



**Canberra Business Council
and
Conservation Council ACT Region**

*Joint Submission to the
ACT Government*

***Development of a Detailed Proposal to
Infrastructure Australia
for a
Light Rail System for Canberra***

July 2008

***Committed to the Growth and Development of
Canberra and the Capital Region***



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Introduction

The Conservation Council ACT Region together with the Canberra Business Council welcome the announcement on 09 July 2008 that the ACT Government will be pursuing funding for Light Rail from the Commonwealth Building Australia Fund.

The Canberra Business Council has partnered with the Conservation Council to develop the case for a Light Rail network in Canberra. The partnering of these two quite divergent organisations demonstrates the wide-spread support that Light Rail receives across the entire spectrum of community interest groups.

This paper outlines the next steps in developing a detailed proposal for a Light Rail system for Canberra – a proposal sufficiently detailed for presentation to Infrastructure Australia – and includes a Task Force approach representing both ACT Government and Community Interest groups.

Infrastructure Australia has \$20 billion in the Building Australia Fund to be shared between the states and territories for major infrastructure projects. Infrastructure Australia has been tasked to unclog roads and reduce transport emissions. Infrastructure Australia is particularly interested in funding landmark, iconic projects that will benefit Australian communities for generations to come, and that will gain international recognition and adulation for innovation, efficiency and improving quality of life. A submission for Light Rail for Canberra would meet these criteria.

Canberra is the ideal location for Light Rail. Spiralling petrol prices, traffic congestion, parking problems, and concerns about climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, have led the Canberra community to look for a new and re-invigorated public transport system. Light Rail is an ideal solution to Canberra's transport problems. It provides a reliable, clean, climate-friendly way of commuting that breaks people's dependence on cars and supports development. Investment in Light Rail would help protect Canberrans from further petrol price rises, ease traffic and parking congestion, and reduce government spending on roads and carparks.

Light Rail will reinvigorate Canberra, as Light Rail has been proven to bring life to a city as community and businesses spring up around its hubs.



It would be considerably cheaper to provide Light Rail in Canberra than in any other Australian city, as the Griffin Plan provides the planning infrastructure such as wide roadways, to support its installation.

This is a new opportunity for the ACT Government to partner with private industry and the conservation community, with the financial backing of Infrastructure Australia, to bring Light Rail to Canberra. This is a once in a generation opportunity for Canberra and the time to act is now.

Why Light Rail for Canberra is Important

A proposal to introduce Light Rail to Canberra is both necessary and opportune.

Light Rail will:

- provide a positive response to **Canberra's growth** and **rising fuel prices**,
- demonstrably **improve** the **environment** and **make a positive contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions**,
- provide an **iconic**, project that will benefit the ACT community for generations
- boost **Canberra's economy**, and
- be **equitable** and **popular**.

A positive response to Canberra's growth and rising fuel prices

Canberra is a fast-growing city, and as the city grows in both geographic size and population, pressure will continue to build for better public transport services. As petrol prices continue to rise to record levels¹, more and more people will prefer to live closer to the centre of Canberra and its major suburban centres in order to reduce their fuel costs. This will result in even higher population density across Canberra and around the major suburban centres, which had been steadily growing in population density before the recent spike in oil prices. As the city, its population and population density grow, a transport system able to carry more Canberrans and that complements the current bus system will become a necessity.

¹ A recent CSIRO Study *'Fuel for Thought'* was quoted in national newspapers on 11 Jul 08, predicting that petrol could rise to \$8 per litre within a decade.



The ACT Government's *Canberra Spatial Plan* identifies a potential need for between 58,000 and 90,000 additional dwellings, of which 90% would be contained within 15km of the city centre, and 50% concentrated within 7.5km of the centre within the next 15 years. The development of areas in and around Civic will require additional transport services. Higher densities of residents and places of employment will reduce the cost of providing public transport to these areas.

Light Rail will complement the growth of residential developments across the ACT, providing a modern, high frequency service which can be expanded over time as required. New urban developments such as the Molonglo development could be established around Light Rail hubs to provide easy, quick, efficient, relatively inexpensive access to the city and other town centres for work, education and play.

Demonstrably Improve the Environment and Make a Positive Contribution to Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Under the Kyoto Protocol, Australia has pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% of 2000 levels by 2050. Light Rail can be powered by renewable energy sources, thereby playing a valuable part in helping to reduce Australia's and the ACT's greenhouse gas emissions, and meeting our international obligations. Light Rail creates lower levels of pollution and noise than cars and buses, helps to ease traffic congestion, and so helps improve quality of life in a city.

Light Rail was originally planned to be an integral part of Canberra's main avenues and can still be built into or adjoining our avenues and major roadways today. Light Rail tracks can be laid in grass, making them visually appealing compared with other transport infrastructure. Modern Light Rail vehicles are quieter than cars and buses, impacting less on surrounding urban areas, and enhancing urban amenity.

Road transport accounts for 26% of ACT greenhouse gas emissions and 25% of national greenhouse gas emissions. A well-functioning, frequent Light Rail system will encourage people to reduce car use thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions. More public transport means more open space and less area given over to roads and car parks, which occupy over 60% of some urban commercial centres. One double articulated tram can hold up to 140 people, which would equate to removing around 100 cars from Canberra's roads.



The ACT Government has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through its Climate Change Strategy and the Weathering the Change Action Plan 2007–2011. These identify actions such as implementing public transport improvements and designing our city to be more sustainable.

Light Rail running on non-green power electricity is estimated by the Public Transport Users Association to produce half the greenhouse gas emission generated by an individual using a car. However, the ACT Government has recently committed to purchasing 23% of electricity from renewable sources (Greenpower) and any Light Rail system running on this percentage of Greenpower would further reduce the greenhouse impact of an average commuter. Light Rail which utilised 100% Greenpower would be a near zero emission transport option. Light Rail is pollution free at point of use, being powered by overhead electric cables. Electricity can be provided by renewable sources such as wind or hydro, making Light Rail also pollution free at the point of generation.

Public transport encourages a more active commuter, helping to combat the growing obesity of our sedentary lifestyles. Lack of physical activity has been linked to Type 2 Diabetes, coronary heart disease, osteoporosis and some cancers. Simply walking 1km to public transport can meet a significant amount of an individual's daily exercise requirements, while reducing exposure to air pollutants to half that of car travellers (VicHealth 2005).

Iconic Project that will Benefit the ACT Community for Generations to Come

Infrastructure Australia has \$20 billion available through the Building Australia Fund to be shared between the states and territories for major infrastructure projects. Infrastructure Australia is particularly interested in funding landmark, iconic projects that will benefit Australian communities for generations to come, and that will gain international recognition and adulation for innovation, efficiency and improving quality of life. A submission for Light Rail for Canberra would meet these criteria.

The realisation of a Light Rail system in the ACT would mean the fulfilment of Walter Burley Griffin's original vision for Canberra, and would therefore be of historic and iconic significance. Griffin saw tramways and Light Rail as an integral part of his vision for Canberra. The National Capital Authority's *The Griffin Legacy* released in 2004 clearly identified Griffin's intentions regarding Light Rail. "The Griffin Plan proposed a model network of street cars [trams / light rail]. His network is direct and efficient, providing lines for 'rapid transit'." The adoption of a



Light Rail proposal provides a chance to implement part of Griffin's 'rapid transit' vision for Canberra.

The National Capital Authority (NCA) released *The Griffin Legacy* with a view to linking future development in "Canberra's Central National Area" to the spirit of Griffin's original vision. The NCA defined eight propositions under the title of "Extending the Griffin Legacy". Light Rail has a key roll in meeting at least seven of these objectives.

1. *Protect the Griffin Legacy* - Light Rail will preserve the structure and functionality of street design and people movement within the city.
2. *Building the Griffin Legacy* – Light Rail will establish the very public transport system which this city was designed around, implementing a core element of Griffin's original vision.
3. *Revitalise the Vision with Growth in the Central National Area* – Light Rail will act as a catalyst for development and growth within Central National Area.
4. *Link the City to the National Area* – Light Rail incorporating the Parliamentary Triangle will create a direct link between the 'municipal' and 'federal' cities.
5. *Extend the City to the Lake* – Light Rail incorporating the Parliamentary Triangle will provide a convenient 'hop on - hop off' link to the lake from both the 'municipal' and 'federal' cities.
6. *Reinforce the Main Avenues* – Light Rail provides a perfect transport solution for the development of Canberra boulevards, while maintaining their streetscape qualities.
7. *Link National Attractions* - Light Rail incorporating the Parliamentary Triangle will support the linking of a number of national attractions and enable tourists to commute easily to the tourist information centre on Northbourne Avenue.
8. *Promote the Griffin Legacy* – Development of a Light Rail system in Central Canberra provides an excellent opportunity to promote Griffin's Legacy.

Funding could also be provided from a private consortium, and public-private partnership arranged to meet the ongoing costs of a Light Rail project. Thus, the building and ongoing costs and risk for the ACT Government could be either shared, or passed on entirely.



A Boost for Canberra's Economy

Studies from cities around the world have shown that Light Rail revitalises public transport and supports economic development around its hubs.

Light Rail is a better public transport option than buses, offering a smoother, quieter, faster ride with more frequent services, and thus brings greater patronage. More people travelling on public transport means more people travelling to shopping centres, and more turnover for small and large businesses in Canberra. For tourists, Light Rail would be more convenient and easier to navigate than current bus services. This would result in a better international reputation for Canberra, increased tourism, and the spending this brings.

The potential economic benefits of light rail include:

- Construction/operating jobs.
- Travel time savings for workforce/residents.
- Economic implications of environmental benefits from reducing car trips, containing growth of vehicle kilometres travelled (vkt) and emissions, etc.
- Postponement (or removal) of need for road or other transport investment.
- Potential revenue/profit/risk sharing with private sector.
- Stimulus for use of related public transport modes from induced travel.
- Stimulus for urban renewal/development, commercial/retail land uses, upgrade of urban design and civic precincts, etc.
- Potential re-use of vacant or under-used publicly-owned land.
- Increased property values/land-based taxation revenues.
- Potential for value capture and joint property development as part of urban renewal.
- Energy savings of using electricity as opposed to diesel (depending on generation/source).

A recent study published in the United States, comparing cities with large rail infrastructure, small rail infrastructure and bus-only public transport found that in comparison to cities serviced only by buses, cities with a significantly rail based public transport system also had:

- 14% lower per capita consumer transport expenditures,
- 19% smaller proportion of household budget devoted to transportation,



- 33% lower transit operating costs per passenger mile, and
- 58% higher transit service cost recovery.

Equitable and Popular

Adequate public transport is a must for an inclusive and socially just society. Provision of adequate access to a high standard of public transport should be the right of everyone and the goal of every Australian government. It is vital to a vibrant, growing, living and inclusive city.

Around the world, Light Rail has proved more popular with commuters than buses. Light Rail is cleaner and quieter, more reliable, and can carry more people than buses.

According to one poll (conducted by WIN Television), 90% of respondents said they thought Canberra needed a Light Rail system.

‘It is important to stress that passengers prefer trams to buses. Apart from giving a smoother ride, trams integrate well into shopping streets because they are clean and they move in a predictable way. The tracks are reassuring: pedestrians can tell at a glance whether there is a tram service operating in the area, and visualise where the service might take them. Consequently, a modern tram system tends to attract more passengers than an equivalent bus system; one report suggests a 30% increase in ridership as the ‘tram bonus’ in Germany.’ (Wright 2004)

Stations and stops can be easily engineered to be at a level height with the tram for ease of boarding. Modern Light Rail vehicles are designed to be wheelchair and pram accessible.

Public transport patronage increases when significant effort and investment is made to improve services for commuters. Perth invested \$400 million dollars in its rail network and increased patronage from 8 million to 31 million between 1991 and 2001. Perth also ran a travel smart program that provided personalised time tables to a target area and increased its patronage by 26% in those areas the program was run. Perth continues to invest in its public transport system today.

Light Rail has earned the reputation of being extremely reliable, both in terms of vehicles and their ability to run to schedule. Figures of between 98.6% and 100% reliability are achieved on a monthly basis by working tram operations such as at the ‘Metro’ Light Rail in the English Midlands.



The creation of a Light Rail system in Canberra provides the perfect opportunity to reinvigorate Canberra's entire public transport system by bringing something new and exciting into the heart of Canberra.

Light Rail Task Force – Proposed Model

The Conservation Council ACT Region and the Canberra Business Council propose a partnership between the community and the ACT Government to develop the detailed proposal for Light Rail for Canberra to be submitted to Infrastructure Australia.

We suggest the establishment of a Light Rail Task Force comprised of a cross-section of stakeholders to contribute to the development of the detailed proposal. This approach will ensure engagement of all relevant stakeholders from the outset in the planning stages for a Light Rail system for Canberra.

The model, shown in Figure 1 below, will bring together the Canberra Business Council, the Conservation Council, other key players and the ACT Government to explore options for Light Rail in Canberra. At each level, and between each level, there will be extensive consultation to bring about a negotiated result that serves the interests of represented constituents as well as ACT Government policy.

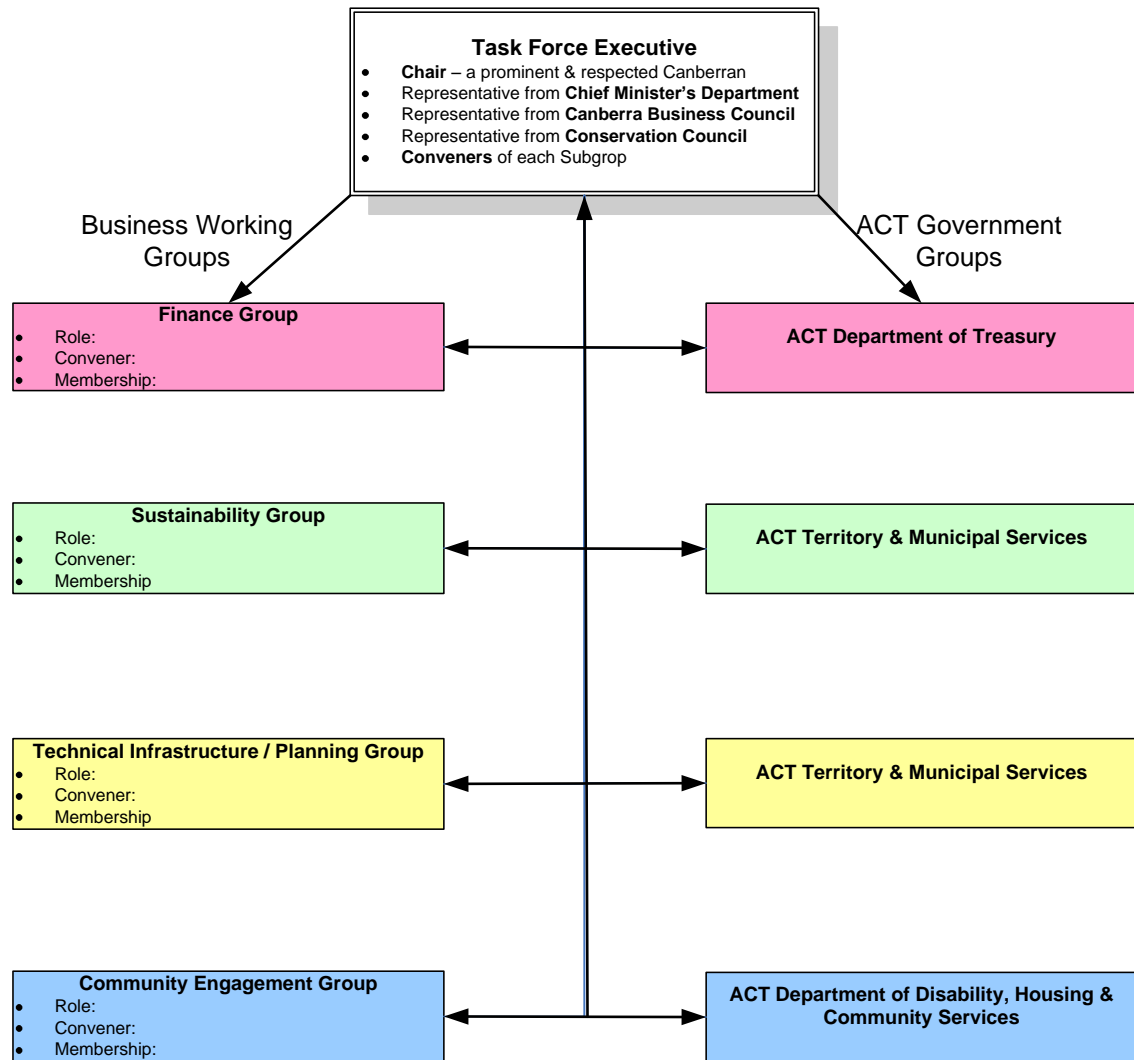


Figure 1: Proposed Task Force Model



Timeline and Key Dates for Development of a Detailed Proposal to Infrastructure Australia

In order to meet a final submission date to Infrastructure Australia of 28 February 2009, we propose the following project timetable.

Activity	Date
ACT Government decision to support Light Rail application	By 08 August 2008
Task Force Executive Meets	08 – 18 August 2008
Interim reports from Working Groups	22 September 2008
Combined workshop to review interim reports and resolve issues	30 September 2008
Final reports from Working Groups	13 October 2008
Develop Draft Application	13 October – 03 November 2008
Draft Application submitted for review by Task Force Executive	03 November
Task Force Executive and ACT Government review Draft Application	03 – 17 November 2008
Submit Draft Application to Infrastructure Australia	28 November 2008
Submit Final Application to Infrastructure Australia	28 February 2009



Cost of Application Development

In order to make this proposal a reality, a great deal of coordination and communication has already taken place between the ACT's peak business and environment bodies. The Canberra Business Council and the Conservation Council ACT Region have provided valuable input into this process, and are keen to continue doing so throughout the proposal process, in close consultation with the ACT Government. We believe that the most appropriate way forward is through the creation of the Joint Task Force described.

However, additional support will be required to ensure the timely coordination of and secretariat services for Task Force activities and the authoring of a high-level report. If the ACT Government is prepared to contribute approximately \$85,000 (incl. GST) a small professional team could be created to work at the direction of the Task Force Executive to:

- coordinate and provide secretariat functions to establish, organise and minute meetings of the working groups;
- provide expertise to undertake research, or source work already done, on Light Rail and write-up working group recommendations; and
- author the final proposal report.

The result would be a thorough and well-considered proposal involving all necessary parties, created in the requisite timeframe. We believe that this is a cost-effective way for the ACT Government to develop an application for an infrastructure project that would have enormous benefits for Canberra.

The Way Ahead

We recommend that the following actions be taken:

- The ACT Government agree to fund the development of a detailed proposal to Infrastructure Australia through the Joint Task Force model proposed.
- The ACT Government, in conjunction with the Canberra Business Council and the Conservation Council, establish the Joint Task Force in accordance with the proposed model.
- Public Statements / Media Releases be issued to inform Canberrans of this significant step towards providing Light Rail for Canberra.