

4.3.19 MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MINISTER FOR ROADS

OVERVIEW

| Agency | Forecast 1997-98 | Estimate 1998-99 | Variation | |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| | \$m | \$m | | % |
| Department of Transport | | | | |
| Total Expenses | 1,943.7 | 1,831.8 | (-) | 5.8 |
| Asset Acquisitions | 1.1 | 0.5 | (-) | 54.5 |
| Tow Truck Industry Council | | | | |
| Total Expenses | 1.0 | 1.0 | | ... |
| Asset Acquisitions | ... | ... | | ... |
| Roads and Traffic Authority | | | | |
| Total Expenses | 1,115.6 | 1,141.1 | | 2.3 |
| Asset Acquisitions | 913.1 | 896.4 | (-) | 1.8 |
| Total, Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads | | | | |
| Total Expenses | 3,060.3 | 2,973.9 | (-) | 2.8 |
| Asset Acquisitions | 914.2 | 896.9 | (-) | 1.9 |

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

The Department of Transport is responsible for the development and implementation of transport policies and plans and also the accreditation and regulation of transport providers. It is the contractor of public transport services provided to the people of New South Wales by government (SRA, STA) as well as private operators and funds designated transport services and infrastructure. The Department administers over 1,000 bus contracts with private operators and several thousand contracts for private vehicle conveyancing of school students.

The Department's emphasis is on the promotion, development and improvement of public transport to reduce the public's private car dependency and its environmental impact. The strategy includes the provision of a safe, efficient and seamless transport network through improvements in transport planning, delivery and access.

The Department supports the Minister for Transport and the Government in meeting the public transport needs of the people of New South Wales through the provision of expert advice and the development of major policy initiatives. Its policy and service role is supported by an effective data collection and information analysis capacity.

All funding arrangements are undertaken on a commercial agreement basis to ensure greater accountability and transparency of funding by eliminating any cross subsidies between entities. The main government transport service providers are -

- The State Rail Authority (SRA), the owner and operator of the passenger rolling stock and stations. The SRA's focus is on expenditure control and improved services to encourage increasing passenger patronage. Funding is given for CityRail (including Olympic Park) and Countrylink services.
- The State Transit Authority (STA), the owner and operator of Government bus and ferry services. Funding is provided for non-commercial services and for concessions.
- The Rail Access Corporation (RAC), as owner of all the mainline infrastructure its function is to permit other operators onto the rail system, allow competition between operators and increase the competitive edge of rail transport over other modes of transport. The RAC receives some selected funding for otherwise non-commercial lines in rural areas, and capital funding to enable infrastructure growth projects.
- Freight Rail Corporation, is a commercially operated State Owned Corporation for rail freight operations. Government funding is only provided for non-commercial freight services through social program payments.

Funding is also provided to a wide group of non-government providers including contracts to approximately 2,000 private bus operators operating largely in Western Sydney and country New South Wales.

In addition, the Department has a policy and regulatory responsibility into other entities such as the Railway Services Authority (RSA) and the National Rail Corporation.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

The rail reforms introduced on 1 July 1996 have continued to improve the accountability and performance of the four rail entities. An increased focus on service delivery and efficiency has ensured that improved services are being provided by the rail entities at a reduced cost. Over this time patronage levels for both CityRail and State Transit buses and ferries have increased substantially.

Between 1996-97 and 1997-98 the total number of State Transit passenger trips increased by an estimated 6 million. The level of funding to State Transit has increased reflecting the increase in the size of the transport task it is undertaking.

By Ministerial direction the Rail Access Corporation suspended the roll out of contestability program for rail infrastructure maintenance until 1 July 1999. Currently the RSA provides capital and maintenance engineering services under contract to the RAC, Freight Rail Corporation and SRA.

During the suspension period the Railway Services Authority will be corporatised and establish a commercial framework to ensure it is able to compete on an equal footing with its private sector competitors. This will ensure greater efficiency and savings in the New South Wales rail sector under improved management structures.

The New South Wales Government is participating with the Commonwealth and other States in the reform program for the national standard gauge rail network. Governments have agreed to focus their efforts on improving the quality and suitability of the network for interstate rail freight. This will include a dedicated freight track through the Sydney area.

This Budget provides \$15.5 million for the construction of the Flemington Junction grade separation. This jointly State and Federal Government funded project is due for completion by the end of 1998-99 and will achieve an efficient separation of freight and passenger services along the Main Western line. Major initiatives such as this will assist the rail industry to compete more effectively with long distance road transport.

To ensure the full co-ordination of transport across New South Wales the Transport Coordination Committee was recently established with the responsibility of ensuring that all major road and rail projects are assessed and justified on the basis of their contribution to achieving an integrated transport system. A key focus of the Committee is how the various modes of transport can be better integrated to improve service delivery throughout the state. The Committee is chaired by the Director General of the Department and other members include the Chief Executives of the RTA and SRA.

The Committee is overseeing the development of an integrated Transport Plan which will guide investment in key transport projects across New South Wales, set performance standards for the delivery of transport services and provide for coordination with other infrastructure and planning decisions which assist with New South Wales growth and development.

The Public Transport Authority is evaluating Expressions of Interest for the development of an Integrated Ticketing system for public passenger services in the Sydney metropolitan area. The evaluation confirmed that the goal of travel of all public transport services using a single ticket, regardless of the transport mode or operators used, is deliverable. Next step is the development of formal tender specifications to facilitate an open tender to ensure that the final system selected represents best value for money. The aim of the exercise is to enhance passenger convenience and thereby increase public transport usage.

Construction of a 10 kilometre underground rail line linking the Sydney city to the East Hills line is on schedule to enable operations by May 2000. Added community value has been achieved by including a new interchange station at the junction of the New Southern Railway, East Hills Line and Illawarra Line.

Strategic Directions

The Department of Transport's mission is to formulate and implement transport policy in New South Wales to ensure continuous improvement in service and infrastructure provision.

This target of continuous improvement recognises the need to minimise private car dependence, reduce the environmental impact of transport and increase the attractiveness of all forms of public passenger transport.

To accomplish this mission, the Department's objectives are directed towards -

- formulating and implementing policies and practices which ensure continuous improvement in transport planning, delivery, safety and access;
- protecting the community's investment in transport by promoting business performance;
- providing a productive and satisfying work environment; and
- carrying out duties in the best interests of stakeholders.

- **Greater Western Sydney Public Transport Strategy**

Western Sydney is a key transport priority for the New South Wales Government. The region faces major environmental, social and economic pressures as one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. The Government has recognised the particular public transport problems facing Western Sydney by developing a public transport strategy for the region. The Greater Western Sydney Public Transport Strategy (GWSPTS) is a major Government commitment towards redressing transport deficiencies, and helping people who live and work in Sydney's greater west.

The Strategy provides a master document for the planning and development of transport infrastructure, improvement of transport services, and land use/transport integration for Greater Western Sydney.

1998-99 Budget

Budget initiatives in the public transport area in 1998-99 focus on continuing improvements to the provision of public transport, including safety, while ensuring ongoing improvements in efficiency.

Total Expenses

Current Payments

- **Rail Services**

The SRA Budget for 1998-99 focuses on improved service delivery for customers at a reduced cost to the budget. Included in the current payments this year are extensive security initiatives for the CityRail network.

From 1 July 1998, 2 security guards will be posted on every CityRail train from 7pm until the service closes each night under a major State Government initiative to ensure the safety of rail passengers. This will mean that more than 100,000 passengers in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong who travel on trains every night of the week can feel safer during their journeys. This is also part of the Government's move to increase the use of public transport throughout New South Wales.

The SRA will also provide \$28 million in 1998-99 to continue the CityRail Carriage Refurbishment Program.

During the 1998 Royal Easter Show CityRail provided Sydney's biggest rail service ever. Throughout the Show extra train services were provided to Olympic Park Station with no negative impact on normal daily trains. This Budget provides funding to enable CityRail to continue to provide regular rail services into Olympic Park Station. In addition to this funding is provided for Rail Services to the 1999 Royal Easter Show.

This Budget continues to allocate recurrent funding of \$175 million to ensure the Rail Access Corporation maintains the rail infrastructure at its current level throughout rural New South Wales.

An additional \$80 million is provided for Freight Rail Corporation to continue providing carriage of freight that would otherwise not be commercially viable, this is primarily through rural New South Wales.

- **Bus and Ferry Services**

State Transit operates bus and ferry services in the Sydney and Newcastle metropolitan areas. Operational efficiency and passenger growth continue to be the key objectives of the business. The increased funding in 1998-99 reflects the continued strong growth in patronage.

In January 1998 State Transit began the trialing of new video surveillance systems on 200 of their bus fleet. The new camera systems are similar to those found in banks and convenience stores and are designed to act as a significant deterrent to crime and anti-social behaviour on buses.

This initiative is costing State Transit \$500,000 in 1997-98 for the installation of the equipment and \$90,000 in 1998-99 for ongoing maintenance. This will provide added safety and security for Sydney Buses' staff and passengers. This new system compliments the work being done by police in programs such as Operation Bus Stop, which is currently providing random checks on hundreds of buses every week.

- **Other Scheme Payments**

Payments to private operators and community groups are estimated at \$50.7 million in 1998-99, compared to the estimate of \$47.6 million in 1997-98. These payments include funding for concessions such as half-fare concessions for pensioners, transport subsidies provided under the Community Transport program, Home and Community Care program and subsidies for half-fare taxi transport for persons unable to utilise public transport because of severe and-or permanent disabilities.

Funding for Community Transport has been increased again in 1998-99 with a further \$200,000 or 10 per cent being added to the scheme. This will enable more community projects to be funded, increasing support for the transport disadvantaged.

A total of \$171.5 million will be allocated in 1998-99 for the continued provision of the Pensioner Excursion Ticket and the Pensioner Half Fare Concession. This includes approximately \$142 million to fund the \$1.00 SRA and STA Pensioner Excursion Ticket. Under this scheme pensioners are provided with unlimited travel on all CityRail services and most STA services on the day of the purchase.

The School Student Transport Scheme provides free travel to and from school for eligible students on Government and private bus, rail and ferry services, school charter services, long distance coaches and in private vehicles where no alternative transport services exist.

School Student Transport Scheme payments (including SRA and STA) in 1998-99 are estimated to total \$367.8 million. This compares with \$345.2 million in 1997-98.

The scheme provides transport for approximately 59.7 per cent of all students notwithstanding changes introduced in 1995-96. Five year costs and trends within this Scheme are as follows -

Table 4.1: School Student Transport Scheme Costs

| | | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
|------------------------------|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total student population (a) | '000 | 1,052.3 | 1,056.6 | 1,066.4 | 1085.5 | 1,095.0 |
| Beneficiaries | '000 | 658.0 | 638.8 | 645.9 | 649.8 | 653.2 |
| Total cost (b) | \$m | 324.1 | 333.0 | 329.6 | 345.2 | 367.8 |
| Total cost per beneficiary | \$ | 492.6 | 521.3 | 510.3 | 531.2 | 563.1 |

(a) Source data from the Department of School Education

(b) Inclusive of payments to SRA and STA

Total Scheme costs have risen by 13.5 per cent from \$324.1 million in 1994-95 to an estimated \$367.8 million in 1998-99. Apart from increases in fares, expenditure increases are driven by growth in the total student population and an increasing demand for new services, part of which is generated by the decision of parents to send children to schools outside their local area.

The reduction in costs in 1996-97 reflects the changes made to the scheme in that year. The changes during 1996-97 included (a) a revision of payments criteria for non-commercial bus operators and (b) a reduction in payments to operators due to the pass usage rate being decreased from 92 per cent to 77 per cent for metropolitan areas and to 79 per cent for country areas.

Asset Acquisitions

The Transport Portfolio capital program aims to further the Government's public transport objectives of increased public transport usage. Achievement of this objective will improve Sydney's air quality. Capital grants for the Transport portfolio fall into three areas -

- Transport infrastructure programs administered by the Department;
- Capital grants to State Rail Authority for renewal, development and upgrading of stations and rolling stocks plus construction of New Southern Railway;
- Capital grants to Rail Access Corporation for improvements to rail infrastructure.

The capital program amounts to \$330 million.

The 1998-99 capital works program allows for the continued construction of the New Southern Railway and East Hills line amplification stage one. The project, which is a joint development by the private and public sector, started in 1995 and will be completed in 1999-2000. A total of \$149 million is earmarked in 1998-99 for the New Southern Railway and East Hills line amplification projects and provide additional train paths to the Sydney CBD for commuters from South Western Sydney.

This Budget allocates \$12.0 million for the construction of a new track extension to provide a dedicated link from Lidcombe to Olympic Park Station. A new railway platform will also be built at Lidcombe Station for Olympic Park passengers. Construction of the new link will start in September 1998 and be completed by April 1999 and provide uninterrupted train services to these events without inconveniencing regular peak hour commuters.

SRA is continuing its 4th generation train project which involves the planned acquisition of new suburban rail cars. \$2 million is allocated in 1998-99 to cover further project development costs, with the first of the new cars due to be operating on the rail network by 2000 Olympics.

A total of 33 stations have been proposed as Easy Access stations throughout the CityRail network which means they will be upgraded to make it easier for people with mobility problems to get around.

16 stations have been completed to date. A total of \$18.6 million is allocated to this program in 1998-99 and will include the completion of easy access facilities at Springwood and Bankstown. The Easy Access program is scheduled for completion in 2002-03 and will total \$86.5 million

The State Rail Authority will commence a \$55 million security upgrade of CityRail stations in 1998-99 to be completed in 1999-00. This will involve the installation of closed circuit television, high intensity security lighting, long line public announcement facilities and emergency help points at every CityRail station. This upgrade will include the provision of security facilities in commuter carparks and interchanges.

The key aim of these initiatives is to make people feel safer on public transport and increase patronage levels.

Western Sydney is a key transport priority for the New South Wales Government. For too long the needs of Western Sydney were neglected, however over the last three years the Government has been working consistently to upgrade the transport services to the region.

The Transport portfolio has a clear focus on delivering projects and planning strategies in Western Sydney which improve frequency and efficiency, provides easy and direct access to existing station for commuters and makes interchanges work better. The Transport agencies all share a common goal of delivering safe, comfortable and convenient services to the people of Western Sydney.

Central to the Government's transport program for western Sydney is the reduction of pollution and improving the environment by getting people out of their cars and on to public transport.

The works scheduled for 1998-99 throughout Western Sydney build on the public transport achievements of the Government and progress the implementation of the Government's Greater Western Sydney Public Transport Strategy released in 1997.

The Government commence the construction of the 20km Liverpool Parramatta Transitway. This \$100 million initiative will connect Parramatta, which has become Sydney's second CBD, and the fast-growing Liverpool area with an express transit service. The new Transitway will provide significant cuts to travel times for the people of Western Sydney.

The Transitway will mean a fast, reliable service between places such as Bonnyrigg Plaza, Fairfield Hospital, Liverpool CBD, Miller TAFE, Parramatta CBD, Prairewood, Prestons industrial area, Stockland Town Centre, Wetherill Park TAFE, and Yennora, Wetherill Park and Smithfield industrial areas. The new Transitway will also include separate bikeways along the road.

The 1998-99 Budget includes an allocation of \$13.1 million to RAC for the completion of the Richmond Line Amplification which will deliver to the people of Western Sydney more frequent train services to the areas between Blacktown and Richmond. The total project cost is \$21.3 million.

In addition, SRA will be spending \$65 million of its maintenance program in Western Sydney including \$60 million on train maintenance at the Maintrain centre at Auburn, \$3 million on carriage refurbishment at Clyde.

Construction and enhancements to a series of facilities which will provide a direct connection between the various transport modes, such as bus/rail/ferry interchanges and commuter car parking at rail stations and ferry wharves. A majority of these projects are in Western Sydney.

The Government will be upgrading the Liverpool Station and Interchange to increase the stations capacity, make the station safer for commuters and provide easy access facilities.

Construction on the new interchange facilities commenced at Liverpool in February 1998. The station redevelopment will include easy access facilities, improved safety facilities and increased capacity. The total budget for the upgrade is \$18.5 million over two years.

A total of \$3.2 million has been allocated for the upgrade of Bankstown Station to commence in 1998-99. The upgrade will include the installation of easy access lifts, increased platform stairs amongst the proposed works. This work is to be completed by 1999-00.

Many Department of Transport administered projects are funded from the Parking Space Levy, with revenue sourced exclusively from an annual levy on all parking spaces in the Sydney CBD and parts of North Sydney. Funds are utilised for the total development of projects from the studies to determine demand and concept through to finished construction.

In addition, the Roads and Traffic Authority's capital program will provide for capital expenditures taken from the proceeds of the Roads Improvement (Special Funding) Act 1989 (3x3 Fuel Levy) as part of the RTA's Public Transport Infrastructure Improvement program.

Further improvements to public transport, notably those relating to Government bus and ferry services, are not directly funded by government capital grants, but are funded internally by the agencies involved.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) of New South Wales manages the State's road and traffic systems. The Authority focuses on three main areas of business: road network infrastructure, road safety and traffic management, and driver and vehicle policy and regulation. It also manages the M4/M5 Cashback Scheme.

Expenditure Trends and Recent Developments

The projected total roads program for 1997-98 is \$2,063 million, an increase of \$90 million over 1996-97.

Operating expenses for 1997-98 are estimated at \$1,115.6 million and include \$110 million to meet debt servicing costs.

The M4/M5 Cashback scheme was introduced on 1 January 1997 to reimburse tolls paid by motorists driving New South Wales privately registered vehicles on the M4 and M5 Motorways. Expenditure under the Scheme is expected to be \$28 million in 1997-98.

Capital expenditure including asset acquisitions of \$913.1 million for 1997-98 is \$947 million. This projected capital expenditure (in addition to the RTA's operating costs of maintaining roads and providing services to the community) will result in a total Capital and Maintenance program for 1997-98 of \$1,691 million, an increase of \$40 million over 1996-97.

The RTA has a major organisational improvement program under way to ensure that it becomes more efficient, commercially focused and customer driven. Savings of at least \$28.6 million have been identified for 1997-98. This amount is being re-invested in better roads.

The RTA is actively participating in the national road transport reform process. National initiatives include: a new vehicle registration scheme, a new driver licensing scheme, an improved truck driving hours regime and the development of reciprocal access to registration and licensing data between States and Territories.

New arrangements for the management of speeding vehicles will also be implemented. These will include enhanced technology (Safe-T-Cam) and new sanctions.

Quality service has become a feature of RTA activities related to Motor Registry customer operations. Some of the significant enhancements introduced to improve customer service include expansion of Q-matic queuing systems to 104 high volume registries, the issue of over-the-counter photo licences at registries, providing online registration and licensing services at 9 council agencies in remote areas, and the introduction of EFTPOS at motor registries.

Strategic Directions

The New South Wales Government has set the following priorities for the RTA -

- ensure the RTA plays its part in the integration of road and transport planning;
- make New South Wales roads the safest in the world;
- improve the efficiency of road related public transport;
- create customer focus, especially in the areas of traffic management, registry services and community consultation;
- focus the provision of all services on World Best Practice;
- reduce administrative expenditure to improve service delivery;
- provide road related transport infrastructure, and an appropriate regulatory framework which meets the needs of State and regional development;
- ensure that the road asset is properly maintained, at minimum whole of life cost;
- minimise adverse impacts on natural and built environments;
- provide advice to Government on ways to address the increasing demand for road travel, including alternatives to road building; and
- pursue and develop opportunities in overseas markets for competitive products and services.

These priorities are integrated with the RTA Corporate Strategic Plan, which in turn guides the development of strategic plans for each of the RTA's core businesses and programs. The CEO of the RTA, along with the CEOs of the Department of Transport and State Rail Authority, comprise the recently established Transport Co-ordination Committee to advise the Government on the priorities for the future development of transport in New South Wales with a special focus on how the various modes could be better integrated to improve services.

As economic growth continues, road travel is expected to increase, adding to the challenge for the RTA to encourage people to use cars less in favour of public transport, bicycles and walking. This Budget provides for improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists through the development and implementation of new cycleways and other bicycle facilities (parking and cycleway improvements). The RTA's Public Transport Infrastructure Improvement Program is improving efficiency and priority for buses through the implementation of bus lanes, transit lanes, special priority 'B' signals and bus bays.

In order to make it more convenient for people to transfer between private and public transport the RTA is undertaking the implementation of interchanges and commuter car parks. The RTA is continuing the promotion of teleworking and carpooling to reduce car usage. The above measures contribute to the achievement of the air quality targets in the Government Action for Air Plan, by reducing the annual growth in vehicle kilometres travelled.

1998-99 Budget

The RTA 1998-99 budget provides for reimbursement of Commonwealth fuel taxes to be allocated to the Roads Program. In addition, the revenue from registration and transfer fee increases introduced in February 1998 has been included for both 1998-99 and 1999-2000. The increases expire in June 2000.

As part of the Vehicle Emissions Inspection and Maintenance Program, the RTA will monitor vehicle emissions in the Sydney metropolitan area at two emissions inspection stations to be established in 1998-99.

Total Expenses

Total expenses for 1998-99 will be \$1,141 million, an increase of 2.3 per cent over 1997-98.

A major influence on the New South Wales and Australian economy is the availability of a road transportation network in sound condition. Transport incurs vehicle operating costs such as fuel, tyres, oil, wear and tear on vehicles and vehicle depreciation that are directly related to the condition of the road surface. In New South Wales, total vehicle operating costs are estimated to be \$9 billion each year. This amount can be reduced by well maintained roads.

The RTA aims to balance these savings against the cost of providing smoother roads. The priority is to maintain road assets at minimum whole of life cost. This will improve customer satisfaction, reduce vehicle operating costs and improve the efficiency of the network. The extent of the Country State Roads network measured by laser as having "Good" smoothness has increased from 83 per cent to 89 per cent since 1995.

This Budget provides for improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in the Roads Program (\$13.1 million). Measures include new and enhanced pedestrian access and crossing facilities as well as the continued expansion of a quality bicycle network. The bicycle program will include the promotion of bicycle network usage, safe cycling and education.

The RTA is currently developing "Bike Plan 2010". This will establish a framework for future bicycle networks. Development and implementation of new cycleways and other bicycle facilities (parking and cycleway improvements) under special bicycle programs involves \$5.6 million statewide. In addition to this funding, provision for bicyclists is also funded within the development and maintenance programs.

A key focus for the RTA is the effective implementation of road safety programs to further reduce road deaths, serious injuries and crashes in New South Wales. Measures to achieve this improvement in road safety include an extension to the successful initiative to increase the level of Police enforcement (\$3 million), the continuing encouragement of participation by the community (\$1.7 million), provision of road safety education for children through schools (\$4 million), an integrated program to counter excessive speeding (\$6.4 million), further development of the capacity of local government to deliver road safety programs at community level (\$2.9 million) and encouragement for consumers to purchase safer vehicles (\$0.9 million).

A Road Blackspot program of \$24.8 million for accident blackspot treatment and road safety improvements complements major works. These safety improvements include work on railway level crossings. The blackspot program includes work on the Pacific Highway at Bulahdelah, work at Ewingsdale near Byron Bay and work on the Great Western Highway at Faulconbridge and Warrimoo.

The \$4 million Bus Stop Blackspot program will target improvements to safety for bus users at, and around, bus stop locations. The program will contribute to the safety of school children through a number of initiatives being implemented at school frontages by raising motorists' awareness of the presence of school children, particularly during times when there is a high volume of school bus activity.

The Bus Stop Blackspot program will also provide for enhanced bus stop facilities such as bus bays, especially in the rural areas of the State. This program is additional to the Safer Routes to Schools program which has a budget of \$11 million for 1998-99.

The RTA will continue to implement the Government Road Traffic Noise Abatement Program. In the past three years, 2,500 homes, 6 schools and 3 churches in areas of high noise levels on existing metropolitan roads have benefited from noise mitigation funded from this Program.

During 1998-99, the M4/M5 Cashback Scheme payments are again expected to increase with total costs estimated at \$30 million.

Asset Acquisition

Total capital expenditure for 1998-99 including asset acquisitions of \$896.4 million will be \$944 million, which is at a similar level to 1997-98.

The RTA's Public Transport Infrastructure Improvement Program (\$50 million in 1998-99) is improving efficiency and priority for buses through the implementation of bus lanes, transit lanes, special priority 'B' signals and bus bays. Some examples include Sydney CBD Bus Priority Scheme and Eastern Distributor/Moore Park Bus Priority Works. In 1998-99 the RTA will commence construction of the first stage of the Liverpool to Parramatta Transitway, between North Liverpool Road and Edensor Road, Bonnyrigg.

In order to make it more convenient for people to transfer between private and public transport, the RTA is undertaking the implementation of interchanges and commuter car parks. Some examples are the Moore Park Bus Station, Epping Railway Station interchange, Ulladulla Bus interchange and Wollongong University Bus Facility. The program also includes the upgrading of level crossings.

The increase in road travel also requires increased focus on the efficient management of traffic flow, both to meet road user expectations, as well as to reduce the adverse impacts on the environment. In order to improve the reliability of travel times as well as average speeds, emphasis will be placed on managing traffic where incidents occur (\$26 million). Examples include development of a state of the art Transport Management Centre, incorporating a centrally located computer system to manage the incident detection and driver information system.

Capital traffic management improvements are also being targeted to principal transport routes and include intersection improvements and the upgrading and fine-tuning of the coordinated traffic signal system.

The RTA's Road Network Development Program will provide safer roads, promote economic growth, improve accessibility and assist regional development. The program continues to fund works in progress and commences other works to meet Government commitments.

This Budget will continue the RTA's commitment to providing better road infrastructure for rural and regional New South Wales. In 1998-99 the RTA will commence a five year program to upgrade country timber bridges. \$129 million will be provided between 1998-99 and 2002-2003 to upgrade 140 country timber bridges. Examples include Sandy Creek on the Bruxner Highway near Tabulam, Camp, Middle and Nogulga Creeks on the Gwydir Highway west of Grafton, and Harts Gully on the Princes Highway south of Bega.

The Pacific Highway Upgrading Program provides for continuation of State funding of \$160 million per annum for State-funded works and the State's share of joint State/Federal projects.

Major State-funded works, worth \$100 million in 1998-99, include duplication between Raymond Terrace and Karuah, the Taree Bypass, widening between Bray Street and Arthur Street, Coffs Harbour, Halfway Creek Truck Stop realignment and overtaking lanes and the Byron's Lane realignment and overtaking lanes north of Grafton. Funding includes provision for environmental protection and mitigation measures for water quality, traffic noise and flora and fauna conservation as the development proceeds.

Major works undertaken under the joint State/Federal Program include the Raymond Terrace Bypass, the Bulahdelah to Coolongolook Freeway, duplication from Coolongolook to Wang Wauk, construction of a second carriageway at Eungai, the Raleigh deviation, upgrading in Coffs Harbour between Lyons and Englands Roads and commencement of the deviation from Yelgun to Chinderah. A total of \$60 million will be provided by the State for these joint projects.

Upgrading both the Summerland Way in northern New South Wales, the Golden Highway (Dubbo-Newcastle) and the East West Route from Bourke to Narrabri will continue. In addition the sealing of the Kidman Way in western New South Wales will be completed and the Gobba Bridge deviation on the Olympic Way will be completed in 1998-99.

The Western Sydney Improvement Program is designed to meet the Government's commitment to invest an average of \$145 million per annum over 4 years for roads in that area. Key projects currently in progress include the provision of six lanes on the M4 viaduct at Granville, grade separation of the Hume Highway/Roberts Road intersection, the extension of Stacey Street from the Hume Highway to Rookwood Road, widening of Old Windsor Road from Abbots Road to Sunnyholt Road, widening of Castlereagh Road from Jane Street to McCarthys Lane, upgrading of Cowpasture Road between Camden Valley Way and Horsley Drive, widening Horsley Drive between Mimosa Road and Elizabeth Street and improvements at the Wallgrove Road intersection, widening of the rail bridges on Campbelltown Road at Leumeah and the upgrading of Elizabeth Drive from Cabramatta to Cowpasture Road.

Other major works in the Sydney area include the City West Link Road from Balmain Road to Boomerang Street, the Victoria Road/Devlin Street interchange at Top Ryde, upgrading of Southern Cross Drive and construction of a new bridge and approaches over the Woronora River, Woronora. Construction works on the M5 East will also commence in 1998-99.

Over the past 3 years more than \$60 million has been spent on road improvements in the Blue Mountains. In 1998-99 work will continue on widening of the Great Western Highway at Warrimoo and the Hawkesbury Road ramp at Springwood. Widening works will commence at Faulconbridge and planning will continue for future improvements from Hazelbrook to Lawson and for Stage 3 of Linden Bends.

In 1998-99 the RTA will commence a \$44.6 million Road Improvement Program as part of the Hawkesbury Nepean Flood Plain Strategy which is being coordinated by the Department of Land and Water Conservation.

In the Hunter and Central Coast regions, work will continue on the West Charlestown Bypass and planning for a variety of other works committed by the Government's Hunter/Maitland policy

As part of the Government's Illawarra policy, work will continue on the widening of the F6 between Gwynneville and Ghosts Creek and on Princes Highway improvement works including the interchange with Lakes Entrance Road.

On the National Highways system, construction is expected to continue on the Lake George dual carriageways on the Federal Highway, the Leneghan's Drive duplication on the F3, the Belford deviation on the New England Highway and on the Bookham bypass and South Gundagai interchange on the Hume Highway. Major works to commence in 1998-99 include a driver aid system on the F3 between Wahroonga and Calga, widening of the Cumberland Highway between The Horsley Drive and Merrylands Road in Western Sydney, dual carriageways on the Federal Highway between Lake George and the ACT border and the Hume Highway Albury to Wodonga project. All proposed works on the National Highway System are subject to Federal allocation of funds.