

Chapter one: Introduction and overview

Planning for the future

The Sunshine Coast is a great place to live, work and play.

One of the things people love about the Sunshine Coast is the relaxed lifestyle and the fact that it's currently pretty easy to get where you want to go. It doesn't face the major congestion problems that other cities face. But if plans aren't put in place to deal with the massive growth pressures facing the region, it won't always be this way.

The Sunshine Coast's population is expected to increase by up to 84 per cent between 2007 and 2031 (Department of Infrastructure and Planning, March 2009). More people moving to the Sunshine Coast means more cars, more congestion and more pollution. By putting plans in place now for a better public transport system we will ease the pressure on the region and keep the current lifestyle.

CoastConnect — Caloundra to Maroochydore is part of the Queensland Government's plan to deliver a balanced transport solution for the Sunshine Coast. The government is planning major improvements to the road network via the Bruce Highway, Sunshine Motorway and future Multi-Modal Transport Corridor. But we also need to plan ahead to make sure public transport is an attractive option.

It's about providing a balanced transport system. Moving more people more efficiently will mean fewer car trips, less congestion and less pollution. Managing the effects of growth and related traffic congestion before it becomes a major problem is one way we can help keep the Sunshine Coast strong and green into the future.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads knows that car-based travel will remain the dominant mode of travel on the Sunshine Coast. But unless we get in early and set aside space in the road network that can be used by buses in the future, the Sunshine Coast faces worsening localised congestion and unreliable travel times. By planning now, the department can be sure that in the future public transport will be able to take people where they want to go on fast, frequent and reliable services.

A more efficient public transport system would bring a number of economic benefits to the Sunshine Coast. It would help attract investment and innovation, increase business efficiency and help boost the productive capacity of the economy.

What's more, improved public transport would lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and improvements to community health through better air quality as every full bus takes up to 40 cars off the road.

We don't want the Sunshine Coast to be overcome with traffic congestion choking the streets and car fumes ruining the clean air. Tourists flock to the coast because the lifestyle is the envy of the world — and we want to help keep it that way. Planning for better public transport now is a smart way to make sure we keep the Sunshine Coast clean, green and attractive — just the way we all like it.

That's what CoastConnect is all about.

What is CoastConnect – Caloundra to Maroochydore?

CoastConnect – Caloundra to Maroochydore is one of the many Queensland Government initiatives underway to improve public transport on the Sunshine Coast.

This project is about improving options for sustainable travel in the Caloundra to Maroochydore corridor. The department is investigating a mixture of infrastructure improvements to suit different parts of the coast, including:

- dedicated on-road cycle lanes
- bus priority lanes – a dedicated lane for buses and emergency vehicles
- transit lanes – a dedicated lane for buses, cars with passengers and emergency vehicles
- bus stations in key activity areas
- bus stop upgrades
- bus queue jumps – an additional length of lane to enable buses to bypass the traffic waiting at traffic lights
- bus priority signal at traffic lights – a three to six second head start for buses.

These improvements will make bus travel on the Sunshine Coast faster, easier and more reliable than ever before.

Delivery of the CoastConnect – Caloundra to Maroochydore project will be staged. Subject to government approval, the work is planned to be undertaken between 2011 and 2019.

One part of the network, the Maroochydore bus station, has been identified for potential delivery in the short term.

The Sunshine Coast has the lowest rate of public transport usage in south east Queensland. The department wants to change that and get more people moving around on fast, frequent and reliable public transport services. This will take some of the pressure off the road system and provide an attractive and sustainable alternative to the private car.

The department recognises that no two areas are the same on the Sunshine Coast. That is why different bus priority treatments are proposed for different areas. For example, the revised plans propose new dedicated bus and cycle lanes for Nicklin Way to cater for high-speed trips between Caloundra and Mooloolaba or Maroochydore. In response to community feedback, the CoastConnect project through Alexandra Parade and Aerodrome Road will generally be limited to intersection improvements to give local buses priority at major intersections.

“delivering fast, frequent and reliable public transport”

Overview of consultation

Because the department understands that local knowledge is vital to getting public transport planning right for local communities, we released initial concept designs for consultation in September 2008. We sought feedback from as many local residents as possible via:

- a newsletter to 57 000 households
- radio and print advertising
- information sessions and library displays
- a 1800 free call hotline and pre-paid postal address
- a website
- meeting and speaking individually with over 220 potentially impacted property owners and tenants.

The department received a lot of feedback and many people support the idea of improving the bus system on the Sunshine Coast. In fact, research in January 2009 showed 90 per cent of the community supported improving public transport on the Sunshine Coast. In addition, 41 per cent of the community said they would be more likely to use bus services once CoastConnect is operational. Many people also gave us their views on how we can improve the plans to make sure the project fits in with the look and feel of the Sunshine Coast, particularly at Alexandra Headland and Maroochydore.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads is continuing to work with the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and TransLink Transit Authority to make sure we get the designs right.

In general, the community wants the CoastConnect — Caloundra to Maroochydore project to:

- reduce impacts on property
- make bus trips faster and more reliable
- minimise impacts on Alexandra Parade and Aerodrome Road
- investigate the potential to reduce and slow traffic on Alexandra Parade and Aerodrome Road. By having the majority of through traffic and all express buses travel on the Sunshine Motorway, it will be safer and easier to cross these roads
- minimise impacts on parking as much as possible, particularly in commercial precincts
- make sure there is safe pedestrian access to the beach
- provide more dedicated cycle lanes
- relocate some bus stops
- have more frequent shuttle and express bus services.



The community reference group

In November 2008, the project team began meeting regularly with the CoastConnect — Caloundra to Maroochydore community reference group. This group of 14 local business operators and residents is acting in an advisory capacity to the project team and is providing advice on how to best design a public transport solution that fits in with the look and feel of the local area.

The community reference group is taking feedback from homes and workplaces directly to the project team. This has helped the department balance the technical side of the project with input from local residents and businesses. The group is chaired by an independent facilitator and will continue to meet until the preferred plans are identified in late 2009.

Consulting with impacted property owners and businesses

Since September 2008, the department has been consulting with owners of properties and businesses that are potentially directly impacted by the draft plans.

The project team will continue to meet and talk with all potentially directly impacted owners and businesses over the next couple of months. These discussions will help us gather local information to further refine the design and consider appropriate impact management strategies.

What's different?

The revised concept designs show:

- limited widening of Alexandra Parade. Generally the width of the road will remain as it is, with some widening at major intersections to give buses priority at traffic lights
- limited widening along most of Aerodrome Road. Six lanes are now only proposed between Sunshine Plaza and near Third Avenue, Maroochydore. There will be some widening at major intersections to give local buses priority at traffic lights
- much fewer property and parking impacts along Alexandra Parade, Aerodrome Road and Nicklin Way. Some impacts on parking and property would still be required at a number of intersections where bus priority is necessary
- dedicated cycle lanes on Nicklin Way between Buderim Street and the Mooloolah River and on Brisbane Road between Amarina Avenue and Mayes Canal
- bus stop locations have been revised along the full length of the corridor.

The changes along Alexandra Parade and Aerodrome Road have been explored in consultation with the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and TransLink Transit Authority. The revised plans are still draft concepts and are subject to ongoing stakeholder review and community consultation.



Tell us what you think of the revised plans

The department is seeking community feedback on the revised concept designs.

Project displays will be located at libraries, departmental and Sunshine Coast Regional Council customer service centres from Monday 29 June to Friday 7 August 2009. Department staff will be available at information sessions to answer questions.

The department encourages you to come along to one of the information sessions and let us know what you think of the revised plans. Alternatively, if you have any queries or want to provide us with feedback, you can contact the CoastConnect project team:

Freecall*: 1800 848 000

Visit: www.transport.qld.gov.au/coastconnect

Email: coastconnect@transport.qld.gov.au

Write to (no stamp required):
CoastConnect Project Team
Reply Paid 6376
Maroochydore BC QLD 4558

*Higher rates apply from mobile phones and pay phones.
STD rates will apply if calling from outside south east Queensland.

Feedback is requested by Friday 7 August 2009.

Information sessions

Wednesday 1 July 2009, 5 pm–8 pm
Millwell Road Community Centre
Millwell Road, Maroochydore

Wednesday 8 July 2009, 6 pm–9 pm
Mooloolaba Surf Club
The Esplanade, Mooloolaba

Tuesday 14 July 2009, noon–2 pm
Saturday 18 July 2009, 9 am–noon
Sunshine Plaza
Plaza Parade, Maroochydore

Wednesday 22 July 2009, 5 pm–8 pm
Lake Kawana Community Centre
Sportsmans Parade, Bokarina

Thursday 30 July 2009, 5 pm–8 pm
The Events Centre
20 Minchinton Street, Caloundra

Unstaffed displays (from 29 June to 7 August 2009)

Caloundra Library
Omrah Avenue, Caloundra

Kawana Library
Nanyima Street, Buddina

Maroochydore Library
44 Sixth Avenue, Cotton Tree

Department of Transport and Main Roads Customer Service Centres

- 54 Canberra Terrace, Caloundra
- Kelly Court, Maroochydore

Sunshine Coast Regional Council Customer Service Centres

- 1 Omrah Avenue, Caloundra
- 11-13 Ocean Street, Maroochydore

Unstaffed display (from 13 July to 18 July 2009)

Sunshine Plaza
Plaza Parade, Maroochydore

Next steps

The department is seeking your feedback on the revised plans which will be on display until 7 August 2009. Following the consultation period and the review of community feedback, the Concept Design and Impact Management Plan is due to be completed by late 2009. This will be released to the public and contain a more detailed analysis of the project's anticipated benefits and potential impacts.

The Concept Design and Impact Management Plan will then be submitted to the Queensland Government to consider.

Improved public transport attracts passengers

Experience shows that providing fast, frequent and reliable public transport attracts passengers. On the South East Busway in Brisbane, patronage has increased 182 per cent on core busway routes since opening in 2001. This shows that the better the public transport service, the more people will use it.

The South East Busway and Inner Northern Busway in Brisbane are on track to record 50 million passenger journeys in 2008-09. Considering trains on the TransLink network carried about 60 million people in 2007-08, you can see how crucial bus infrastructure has become in helping to address Brisbane's growing transport task.

Just as it did in Brisbane, providing high quality public transport on the Sunshine Coast is likely to entice more people out of their cars and onto public transport.

That's good for our region and good for the environment.



Project benefits

Transport benefits

The project will deliver:

- fast and reliable express bus services between Caloundra and Maroochydore via Nicklin Way and the Sunshine Motorway
- savings of up to 15 minutes on a bus trip between Caloundra and Maroochydore in 2026
- increased bus patronage by up to 40 per cent in 2016 and a further increase of 30 per cent in 2026
- greater frequency and variety of bus services while retaining important local services
- faster, more reliable and more comfortable bus services
- upgrades to over 70 bus stops and new stations at Maroochydore, Mooloolaba, Kawana, Caloundra and Currimundi
- safer and more attractive cycling options
- reduced traffic congestion by giving people a fast, frequent and reliable public transport option. This will increase the number of bus trips made in the Caloundra to Maroochydore corridor
- a more pleasant travel experience by providing bus shelters and real time information.

Social benefits

The project will deliver:

- improved connections to where people live, work and play
- improved public transport access to major destinations, including the Maroochydore, Mooloolaba, Kawana, Currimundi and Caloundra commercial precincts, the beach, and the future Sunshine Coast University Hospital
- reduced negative health impacts of motor vehicle pollution
- the ability for everyone in our community, particularly those without cars, to get to where they need to go with confidence. For example, a job interview, the doctor, the beach or to visit family and friends
- the ability to travel conveniently without a car, which is an important component of a community's liveability. Public transport provides opportunity, access, choice and freedom all of which contribute to an improved quality of life.



Economic benefits

The project will deliver:

- an image of the Sunshine Coast as a place that is easy to get around – good for business and good for tourism
- an image of the Sunshine Coast as an attractive place for tourism by maintaining the current lifestyle
- a bus-based system that allows cost-effective staging by constructing the highest priority sections first
- reduced costs of traffic congestion, and an alternative to paying increasingly high fuel, parking and vehicle prices
- reduced funding to finance new roads – one bus lane can carry the same number of people as up to three car lanes
- savings as the costs associated with driving a vehicle are substantially higher than the annual average cost of public transport
- public transport facilities and corridors that are natural focal points for economic and social activities
- public transport that is affordable and, for many, a necessary alternative to driving
- real estate – residential or commercial – that is more highly valued because it is served by good public transport.

Environmental benefits

The project will deliver:

- reduced greenhouse gas emissions by reducing car use. For every full bus, there are up to 40 fewer cars on the road. Research shows that motor vehicles contribute about 70 per cent of south east Queensland's air pollution. A family car generates up to a third of a kilogram of greenhouse gases per kilometre. Driving 20 kms to and from work every day produces up to 1.25 tonnes of greenhouse gases annually
- more concentrated urban development - this reduces the urban footprint on valuable ecological and agricultural land
- increased efficiency and flow of bus movements and reduced fuel emissions through less stop-start driving.

Health benefits

The project will deliver:

- a more active lifestyle, by encouraging people to walk and cycle to stops and stations - a five to ten minute walk to the bus stop would help to accumulate the 30 minutes of physical activity adults are encouraged to do every day
- reduced car use which helps ease the cumulative effects on our physical and mental health which result from global warming, air and noise pollution.

Integrated Sunshine Coast Transport Network

To help manage our area's massive growth, the Queensland Government has a comprehensive transport plan for the Sunshine Coast.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads is currently planning to deliver over \$15 billion worth of transport infrastructure for the Sunshine Coast over the next 20 years, as identified in the 2008-2026 South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program.

Some of the major projects underway or in planning are:

Beerwah to Maroochydore rail line (also known as CAMCOS)

This future rail line will link Beerwah to Maroochydore, with stations at (among others) Caloundra, Kawana Town Centre, Mooloolaba and Maroochydore, providing a primary public transport spine for the major urban corridor of the Sunshine Coast. Preliminary planning on the approved alignment and station location is complete. Refinements to the alignment are being investigated at Caloundra South, Kawana and Maroochydore. CoastConnect is working closely with this project to make sure they are integrated.

For more information visit www.transport.qld.gov.au

Multi-Modal Transport Corridor

This project will improve access and public transport links on the Sunshine Coast between Caloundra and Maroochydore. Planning includes a high-speed motorway-standard road between Caloundra, Mooloolaba and Maroochydore and the future rail line between Creekside and Maroochy Boulevard. The southern section of Caloundra-Mooloolaba Road, from Caloundra Road to Creekside Boulevard, is almost complete and planning for the section from Creekside Boulevard to Maroochy Boulevard is progressing well. This project will provide improved access to Maroochydore as the area's Principal Activity Centre and is vital for the operations of the new Sunshine Coast University Hospital and for CoastConnect through Kawana and Buddina.

For more information visit www.mainroads.qld.gov.au

Landsborough to Nambour Rail Upgrade

The Landsborough to Nambour Rail Upgrade project will include construction of a double-track railway along a predominantly new route, with room for extra tracks if required.

For more information visit www.transport.qld.gov.au

The Beerwah to Maroochydore rail line, Multi-Modal Transport Corridor and CoastConnect – Caloundra to Maroochydore projects are closely inter-related and will complement each other to keep the Sunshine Coast moving into the future. The aim of CoastConnect is to improve bus travel in the corridor between Caloundra and Maroochydore.

When the rail line between Beerwah and Maroochydore and the road component of the Multi-Modal Transport Corridor are built, these two projects will ‘do the heavy lifting’ in terms of moving the majority of commuters at high speed between Maroochydore and Caloundra and beyond. These are large-scale transport projects and are subject to more planning and analysis.

The CoastConnect corridor is designed to cater for a higher proportion of shorter, local trips by local residents, shoppers and tourists. There is a risk that as the coast grows, more cars and more congestion mean that Nicklin Way, Brisbane Road, Alexandra Parade and Aerodrome Road could grind to a halt. The bus lanes along Nicklin Way, transit lanes along Brisbane Road and the bus priority at intersections along Alexandra Parade and Aerodrome Road are designed to make sure this doesn’t negatively impact future bus travel. CoastConnect will ensure that no matter how congested these roads become in the future, buses will have a level of priority that will provide the community with a high-quality public transport option.

The future rail line and the Multi-Modal Transport Corridor will cater for commuters travelling longer distances between Caloundra and Maroochydore and beyond. These are more expensive and have longer-term timeframes.

The CoastConnect – Caloundra to Maroochydore project provides a cost effective public transport solution that can be delivered in stages over the short-to-medium term and builds upon the existing bus system.

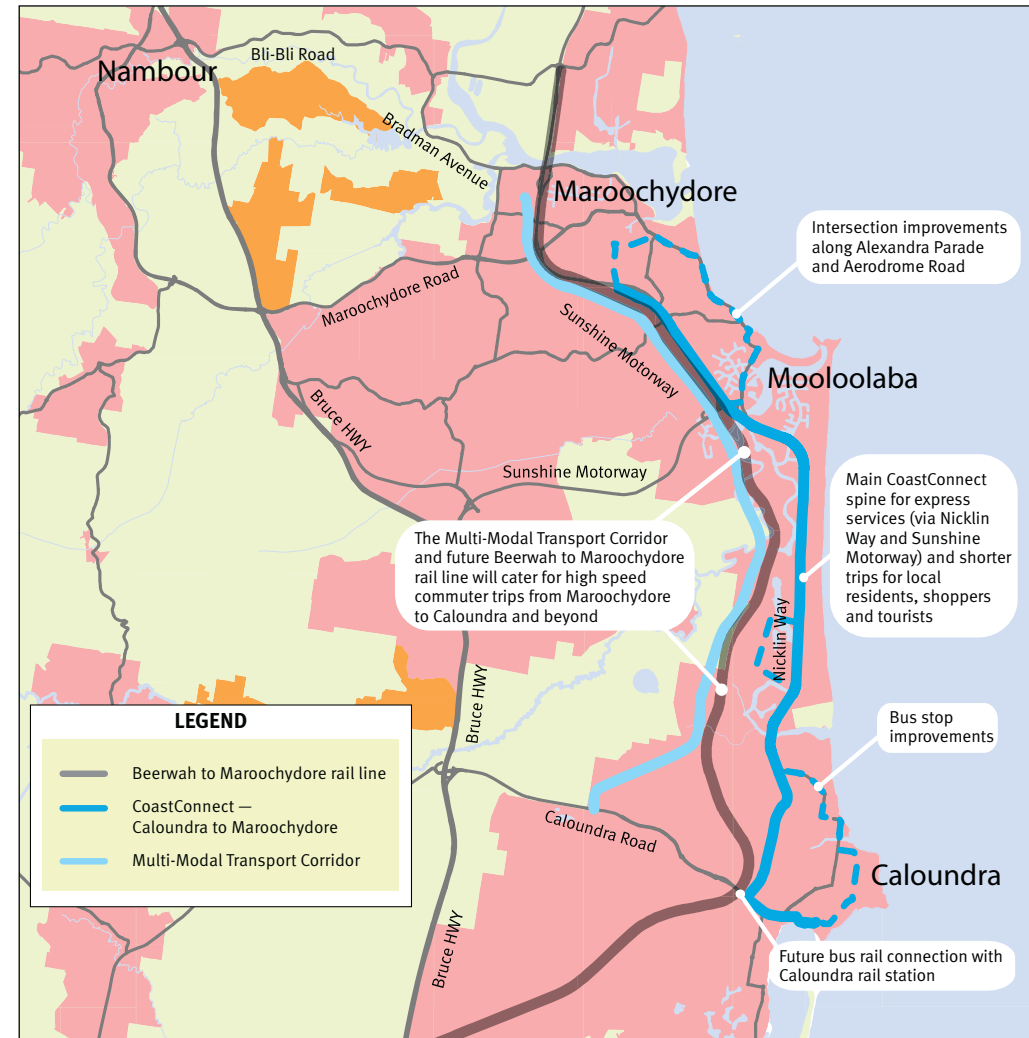


Figure 1 - How CoastConnect – Caloundra to Maroochydore relates to the Beerwah to Maroochydore rail line and Multi-Modal Transport Corridor road upgrade