

COMMITTED TO QUALITY OF LIFE

BY KATE SHIRLEY

In 2008, the South Australian Government dedicated \$2.6 billion (AUS) over ten years toward the upgrade and revitalization of the State's transportation network. This financial commitment is a product of the South Australia Strategic Plan, which seeks to create a better future for the region through conscientious investment in public infrastructure and sustainable practices. The Plan was created to support the expansion and electrification of rail networks, the addition of buses, trams and tramlines and upgrades to major arterial highways to increase the convenience and usage of public transportation. This is the largest single investment ever made by an Australian State Government in its public transportation system. Adelaide, the capital of and most populous city in South Australia, hopes to use this federal assistance to become one of the most liveable and sustainable cities in the country.

The Department of Transportation, Energy and Infrastructure (DTEI) is the main governmental agency serving the public infrastructure needs of the State of South Australia, and is committed toward furthering the goals of the Plan with its projects and policies. Among other responsibilities, the DTEI is dedicated to improving the quality and safety of public transportation, highways and energy infrastructure with an additional goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting development. The inaugural plan, which launched in 2004, was updated in 2006 using direct input from communities all across the State. Increasing the use of public transportation was one of the major goals set forth in the Plan.

The DTEI is fully committed to increasing the quality of life and safety of the citizens of South Australia through innovative projects designed to encourage smart, environmentally-friendly living practices. One such project

is the expansion and revitalization of the 'Coast to Coast' Light Rail. In the early 20th Century, Adelaide's light rail system was largely dismantled, leaving only a short stretch of city tramline.

Following an extension in 2007, the most recent 2.8 km addition of the track was completed in Spring 2010, which included new overhead wiring and the addition of six new trams. The expanded light rail is anticipated to encourage "park and ride," reducing pollution and traffic in the city, encouraging development, and putting the city on the path set forth in the Plan to increase usage of public transportation to 10% of vehicular kilometers travelled each week by 2018. As a result of the efforts of the DTEI, by 2009, public transportation accounted for 7.4% of workday vehicle use, and passenger boardings have increased by 12% since 2005.

Another major project the DTEI is heading up is the South Road Upgrade. South Road is the main artery that runs through Adelaide and handles up to 88,000 vehicles per day, a number which is projected to increase by as much as six percent each year up to 2020. As the only continuous highway link between the northern and southern portions of the city, the South Road is often clogged with traffic caused by commuters, as well as business and freight transportation. The planned upgrades intend to not only reduce traffic, but increase road safety, a focal point of the Plan, which aims to cut road fatalities by 40%. This project also hopes to increase revenues by encouraging development in previously hard to reach areas, and by easing the flow of goods and services to crucial areas of the city.



The Glenelg tramline extension, completed in 2007, won the DTEI the prestigious Adelaide Prize for achievement and excellence in the city realm by providing sustainable transport options and promoting development.

The DTEI is also in the planning and acquisition stages for the Northern Connector, a dual-use rail and road corridor that will connect the Northern Expressway to the Port River Expressway and South Road. The up and coming northern area of Adelaide has recently expanded its residential areas and its industrial and commercial potential. The high-speed freight and commuter rail line will bring much-needed public transportation to and from the northern region. With a growing need for a fast and efficient means of transporting people and freight with minimal impact to the growing community, this project is considered essential, as business and population growth occurs in previously difficult to access areas.

What is most incredible about the efforts undertaken by the DTEI, the State of South Australia and the City of Adelaide is how successfully local citizens have been included in the decision-making process. The over-arching concept of improving South Australians' quality of life is a noble goal that can be realized with safer, faster, more efficient and convenient public infrastructure and transportation that improves access to developing parts of the state, allowing communities to thrive in all areas. South Australia has taken an innovative approach to developing infrastructure – keeping healthy communities, commercial growth and sustainable communities at the forefront of every decision.