

Transport Position Statement

The future we want:

A range of accessible transport options across the Northern Rivers that enable social inclusion and wellbeing for everyone.

How we will achieve this:

We will increase access and opportunities through the development of relevant, effective, affordable and accessible transport solutions, with a focus on our most transport disadvantaged communities. NRSDC will work collaboratively across the region to develop innovative transport solutions that help create a fairer society.

NRSDC seeks the following results for our community:

- **Better planning for the future of people's mobility**
 - A comprehensive integrated regional transport plan for the region that has a strong focus on passenger transport and contains realistic strategies to overcome transport disadvantage in the region. The plan should be supported by a commitment to fund additional public transport needs identified in the plan.
 - Action to expand transport connections with South East Queensland. Northern Rivers' residents have high need to travel to South East Queensland for health, education and business purposes and many people also have cross border family networks.
- **Increasing passenger transport options**
 - Better, safer, more appropriate and affordable transport for young people in the NR region, including extension of the current Regional Excursion Daily concession fares to under 16's, and eligible job seekers including Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients and provision of travel vouchers.
 - Additional funding for the Transport for Health program. We need to improve access to health services for the Northern Rivers, especially Aboriginal people and residents in remote communities, who may forgo treatment for want of accessible and affordable transport. Many specialist appointments require transport to Gold Coast or Brisbane.
- **Greater use of existing passenger transport**
 - Better transport information services for residents in the region, including extending the 131 500 transport information line to regional NSW and development of up-to-date comprehensive web-based transport information for rural and regional communities.
 - Fare parity for rural and regional public transport so that our communities pay an equivalent fare per kilometre travelled to residents of metropolitan centres.
- **Innovative solutions**
 - Funding to develop and test innovative and flexible public transport services including a Northern Rivers Mobility Management Office to act as a one-stop-shop to provide transport information; travel bookings and spare seat brokerage service to promote better use of existing services.

There is no bus to my local shops- I have to walk for half an hour to visit a doctor. (Lismore Survey Respondent 2011)

The Northern Rivers transport story:

Access to transport is one of the highest social priorities for the Northern Rivers region. It cuts across many other areas, including health, education and training, employment, youth issues, ageing, disability and Aboriginal disadvantage. People who don't have transport can't access education and training opportunities, look for work, attend health appointments, visit family and friends, or participate in sport, recreation and cultural activities. There are high levels of transport disadvantage in this region as a result of

There are no buses apart from a school bus along my road. It's hard to get around for those of us who no longer drive. (Lismore Survey Respondent 2011)

- Socio-economic status. Incomes in the Northern Rivers are roughly two thirds of the national average. Unemployment is one and a half times the national average. Some communities in our region are amongst the most disadvantaged in the country.
- Population is dispersed across villages, small towns and larger centres
- Public transport options in the region are limited, inflexible and costly. Passengers in the Northern Rivers often pay more than twice as much as people in Sydney to travel the same distance.
- High reliance on private vehicles but comparatively low rates of car ownership. Rising costs of car dependency increase hardship for low income families and place a real burden on communities without an affordable public transport system.
- Transport policies across all levels of government that privilege car dependence and roads development over public transport and active transport options.

Good transport = good communities:

Efficient, safe, accessible, affordable and pleasant transport options for people in the Northern Rivers will:

- Build social inclusion, strong communities and community connectedness
- Increase economic participation (education, training and jobs)
- Increase our standard of living
- Improve access to services that support community needs
- Promote a healthier population through access to healthy, active living options

We support progressing transport options that encompass public transport, community transport, car pooling, active transport (cycling and walking) and disability access, as well as reducing the need for travel through the use of information technology alternatives.

Current NRSDC actions:

- Founding member and lead agency for transport action team within the Sustain Northern Rivers Collaboration
- Provision of information to encourage use of existing transport capacity through the Transport Information Pages in the telephone book, the www.goingplaces.org.au website and engaging with and educating community members through transport awareness events across the Region.
- Accessibility information project, which will compile and promote information on various types of accessible transport options available in the Region.
- Advocacy, promotion and representation
- Contribute to planning and policy on a national, state and local level that focuses on the particular needs of transport disadvantaged groups such as Aboriginal people, aged people, young people and people with a disability.
- Working on projects with Transport Working Groups across the region
 - Transport promotion events
 - Health transport networks
 - Bicycle network maps
 - Car pooling
 - Development Application assessment
 - Funding applications to improve public transport infrastructure
 - Other issues as identified by community members