

Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Action Group Inc. (MTAG)

March 2024

Divisional Councillor Candidate Questionnaire

As a key advocacy groups on the Sunshine Coast, we are seeking your views on public transport and housing densification in the region. Please be advised your responses will be collated and made public as we believe all voters should be aware of your position on these two key issues prior to voting. No response will be taken to mean you agree with the following:

1. The current Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) Southern Sunshine Coast Public transport strategy and their decision to proceed with Rapid Bus Transit in a dedicated lane along our coastal strip.
2. The current Sunshine Coast Regional Council plan to house the large majority of the future population growth out to 2041, in the Coastal corridor between Maroochydore and Caloundra.

Name of candidate:	Tim Burns	Date:	30 January 2024
Division contesting:	Division 3		

Section 1: Transport

- 1 Do you think two public transport spinal networks (Heavy Rail from Beerwah to Maroochydore and a Mass Transit system from Maroochydore to Birtinya) with feeder networks running to them, is the best public transport system for the region?

YES/NO Yes

- 2 If NO, and you are elected, will you advocate to TMR for a different Sunshine Coast Public Transport strategy?

YES/NO

If YES what?

My answer is a bit of yes and no! I think it's vital for the future of the SC to have an efficient, effective and affordable mix of public and active transport. So, yes, I support heavy rail Beerwah to Maroochydore and an integrated Mass Transit solution that connects Maroochydore to Caloundra, not just to Birtinya. Not completing the connection to Caloundra is an oversight in my estimation. I think we need to ensure the connection is also strong between Maroochydore and the SC Airport to support tourism and business visitors to the region. Active transport infrastructure can also be improved along with Heavy Rail and a Transit solution. This would mean that people are more able to easily walk short distances to transport or services, students can ride confidently and safely to school etc. To be a sustainable region and to enhance our lifestyle each of these modes need to be considered.

- 3 Do you support a Rapid Bus Transit system in a dedicated right of way along our coastal corridor?

YES/NO Yes

- 4 What will you do to improve public transport now?

Response:

In regard to Rapid Bus Transit mentioned in question 3, I'm open to where and how that system could function to ensure the best future functionality of it. To improve Public transport now, I would be looking to work across council and with other councillors, rather than considering myself as able to improve things on my own. It would be helpful to consider how we can encourage greater uptake on existing services, advocating for the ongoing implementation of Councils Active Transport Plan (<https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/council/planning-and-projects/council-plans/sunshine-coast-active-transport-plan>) to support public transport now. Advocate to Translink for simple measures to improve access to public transport such as allowing the use of debit/credit cards on the tap on/off system. It would also be great if we could add some frequency of service on major routes and ensure the cost is the same or less of all day parking in maroochydore as an example.

- 5 What do you think should be the priority for better public transport in the future?

Response:

As mentioned above, the integration between different modes of transport. The best transport systems around the world all have multi modal systems. The heavy rail is a must, some form of rapid transit system (preferably electric, rubber wheeled etc) to service other areas of the region with strong east/west connection between the two systems. Better active transport infrastructure to encourage more trips locally by this means, helping to reduce reliance on cars and other transport modes. The better connected the region is with transport, the less reliance on car

travel. Cities such as Oslo, Helsinki, Zurich, Stockholm have developed effective and sustainable systems I think.

Section 2: SCRC 2024 Draft Planning Scheme

6 Do you support the current plan to put the large majority of new arrivals out to 2041 within the Coastal Corridor? (Maroochydore to Caloundra)?

YES/NO No

7 What does high-rise mean to you (how many storeys)?

Response:

My answer to Q6 is actually yes and no. I support plans that will see new arrivals being accommodated close to existing service centres this could include centres such as Nambour or Beerwah, Maroochydore, Coolum, Caloundra, Kawana. This makes sense as it will allow easier access to essential services with less travel across longer distances. Services include things such as schools, shops, health, professional, hospitality venues, stormwater, electricity services etc. I think it's vital we continue to limit further damage to bushland and open green space in the effort to accommodate population growth. Those spaces, enhance our natural amenity and liveability, mitigate climate related risks such as increased flooding or heat sinks in urban areas. They also support healthier waterways and run off to the ocean. High rise that I'd be comfortable with in different areas is 4-6 storeys with an aspiration of diversity in the housing stock. I reflect that we already have areas of higher density than that in areas such as Caloundra, Mooloolaba, Alexandra Headlands and Maroochydore and believe we are in a good position to find nuanced solutions for the future. I am not comfortable with higher storey buildings encroaching on dunal systems and believe we need to protect those areas for the sake of turtle conservation, potential future storm surges, sand replenishment for beaches etc.

8 Do you think housing densification should occur along the Heavy Passenger Rail Corridor rather than the Mass Transit Coastal Corridor?

YES/NO Yes

Explain why?

Again, yes and no. It has to be both/and. We will need to share the load of densification, and I believe this can be done thoughtfully. As a region, we are a community of communities, and this is a strength that we can consider to carefully plan a future that is liveable and sustainable. Therefore, the diversity of housing stock can be shared right across the region. This will ensure access to more affordable housing stock which is vital if we're to be an equitable region. This makes sense from a community/social perspective, an environmental perspective and an economic perspective. Having housing in proximity to multi modal transport solutions is common sense.

9 If you are an existing Councillor, did you vote in favour of the current draft 2024 Planning Scheme?

YES/NO

10 If you are elected, will you vote to review the draft 2024 Planning Scheme, in particular the densification of the coastal corridor?

YES/NO No

11 As a Divisional Councillor, what will you do to ensure we do not become another Gold Coast?

Response:

The reason I answer no to question 10 is that I haven't seen the draft 2024 Planning Scheme and understand that the current process is in fact a review. I'm concerned that delaying the

planning scheme will only allow continued development according to existing plans and provides no certainty for the future. Therefore, I can't say how I will vote on this matter until I see the document. I would however, be active in seeking a strengthening of the upcoming round of community engagement and feedback to the Draft Planning scheme. I believe it's important to ensure localised communities can creatively and actively participate in important processes such as the planning scheme. Strong engagement with local communities can support improved understanding and outcomes for people through the scheme. I think doing this, helps us avoid being another Gold Coast. Further, it appears the GC built their density with little consideration of future community connectedness etc. In my estimation, we are still in the drivers seat to ensure the future growth, infrastructure, amenability, liveability etc is uniquely Sunshine Coast. I contend that it is not only building form that shapes places. It is the connection to others, the capacity for people to engage meaningfully in democratic processes and community building projects, arts and cultural expression, health and wellbeing, access to public spaces that are well maintained and designed etc that all contribute to what the Sunny Coast is and will be. I'm very committed to championing all those aspects too as a way to ensure we continue to be uniquely SC.

12 Do you think the current planning decision making process is too lenient toward developers, especially in regard to site coverage, set backs and density?

YES/NO	<p>Why?</p> <p>I'm unsure. I don't have a deep understanding on how development/planning decision processes are undertaken. What I understand though, is that council development service officers are required to follow agreed codes, plans, legislation or instruments in their assessments. I believe these decisions are open to accountability or scrutiny which is reasonable and a safeguard. Perhaps there is an opportunity to better educate residents on how the system works so they're better able to consider their interaction with the system. it is important to continue consideration of local areas, built form and how it benefits or detracts.</p>
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13 Do you think all Development Applications should require Council to notify all adjoining neighbours?

YES/NO No	<p>If YES, what will you do to try and make this happen?</p> <p>My concern with notifying all neighbours in every instance, is that it has the potential to further slow new housing stock into what is already a significantly undersupplied market. The undersupply and lack of diversity in housing stock is creating an unaffordable housing market leading to significant levels of rental and mortgage stress (30+% across the coast). Having had involvement in Homelessness service response, we need to take seriously the need for more stock and in particular affordable and diverse housing stock. No one I've spoken to considers homelessness as an acceptable outcome to housing supply and insecurity. I don't think adding new layers of bureaucracy is necessarily helpful in the long term in ensuring adequate housing supply across the coast. My understanding is there is an online portal already in operation that allows any resident to check the development status of any property in the region (Development.i), so perhaps there are ways we can leverage that existing system for everybody to be aware of developments in their areas. I am committed to seeing appropriate development take place and think that neighbours or affected residents should absolutely have effective avenues to raise their concerns.</p>
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14 As a Divisional Councillor, what will you do to achieve better development outcomes for the region and your Division?

Response:

I am committed to being as available/accessible as possible to residents and holding pop up community offices across the region. Where there is a larger or potentially contentious development before council, I would seek to inform and then understand the opinions/ideas of those who might be immediately effected by the development proposal. My commitment then would be to pursue answers or alternative ideas on behalf of the residents. My intention would be to advocate and represent what I hear from residents to council and stand up strongly for them. It's also important to provide feedback to residents of the progression of the situation so they can be adequately informed and able to respond as effectively as possible together. I will also be as educated as I can in the development processes and ensure I engage with different groups of people including planners, transport experts, residents, interested community groups and peak organisations. Finally, I try to consider both/and opportunities and avoid locking into either/or scenarios as I believe we miss possibilities when we do that. That means, I could oppose one element of a development plan/application, but support another aspect of it. For example, it could be the site earmarked for a development is too close to a valued natural site, but the actual design of the development is good. I would argue against the site, but could support the design.