2. The Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study (2001)

2.1 Background to Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study

The South East Queensland Integrated Regional Transport Plan of 1997 identified the need for protection of major transport corridors. In the Sunshine Coast region this led to the commencement of the Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor study.

This study was conducted in the context of a high population growth on the Sunshine Coast, with an estimated 70% increase in population between 1997 and 2011 resulting in a potential 300% increase in car trips. In this environment, it was considered that an increase in the road network alone was not an option that would be viable in the long term. Rather, there should be a shift to more sustainable transport options, which would include a dedicated line-haul public transport route linking the key regional centre of Maroochydore with the main Brisbane railway system.

One of the terms of reference for the Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study was that it should identify and preserve an alignment into Maroochydore that “maximises the public transport opportunities and benefits without unacceptable impact on the environment”.

2.2 The Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study process

The Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study project was completed in a three stage process.

The first stage consisted of the establishment of base criteria and the development of a range of working papers, covering planning and land use, transport and the environment, leading to the identification of a range of potential corridors. These included a coastal route via Caloundra, an inland route via Sippy Downs and a wide range of variations (refer Figure 2-1).

Figure 2-1: Alignments considered (Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study Corridor Options Report)

The second stage evaluated the various corridor options to produce a preferred corridor for the majority of the study area. A Corridor Options Report was released in September 1998.

Finally the third stage concluded evaluation with the selection of a preferred corridor for the length of the corridor, and led to the preparation of a Final Impact Assessment and Land

Use Transport Strategy (IAS). The draft IAS was opened to public comment in 1999 and following revision, a final IAS was released in February 2001.

Some of the key issues in the Maroochydore area found as part of the consultation process included

- traffic impact concerns
  - concern was expressed that there would be an increase in traffic around the stations, particularly residential streets in both existing residential development to the north-west of the station, and in proposed new development to the south and west.
- proposed station locations
  - Sunshine Plaza
  - near the western option (Maroochydore)
  - adjacent to the motorway (for another station, Mooloolaba)
- Sunshine Coast University connections
  - the consultants determined that the university would not have a station as it would not be on the route. There would be an integrated transport system to address issues to access it.

A Community Attitude Survey was undertaken in August 1999 and found

- In each case the preferred place to begin or end a journey was a shopping centre and/or 'park and ride' facility. In each case there was a non-specific request for the locations to be 'central' without many nominating the 'CBD area' which, for the Sunshine Coast, was taken to be Maroochydore.
- The consultation report found from this attitude survey that Maroochydore was the area most reported as the destination of travel for regular work.

The extensive nature of the consultation process for the full Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study (refer Figure 2-2) meant that for the Maroochydore Station Corridor Study the consultation process has been limited largely to key stakeholders and directly affected individuals.

Type of Submission	Corridor Options Assessment Report	Draft IAS
	Number of Submissions	
Written Submissions (including faxes and E-mail)	214	38
Written Shopfront Comments	250	24
Response to QT newsletter surveys	1057	N/A
Form Letters	547	N/A
TOTALS	**2068**	**62**

Figure 2-2: Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study consultation (IAS)

2.3 Summary of Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study findings

2.3.1 Demand, economic and overall evaluation

The three different alignments through central Maroochydore were assessed using a benefit-cost ratio and multi-criteria analysis. The results of the benefit-cost ratio indicate that an ordinary (not guided) busway should be constructed. The results of the multi-criteria analysis showed the railway to be the best mode for all alignments. The railway had the highest patronage forecast, assuming a combination of Brisbane bound and local area traffic.

A 30-minute headway on services was adopted for Brisbane and a 15-minute headway was adopted for services on the Sunshine Coast. The estimated capital expenditure was $399 million (1999 dollars).

2.3.2 Maroochydore CBD alignment and station location

Three different alignments through central Maroochydore were considered by the Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study project in the Corridor Options Assessment Report (September 1998). These were a western alignment and an eastern alignment as well as an at-motorway alignment.

The location on the Sunshine Motorway was supported by a number of landowners (as their lands would not be affected directly) and, at that stage, by the Maroochy Shire Council as it would keep rail out of the central business district. However, it was rejected by the consultants as it would discourage many potential users (with up to 30-60% switching mode to car), besides being inconsistent with official Maroochy Shire planning schemes for the central business district.

The western alignment (“L2”) was planned to follow closely the route of the then proposed “Southern Access Link” (now Maroochy Boulevard) from the Sunshine Motorway to a station on Southern Drive adjacent to Plaza Parade.

The eastern alignment (“L1”) would leave the Sunshine Motorway corridor at the same location, but then curve to the northeast through the Horton Park Golf Course before terminating in central Maroochydore adjacent to Horton Parade.

The L1 alignment was considered the preferred alignment by the draft COAR Report on the grounds that it provided a railway station in the heart of the traditional town centre of Maroochydore, provided better access to current and predicted centres of employment and gave a better overall land use result. On the other hand, there was much stronger support for L2 following community consultation, particularly from directly affected landowners who rejected resumption and other property impacts that the eastern alignment would cause.

Ultimately, the Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study report recommended the western (L2) alignment into Maroochydore.

2.3.3 Final Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study recommendations

The final Caboolture to Maroochydore Study recommendation is for a heavy-rail alignment linking Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast Airport via Caloundra and Maroochydore (Figure 2-3, below).

The corridor leaves the North Coast Main Line at Beerwah before turning east to Pelican Waters then northwards, passing to the east of Caloundra and along the established Multi Modal Transport Corridor through Kawana Waters to southern Mooloolaba. It then runs along the west side of the Sunshine Motorway, crossing over to the east side at Sugar Road, in south Maroochydore. The line then follows the north/east side of the motorway, across Maroochy River and north to a terminal station at the Sunshine Coast Airport.

There is a branch line into central Maroochydore, leaving the main line near the intersection of Maroochy Boulevard and the Sunshine Motorway, heading due north to a station on Southern Drive, adjacent to Plaza Parade. A triangle junction is proposed, allowing trains to enter Maroochydore from the north and depart to the south (and vice-versa) as well as through trains bypassing Maroochydore altogether.

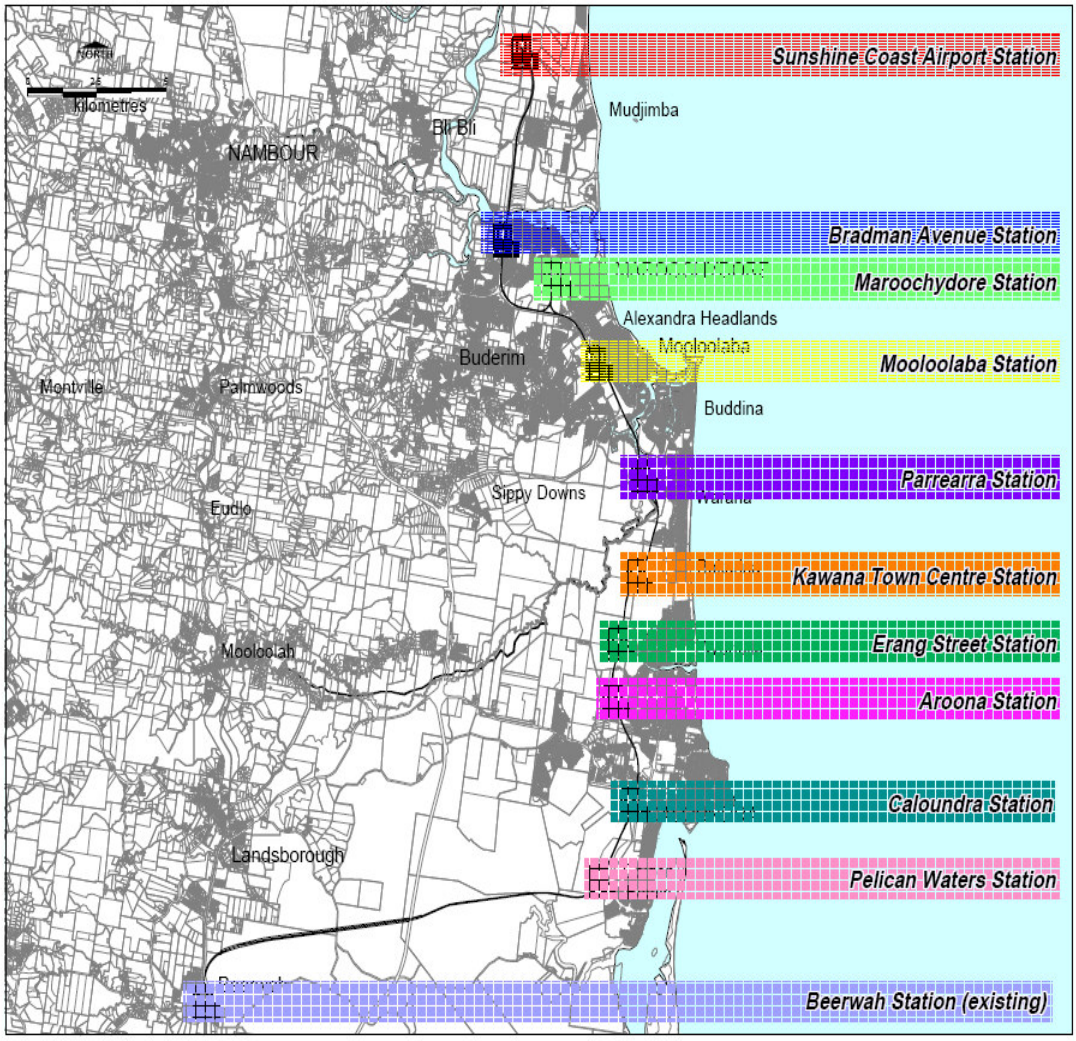

Figure 2-3: Final alignment and stations (IAS)

2.3.4 Timeframes

The original Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study proposed a phased introduction of services onto the preferred corridor identified in that study with an interim busway and rail progressively constructed post 2015 (Figure 2-4). The South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program 2009-2026 (SEQIPP) indicates construction commencing in the period from 2013-14 to 2018-19 and extending through the period 2019-20 to 2025/26.

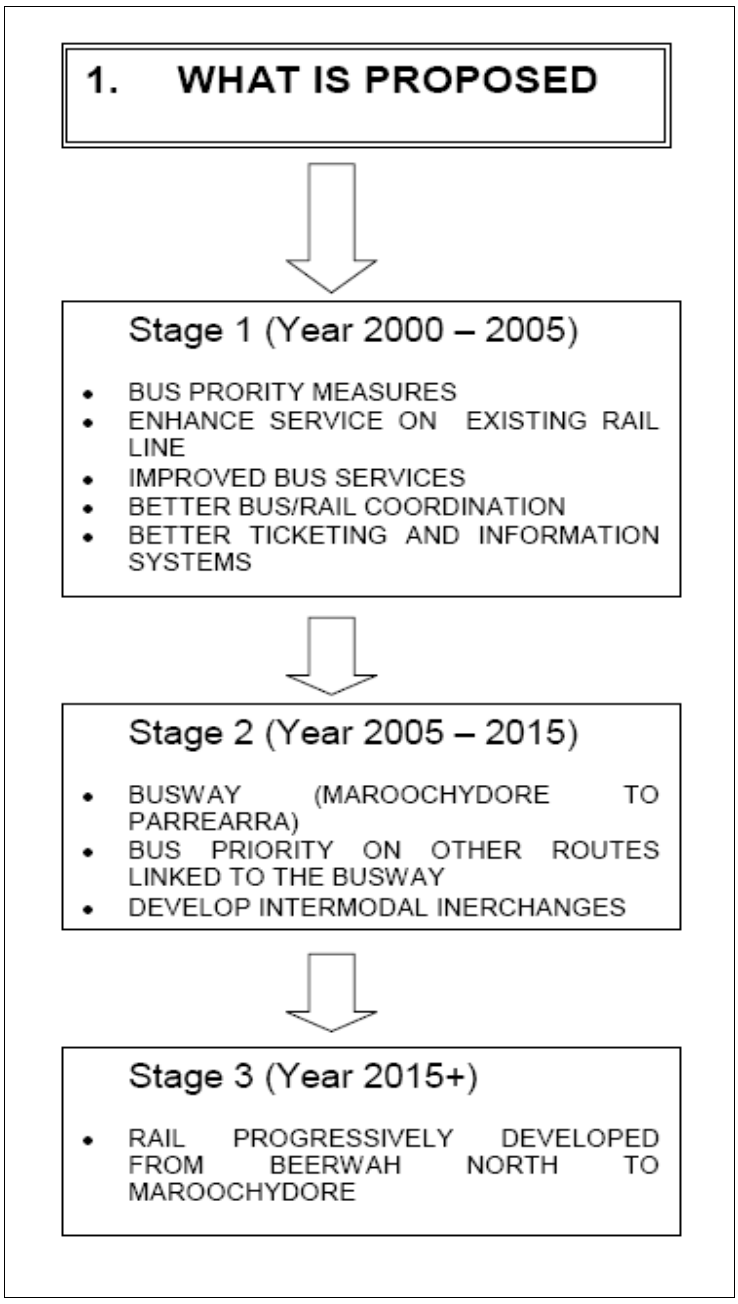

Figure 2-4: Proposed Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study implementation (IAS)