Committee for Sydney

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To whom it concerns,

Re: Towards net zero for transport and infrastructure

The Committee for Sydney welcomes the Federal Government's focus on net zero transport and infrastructure and is grateful for the opportunity to provide input to the development of Australia's Transport and Infrastructure Net Zero Roadmap and Action Plan.

Who we are

The Committee for Sydney is an urban policy think tank. We are advocates for the whole of Sydney, focused on developing solutions to the most important problems we face. We are proud to have over 160 members that represent key business, academic and civic organisations across Sydney.

We advocate for policy and investment outcomes that shape the future of Greater Sydney. We work across six distinct but connected program areas which include resilience, planning, mobility, economy, culture and equity and fairness.

Our work has both catalysed and influenced the development of key city-shaping agendas led by the NSW Government, including but not limited to fast rail between Sydney and Newcastle, the State Disaster Mitigation Plan, transport-oriented development and low to mid-rise housing reforms, and vibrancy reforms.

Recommendations

We make seven key recommendations to include in the roadmap and action plan, as detailed below:

1. Set national sustainable mode-share targets for capital cities

Set a target for 40% of all trips in capital cities to be taken by sustainable modes by 2030. Sustainable modes include all active and public transport modes. This target should gradually increase, with a 60% target for 2035 and 80% target for 2040.

Mode share targets are useful as they guide effort, attention and investment. Creating a clear target for what the mode split should be in the future, along with measures to achieve the target, will also focus road space allocation strategies and policies set by states and territories.

Implementing a mode-share target would help align the sometimes incongruous outcomes sought by traffic engineers and place makers. In particular, it could clarify where and why the throughput of cars in certain places needs to be deprioritised, with the throughput of active and public transport being the highest priority.

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2. **Encourage or require states and territories to implement transport oriented development**

   Set targets for states and territories to ensure a certain percentage of their housing supply targets are met in transport oriented development zones. In Sydney, we estimate around 40% of new homes over the next 20 years can be accommodated around train stations.

   Not everyone is lucky enough to live within a walking distance of a rail station – and that is exactly our point. Changing Australia's development patterns so more people have the convenience of being able to access high speed, high capacity public transport is one of the best ways to reduce transport emissions.

   When people live somewhere without good public transport access, their only option is to drive for essentially all trips. If we want it to be easy for Australians to access the necessities of life without always having to drive, the single most important thing we can do is put more development near stations. Buses can supplement this, but the highest rates of public transport use occur when people are near rail stations.

   The NSW Government's new Transport Oriented Development program sets an example for other states and territories. These zones need to be strategically planned to ensure there is an appropriate level of supporting social infrastructure and amenities.

3. **Prioritise public and active transport projects for transport infrastructure funding**

   Federal government should prioritise active and public transport infrastructure funding to states and territories, over private vehicle infrastructure projects. This would align with a national sustainable mode-shift target.

   It is important to remember that walking and cycling have zero, or very close to zero, carbon emissions yet are often left out of the zero-carbon emission transport debate.

   Funding for cycleways and bus rapid transit infrastructure are extremely cost effective for government, while rail projects are also critical. Federal government should also consider linking infrastructure funding bonuses to states and territories who can prove projects in their capital cities reallocate significant road space for buses, bikes, and people walking.

4. **Investigate the possibility of funding to increase public transport service kilometres**

   Federal government currently provides capital expenditure funding to states and territories for infrastructure funding. The possibility of providing operational expenditure funding for public transport should be investigated.

   Public transport operational expenditure funding would support states and territories to increase the frequency of public transport services. Frequent public transport services are essential to induce mode-shift. Compared to other global cities, Australia's capital cities have relatively infrequent public transport services.

   For example, in Sydney, bus services in the west and south-west have run every half hour to hour in the morning peak. This disincentivises public transport use. A wait time of no more than 10-15 minutes is essential to encourage sustainable transport use.

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5. Accelerate adoption of passenger electric vehicles

Our research has found that Sydney is not on-track to reach its 2030 or 2050 emissions goals[1]. Our Accelerated Transition Model (which is required to meet the 2030 and 2050 emissions goals) shows that all new passenger car sales need to be electric by 2027. While the federal governments new fuel efficiency standards are a step in the right direction, they are not ambitious enough to achieve the required emissions reductions.

6. Convert all commercial and government vehicle fleets to EVs by 2030

Our modelling suggests commercial and government fleets should be converted entirely to electric vehicles by 2030. Fleets make up almost 10% of all passenger cars, so their conversion would put ~200,000– 250,000 EVs on the road in Sydney alone.

The federal government should set an end date (2030) to convert all government fleets to EVs. This should be required of state, territory and local governments as well.

7. Set a strategy for truck decarbonisation in line with net-zero objectives

A clear Australia-wide strategy for zero emission trucks needs to be developed. Governments, freight companies, truck manufacturers and charging providers should collaborate to help big first movers switch as soon as possible and assist smaller followers to do so later.

A strategy may include:

- The introduction of CO2 emissions or fuel efficiency standards for new truck sales
- A petrol/diesel truck 2035 sales ban
- Updated truck width standards to improve model availability
- Financial incentives for truck purchase and depot charging infrastructure

Barriers to adopting zero-emission trucks (light and heavy) are similar to those for passenger EVs, however, the specifics are quite different so require tailored solutions. Further investment and incentives may be needed to accelerate charging infrastructure.

Charging is even more problematic for zero emission trucks than for passenger EVs. On the road charging infrastructure does not exist yet at scale, while depot charging is expensive due to grid upgrade costs, and coordination with the network providers will be needed to support the grid.

8. Set a strategy for bus decarbonisation in line with net-zero objectives

A clear Australia-wide strategy for zero emissions buses needs to be developed. Most states and territories now have their own strategies and targets to transition to zero emissions buses, however national coordination will bolster these efforts.

State and territories should work together on this effort, to share in the co-benefits of Australian manufacturing opportunities, and to share learnings from early conversion of depots and fleets, for example the electrification of Leichhardt bus depot in Sydney.

[1] https://sydney.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Committee-for-Sydney-Decarbonising-Sydney-August-2022.pdf

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Supporting research

The above recommendations are made in a variety of the Committee for Sydney's reports. These will be useful for the development of the roadmap for net zero transport. Key reports include:

- Make Sydney a cycling city, 2021
- Decarbonising Sydney, 2022
- Rethinking station precincts, 2022
- Better parking for better places, 2022
- Plan B: Better buses for Sydney, 2024

Kind regards,

Eamon Waterford
CEO
The Committee for Sydney