

Transport Action Network

Submission to:

Planning System Implementation Review

The Transport Action Network (TAN) comprises community organisations, advocacy groups, urban and transport practitioners and researchers concerned about the lack of attention to the integration of land use and transport in South Australia.

TAN's vision is that: all South Australians have genuine transport choices that are convenient, connected, affordable, safe and carbon-free now and into the future.

TAN would like to congratulate the Minister for Planning for establishing this review and encouraging the entire South Australian community to make submissions. We are also pleased the Expert Panel members have directly engaged with community members and stakeholder groups in workshops and forums. We appreciate the efforts of staff at Planning SA tasked with creating a Planning and Design Code (PDC) that applies across the entire State. Our criticisms are not meant as a criticism of these staff. Our submission is an effort to identify and address some glaring shortcomings of the Planning System and PDC.

We believe the starting point for the planning system must be clear strategic objectives that link land use and transport to ensure transport choice for South Australians of all ages and life stages. An Integrated Land Use and Transport Plan requires a vision for and strong focus on equity, health and environmental sustainability with ambitious targets related to each of these themes.

Our submission focuses on two key areas a) the relationship between strategy, policy and assessment, and b) land use and transport integration as expressed (or not) in the PDC.

Strategy-Policy-Assessment

Strategic Planning

The 'problem statement' in the Expert Panel's *Discussion Paper – PDI Act 2016 Reform Options* is emblematic of the problems with entire planning system.

'The Panel has been tasked with reviewing key aspects of the planning system and identifying opportunities to ensure planning decisions encourage a more liveable, competitive, affordable, and sustainable long-term growth strategy for Greater Adelaide and the regions (2022, page 5)

This statement is concerning as it suggests the long-term growth strategy will emerge from development assessment decisions based on the PDC. Development assessment decisions should be

based on policies derived from and with a clear link to broader strategic objectives set out in the South Australian Planning Strategy (30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide, Regional Plans). There must be a clear line of sight from the strategic objectives expressed in the SA Planning Strategy to the policies crafted to deliver those objectives to the assessment of developments against these policies. Yet currently, the new planning system and, more specifically the PDC, emphasises and effectively prioritises the minutiae of *Performance Outcome* criteria which, while important, are at the cost of policy and a broader strategic vision.

Policy

Desired Outcomes are the PDC policy statements that describe the function and character anticipated in an area. *Desired Outcomes* should be derived from the SA Planning Strategy and operate as the guiding framework for assessment. However, in the PDC, *Desired Outcomes* do not reference Planning Strategy objectives and are subservient to *Performance Outcomes*. In fact, *Desired Outcomes* (i.e. policies) do not have to be considered at all in the development assessment process!

Desired outcomes are policies designed to *aid* the interpretation of performance outcomes by setting a general policy agenda for a zone, subzone, overlay or general development policies module. Where a relevant authority is uncertain as to whether or how a performance outcome applies to a development, the desired outcome(s) *may* inform its consideration of the relevance and application of a performance outcome, or assist in assessing the merits of the development against the applicable performance outcomes collectively. (PDC, 2022, page 3). [*emphasis added*]

Desired Outcomes for individual zones replaced the much more detailed and nuanced *Desired Character Statements* in former local government development plans. *Desired Character Statements* provided the framework for diverse and richly textured urban areas. By contrast, *Desired Outcomes* are so broad that they will facilitate almost any kind of development in an area. For example:

Business Neighbourhood Zone

DO 1: A variety of housing and accommodation types and compatible employment-generating land uses in an environment characterised by primarily low-rise buildings.

DO 2: Buildings of a scale and design that complements surrounding built form, streetscapes and local character and provide for landscaping and open space.

In this zone, the *Desired Outcomes* make it clear that buildings that are not 'low-rise' can be contemplated. Unfortunately, precedents and/or existing buildings that do not align with the desired outcome of an area are often used to argue for another inappropriate development. It is possible that within a very short amount of time the character of an area can be rapidly transformed in ways communities have never anticipated. This issue applies across the PDC.

Overlay *Desired Outcome* statements apply across several zones or an entire region. The *Desired Outcome* statements for transport are especially worrying as they directly undermine strategic objectives in the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide. For example, the 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide includes public transport and active travel objectives but these are not currently being met (Report Card, 2022). This failure is hardly surprising as there are no Overlays for existing or proposed bicycle networks and there is minimal attention given to public and active transport. The emphasis in the PDC is on

reserving land for road widening and, harking back to debates of the 1920s, ensuring ‘traffic flow.’ Road building and widening to ensure traffic flow has not only undermined conditions for active transport (e.g. through hard and mobile severance) but also facilitated a steady increase in motor (and soon, electric) vehicle use. We return to these concerns below in discussing specific issues associated with the PDC.

Assessment

The PDC is unwieldy and its limited mapping means applicants and assessors must work across different sites (e.g. the Code and the Planning Policy Atlas) to understand the relationship between zones and the spatial context of an individual development. The ePlanning Portal and inadequate *Desired Outcome* statements further limits understanding of the development context. Furthermore, when downloading the ‘relevant’ policies for a simple application on a specific site, the output from the ePlanning Portal can run to hundreds of pages of extraneous information. This is not providing citizens with a more simple and accessible experience of using the planning system.

Additionally, there is no alignment between *Performance Outcome* statements and criteria, and strategic objectives of the 30 Year Plan or Regional Plans.

Land Use and Transport Integration

As noted above, 30 Year Plan strategic objectives include increasing the proportion of journeys made by public and active transport. Yet, the PDC Policies (*Desired Outcomes*) and Assessment guidelines (*Performance Outcome* statements and *Criteria*) continue to emphasise motor vehicle access and movement.

Activity Centres

Desired Outcomes for significant destinations such as Business Neighbourhoods, City Living, Community Facilities, Employment, Urban Activity Centres and so forth are silent on access by public transport or active travel (walking, cycling, scooting, skating or other forms of micro-mobility). If we are serious about public transport, active travel and facilitating micro-mobility these must be expressly stated in the policy statement and followed up in assessment guidelines.

Only the Local Activity Zones address pedestrian access (walkability not cyclability) in the *Desired Outcomes* while the Neighbourhood Zone includes walkability in a *Performance Outcome*. *Desired Outcomes* for City and Suburban Main Streets emphasise pedestrian activity on the street itself but fail to address these or other active modes in relation to access. Access is assumed to be by motor vehicle with *Performance Outcomes* (and *Criteria*) identifying the required amount and recommended location of car parking. Main streets effectively become islands of pedestrian activity surrounded by car parking and motor vehicle traffic movement.

Land use activities that have a significant dependence on public transport must be located at or close to existing or proposed public transport nodes such as railway, tramway or busway stations or intersections of public transport routes. These include major shopping centres, hospitals, major schools, and elderly citizens’ homes, and the layout of such activities must provide close access by public

transport passengers to their entrances and not be separated from the public transport stops by a large swathe of car parking. *Performance Outcomes* for large centres – particularly suburban regional centres - which will accommodate bus routes on site must make adequate provision for circulating roadways and bus bays, these provisions subject to agreement by the local planning authority and DIT.

Activity centres need to be integrated into their spatial context with pedestrian, cyclist and public transport access, comprehensive footpath provision and bicycle connections, and conveniently located bike parking forming part of the policy (i.e. *Desired Outcome*) statement.

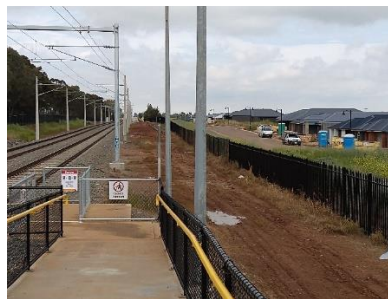
New Housing Estates

Currently, significant housing development is occurring beyond major public transport routes (e.g. Mt Barker, Gawler East, Buckland Park and Aldinga). The 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide set a target for 60% of new housing to be located in close proximity to existing and proposed major public transport routes by 2045. Leaving aside the manifestly inadequate target and excessively long time-frames for reaching the target, staging of new development does not capitalise on existing public transport facilities and services. Estate development at Evanston Gardens, north of Adelaide, is a lesson in how not to develop a new estate (see Photos 1-3). The first stage of housing was commenced at the furthest point from the railway station and there is no footway or safe cycleway connection to the station.

New housing estates must be located in close proximity to existing or proposed high quality public transport facilities (interchanges/railway/busway/tramway stations) and proposed transit services must commence with first occupancy of the estate (see below). It is widely understood that new estates must be staged so that houses are constructed in the immediate vicinity of public transport facilities in the first instance and progressively developed away from this point. Roads providing access to new subdivisions must be: direct, suitable for standard-sized buses, and completed along their entire length at the outset of development. Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure (including secure bike parking) must be integrated with public transport facilities and services and the routes must be direct. Infrastructure and services must be available from first occupancy to develop these transport habits.



Photo 1: Development commenced at a distance from Tambelin Station



Photos 2: Fence obstructing western access to Tambelin station (appropriate design can facilitate western access)



Photo 3: Western access to the station via the main road

Quite clearly, the assessment of these housing estates did not and, by virtue of the inadequate policy settings, could not take these fundamental staging principles into account. Not only is the outcome for future occupants of these estates poor in terms of transport choice and access to key services and facilities, it also results in less patronage of expensive public transport infrastructure that has been put in place specifically to service these communities.

Development applications for new communities must include consultation with and commitment from relevant authorities – transport, infrastructure, education, health, human services and so forth – for services to be provided in a timely manner. As an essential service and as noted above, public transport must be provided at first occupancy. This can be met either by a budget commitment from the State Government for additional public transport services or financial contributions from local government and/or developers to finance the provision of those services. Development approvals should not be granted until these commitments are in place.

Transport Overlays

Transport Overlays recently added to the PDC focus on motor (and electric) vehicle growth effectively becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. They undermine 30 Year Plan objectives for a compact city and threaten the liveability of established neighbourhoods. For example, The *Desired Outcome* for the *Future Local Road Widening Overlay* and *Future Road Widening Overlay* seek, respectively,

DO 1: Development consistent with and will not compromise efficient delivery of future road widening requirements on local roads.

DO 1: Development which is consistent with and will not compromise efficient delivery of future road widening projects.

The setbacks for development range from 5-16.5 metres. These *Overlays* increase the land removed from development and vastly expand the area available for, mainly private, motor (and electric) vehicle traffic. They operate to reduce urban densities and expand the urban footprint. It would be insightful to calculate the opportunity cost of setting aside so much land for ‘possible’ future road development. Further, if this land is eventually taken up for roads, the expanded road surface will have impacts ranging from increasing urban heat and Scope 3 GHG emissions to further stormwater runoff and pollution of waterways. Similar criticism can be made of the *Major Urban Transport Routes Overlay*, *Urban Transport Routes Overlay*, and the *Non-Stop Corridors Overlay*.

These *Overlays* entrench the operation of the Highways Act 1926 which allows the Commissioner of Highways to acquire any property deemed necessary for a current or future road project. Legislation that ‘worked’ 100 years ago in a sparsely settled agricultural State and lightly settled Metropolitan area is not fit for purpose in a 21st Century metropolis. Of course, bicycles, buses and light rail vehicles may also use roads. In practice, the design, construction and regulation (see the Road Traffic Act 1961) of roads is based on private motor vehicle use (passenger and freight). Road and intersection building and widening projects of more than \$10m must be categorised as development and subject to rigorous development application processes that include social, environmental and health impact assessments and the application of policy geared towards delivering the strategic planning objectives noted above.

Car Parking

Placing responsibility on local government for local area car parking problems neatly ignores the fundamental failure of successive State Government transport departments to a) invest in infrastructure and services that facilitate public transport, active travel and micro-mobility (including scooters, mobility scooters and wheelchairs) that could provide choice and reduce reliance on cars and b) create a legislative and regulatory framework that ensures the safe use of diverse modes of transport (from bicycles and scooters to skateboards and personal mobility devices). Car-parking is generally, and understandably, raised by people opposed to urban infill.

Infill development is most appropriately located close to activity centres with high levels of services and facilities (in terms of range, number and customer capacity) which should be well-served by public transport. We are seeing urban infill along roads with poor quality public transport, such as Fullarton Road, where no attempt has been made to increase the level and efficiency of public transport with proven interventions such as high occupancy vehicle lanes.

Car parking provision increases the cost of housing and makes car use more attractive. Unbundling car parking from development, i.e. locating it away from a development, and providing people with the option of buying or leasing car parking space a) reduces the cost of housing - especially for people who cannot afford or do not want to own a car and b) encourages people to consider whether they need to use a car for a particular journey. Unbundling car parking from development must be implemented alongside providing vastly improved public transport infrastructure and services, investments in active transport infrastructure and a regulatory framework that facilitates micro-mobility (from wheelchairs and mobility scooters to eScooters and PMDs) and shared mobility. *Performance Outcomes* and associated criteria should include parking spaces for share vehicles (cars and eScooters) and allow this to be traded against private car parking requirements. Bike parking should be required in all developments. *Performance Outcomes* and associated criteria must ensure bike parking is located in and accessed via safe and convenient routes.

Large commuter car park-n-ride facilities must not be located within 8 kms of the CBD. Locating park-n-ride facilities closer to the City encourages drivers to drive/transit rather than using public transport for the entire journey. *Performance Outcomes* should limit the size of car park-n-ride facilities to ensure quality local feeder bus services can be maintained.

Expanding how car-parking off-set funds can be spent is appropriate and should also include participation in share vehicle schemes and fixed route community bus services. DIT should be taking the lead on public and active transport rather than leaving it to local governments to 'work it out.'

It is hardly surprising that 30 Year Plan objectives for public and active transport are not being met when PDC policies and assessment criteria facilitate private motor (and electric) vehicle transport.

Conclusion

Land use and transport planning must be developed together in an integrated fashion to create cohesive metropolitan and regional plans. In addition, the Strategic Objectives in these plans need to refer back to and be explicit in the policies and criteria that guide the assessment process. As demonstrated above,

the current system fails to do this and risks reducing development decisions that shape people's livelihoods to opportunistic assessments devoid of strategic planning merit.

This is particularly apparent in relation to decisions by State Government transport agencies which continue to ignore important strategic planning objectives in the 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide. It is TAN's view that the liveability, sustainability and productivity of metropolitan Adelaide and our regional centres will be seriously compromised if the planning system continues to facilitate development which is not properly integrated with a transport system providing citizens with genuine transport choice.

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