

Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Action Group Inc. (MTAG)

March 2024

Mayoral 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:**

- **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.**
- **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:

Ashley Robinson

Date:01/02/2024

## 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

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

YES/NO I support a Heavy Rail network from Beerwah to Maroochydore, with stops at Beerwah East and Aura to service the growth corridors, facilitate access to Brisbane for Sunshine Coast residents, encourage tourism and link communities, along the CAMCOS route that was identified more than 20 years ago. I think Heavy Rail is much more important to the region's short-term and medium-term needs than a Mass Transit system between Maroochydore and Birtinya.

If YES what?

3 Do you support a rapid bus transit system in a dedicated right of way along our coastal corridor?

YES/NO NO

4 What will you do to improve public transport now?

Response:

- Ours is a population that relies almost entirely on private vehicles for transport, partly because public transport has never been adequate enough to meet our needs. The region's bus service is owned and operated by Translink, a subsidiary of the State Government's Transport and Main Roads department, so Sunshine Coast Council has no direct control over the bus service. But we can certainly lobby for a better, safer and more reliable bus service. And we will. A faster, more affordable, more convenient bus service along the coastal fringe is essential, and it should be supplemented by feeder networks linking the coastal strip with inland suburbs and the hinterland. In the interests of a better public transport system, an Ashley Robinson-led Council would welcome such a system, and would work with TMR to ensure it was adequately funded.

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

Response:

- No 1 priority is securing a Heavy Rail network from Beerwah to Maroochydore, later perhaps extending it to the airport and, ultimately, to Noosa. Next priority is to encourage a better, safer and more reliable bus service, supplemented by feeder routes to less densely populated suburbs and areas.

## 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: • On the Sunshine Coast, high-rise means buildings of a height greater than six storeys. In other regions, of course, high-rise means something quite different, but a Sunshine Coast Council that I lead will never support the concept of high-rise as it is understood in places like the Gold Coast and the metropolitan capital cities. That sort of high-rise would be entirely out of character, and inappropriate for a region like ours.

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? The population of the Sunshine Coast is forecast to grow to more than 565,000 by 2046, requiring an additional 84,800 dwellings to accommodate the newcomers. Aura, or Caloundra South as it was known, will deliver 20,000 dwellings. Beerwah East, a Major Development Area within the Urban Footprint, is capable of delivering another 20,000 homes. And, though it's not zoned for residential development, and not supported by the Council or the State Government, Stockland's proposed development at Aura South could accommodate another 15,000 homes. I know future predictions are for 70% of the predicted growth to be accommodated by 'infill' in existing developed sites. But I'm not certain that that's the best option. With a Heavy Rail network servicing the greenfield sites, and a more focused approach to their development, I believe the pressure on greater population numbers along the coastal strip can be eased.

9 If you are an existing Councillor, did you vote in favour of the current draft 2024 Planning Scheme (no answer required if not an incumbent Councillor)?

YES/NO

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

YES/NO YES • As much as I can, I will seek input into the Planning Scheme and ensure the views of the Sunshine Coast population, including of course Mtag, are considered.

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

Response: • Few Sunshine Coast residents, if any, wish our region to become a high-rise cluster like we see on the Gold Coast. No mayor, or councillor, would ever advocate for such a thing. The new Planning Scheme will reflect the views of not just the Council, but the entire community, on the sort of region they want the Sunshine Coast to become. I've lived here all my life and I love the Sunshine Coast. I'll fight to protect the environment and the lifestyle that has made you and I want to live here, and bring up our

families. But nothing will stop the newcomers relocating to our region. Our task is to best manage that growth, and find a way to accommodate them, and find them jobs, without damaging the environment that we cherish. And without becoming another Gold Coast.

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 NO

There have been concerns expressed to me regarding planning approval issues which of course as Mayor I will investigate more closely.

The current process is generally rigorous enough in ensuring that proposed developments comply with planning regulations. If a proposed development falls outside the regulations of the new Planning Scheme, under the Planning Act it may still be considered. But I have committed to always defending the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme. Any amendments to that scheme would only come after rigorous public consultation and would only be in the public interest.

It is our task to ensure the new Planning Scheme, therefore, reflects the kind of Sunshine Coast we all want.

13 Do you think all Development Applications should require Council to notify all adjoining neighbours?

YES/NO YES

If YES, what will you do to try and make this happen?

If an application is made for a development that ticks all the boxes in regard to the relevant zoning, then it should be fairly straightforward. But notifying adjoining neighbours of what is happening on their doorstep is not an unreasonable request and should be considered by the new council.

14 As Mayor, what will you do to achieve better development outcomes for the region that better protect existing residents' privacy and amenity?

Response: • As mayor, I will listen to the views of all parties, and give special consideration to the views of residents who feel they may be disadvantaged by any development that affects their privacy, amenity or lifestyle. I have always made myself available to stakeholders, and I always listen to people's views. I guarantee that approach will continue.