Kym C Jerome – Regional Organisation of Communities of Cape York

1 Cape York & Thursday Island (Note: We clearly need to be seen and considered as Cape York & Torres Straits – Not Far North Queensland)

Draft Document notes:

- Freight does not appear to exist in the draft document (General Freight, Fuel, Tourism, Cattle etc) Barge Landings and airports are not shown
- Sea and air access and provision of jetties, boat/barge ramps; runways and terminals is clearly understated

Of critical interest is the need to support business and industry with a focus on economic opportunity for all communities.

- for roads -
  (i) The system needs to be noted as significant with all general freight to communities using the roads systems - Lakeland Downs has significant agriculture movement along with all fuel deliveries to the Cape and cattle transport to market from the Cape. Bridges are also not noted and the Cape has significant need in this area given the annual wet season closures. These closures can be applied to heavy vehicles for many months. The annual heavy vehicle turnarounds carrying road base in all shire areas is of significance to the freight strategy
- for marine transport
  (i) public marine facilities in many communities on the east and west coast need to be considered
- for air
  (i) Each community has an airstrip with major impact on transfers to and from communities during the annual wet season.

To derive the transport objectives of Cape York Peninsula and Thursday Island there needs to be a clear basis on which to initiate regional planning or activities to further the economic debate for these areas and assist the formulation of local community and industry supported infrastructure plans.

2 NEEDS FOR THE CAPE

Needs and drivers for transport facilities and services could include:

Economic

- Comparative costs and convenience between road, air and sea (for those communities with sea access)
- Economic impacts of transport efficiency on local economic development
- Economic opportunities for communities
- Minimum frequency of sea or air transport to support community necessities
- Any major opportunities (e.g. mining) which necessitate sea / land transport
- Nature of future development over various periods, e.g. up to 100 years (type and location of infrastructure such as road alignment, standards, grades etc are dependant on needs assessment)

Safety

- For current and future road use, sealed vs unsealed
- Alignment deficiencies
- Flood immunity for essential access
- Alternatives in emergencies, e.g. air

Social

- Need for community connectivity
- Cultural events

- Health and amenity
- Recreation

TARGETS

Economic and community development needs to drive short, medium and long term objectives. Infrastructure solutions should be designed to accommodate changing needs and strategies need to be developed to assist in preparing these to achieve Value for Money outcomes. Not only do needs vary, e.g. with growing population or expectations, or the economic demands of growth, but different levels of service require different time frames.

For example, if it is determined that significant bridging is required, the structural requirements dictate that bridges need to be designed to last for up to 200years. This may determine that if low level bridges (to suit current needs) are built, the strategic need in 50 years may be that high level bridges are needed on higher alignment areas. This will result in the premature need to demolish the low level structures, raising the "cost" of structures relative to the "benefits". In addition the extra high level cost may not be a lot, and could be justified earlier.

Clearer definition of the timeframes for development and need can assist greatly in planning for transport delivery.

It is suggested that the following could be targets:

- 1 to 5 years
- 5 to 10 years
- 10 to 20 years
- 20 to 50 years (structures to 100 years)

Objectives of targets need to consider subsets including transport mode as well as the technical standards:

- Road – design speeds, corridor alignment, width, travel times, seasonal and flooding access,
- Sea – locations, vessel size, drafts, wind protection, frequency of service, shore based support
- Air – runway location, orientation and length; size of aircraft, likely frequency,

In addition, strategies need to include consideration of the whole of life maintenance costs. Trade-offs between expensive, infrequent but reliable air travel compared to possibly poor standard roads, with wet season closure, to maintain lower costs for freight. These considerations may mould the strategies to cater for growth in need and service improvement.

With sealed roads having a high upfront cost, and a relatively high regular but predictable reseal cost, they also have benefits in preserving gravel supplies, with low or no annual call on water and gravel, and with a long term beneficial environmental impact due to lack of dust, retention of native vegetation from smaller short term pits, and no or little erosion runoff. Strategies which include these considerations will also deliver better road user and community benefits by lowering freight costs and cost of living while providing better inter community access and interaction.

3 CONSTRAINTS

To assist in developing solutions, the constraints should be identified. These may be particularly important for the short term objectives as their resolution may take some time and delay implementation. Possible constraints could include:

Funding

- Sources of funds (e.g. State, Commonwealth)

- Timing of funds, e.g. budget cycles, new initiatives, income payments (royalties, trust funds etc)
- Project justification, benefit/cost ratio justification

Issues

Resource Needs

- Access to earthwork and gravel supplies, e.g. environment tenure restraints
- Time to obtain permits, Development Applications
- Tenure resolution
- Environmental management plans
- Disposal sites for unsuitable materials (land and sea)
- Access to water, licences, conditions
- Dredging, filling, etc
- Cost to implement may make unviable

Environmental

- Wild Rivers, World Heritage
- Specific conditions
- Management plan conditions
- Not compatible with safety or design requirements to meet outcomes (speed, grades, vehicle configuration, e.g. if unable to use road trains, or large vessels in the long term could have an impact on economic development)
- Flora/fauna restraints may limit some alignments better suited to whole of life affordable costs