



Regional transport

BACKGROUND

The Region is currently serviced by a transport network comprised of road, rail and air infrastructure, facilities and services. The extensive road network includes:

- two major north–south corridors, the Pacific Highway and Summerland Way
- an east–west link, the Bruxner Highway.

There is an estimated 380 million trips made by residents and visitors, and around 20 million tonnes of freight moved within and through the Region each year. The road network is especially important with approximately 75% of all journeys within the Region by car.

A major initiative of the State and Commonwealth governments is the upgrading of the Pacific

Highway to dual carriageway standard. The improvements to the road corridor will provide greater transport efficiency and safety for residents, and for intra- and interstate movements. The Pacific Highway extends for 140 kilometres through the Region, of which 56 kilometres has been upgraded to dual carriageway and 20 kilometres approved or under construction. The remaining roadway is currently being project-planned for future upgrade.

The main Sydney–Brisbane rail corridor passes through the western part of the Region linking the Far North Coast to the east coast passenger and freight rail network, the capital cities and major shipping ports. The Australian Rail Track Corporation, as lessee of the rail network from the NSW Government, is currently upgrading the track and

signalling on the North Coast Line between Maitland and the Queensland border. This work will involve concrete re-sleepering, the lengthening and/or upgrading of 11 passing loops and various smaller upgrade projects. The aim of this investment is to assist in reducing travel times for intermodal freight trains by 3.5 hours and thereby to increase the amount of freight transported by rail on the North Coast line from the present 19% to 30%. An upgraded efficient rail freight link north to the Port of Brisbane or south to Sydney will be of increasing value to the economic development of the Region.

The South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005–2026 has identified the future extension of the Gold Coast rail link to Coolangatta airport by 2026 and the planned investigation of significant employment lands and

housing at Bromelton—which has direct links to the Summerland Way and North Coast rail line—as major infrastructure initiatives. The Far North Coast Regional Strategy, as part of its regular review, will progressively identify and link transport needs with the projected population growth of both the Region and adjoining South East Queensland in order to achieve optimal transport planning and coordination for residents and businesses.

A rail corridor also exists between Casino and Murwillumbah, which was replaced by bus services in 2004. This service links with the existing regional bus network, which together with local school buses service the Region's major towns and settlements.

Air services are provided by three airports. Coolangatta (Queensland) operates some international flights, while both it and Ballina primarily operate domestic jet services. Lismore provides a commuter flight service to Sydney.

OUTCOMES

The Pacific Highway will continue to be the primary inter/intra-region road corridor and the efficiency and safety of this corridor will accordingly be protected.

The identification of local transport hubs will assist in linking the Region's major urban centres with each other and with destinations/origins outside the Region.

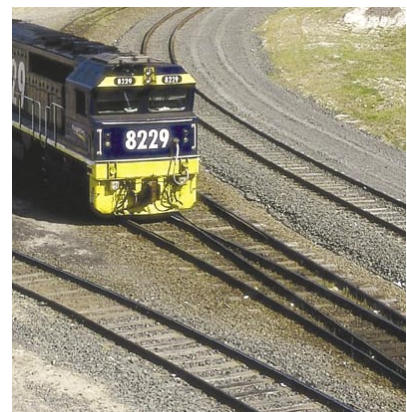
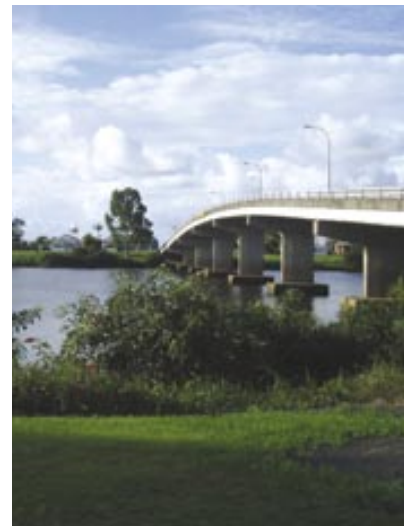
Through its settlement planning

and urban design actions, the Strategy will improve connectivity and accessibility within urban areas.

The development of improved transport linkages with South East Queensland will be considered during the ongoing review of the Strategy.

ACTIONS

- Planning and construction of the Pacific Highway upgrade program through the Region will be continued.
- Local environmental plans will provide for passenger interchanges in all major regional centres, major towns and towns. These interchanges will be well connected to pedestrian and cycle ways.
- Land use and transport planning must be integrated to minimise the need to travel, and to encourage energy and resource efficiency.
- Local environmental plans are to recognise and protect the regional transport network through appropriate planning provisions.
- The Casino to Murwillumbah rail corridor will be protected.
- As the Gold Coast rail extension is planned, investigation will be undertaken to determine whether demand warrants extension of the route into NSW.





Implementation

This Regional Strategy will be implemented primarily through local environmental plans, development control plans, the State Infrastructure Strategy and funds collected as development contributions.

The State Infrastructure Strategy 2006–07 to 2015–16 identifies infrastructure projects in the short- to medium-term that (among other things) support population growth and demographic change in the Far North Coast. A list of projects from this Strategy is contained in Appendix 3.

The Regional Strategy sets out the agreed position of the NSW Government on the future of the Far North Coast Region. The Regional Strategy is recognised by the State Infrastructure Strategy as a long term planning strategy to be used by State agencies and public trading enterprises to understand

the future infrastructure needs of the Region.

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS

The Regional Strategy provides the framework and context for future local statutory planning controls. All six local councils on the Far North Coast are required to prepare a new local environmental plan by 2009, as part of the NSW Government's state-wide planning reforms.

The local plans will guide future development, and must be consistent with the outcomes and actions of the Far North Coast Regional Strategy.

Section 117 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* allows the Minister for Planning to direct the content of a local environmental plan. This is likely to be the mechanism by

which local environmental plans will be required to be consistent with the Regional Strategy.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Where development or rezoning increases the need for State infrastructure, the Minister for Planning may require a contribution towards the provision of such infrastructure.

Funds collected from contributions from major developments will be used for regional infrastructure, consistent with the State Infrastructure Strategy, and approved biodiversity outcomes.

Funds collected by councils through section 94 contributions plans and levies will be used to fund local infrastructure and achieve any local biodiversity outcomes.

Monitoring and review

Progress on the actions established in the Regional Strategy will be monitored annually. The delivery and take-up of new housing and employment lands will also be monitored annually as part of the North Coast Housing and Land Monitor.

The Far North Coast Regional Strategy will also be comprehensively reviewed every five years, so that it can adjust to any demographic and economic changes. This will assist local councils with five-yearly review of their local environmental plans, required under recent reforms to the NSW planning system.

The Department of Planning will also monitor the South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005–2026 and any impact on the Regional Strategy, particularly relating to population projections and major infrastructure. The NSW and Queensland governments have formed a partnership to share information and promote consistent sustainable planning strategies.

