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MaaS: opportunities and threats posed by COVID-19

10.00 – 11.00 AM AEST
THURSDAY 28 MAY 2020



ABOUT ROADS AUSTRALIA

RA is the peak body for roads within an integrated transport system, representing an industry that contributes \$207 billion annually to the economy and supports 1.3 million jobs.

RA brings industry, government and communities together to lead the evolution of Australia's roads, integrated transport and mobility.

The nation's only roads champion, RA's 150+ members includes all of Australia's road agencies, major contractors and consultants, motoring clubs, service providers and other relevant industry groups.

Roads Australia's current policy focus extends across five activity streams, with diversity and inclusion an underlying commitment across all five: Safety; Capacity; Transport Reform; Journey Reliability; and Sustainability with Diversity and Inclusion sitting across each stream.

Register for [upcoming policy events](#) to contribute to the debate.

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen rapid changes to Australia's road network and public transport usage. 'Stay home' directives across Australia saw road congestion and public transport patronage plummet. As we move out of this pandemic, and into a 'new normal', there are opportunities that should be harnessed and

threats that should be prepared for in order to ensure Mobility as a Service (MaaS) thrives in Australia.

EVENT SUMMARY

Over 150 attendees joined RA's webinar on 28 May 2020 to hear from experts in the research, government and consulting sectors and discuss the opportunities and threats presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Professor [David Hensher](#), Founding Director-Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies (ITLS) presented the scenarios from his soon to be published paper, "[What might Covid-19 mean for Mobility as a Service \(MaaS\)?](#)".

[Neil Scales OBE](#), Director-General, Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads and **[Jacqui Banks](#)**, Melbourne Cities Director, Arcadis gave their perspectives as we start to return to a new 'normal'.

Professor Hensher and Neil's presentations are available on our [website](#).

The webinar was moderated by **[Aneetha De Silva](#)**, Board Member and Journey Reliability Policy Stream Chair, Roads Australia and Managing Director, Government - Australia & New Zealand, Aurecon.



KEY INSIGHTS

Professor Hensher presented the headline results of ITLS COVID-19 National Travel Survey which showed has been a significant decrease in the number of trips made, and this is the case for all modes and all purposes. The survey confirmed that working from home is currently the norm, and that regular activities people participate in such as visiting restaurants and meeting friends are well down as a result of the pandemic and associated measures.

He noted that the main change that has occurred to disrupt transport demand during the pandemic is working from home under Federal and/or State Government directive, which has had “an unintended positive consequence” of reducing transport congestion and crowding.

Multiple Scenarios

Professor Hensher presented two likely scenarios as restrictions on travel and activities are reduced:

- 1) The first being business as usual pre-COVID-19; and
- 2) the second being a significant change in the mobility framework as shared modes are less attractive and working from home becomes more accepted.

Under scenario one, given the success Australia has had in “flattening the curve”, he suggests that once people are allowed to resume activities and return to work on a broad scale, perceptions of risk decrease may happen very quickly. Subsequently, transport modes will return to similar levels of use and congestion as prior to the pandemic.

Under scenario two, while offices are required to maintain social distance working from home and staggered hours will be encouraged. Other options include minimising staff in the office through rotating rosters of teams (i.e. team A in the office on one day, team B on the other). In the longer term, this may also lead to cost reductions for companies through smaller office spaces.

Professor Hensher suggested that the preferred future should be scenario two with an aim to eliminate (or significantly reduce) the two peaks in travel demand and continue with a reduced demand spread out or flattened over the whole day.

This would be achieved by flexibility in the workplace through staggered working hours and working from home continuing even when there is no externally imposed constraint on this. He proposes that there is an opportunity for this flexibility to be formalised through the sustainability charters of businesses.

MaaS Reboot

Professor Hensher recommended a “MaaS reboot” under scenario two, which would consist of flexibility of subscription periods, micro-mobility modes for local trips, a shared car for familiar sharers co-ordinated through a broker (i.e. for carpooling), a rental car for individual use and a multi-service re-think which means being more than just a multimodal offer and might include discounts on non-transport services, having goods delivered or earning points to redeem on gift cards.

Other threats to MaaS post-pandemic that were discussed included:

- the need to maintain social distancing which will limit the capacity of public transport and potentially increase use of private vehicles; and
- public health concerns about using shared modes of transport such as public transport, taxis and rideshare.

Other opportunities discussed included:

- the opportunity to disrupt transport faster than we ever have before;
- a massive increase in active transport uptake ([Bike Network](#) counts have shown a 270% increase in cycling in Melbourne) and the need to respond quickly to this, such as through pop up lanes to encourage continued use;
- people being open to behaviour change and seeking alternative modes of travel to their regular commute; and
- continued working from home, on some level – perhaps not full-time for most, taking into account people’s need for social interaction and mental health.



Participant Opinions

A poll during the webinar, responded to by 100 attendees, found that the majority were in favour of continuing to work from home with **97%** stated they would like to continue to work from home occasionally or regularly. The main reasons for this were travel time savings (41%) and better work/life balance (39%) as shown in Figure 1.

If working from home is to continue, then this could be a powerful policy lever to help manage travel demand, a point that Professor Hensher made in his presentation.

EVENT OUTPUTS & NEXT STEPS

A snapshot of the event was promoted through Roads Australia's [LinkedIn](#) channel.

As a follow up to this event, and to further investigate some of the issues above, Roads Australia discussed these issues in a [Road Work podcast](#) featuring Professor Hensher, Jacqui Banks and Aneetha De Silva. This was also promoted on [LinkedIn](#).

Looking ahead, Roads Australia plans to host further [webinars](#) on this and related topics.

In July 2020, we will explore the impact to transport assets in a post COVID-19 world, and how this may change the way such assets are utilised within the MaaS ecosystem.

F1. What is the main reason for wanting to work from home, or not, in the future?

