AUSTRALIAN TRUCKING ASSOCIATION

NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE DATA COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION PLAN

AUSTRALIAN TRUCKING ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION
1 NOVEMBER 2017

1. About the Australian Trucking Association

The Australian Trucking Association (ATA) is the peak body representing trucking operators. Its members include state and sector associations, some of Australia's major logistics companies and businesses with leading expertise in truck technology. Through its members, the ATA represents many thousands of trucking businesses, ranging from owner drivers to large fleets.

2. Recommendations

Recommendation 1
The creation of a transport satellite account should proceed, but the development and ongoing costs should not be imposed on industry.

Recommendation 2
Data collection from heavy vehicles under the infrastructure data collection and dissemination plan should be voluntary, not apply for regulatory or enforcement purposes, maintain strong confidentiality provisions, and only be available in de-identified, aggregate form.

Recommendation 3
Data opportunities and projects under the national infrastructure data collection and dissemination plan should be linked to delivering evidence based road funding decisions.

Recommendation 4
The national infrastructure data collection and dissemination plan should progress projects for developing road service standards, a customer performance framework for roads, supply chain indicators, road access indicators, and encroachment indicators.

3. Introduction

In November 2016, the Australian Government announced the development of a data collection and dissemination plan to improve the collection of data on freight movements and public transport across different modes. The Government said that the plan would provide for improved and more timely information for infrastructure investment decisions and monitoring of the performance of Australia's infrastructure networks.

In September 2017, the Australian Government released a consultation draft for the national infrastructure data collection and dissemination plan. The overall objectives of the data plan are to:

- Identify key national infrastructure and transport statistics
- Develop national infrastructure performance measures
- Identify opportunities to use new technologies to collect infrastructure data

- Develop means of disseminating data to encourage innovation and improved public and private decision making
- Promote and identify priority projects that:
    - Fill key data gaps.
    - Develop and report performance relevant to infrastructure operators and customers.
    - Support innovation in data collection and use.

The final data plan will seek to develop priority projects that relate to data priorities, utilising opportunities from new and emerging technologies, and improvements to data sharing and accessibility. The draft data plan is structured by focusing on:

- Identifying enduring questions, gaps and opportunities
- Infrastructure performance measures
- Data dissemination.

The ATA supports the attempt to improve data measures relating to national infrastructure, and in particular roads, provided the data is tied into delivering better investment decisions and management of infrastructure, prioritising improvements to the customer service experience of roads, and does not increase the regulatory burden on industry.

4. Not increasing the regulatory burden on industry

The draft national infrastructure data collection and dissemination plan (draft plan) should, in terms of road freight, be focused on enabling governments to deliver improvements to productivity.

The draft plan states:

> Infrastructure operators and governments focus on productivity because, in developed economies, improved productivity is the largest driver of long-term income and GDP growth, as well as a measure of competitiveness of trade-exposed industries.[1]

Trucking industry productivity is important to the wider economy. The Competition Policy Review (Harper Review) found that in relation to road transport:

> Even small changes in productivity in this sector can cascade through the economy, boosting productivity and output in other sectors. Also, given the size of the road transport sector, enhanced productivity in road transport can deliver large gains to the economy.[2]

However, governments have failed to deliver the policy framework to improve trucking industry productivity over the last decade, as illustrated in table 1.

Table 1: Recent versus long-term productivity growth for the transport industry

Labour productivity		Multifactor productivity	
1989-90 to 2015-16	2007-08 to 2015-16	1989-90 to 2015-16	2007-08 to 2015-16
1.8	0.3	1.0	-0.8

Source: Productivity Commission, 3 August 2017, 5 Year Productivity Review Supporting Paper No. 1, 16.

[1] Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, September 2017, National Infrastructure Data Collection and Dissemination Plan, 29.
[2] Harper, Anderson, McCluskey, O'Bryan, March 2015, Competition Policy Review Final Report, 38.

The focus of government and the national infrastructure data collection and dissemination plan needs to enable productivity growth, such as road investment reform, and not further undermine productivity by imposing additional regulatory costs.

Transport satellite account

The draft plan proposes the development of a transport satellite account (TrSA) by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, to assess the full contribution of transport across the whole economy.[3] Satellite accounts are designed to measure the size of economic sectors that are not defined as industries in the national accounts.

As noted by the draft plan, the development of a TrSA has been previously canvassed by the National Transport Commission (NTC). The NTC has previously stated that development of a TrSA would require industry support and funding. Indicative costs to introduce a TrSA were stated to be in the vicinity of $3 million for development, and ongoing annual costs of around $500,000.[4]

Industry, however, is already overcharged. In 2018-19 industry is projected to be overcharged by $148.8 million if governments maintain the current freeze on heavy vehicle revenue, or $189.5 million if governments decided to freeze charge rates. The ATA does not support cost increases on industry, which would only further undermine industry productivity.

The development of a TrSA would however provide important information for policy makers, especially considering the impact of transport on economic output for other sectors and the wider economy. The ATA would welcome development of a transport satellite account, but it should only proceed if no further costs are imposed on the transport industry.

Vehicle telematics data

Case Study 3.3 and enduring questions 5.2a and 5.3a focus on the opportunity to determine points of congestion for freight vehicles, and when road freight is moved around Australia, by collecting data from telematics and administrative data sources.

The ATA has been consulted on, and supports, the pilot study undertaken by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE). The project has strong potential to better inform road investment decisions.

As a result of input provided by the ATA and other stakeholders, the project has operated with the following core principles:

- Data provision by industry is to be voluntary
- Data is not to be used for regulatory or enforcement purposes
- Confidentiality of firm and individual data protected
- Data is only available in a de-identified, aggregate form.

These principles must be maintained in any expanded or related projects.

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[3] Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, September 2017, National Infrastructure Data Collection and Dissemination Plan, 20.

[4] National Transport Commission, January 2017, Who moves what where: Better informing transport planning for Australians, 14-15.

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5. Improving productivity and the allocation of roads funding

The road freight telematics pilot study does hold significant potential to improve the allocation of roads funding and industry productivity. Directing roads funding to projects which remove road freight congestion points or provide improved road access for high productivity vehicles should be a priority.

The case for road investment reform is clear. The Productivity Commission has reported that the current governance, taxation and institutional arrangements for the provision and funding of roads are ultimately unsustainable. The Commission also reported that road funding decisions are often based on inadequate information, inadequate assessment of the costs and benefits of projects, and are subject to budgetary and electoral pressures.[5]

Austroads reported that despite Australia spending approximately $19 billion maintaining, expanding and operating our extensive road network in 2013-14, and despite steady growth in expenditure, parts of the road network are poorly maintained, accessibility in remote and regional areas continues to be a concern, the road network continued to be congested, and heavy vehicle productivity has plateaued impacting on freight transport costs and leading to an anticipated growth in the number of heavy vehicles on the network.[6]

Road service standards
There are a number of enduring questions and data opportunities which underpin the need to develop road service standards.

Case study 3.1 focuses on heavy vehicle infrastructure asset registers, which are intended to increase the transparency of service delivery and public understanding of the road network.

Ultimately, the development of road service standards needs to go beyond the current scope of this project, to connect freight corridors with standards on vehicle access, safety, and specific heavy vehicle infrastructure such as rest areas.

Whilst the heavy vehicle infrastructure asset registers are referred to in the draft plan within the context of infrastructure and freight performance, development of road service standards are also a question for infrastructure stocktake, investment and planning.

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[5] Productivity Commission, May 2014, Public Infrastructure, 303.
[6] Austroads, August 2016, Reforming Remote and Regional Road Funding in Australia, i.

Road access indicator
The ATA welcomes the BITRE proposal to develop a new road access indicator. Potential indicators suggested by BITRE are:

- Percentage of network accessible to each vehicle class.
- Percentage of producers within a set distance of network for each class.

Additionally, it would be useful if all of these indicators were available by local government area.

The proposed road access indicator should be integrated with the existing heavy vehicle infrastructure asset registers and the development of road service standards.

Customer performance framework
The ATA welcomes the Australian Government proposal to develop an infrastructure and customer service framework, as outlined in the recently released report *Measuring infrastructure asset performance and customer satisfaction.*

Additional economic gains from infrastructure relies on its efficient management, operation and use. Improving outcomes for road users in terms of better safety, access, reliability and cost should be a key objective for road managers, including both governments and toll road operators.

Economic benefits of transport
The ATA supports highlighting the economic benefits of transport. In addition to the proposal for a transport satellite account (provided no further costs are imposed on industry), proposals in the draft plan to report on specific supply chains present an opportunity to illustrate the economic impacts of transport for specific economic sectors. End to end supply chain monitoring should be progressed, but still include the breakdowns of the impact of individual modes within a supply chain.

Land use/encroachment indicator
The ATA also supports the BITRE proposed potential indicators for encroachment of key logistics sites, including:

- Population and jobs density within set distance of port precinct or intermodal terminal sites.
- Congestion on roads approaching ports.

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