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27 May 2024

Mr Greg Doyle
Chief Executive Officer
Wollongong City Council

Via email: engagement@wollongong.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Doyle,

The Property Council of Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Draft Wollongong Integrated Transport Strategy (Strategy)* which has been released for public comment by Wollongong City Council (Council).

Property Council is Australia's leading peak advocacy body with over 2,300 member companies. We are the voice of the Australian property industry, championing a strong, thriving sector that leaves a positive legacy for all Australians.

Property Council Members in the Illawarra Shoalhaven operate across the property industry in fields such as design, planning, engineering, and legal professions, also encompassing owners and operators of key industrial, commercial, retail and residential companies. Through our work, we are the voice for the property industry and are acutely aware of the challenges facing local councils on the need to balance growth for a changing and diverse population, as well as providing services and lifestyle benefits offered within a regional area.

Overall, we are generally supportive of the strategy and the 'Top 14 Moves' outlined in the document and the action plan, as well as its aim to Connect with Country. We note there are a number of actions provided in the strategy that are to be 'State Government led' and are 'medium to long term' which raises questions for industry including:

- How will these actions be monitored and who takes the lead on this?
- How will reporting on these actions be communicated to industry and community?
- Where do discussions with industry occur considering the delivery of these actions?
- How will the actions to be led by Government ie. Transport NSW be delivered and how will they be kept accountable?
- How will Council be working with other Councils across the Illawarra region to deliver action items such as the 'rapid transport routes' between Shellharbour, Wollongong and West Lake Illawarra?

We acknowledge that this strategy aims to reduce car dependency and improve public transport options in line with employment and population growth across the Wollongong LGA and are generally supportive of this initiative. However, a number of questions and recommendations have been raised by industry to consider, which include:

- The University of Wollongong (UOW), Wollongong Health Precinct and the City Centre are key generators of regional travel demand – what can we do to increase public transport modes of transport and reduce car trips.

- We know that patronage on the 'Gong' Shuttle is high and UOW would like to keep this critical service – are more possibilities for increased bus services and/or more funding for the 'Gong' shuttle being considered? We note that UOW, TfNSW and Council currently share the costs of the 'Gong' shuttle.
 - We know that many short trips are being taken by car (82% trips are less than 1-2kms) - in light of where students live in proximity to UOW and the increase of people living in our City Centre, what else can be done to improve cycling infrastructure? What links can be improved between UOW, the train stations (Wollongong and North Wollongong) and city centre to encourage cycling/electric bikes/scooters as a transport option in our local community?
 - We support bike storage at train stations and the real time travel information at bus interchanges to encourage the uptake of public transport and cycling.
 - We support the exploration of a 'Southern Gong Shuttle' and believe this could help to address the amount of car trips being undertaken across the region. It is important that this type of initiative connects education campuses and health precincts to city centres south of Wollongong, and back into the Wollongong CBD to improve connections across the LGA.
- Car parking in the City Centre and associated planning requirements.
 - We know that there are a number of car parking requirements outlined in planning instruments for new developments in the city centre that detract from enabling more public transport infrastructure – we would encourage Council to consider changes that can be made to planning instruments to challenge the narrative around 'car-centric' planning which has long been engrained in CBD. We acknowledge that this also must be balanced with the needs of local businesses who require a certain number of car parking spaces for their business requirements, however, we believe there are more innovative solutions that could be explored by Council together with industry and local businesses.
 - Industry would be receptive to working with Council on how we can improve the current car parking requirements for the City Centre and suggest a workshop to explore this further with key stakeholders from the development industry and local businesses/employees who work and do business in the CBD.

Conclusion

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this Strategy and encourage Council to continue engaging with the industry on the next steps for this important piece of work. We also look forward to reviewing and providing comment on the updated Wollongong City Centre Movement and Place Plan which coincides with the release of this strategy.

If you have any questions related to the matters raised in this letter, please feel free to contact me at mguido@propertycouncil.com.au or on 0437 315 198.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Guido

Regional Director - Illawarra
Property Council of Australia