



Comments on *Canberra's Transport Future for All Canberrans*

7 April 2016

The Conservation Council welcomes the announcement of a public transport election policy from the Canberra Liberals: *Canberra's Transport Future for all Canberrans*. The Council commends some elements of the plan, however, the plan has critical gaps that limit its ability to achieve strong environmental outcomes.

The Conservation Council supports an integrated transport plan for the ACT. A central feature should be a mass transit public transport system. Light rail can be part of such an integrated transport system. Other elements should include:

- an integrated ticketing system
- co-location of stops for buses and trams and linking various transport options
- reduce vehicle speeds through speed limits and traffic calming, include private vehicle-free zones in suburbs and town centres
- appropriate urban planning along transport routes to enhance usage
- planning that supports walking, cycling and public transport by locating more homes within walking and cycling distances of workplaces, shops, schools, services and public transport.
- community engagement and ownership of our transport plan

The ACT is too dependent on the private motor car for transport. The Conservation Council supports policies that reduce this dependence and diversify the range of transport options.

Canberra's Transport Future for all Canberrans reflects some positive elements that would be part of a successful integrated transport system. The plan offers:

- the principle of "*a bus network that is so frequent, people won't need to know the timetable because there is always a service less than 15 minutes away.*" Delivering frequent service across the entire public transport system is critical to achieve a mode shift away from cars.
- a 7 day standard timetable, which can better ensure Canberrans of all ages have an accessible transport option beyond simply week day work travel.
- a service to airport, which should be affordable and convenient.
- travel incentive 'Free Friday,' rewarding passengers with free travel after 8 rides in one week. Incentives are important to assist people to make the change to public transport.
- commitment to ensure people of all abilities can ride all buses, and a wayfinding system to ensure all people can easily access the system.
- greater staff support, including 'roving' bus assistants. Interchange staff can be a critical component to ensuring both smooth transfers of services, as well as delivering safe, comfortable experiences for passengers.

These elements reflect actions important for any transport system to succeed. However *Canberra's Transport Future* does not include some basic elements essential to a successful system for Canberra.

An integrated transport system must be based on the aim of a significant mode shift for people to take transport options other than their car. The environmental and social benefits of decreased car use include reduced greenhouse emissions from cars, reduction in road development preserving more of the landscape, and more active transport. *Canberra's Transport Future* has no targets to deliver mode shift. In fact the paper states 'we will not try to force patronage growth by making it harder to drive, but by making public transport a more attractive option.'¹ This does not suggest an integrated plan to achieve transport outcomes rather it is ongoing support for the status quo based on private vehicles and buses using roads with likely increased congestion and longer travel times as the city continues to grow.

The Canberra Liberals released *Canberra's Transport Future* one week after announcements of commitments to more road expansions.² The plan flags further 'necessary roadworks' in its rapid bus network (page 6). An integrated transport plan should deliver mode shift in order to reduce the need for development of more roads. Continual road expansion stimulates more people to drive in the short term, increasing dependence on cars and contributing to further congestion. Canberra needs a transport vision that provides genuine alternatives to the car.

Transport systems are inherently linked to urban design and planning, and an integrated transport plan would address Canberra's urban form with clear outcomes for liveability and function, and meet modal shift targets with urban design solutions where necessary. The current light rail plan integrates transport with urban form with a plan for urban renewal. A more compact city, if developed thoughtfully with best practice, can deliver better environmental and social outcomes. *Canberra's Transport Future* is not an integrated transport plan as it does not address Canberra's urban form and thus is highly unlikely to deliver real transport solutions.

Both the Labor party and Greens committed to the first stage of Light Rail ahead of the 2012 election, and the Conservation Council for many years has called for introduction of light rail and has welcomed the current Light Rail project as the first stage of major investment in part of the overall public transport infrastructure. The Conservation Council has concerns around the political battle being waged over the system, and is focused on the best transport and urban form outcomes which in turn lead to an improved environmental outcome.

The Conservation Council encourages all parties to release transport policy that delivers an integrated system with public transport and active transport options that give Canberra residents the choice to live without a car.

¹ *Canberra's Transport Future for all Canberrans*, page 2.

² Canberra Liberals announce full duplication of Ashley Drive:

<http://canberraliberals.org.au/2016/03/canberra-liberals-commit-to-full-ashley-drive-duplication/>