

Transport Strategies for Sustainable Outcomes

Session Description

Transport Strategies for Sustainable Outcomes investigated how local government and stakeholders can deliver economic, social and environmental benefits — both within their own operations and also to their communities — through an integrated and sustainable approach to transport.

The session explored best practice examples from both Australia and New Zealand, and drew upon expert insights to highlight the actions and processes that all councils can implement today.

This highly interactive session invited delegates to share their experiences, hopes and challenges with other delegates, and to learn from them. With a focus on collaboration and engagement, 'Transport Strategies for Sustainable Outcomes' was thoughtfully designed to support delegates to build successful and beneficial sustainable transport programs.

Session Format

This two-hour session combined advice from expert speakers and interactive table discussion. The first portion of the session was devoted to a panel discussion facilitated by CCP staff member Michael Cann.

The second part of the session invited delegates to apply learnings from the panel discussion to their own organisations. An ICLEI Oceania table facilitator supported a structured discussion designed to explore:

- sustainable transport initiatives that should be 'business as usual' at all councils;
- *internal processes* required to implement programs successfully; and
- *external stakeholders* that can be engaged to maximise success.

Session Attendance

This session was attended by more than 50 conference delegates, representing a wide range of councils from across Australia and New Zealand. Participants included council officers, managers and elected members, as well as representatives from Vic Health and the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Water Resources.

Expert Speakers/Panel Summary

Speaker 1: Cr Richard Budd, Environment Canterbury, NZ

Key Focus & Messages

During his time as councillor, Richard Budd has witnessed significant shifts in people's transport choices in and around Christchurch. Ten years ago, Christchurch was suffering from severe traffic congestion and car dependence. Today, it has one of the best public transport systems in the Asia Pacific Region.

Richard spoke passionately about the need to base transport decisions on people's real needs, and to engage the community extensively in project development. He spoke about the importance of integration between transport modes. He encouraged councils to set ambitious and quantifiable targets, and systematically to set about meeting them.

Importantly, the Christchurch example illustrates that even in a car-dominated culture, people are more than happy to use other modes of transport where they cater for people's needs. Cr Budd also encouraged people to think about designing transport systems from the ground up, rather than tinkering at the edges of a flawed system.

Speaker 2: Nigel Walker, Team Leader of Travel Behaviour Change at Noosa Shire Council.

Key Focus & Messages:

Nigel Walker has had outstanding success in developing sustainable transport programs in Noosa. In less than three years he has secured funding for a team of four people dedicated to transport behaviour change.

Nigel spoke about the importance of engaging the whole of an organisation in an integrated approach to sustainable transport. He suggested that securing a strong internal policy framework is an important way to secure this integration. In Noosa, they have adopted a transport hierarchy that requires pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport to be prioritised, in that order, ahead of private cars in the design of transport infrastructure.

Nigel also spoke about the importance of securing and promoting small wins to gain political and community support for transport programs. He mentioned the importance of engaging local community groups and the local media to leverage council's advocacy for sustainable transport.

Speaker 3: Beth Riordan, Assistant Director of the Community Partnerships Team, Australian Greenhouse Office.

Key Focus & Messages

Beth Riordan provided a summary of the approach taken by the Australian Greenhouse Office to sustainable transport. In particular, she highlighted the support provided to local government through the TravelSmart program. She commented that the AGO looks to local government to provide information on community needs, and on ways to improve the TravelSmart program.

Small Group Discussion Summary

Focus Questions

1. What sustainable transport initiatives should be 'business as usual' at all councils, but are not?
2. What processes within council would accelerate your sustainable transport programs?
3. What opportunities are there to collaborate with external stakeholders to accelerate your sustainable transport programs?

Prioritised Results from Discussion

Following discussion on each focus question, table participants prioritised a sub-set of responses to share with the wider group.

Delegates suggested that the following sustainable transport initiatives should be business as usual at all councils:

- Councils should provide information to the community on active and public transport routes and timetables.
- Councils should adopt formal transport planning hierarchies that put sustainable options first.
- Councils should have fleet policies that favour smaller, more efficient vehicles, including bicycles.
- Councils should adopt urban planning schemes that incorporate sustainable transport as a high level priority.
- Where vehicle entitlements are part of staff salary packages, staff should be able to cash in this entitlement, and should be offered a sustainable transport alternative.
- Councils should participate in vehicle emissions offset programs.
- Councils should lead with their own practice, and should engage their own staff in sustainable transport behaviour change programs.
- Councils should communicate to their communities about the importance and benefits of sustainable transport.

Delegates recognised that the following organisational processes are important to the success of sustainable transport programs:

- Specific sustainable transport key performance indicators (KPI) must be introduced into managers' work plans.
- Specific budget entries should be introduced for sustainable transport.
- Councils should formulate clear and ambitious targets and develop strategies plans to achieve them. These strategies and plans need to involve the whole of council.
- Councils have some scope to introduce incentives for the adoption of green travel plans.
- Because sustainable transport is interdisciplinary, it is important to formulate a cross-council sustainable transport team.
- Council policy and budget should prioritise the improvement of sustainable transport infrastructure.
- It can be useful to bring in new staff/champions or even consultants to break organisational log jams.
- Gather emissions and energy use data and use as a communication tool.
- Gather best practice examples and use these to inspire or to shame people into action.
- It is important for council activities to consider its community's transport needs in detail and to set about delivering benefits holistically.

Delegates recognised the importance of collaboration in delivering sustainable transport outcomes. They suggested the following priorities for working with others:

- Build relationships with other local governments (sister councils) to share information.
- Build relationships with the state government through local government associations.
- Improve cooperation between transport and health agendas.
- Collaborate with public transport providers and state authorities.
- Collaborate with community advocacy groups and work together to increase the appeal of sustainable transport through social marketing.
- Engage the private sector.
- Advocate either individually or through regional or state associations in the area of fringe benefits tax and other subsidies to private vehicles.
- Engage directly with transport users, or the transport 'market' to understand needs.

Session Outcomes

Leading councils have demonstrated that it is feasible and beneficial for councils to play an active role in sustainable transport. Successful sustainable transport programs are found to rely on thorough organisational policy integration and management support. Councils acknowledge and appreciate learning from other councils, rather than having to reinvent good programs from scratch.

Local governments are seen to have an important role to play, especially when it comes to engaging the community on their transport needs. There is a need to communicate the importance of our transport choices in a clearer and more compelling way.

There are some issues such as public transport, tax incentives and subsidies that require leadership on a regional or national level. Councils expressed the need for state and federal governments to support sustainable transport in a systematic way.

Additional Resources

Sustainable Transport Session 'Topic Resource Page' www.iclei.org/index.php?id=6245

ICLEI Oceania's sustainable transport web pages www.iclei.org/index.php?id=4278

TravelSmart: www.travelsmart.gov.au

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