



Department of Transport and Main Roads
South Coast Region
PO Box 442
NERANG QLD 4211

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Online submission: SouthCoast@tmr.qld.gov.au

Re: Coomera Park and Ride Upgrade project

The Queensland Chapter of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposal for expansion and upgrade works for the Coomera Park and Ride precinct.

The **Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA)** is the peak national body for Landscape Architecture. AILA champions quality design for public open spaces, stronger communities, and greater environmental stewardship. We provide our members with training, recognition, and a community of practice to share knowledge, ideas, and action. With our members, we anticipate and develop a leading position on issues of concern in landscape architecture. Alongside government and allied professions, we work to improve the design, planning and management of the natural and built environment.

In operation since 1966, AILA represents over 3,500 landscape architects and promotes excellence in planning and designing for life outdoors. Committed to designing and creating better spaces in Australia, landscape architects have the skills and expertise to improve the nation's livability through a unique approach to planning issues via innovative integrated solutions. In doing so, landscape architects contribute towards better environmental, social, and economic outcomes for all Australians.

As an organisation AILA has and continues to provide representation to the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) and other bodies that have influence over and the ability to deliver high quality community projects and green infrastructure throughout Australia. In Queensland, our State Chapter and individual members have also proudly represented the Institute and contributed to the design and delivery of many projects of this nature.

Please find attached a formal response to the Coomera Park and Ride Upgrade project. The statements contained within offer comment / alternatives to the current proposal, which we believe in its current form is a poor outcome for the local context, and not as an example of the potential that these community infrastructure spaces can and should deliver as part of community rail projects. We note that the project is jointly funded by State and Federal contributions so believe that though this response is targeted at one station expansion project only, that the principles have the capacity to be considered and applied across Australia also.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss further, and request that we remain involved in the ongoing development of these projects. Should you have any queries or wish to discuss, please contact Melanie West, AILA Queensland Chapter Manager on 0417 666 622 or melanie.west@aila.org.au

Yours sincerely,

David Uhlmann
AILA Queensland President



AILA Queensland Response to Coomera Park and Ride Upgrade project

Key Areas

1. Development Footprint / Revegetation / Precinct Planting

The current design appears to make no attempt to ‘temper’ the site cover. Clearly the design has sought to maximise the carpark bays and occupy the full available land area.

Queensland is a large state of significant area and connectivity between regional and capital centres is challenging. The implementation of rail and associated infrastructure is recognised as a critical component to provide equity and access throughout our community. In addition to the challenge of connecting people, in our opinion, availability of land can mean that design innovation and motivation to minimise the physical footprint of the infrastructure and associated works is not prioritised; just because we *can* spread across the landscape does not mean we *should*.

We recognise that budgets are a challenging component of these projects but suggest that the strategic location of major and minor stations should also consider the intensity and volume both now and beyond this expansion project. A multi-storey parking option should be closely considered as a long-term investment in the region in combination with the on-ground proposal for all the reasons suggested in this response. We recommend that the design site cover be closely reviewed, and external buffer and internal parking area size reconsidered to reduce hardstand site coverage.

2. Provision of Natural Shade

The Local Authority (City of Gold Coast Council) in which the site lies, provides planning guidance for carparks and typically requires shade tree planting of a minimum of 1 tree per 6 carpark bays. In this location, Council identified the Town Centre area of such importance that a specific plan was formed. The Coomera Town Centre Local Area Plan provides specific intent / guidelines including an Environmental Management Strategy. It is noted in the plan the suggestion that precinct carparking should consider underground and multi-storey options and that the Eastern side particularly of the rail station precinct is recognised as a part of the ‘public gateway to the town centre’ and an opportunity for a ‘meeting and gathering space’.

https://www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/gcplanningscheme_0509/attachments/planning_scheme_documents/part6_local_area_plans/div2_laps/chapter_10_coomera_town_centre.pdf

In addition to this, Queensland State Government Health Policy states that 1 tree per 10 bays is viewed as ‘essential’ and 1 tree per 15 carpark bays as ‘necessary’.

<https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/shade-and-sun-safety-in-public-facilities/resource/15f31b3a-cb86-4edb-8209-f3a772e22fc3>

The current proposal is devoid of natural shade and vegetative ‘respite’ from the extensive asphalt and concrete surfaces. This will contribute significantly to the ‘heat island effect’ generated which increases energy consumption, elevating emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases resulting in compromised human health and comfort. In addition to the above, minimal to non-existent shade also contributes to extreme embedded and reflective heat for the vehicles parked in the locality, the pedestrians moving in and around the spaces and the minor planting included.

3. Site Topography and Vegetative Cover

The local topography in the Coomera region, the vegetative regional ecosystem, soils and local fauna are all under significant and devastating pressure in this area with the intensive development existing and proposed.

With the land holdings and strategic locations under control, the leadership role that the Department of Transport and Main Roads is in a position to take, with the rail infrastructure throughout this region, should not be underestimated along the length of the corridor and at the station precincts along the route.



This response is not proposed to prevent the works but suggests all efforts be concentrated on minimising the hardstand footprint on this site to:

- Provide the ability to retain/protect critical vegetative cover to the site perimeter and through the site (significant structural vegetation has been lost in this northern corridor at alarming rates);
- Minimise the loss of critical topsoil and local native vegetation areas for native fauna;
- Provide essential shade and cooling properties to the area;
- Support the ability of the project to minimise earthwork and civil cut to achieve the parking requirements; and
- Reduce the loss of surface water that can be naturally treated and harnessed by the landscape rather than be piped from site.

4. CCTV and Safety

It is clear from the publication and the graphics provided that the design, installation and management of the CCTV systems appears to be prioritised over all other environmental and design considerations. It is our position that this element should not dictate design outcomes but be a part of a wholistic approach.

Other aspects such as the creation of a more positive pedestrian experience, legibility and way finding, vehicle cooling/protection from the elements and environmental factors such as water sensitive urban design initiatives and positive and local vegetation for native fauna benefit should be prioritized.

5. City of Gold Coast Council, Cross River Rail, Westfield Coomera, Future Health Precinct and Other Development Coordination

As part of a broader network, we would encourage the Department of Transport and Main Roads project leaders to closely interrogate the number and type of carpark bays required at this site and consider alternative opportunities to diversify the intensity / volume of parking required. Given the proximity of stations North and South of this location, maximising any efficiencies that can be achieved to minimise the project footprint would also contribute to delivering a project that aims to minimize impacts on the environment whilst providing a necessary community service.

In addition, Coomera has and is proposed to experience in future, significant expansion. We would encourage discussion and collaboration with existing and in planning future development works to consider the potential for shared / combined parking arrangements. Potential joint ventures for creation of carpark infrastructure to multiple organisation benefit, which achieves the capacity / typology for shared benefit, has the potential for greater long term community benefit.

Further to this, we note that the bus interchange appears to be expanding the existing capacity. We would encourage further detailed discussion with the Local Authority for a potential joint investment in a more targeted, regular, and considered bus service to deliver the patrons to the rail station potentially increasing customers for the network. This would assist in reducing the number of vehicles on the local road network and could also alleviate the need for such extensive carpark capacity requirements. We would recommend further discussions with the City of Gold Coast Council and potential public/ private transport provider partnerships to further investigate possible viable alternatives to supporting an increase in public transport usage.

6. Alternative Pavement Solutions for Parking Areas

For many years, alternative trafficable pavements have been utilised with permeable pavement solutions in parking infrastructure to achieve functionality requirements and support more positive environmental outcomes. These initiatives and others also provide the Department of Transport and Main Roads with positive educational opportunities such as interpretative signage and positive advertisements to the recognition of the significant influence that rail infrastructure brings connecting local and environmental communities via the network.



7. Stormwater collection and WSUD initiatives

Little detail is included in the graphic or text outlining any proposal for significant initiatives for stormwater collection and management. This is another area where the Department of Transport and Main Roads has a significant opportunity for educating its patrons and taking a leadership role in innovation and responsible management of a precious resource.

We would recommend that any site development solution include substantial surface and subsurface infrastructure that provides support to capturing and managing water in an environmentally sustainable and sensitive manner.

The City of Gold Coast Council Planning Scheme also contains local guidance for development works in relation to Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) Guidelines which may support more environmentally sensitive outcomes given the site context adjacent to significant areas of remnant vegetation and waterways.