

WARRUMBUNGLE SHIRE COUNCIL

Ordinary Meeting – 13 December 2018

Item 27 Shire Integrated Transport Strategy

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| Division: | Technical Services |
| Management Area: | Technical Services |
| Author: | Director Technical Services – Kevin Tighe |
| CSP Key Focus Area: | Local Economy Public Infrastructure and Services |
| Priority: | LE1 Agricultural activities continue to be recognised and supported as a foundation of our local economy PI1 Public transport alternatives including bus and rail services connect local towns and villages and provide links with other regional centres PI3 Roads throughout the shire are safe, well maintained and appropriately funded. |

Reason for Report

The purpose of this report is to consider the concept of an Integrated Transport Strategy for Warrumbungle Shire and to recommend a process for development of the strategy.

Background

Council owns and manages an extensive network of roads, bridges and footpaths that are used to deliver a range of social and economic benefits across the Shire and to surrounding regions. There are transport assets within the Shire not owned by Council such as State Highways and rail lines that have a significant impact on social and economic wellbeing of the Shire. There is of course a wide variety of users, on each of these transport networks to cater for the expectations of a variety of primary, secondary and tertiary industries. A study of transport infrastructure extends beyond the road, bridge and footpath network and may include aerodromes, cycleways and rail lines.

The purpose of a Transport Strategy is to guide decisions on future development of transport infrastructure for the Shire. They are usually developed in response to existing or foreseeable capacity constraints and they may be developed to provide a vision for transport infrastructure in the medium to long term, say 10 to 30 years.

The actions and targets established in a Transport Strategy must by necessity align with other strategy documents that may be developed by Council, such as; Land Use Strategy, Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Long Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plans. A Transport Strategy for the Shire should also align with State Government initiated strategies such as the Castlereagh Regional Economic Development Strategy, State Highway Corridor Plans and Road Safety

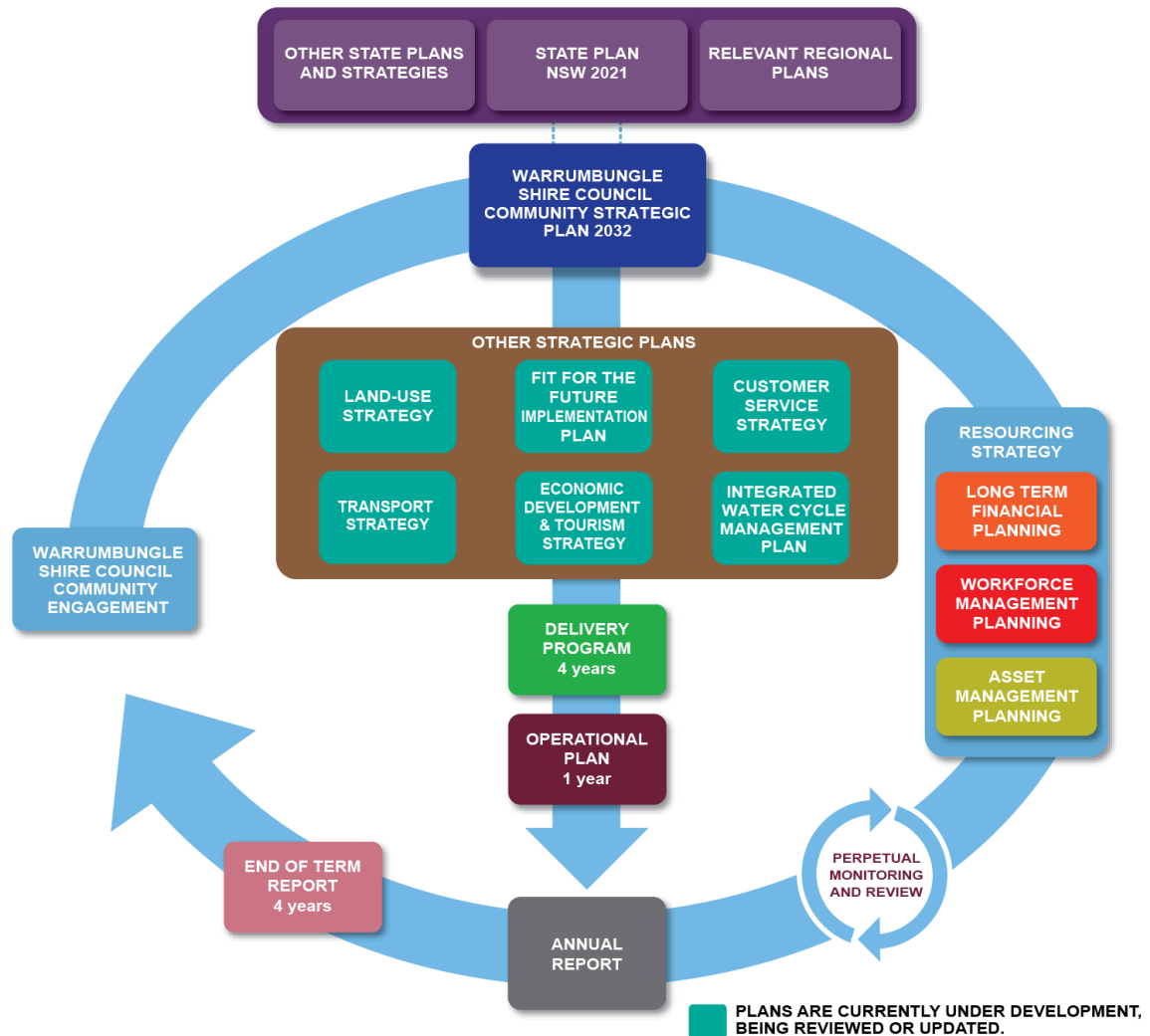
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Plans. A depiction of how a Transport Strategy might integrate with existing statutory Integrated Planning and Reporting requirements is shown in Figure 1.

A snapshot of transport infrastructure that exists within the Shire is provided in Figure 2.

Figure 1 – Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework



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Figure 2 – Transport Infrastructure & Services Snap Shot

- Rural Roads – The local rural road network of 1,986km in the Shire is categorised according to hierarchy and whether the road is sealed or unsealed. A summary table of categorisation is shown as follows:

| | Sealed Length (km) | Unsealed Length (km) | Total Length (km) |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Arterial Roads | 200 | 21 | 221 |
| Distributor Roads | 208 | 526 | 734 |
| Collector Roads | 64 | 532 | 596 |
| Access Roads | 7 | 398 | 405 |
| Unformed Roads | 0 | 30 | 30 |
| Total Lengths | 479 | 1507 | 1986 |

- Regional Roads – Purlough Road, Baradine Road, Gwabegar Road, Warrumbungles Way, Vinegaroy Road, Forest Road. Total length 385km.
- Urban Centres – Baradine, Binnaway, Coolah, Coonabarabran, Coolah, Dunedoo and Mendooran. Total length of town streets – 139km.
- State Highways – Newell Highway, Golden Highway, Oxley Highway, Castlereagh Highway. Total length within the Shire - 334km.
- Routes for Restricted Access Vehicles – A range of routes for restricted access vehicles exists and may be found on an interactive map facility on the NSW Roads & Maritime Services' website. The interactive map provides route details for 4.6m high vehicles, B Double routes and Road Train routes including any conditions attached to the route.
- Aerodromes – There is a sealed runway at Coonabarabran and unsealed runways at Baradine and Coolah. Both the Coonabarabran and Coolah aerodromes are registered with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA).
- Rail Lines – The following freight rail lines traverse the Shire; Wallerawang Binnaway Line (via Dunedoo and Merrygoen), Binnaway Werris Creek Line and Merrygoen Dubbo Line. Abandoned rail lines include; Binnaway Gwabegar Line (via Coonabarabran) and Dunedoo Coolah Line.
- Public Transport – Transport NSW operate a daily bus service to and from Lithgow train station. The bus service takes in the following towns within the Shire; Dunedoo, Coolah, Mendooran, Binnaway, Coonabarabran and Baradine.
- Community Care Bus – Warrumbungle Shire Council operates a community care bus on a timetable that covers each town within the Shire.
- Cycleways – A constructed off road shared bike path exists in Coonabarabran and Coolah. A Bike Plan exists for future development of cycleway infrastructure.
- Footpaths – A Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan exists to guide future upgrades and development of pedestrian facilities within each of the urban centres.

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Issues

There appears to be limited guidance or reference documents available on development of an Integrated Transport Strategy specific for a medium sized Rural Council. Some of the larger Regional Councils in NSW have a Transport Strategy that may be useful as a reference document for development of a strategy. However, the strategies developed by large Regional Councils are in response to traffic congestion and parking constraints caused by rapid population increases and by rapid regional economic growth. *“.. the Transport Strategy is the blueprint for the city’s transport network over the next 25 years, with a particular focus on expected accelerated growth in the region”* (Cessnock Traffic and Transport Strategy, 2018). *“The city’s existing road and transport network has developed over time to cater for increasingly expanding outer settlements, but we need a new and integrated approach if we are to support our growing population, economy and position as a regional centre”* (Wagga Integrated Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan 2040).

The population of Warrumbungle is expected to continue to decline in the medium term, unless there is a substantial increase in economic activity, and traffic congestion is not likely to be an issue in the foreseeable future in any of the urban centres. The economy of Warrumbungle Shire Council is primarily dependent on agriculture and perhaps the focus of a Transport Strategy may be access to an effective freight network. The social needs of Shire residents are constantly changing and a Transport Strategy may also focus on demands for access to health and education services.

There are many transport infrastructure decisions made by both State and Australian Governments that impact on Warrumbungle Shire, for example the Coonabarabran Heavy Vehicle Project and the Inland Rail Project. Council may be in a better position to influence such decisions if a Transport Strategy existed for the Shire.

A focus on freight networks in a Transport Strategy may lead to actions and targets being established in relation to upgrading the road network to allow access for higher productivity trucks. A Roads Asset Management Plan has several objectives including those that may be found in a Transport Strategy such as; a demand forecast of future road asset and service requirements and the expected level of service to be provided by the asset. Council’s Roads Asset Management Plan is not yet fully developed, however outcomes from the plan to date include budget information to inform the Long Term Financial Plan.

A Transport Strategy for Warrumbungle Shire Council may have several focus areas other than roads including; aerodromes, public transport, cycleways, school buses, truck rest areas, use of ‘intelligent’ traffic management devices and vehicles and road safety.

The process of developing a Transport Strategy must first start with a clear understanding of strategy focus and strategy objectives. This then will enable effort associated with data collection and community consultation to be targeted towards meeting strategy objectives. Specialist advice will be required to assist Council with development of a Data Collection Strategy and Community Consultation Strategy.

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Options

Council may wish to fund the development of a comprehensive Transport Strategy for the Shire. A process for development would need to be established, which will have many components including; a process of consultation with the community and relevant Government agencies and industry representatives, a process for collection of data and a process of document review. Council does not have in house resources available to develop a Transport Strategy and specialist consultants will need to be engaged. To ensure that Council objectives for a Transport Strategy are met, it may be necessary for Council to establish a steering committee or even an advisory committee for the project. Until a framework is established it is difficult to estimate the time required to develop a strategy, however it is likely that such a project will take 10 to 15 months. Council is currently not in a position to make decisions on process and overall framework and costing details for development of a strategy, and a report to Council will be necessary before Council is able to commit to the project.

It appears that one of the top priorities for the Orana Joint Organisation of Councils (JOC) is development of a Regional Road Strategy. Council is a member of the Orana JOC and Council may wish to defer development of a Shire Transport Strategy until a Regional Roads Strategy is developed by this organisation. Recently, Council participated in a data collection survey put out by Orana JOC, which sought information on various roads within the Shire including; traffic volume, safety data, road pavement defect, connectivity and potential travel time savings. The focus of Orana JOC Road Strategy Project is on having a road network that optimises efficient movement of agricultural and mining freight across the region.

Rather than development of a comprehensive Transport Strategy, Council may wish to focus on developing a strategy for particular categories of transport for particular types of infrastructure in the Shire. The movement of agricultural freight within and through the Shire is likely to be a prominent feature of any Transport Strategy and Council may wish to focus on a Road Transport Strategy for the agriculture sector in the Shire. Such a strategy could focus on the existing local and regional road network and existing and proposed routes for access by B Double and Road Train trucks and their derivatives and for access by a range of agricultural equipment. Development of a Shire Road Strategy for trucks on local and regional roads, including town streets but excluding State highways, could be undertaken as a project by Council's resources. For example, not all arterial or distributor roads (formerly Category 1.0 roads) on the local rural road network are open to B Double access and Council may wish to commence a process of assessment of these roads.

Council may wish to defer making a decision on development of a Shire Transport Strategy until such time that supporting strategy documents are in place. For example, Council may wait until a Regional Roads Strategy is developed by the Orana JOC. Also, Council may wish to wait until Council's Road Asset Management Plan is fully developed and implemented.

Financial Considerations

There is no allocation in the current budget or Long Term Financial Plan for development of a comprehensive Shire Transport Strategy. Engagement of specialist consultants to collect the necessary data, formulate a Consultation

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Strategy and participate in public consultation and liaise with an advisory committee may cost between \$40,000 an \$80,000.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council consult with the Orana Joint Organisation of Councils regarding timeframe for completion of Regional Roads Strategy.