

Main Roads Projects to Address Traffic Congestion

Report 2 – March 2015

Background and Objective

It is generally agreed that traffic congestion in Perth has got worse in the last ten years, in part caused by high population growth at low density, limited outer suburbs public transport and high reliance on car travel, and concentrated employment in the CBD. Congestion can lead to increased costs to the community and business through longer travel times, lost productivity and additional running costs. Addressing congestion is complex, and involves managing supply and demand. Main Roads is responsible for 850 kilometres of roads in Perth, and has a role in providing accurate congestion information for the Department of Transport (DoT) and other transport policy makers. This audit assessed if Main Roads infrastructure and traffic management projects were effective in addressing congestion in metropolitan Perth.

Conclusion

Demand on the road network has increased and although difficult to define, Main Roads predicts that traffic congestion will get worse. Part of the solution requires Main Roads to manage the road network to minimise the effects of congestion and to provide information for other policy makers.

Main Roads could not demonstrate that its projects and activities to address congestion have made the best use of resources. The broad transport-planning framework is incomplete. There are no agreed traffic congestion priorities, performance levels, measures and targets across Main Roads and its partner agencies, such as DoT. Although Main Roads collects a lot of data, coherent congestion information is limited to a small part of the freeway network, and not reported to DoT or publicly. While effective strategic and operational transport decisions require comprehensive, consistent and real time information, this is a challenge in many jurisdictions.

Main Roads has delivered a number of projects that have mitigated congestion on parts of the network



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and within the CBD. They have been delivered under budget, within expected time and they have achieved their intended localised outcomes. Modelling suggests Main Roads' activity has helped slow the increase of congestion.

Main Roads has recognised it does not have the capacity to manage traffic congestion effectively and is introducing significant changes to the way it does business. It has begun the process of changing from an agency that builds roads and manages assets to one that manages a road network and is responsible for traffic flow. This will bring Main Roads in line with better practice in managing traffic congestion. These changes should also allow government to make more informed transport decisions.

Recommendations

Main Roads and DoT should:

- develop an integrated approach to managing congestion that clearly defines agency roles and responsibilities
- formally agree on network performance targets and measures
- agree public and inter-agency reporting requirements for congestion information.

Main Roads should implement the changes outlined in its organisational review. Specifically, by the end of 2015 it should:

- finalise how it will manage congestion as part of its future operating structure
- determine staffing needs once its structural planning is complete
- set internal performance measures to align with overall measures agreed with DoT
- complete its review of data and information capabilities
- finalise its five year congestion program plan, including a budgeted implementation plan with timelines for each project.



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