

BEGA VALLEY SHIRE

# *TRANSPORT FUTURES*

(CONSULTATION DRAFT)



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# Context

## Background

With a current population of around 34,000, the state government has predicted a modest growth to nearly 39,000 residents by 2036. Those projections did not however contemplate the new vision for Merimbula Airport and the Port of Eden as gateways to the NSW south coast and beyond. Bega Valley Shire must prepare for change.

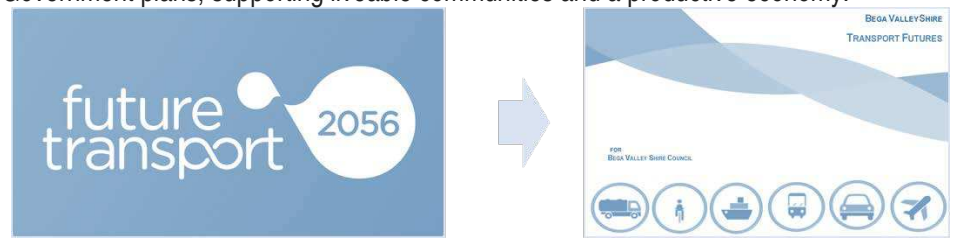
What the investment in the airport and port will assist in doing is unlocking access to far greater visitor numbers, generating associated employment and increasing local population. The ability to dock cruise ships, in particular, will open up the Bega Valley to potential new tourist markets should the associated tourism infrastructure and services investment follow.

The potential as a freight port cannot be understated as well with Eden’s strategic location halfway between Melbourne and Sydney being highly advantageous. What this investment will also generate is a need to reconsider road transport needs between these gateways and Bega, Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne, whilst also considering local traffic interfaces at key towns.

## Document Purpose

This Bega Valley Shire *Transport Futures* is Council’s vision to improve transport for residents and visitors and to both stimulate and support economic growth in a sustainable, safe and secure way; recognising the inherent importance of the region’s liveability.

The NSW Government recently released the *Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan*, titled *Future Transport 2056*. Council’s *Transport Futures* vision is intended to complement the regional infrastructure and services plan and other relevant NSW Government plans, supporting liveable communities and a productive economy.



## Key Transport Challenges and Opportunities

Geographic location	A growing and multi-centred Shire
A thriving tourism industry	Port expansion
Funding availability	Access to economic markets
Merimbula Airport expansion	Cross-border transport issues

The Bega Valley Shire (BVS) is made up of many small towns and villages each with a unique character and each with unique transport needs. Its relative isolation is a draw card for people to live and visit, but also presents a challenge for transport. As a central point between major centres of Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra an opportunity as a key distribution point exists.

39,000 people will call BVS home by 2026 – up from 34,000 in 2016. The transport system needs to cater for an aging and growing population. BVS is made of a large number of towns and villages without one dominant business centre. This structure makes it difficult to provide equitable transport services across the Shire.

Tourism is one of the region’s largest contributors to the local economy. Self-drive holidays remain the biggest market, while adventure and nature-based holidays are strongly growing markets.

Maximising the economic opportunities provided by the expansion of the Eden Port, both freight and cruise ship opportunities, by providing better road links and Higher Productivity including (HML) access to the Port.

Council through limited rate payer funds simply can’t afford the scale of funding needed for major road infrastructure, relying heavily on the state and federal governments as well as private investment. Opportunities exist to leverage program and government investment.

Lack of resilient and productive east-west roads links, impacts on the accessibility to other regional centres and markets for jobs, services and goods movement.

Maximising the economic opportunities provided by the potential upgrade of Merimbula Airport for tourism and business trips, and Canberra Airport for tourism and perishable freight movements to link to international markets.

Cross-border infrastructure and regulatory constraints, such as poor pavements, transport pinch points, inconsistency in vehicle mass limits and registrations increase freight costs for regional operators and business.

## Future Transport

Transport for NSW has finalised its update of the 2012 Long Term Transport Master Plan and adopted *Future Transport NSW 2056*. The document aims to establish a transport and infrastructure investment pipeline for NSW. It takes into account rapidly changing transport trends and acknowledges new and emerging technologies with a selection of these summarised in Table 1.



**Table 1: Transport & Technology Trends**

System/Technology	Summary
<b>Smart Phone</b>	An easy, convenient way of paying for your travel on public transport services.
<b>On-demand Public Transport</b>	Provides smaller “shuttle-like” public bus services via an app where a trip is requested and routes are developed in real time based on patrons’ location and destination.
<b>Smart Parking Management</b>	Employs smart technology to improve safety and provide more information to users and Council. May include: Dynamic Parking Rates or real-time parking availability data systems for apps.
<b>Automated Vehicles</b>	Are able to consider real-time traffic situations, dynamically selecting appropriate routes. Automated public transport systems are also likely.
<b>Vehicle to vehicle and vehicle to roadside communications</b>	Provides real-time data to public and private vehicles as they travel through the network.
<b>Sustainable “Green” transport (i.e. smart vehicles)</b>	Would require catering for battery powered vehicles, both private and public, by providing charging stations at strategic locations (see figure overleaf for example).
<b>Solar Roads and Smart Bikeways</b>	Potential to help power the community and reduce environmental impacts while encouraging higher levels of active transport use.

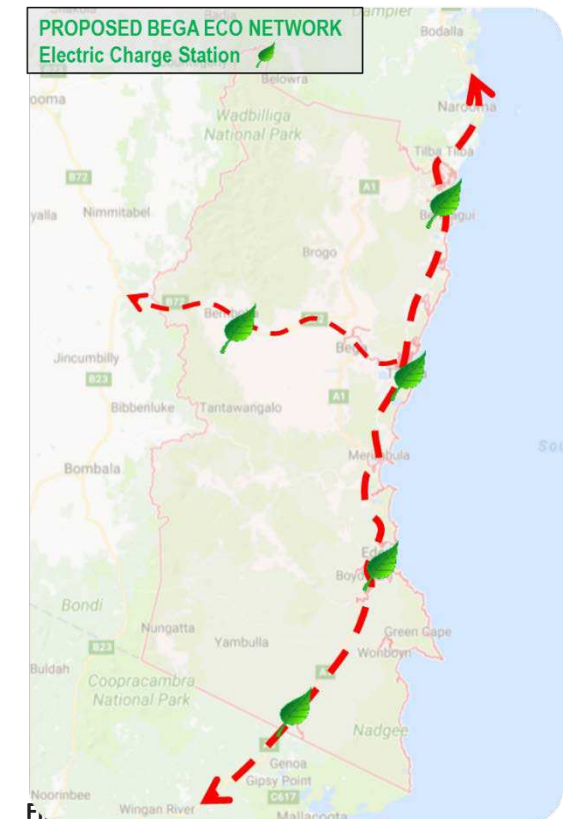
By embracing future transport and technology trends, the Shire can capitalise on the safety, social and economic benefits. For example, the Sapphire Coast is ideally suited

as an electric car super highway to allow cars to travel from Melbourne to Sydney and allow vehicles to travel the route with zero emissions.

Other transport and technology trends will inevitably emerge over time and regular reviews will be needed of BVC’s Transport Vision to ensure it proactively supports these changes which will inevitably increase efficiency and improve transport choices for residents.

More than ever, vehicular travel is changing rapidly, and the changes needed for land use planning, freight movement (with vehicle improvement and increased axle loads), traffic capacity and public transport will need to respond to this.

Also emerging is the integrated use of technology for individual trip planning and pricing which spans across all transport modes. “Mobility as a Service” (MaaS), is one example and is included within the *Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan (Future Transport 2056)*. Specifically, the vision for MaaS is that it will provide integrated, end-to-end trip planning and pricing for customers across multiple public and shared transport modes.



# Transport Vision

## Integrated Vision

*The traffic and transport system drives economic growth and supports residents and the community movement by prioritising investment to reduce access impediments to markets and by creating a movement network for residents that is safe, accessible and environmentally sustainable.*

### A More Resilient Road Network

- ✓ Drive and stimulate positive regional economic growth
- ✓ Promote network connectivity by providing 'one network' regardless of ownership
- ✓ Improve network resilience with direct and reliable routes
- ✓ Better east-west connectivity to regional centres for freight and tourists

### Better Connections and Travel Choices (Walking, Cycling and Public Transport)

- ✓ Provide a connected network that encourages access to and between local centres
- ✓ Provide a clear transport mode prioritisation hierarchy in centres that **supports all user**
- ✓ **Provide fit for purpose pedestrian and cycle facilities**
- ✓ Through safer cycling and pedestrian networks
- ✓ Increase levels of active transport usage and tourism
- ✓ Through more public transport opportunities for those without private vehicles

### Better Parking Management

- ✓ Maximising parking accessibility
- ✓ Better availability of long stay parking for car orientated centres, freight and tourists
- ✓ Improved and better parking supply management
- ✓ Prioritising valued kerbside space improves mobility and accessibility in centres

### Better Connectivity to our Ports and Airport

- ✓ Prioritising investment to maximise accessibility to markets and economic opportunity
- ✓ Improving road links to capitalise on investments
- ✓ Reducing conflicts between freight and non-freight vehicles

### Better Economic Value, Safety and Sustainability through Network Management

- ✓ Manage networks in a consistent way that values economy, safety and sustainability
- ✓ Aligning transport function and prioritisation with road function and user needs
- ✓ Improving access, safety and service for all road users through a defined road hierarchy
- ✓ A better allocation of road funding for the greatest economic and social benefit
- ✓ **Providing greater residential amenity in local streets**
- ✓ A safe system framework



# A Resilient Road Network

## Goal:

*A resilient road network that drives regional economic growth*

The road network is vital to regional economic growth and connectivity, from catering for major freight movements to local accessibility.

The *Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan* proposes that the most efficient way of providing better transport in Regional NSW is through the development of a 'hub and spoke' network model radiating out from Regional and Local Centres rather than a network just focused on Sydney. This will capitalise on the roles that our Local Centres play as distribution **hubs** for services and employment. The NSW plan also recognises the importance of national and state significant transport links, or **spokes**, that pass through the region.

Canberra is the nearest Regional Centre, located 200km north-west of Bega.

Bega Valley Shire is serviced by a number of key transport routes, providing for north-south and east-west connections. Primary access to the region is via the Princes Highway between Sydney and Melbourne, and the Snowy Mountains Highway that connects the Shire to Canberra.

The major industry-generated travel patterns across the Bega Valley and towards major external nodes are shown in Figure 2. High Mass Limit (HML) freight is limited to the Snowy Mountains Highway and Imlay Road routes and lighter freight are able to use the Princes Highway.

The Princes Highway is restricted between Bega and South Nowra in terms of heavy vehicle access, with B-Doubles prohibited north of Bega. Consequently, north-south heavy freight is directed west to the inland highways, (Monaro and Hume Highways), via the Snowy Mountains Highway.

The Snowy Mountains Highway runs for 10km through Brown Mountain, with a continuous uphill grade (east-west) of around 8% and steep sections up to 14%, that are difficult for loaded trucks to negotiate. While this road is the primary east-west freight link, B-Doubles are required to uncouple and carry only one trailer before heading up or down Brown Mountain. This significantly increases travel times for heavy vehicles using the Snowy Mountains Highway. The road through Brown Mountain is curved and undulating, which restricts sight distance due to the adjacent cuttings and vegetation.

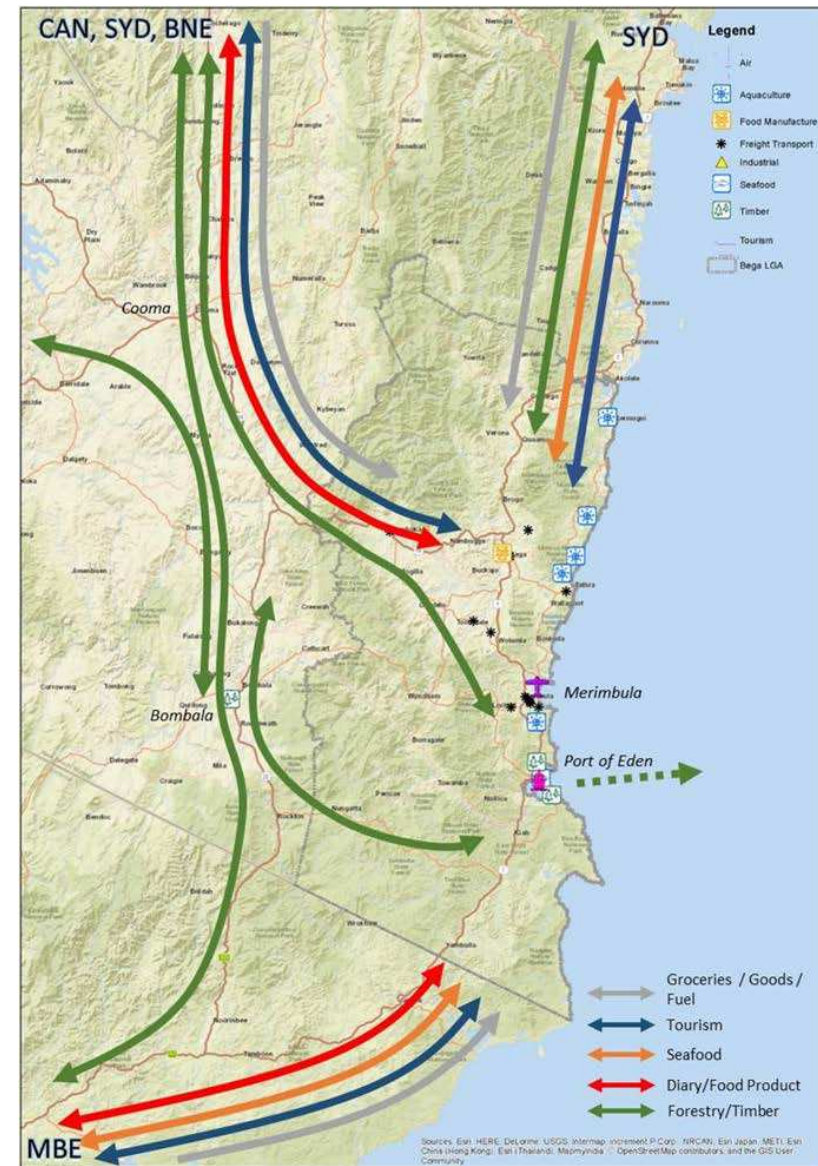


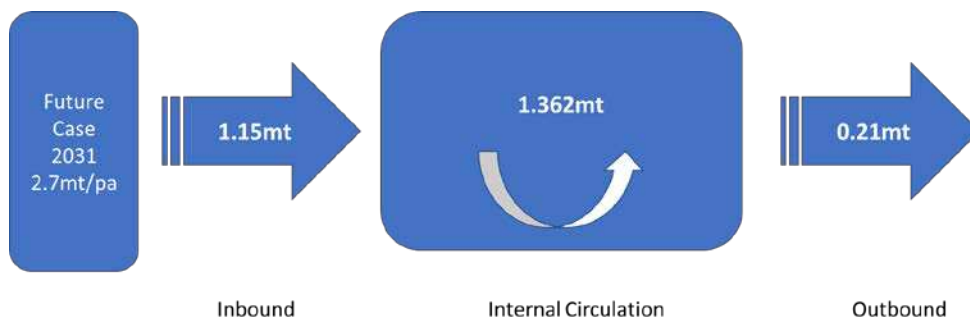
Figure 2: Major Industry Travel Patterns

Upgrading east-west transport corridors is a key initiative of the *NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan*, including improvements to the Snowy Mountains Highway. Fixing the 10km of the Snowy Mountains Highway, through Brown Mountain, provides a safe, resilient and more efficient connection for freight and passenger movements to Canberra and access to north-south freight routes, such as the Monaro and Hume Highways.

Imlay Road (located south of Eden) is the only HML approved east-west link between the Princes and Monaro Highways, and a key connection to the Port of Eden for the forestry industry. Upgrades to the road alignment and widened road shoulders will improve safety for heavy vehicle operations, tourists and maximise opportunities for freight access and export markets to the Port at Eden. Another key connection in Bega Valley Shire is Mt Darragh Road (MR91) which, while catering for more residents than the Snowy Mountains Highway, is still heavily used by road freight as an alternative east-west route. However, Mt Darragh Road is narrow, winding and mountainous creating challenges.

Local roads are important connections between towns and villages giving access to jobs and services. Council maintains over 1,400km of roads with half of this network being unsealed roads. It also maintains 227 road bridges. Innovative, cost-effective treatments will help to provide a safe and efficient local road network.

The importance of freight cannot be under-stated for the south-east region and Bega Valley Shire. Roads and Maritime Services commissioned the South-Eastern NSW Road Freight Supply Chain Study (*Strategic Design + Development Pty Ltd, 2010*) which estimated a freight task of 2.7M tonne for the lower south coast in 2031 increasing from 1.4M tonnes in 2009.



Source: South Eastern NSW Road Freight Supply Chain Study (SD+d 2010)

**Figure 3: 2031 Estimate Freight Task (Lower South Coast)**

The freight task translates to around 170,000 loaded truck trips per year in 2031, or 570 loaded truck movements per day. The actual volume of trucks on these roads will be 70% - 80% higher, as not all return loaded.

A resilient road network that drives regional economic growth will be achieved by:

- Planning and managing the Bega Valley Shire road network as 'one network', regardless of ownership
- Unlocking economic growth by providing better east-west highway connections
- Improving network resilience with more direct and more reliable routes
- Prioritising investment on roads which stimulate economic growth
- Asset management approach to transport infrastructure linked to service levels
- Cost benefit approach to transport investment
- Embracing and capitalising on new advances in technology
- Breaking down barriers to efficient cross-border travel
- Identifying markets that can be unlocked by providing a more resilient and more efficient road network
- Planning and managing linkages between freight and distribution hubs





# Better Connections and Travel Choices

## Goal:

*A connected and safe network that encourages access to and between local centres.*

Walking and cycling are safe, inexpensive and healthy travel choices. They have the least impact on the environment and can contribute to attractive and connected communities. These modes of transport align well with lifestyle areas such as the Bega Valley. In recent years there has been a strong shift in planning priorities. Walking and cycling are now widely considered to be the preferred modes of travel for trips in and around activity centres.

Apart from the transport benefits of improving walking and cycling conditions, there are numerous other benefits such as health benefits, improved connections to/from public transport and economic flow-on benefits associated with more street-level activity in town centres.

Active Transport (walking and cycling) is encouraged for access to education, commuting purposes, recreational purposes (linked to the open space plan), and by connecting facilities which target the specific needs of each user group.

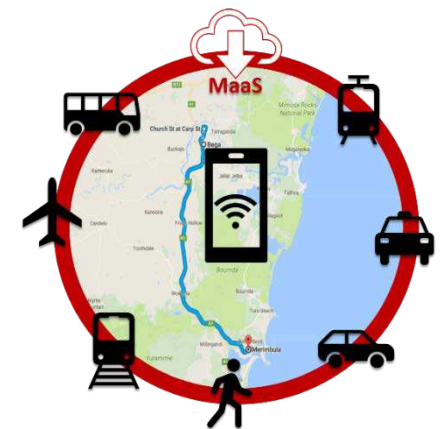
Our region will have a connected and safe active network that helps make walking and cycling attractive alternatives to the car. This will be done by:

- Working with the NSW Government to integrate Cycling and Walking Programs to complete missing links, create integrated transport networks and encourage sustainable travel
- Providing safe and accessible pathways that are clear of heavy traffic, especially around schools
- Prioritising pedestrians and cyclists over other modes in defined centres when making local traffic management and parking decisions
- Unlocking the regions cycle tourism potential



Transport has a vital role to play in ensuring access to jobs, education, health care and other services. Traditional fixed-route public transport is difficult and expensive to provide in regional areas where the population and job placements are widespread. *Future Transport 2056* outlines a range of outcomes that customers can expect in the future. This includes innovative and more flexible services to deliver reliable services and the most appropriate type of services for each customer's circumstances through:

- Flexible and personalised service delivery options
- New bus and coach service improvements for the region to improve connectivity between Canberra and Bega Valley Shire
- Providing Mobility as a Service (MaaS) – across all transport providers (public and shared) as a single comprehensive source of public transport information
- Alignment of fares to be consistent with those in Metropolitan System (i.e. cheaper fares).



# Better Parking Management

## Goal:

*Our parking supply will be managed to maximise user accessibility, to improve economic prosperity, and to support sustainable travel choices*

Council is responsible for regulating parking in the Bega Valley Shire, and is reviewing its policy with a view to establishing a more strategic approach to parking management, rather than an ad-hoc reactive approach to parking demands. It is important to recognise the importance car parking has on *Place Value* as well as on the economic sustainability of many small businesses within local towns and villages.

Overall, the amount of car parking spaces we have is sufficient to cater for the typical weekday demands. However, during peak holiday seasons, the demand and competition for parking spaces increases significantly, putting pressure on available parking.

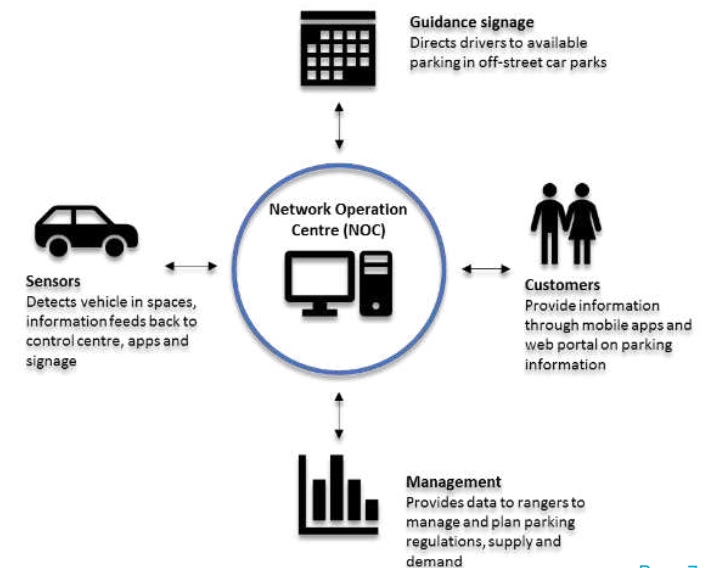
With limited road space and increasing land values, simply allocating more space for parking areas just to meet peak seasonal demands is not a value-for-money proposition. Instead, our parking supply will need to be managed in a clever way, to maximise user accessibility, to improve economic prosperity, and to support sustainable travel choices. This will be done by:

- Managing the supply and location of parking within towns, villages and at tourist locations to give priority to the highest-value social and economic needs
- Facilitating short-stay parking accessibility in areas which rely on drop-in trade by ensuring sufficient turnover through time regulation and enforcement
- Encouraging long-stay parking to use off-street facilities or park on-street away from the main streets
- Prioritising special parking such as loading zones, bus stops, taxi ranks, and accessible parking in centres
- Comprehensive analysis to consider all benefits and costs when managing parking resources, with the most cost-effective strategies implemented first
- Encouraging access to centres by drive-tourism through designated parking for longer vehicles.



New smart parking technologies will significantly improve parking efficiency, make it easier to find a car park and provide a better balance of visitor parking and staff parking. They will also provide Council with real-time data on car park use for:

- Improving customer access to parking information
- Improving centre signage and way-finding to direct visitors to and from parking
- Improving data collection so that parking management can focus on parking “hot-spots”





# Port and Airport

## Goal:

*Investment in our Port and Airport is prioritised to maximise accessibility to markets*

The Port of Eden provides the southern-most deep-water wharf in NSW. The Port includes three wharves, a wood chip terminal (privately owned), Navy wharfs and a Breakwater wharf (cruise ship terminal). The expansion of its seawall will enable larger ships to dock at the port, providing for an estimated 40-60 large cruise ships per year, or 2-3 large cruise ships per week, bringing significant economic value to the Shire.

There is also significant spare capacity at the southern side of the port to handle an increase in freight, including servicing oil and gas operations, an export facility for iron ore or live cattle. It has enormous potential as a transport hub, for example, for receiving and transporting the turbine and blades for renewable energy wind farms.

Investments in our Ports will be prioritised to maximise accessibility to current and future markets by investing in:

- Better landside facilities to maximise economic opportunities provided by the expansion of the port for cruise ships
- Better road east-west road links to the Port of Eden to capitalise on investments made
- Safe all-vehicle access to tourist facilities and managing the interaction between freight and non freight vehicles
- A long term strategy for connecting the Port to the inland rail



Merimbula Airport provides 5-6 connections to Sydney and Melbourne per day, carrying around 1,200 to 1,400 passengers per week.

A 200m extension to the runway will take it to 1802m in length which will allow access for larger aircrafts, an increase to the frequency of smaller aircraft services and increase the number of destinations that will be serviced.

New initiatives for investigation for regional airports as identified in the *Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan* include:

- Landside access strategies for all regional airports to ensure a focus on an adequate door-to-door customer experience. This includes funding mechanisms for landside access, staged implementation to integrate with ground transport and facilitation of consultation and planning
- A Regional Airports Program (landside improvements) to increase efficiency, accessibility, competition, commercial viability and sustainability of regional aviation in NSW
- Increased availability of regional slots at Sydney's airport during peak hours





# Network Management

## Goal:

*Our roads are managed in a consistent and equitable way valuing economic, safety and sustainable outcomes.*

Bega Valley Shire Council owns and maintains over 1,400 km of road network, including 705km of sealed roads, 715km of unsealed roads, 227 bridges, 61km of footpaths, and 9km of cycleways.

The *Bega Valley Shire Transport Asset Management Strategy* estimates the required financial outlay to properly manage the road asset, including operations, maintenance, renewal and upgrade of existing assets at \$221.5M over 10 years, or an average of \$22M per year. The estimated available funding of \$190M over the same period, results in a shortfall of around \$3M per year.

Given the current fiscal challenges, pavement management should focus on critical assets, which are those assets which have a high consequence of failure but not necessarily a high likelihood of failure. By identifying critical assets and critical failure modes, we can target and refine investigative activities, maintenance plans and capital expenditure plans at the appropriate time.

Council operates a local and regional road management system for the maintaining and repairing of roads under its jurisdiction. Risk management, safety and road hierarchy are the primary determinants for prioritising road maintenance.

How Council handles its road asset base, the ageing network problem and the associated risks is extremely important. It is the goal of the management process to ultimately reduce Council's overall costs, while increasing the safety of all road users including pedestrians and cyclists, enhancing the overall environment and improving amenity for the overall community.

Council intends to develop a process to more equitably allocate scarce road capital and maintenance funding based on the upgrades and maintenance that return the greatest economic and social outcomes for all residents and visitors.

Maximising the safety of residents and visitors is the most fundamental requirement of the transport system. A key customer outcome of the *NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan* is 'A safe transport system for every customer with zero deaths or serious injuries on the network by 2056'. We will work with the state government towards achieving this by:

- Building the Safe System Framework consideration into our investigation, design and implementation and management practices
- Integrating safety features with road function, accounting for needs of different road users in each environment
- Targeting innovative treatment at key crash site and high-risk sites
- Prioritising separation of different transport users to improve safety, freight efficiency and promotion of active travel

We will ensure that our roads are managed in a consistent, safe and equitable way valuing economic, safety and sustainable outcomes. We will do this by:

- Managing the road network to match the transport function of each road with places it goes and the users who need priority
- Managing a defined hierarchy of roads to consistently provide an acceptable level of access, safety and service for all road users
- Allocating scarce road maintenance funding to a vast network, to deliver works through constraint based optimised algorithms which return the greatest economic and social outcomes
- Preserving residential amenity in streets by limiting the volume and speed of through traffic
- Developing and manage services for those who do not have private vehicle access.



# Economic Benefits and Funding

The role of the visitor economy is particularly important in Bega Valley Shire. The Snowy Mountains Highway will play an important role in stimulating further investment in the visitor economy and will also be critical for improving the resilience and freight capability of this route.

The Shire's population is expected to grow from 34,000 to 39,000 by 2036 which when forecast out to 2056 results in approximately 43,800 residents. Based on the 2016 census data there were 14,247 employed Bega Valley residents with the largest employment industries being in Health Care and in Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Agriculture and Food and Manufacturing. The Shire's Gross Regional Product for 2016 was \$1.52 billion which was 0.3% of Gross State Product. Bega Valley's future transport network will need to cater for a diverse set of demands, with population growth, the Shire's economic growth and its role in facilitating external freight connections such as from the Port of Eden to Canberra.

Without adequate planning and funding, Bega Valley Shire will fail to maximise the economic opportunities that become available. This vision is the start of the process to realise these opportunities and strengths. Without a vision, there is a potential for missed opportunities and unclear direction which may lead to reduced road safety, transport choice, and amenities for its residents and visitors.

Council's commitment to improving the road network remains strong. External funding is critical to complement the rate payer-based funding whilst we continue to invest in the emerging economic stimulus opportunities attached to transport network improvements. More transport funding will be sourced by:

- Applying for state and federal government grants
- Seeking Section 94 development contributions
- Reclassification of roads of state significance
- Budgeting appropriately for Capital Works Programs
- Innovative private sector involvement such as investigating how advertising could supplement the funding of new technology-based initiative.

# Where to From Here?

This document is Council's transport vision to improve quality of service, support economic growth and regional development in a sustainable, liveable, safe and secure way.

The steps expected to be undertaken following the release of this Draft Vision document include:

- Engage with the community on the vision and collate comments from all stakeholders
- Considering the comments raised; modify and finalise the report
- Council endorsing this *Transport Futures* vision document
- Council proceed with developing detailed strategies and an Action Plan to implement the Vision document aligned with Council's Long Term Financial Plan





