

# Noosa Transport Strategy 2017 – 2027



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# Noosa's Transport Vision

Noosa Shire enjoys an efficient, free flowing, innovative transport system that enhances resident and visitor experiences, and results in sustainable environmental outcomes.

## Principles

- 1 Encourage transport options that meet the needs of both locals and visitors.
- 2 Prioritise our focus on moving people and goods rather than on moving cars.
- 3 Provide infrastructure and services that are designed to give priority to pedestrians, cyclists, scooters and public transport over private cars.
- 4 Improve the safety and amenity of pedestrians and cyclists in our transport infrastructure.
- 5 Address peak time traffic congestion by reducing traffic rather than increasing road capacity.
- 6 Accommodate changes in transportation technology.
- 7 Align our organisational transport options and usage with Council's Zero Emissions Strategy and the above principles.
- 8 Design for, encourage and facilitate transport options that reduce the emissions produced by our community.

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# Challenges

Some of the key transport challenges in Noosa are summarised below.

## Number of Visitors

In holiday seasons, on long weekends and coinciding with major events, the pressure on Noosa's road network and car parking spaces becomes strained and open space gives way to parked cars.

Data from Tourism Noosa indicates that in 2016, approximately 58% of all visitors to Noosa were day trip visitors. Currently, the vast majority of day visitors arrive by car.

Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay Regional Councils combined are forecast to grow by close to 437,000 residents over the next 25 years, to a combined 2041 population of 1,150,000 (Draft SEQ Regional Plan, 2016). This is likely to significantly increase the number of day visitors to Noosa.

## Congestion at peak times

Buses currently get stuck in congestion during peak periods and offer no efficiency over the private car other than not having to find a car park.

Regardless of how many people adopt alternative transport modes, it may not result in noticeably less cars on the road because spare capacity and empty car parking spaces are soon filled by others.

Creating more capacity on the road network and more car parking spaces in key destinations can attract more people than the destinations can reasonably accommodate.

## Car Dependence

For most people, driving a car is a way of life and their preferred mode of transport. Cars seem more convenient and affordable than public transport although the true costs of running a car (purchase price, rego, maintenance, fuel etc.) are not always considered when making a journey by car.

A combined 44% of jobs in Noosa Shire are within the retail, hospitality, accommodation, and healthcare sectors. The nature of this work (shift work, late hours) means that active transport (walking and cycling) may not be appropriate and public transport is unlikely to be available.

## Topography & Climate

Noosa includes some significant hilly terrain which can be challenging for pedestrians and cyclists.

Noosa's subtropical climate is part of its attraction as a place to live, however, at times the temperature is not conducive to active transport (walking and cycling). Summer temperatures often rise above 30 degrees and there are frequent rainy days.

Reducing emissions from transport activity and developing a resilient transport network will be needed to respond to energy risks and climate change.

## Funding

Unlike other parts of South East Queensland, Noosa Shire is not reliant on or predicting a high level of growth over the next 20 years. Given the limitation on future development, the expectation for new infrastructure is also limited. State investment in Noosa's roads and transport infrastructure, as a low growth area, will be dwarfed by investment further to the South.

## Shortfalls in services and infrastructure

Approximately one-third of Noosa's population is in the hinterland area with limited to no public transport services. The Noosa hinterland also has a higher proportion of young people aged 5-19 years.

The large TransLink buses, and also advertising on buses, do not fit with the Noosa look and feel.

A connected off-road pathway network is needed to cater for mobility scooters, cyclists and pedestrians. Noosa's many roundabouts can make it difficult to safely cross the road on foot or by bike.



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## Desired Outcomes

- 1 Residents and workers of Noosa Shire are able to go about their everyday business without having to be reliant on private vehicles.
- 2 The transport network is designed to facilitate and encourage an overall modal shift away from private car use towards more sustainable transport modes including walking, cycling, public transport, electric vehicles and motor scooters/cycles.
- 3 The transport system supports the preferred pattern of development including the local centres hierarchy, and is consistent with our planning scheme.
- 4 Key regional destinations such as hospitals, airports and universities are readily accessible by public transport from Noosa Shire.
- 5 All schools are safely and conveniently accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.
- 6 Parking is closely managed through effective controls.
- 7 There has been a change in behaviour by people in Noosa with a reduction in the number choosing to drive and park cars in congested coastal areas.
- 8 Park-and-Ride facilities have been provided to assist with managing visitor travel demand where supported by transport services.
- 9 The transport system supports the local lifestyle and also tourism by delivering both active and public transport infrastructure that meets the needs of locals and visitors.
- 10 Local public transport routes offer efficient and frequent services.
- 11 Road crossings and associated pedestrian networks are safe and accessible for mobility scooters, cyclists and pedestrians.
- 12 The community at all levels is educated about the costs and benefits of their travel choices, allowing people to make informed decisions.
- 13 Alternative transport is cost effective for users and providers as compared with private car use.
- 14 New technologies are being used in our transport solutions.
- 15 Transport initiatives result in significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions.





# Community and Stakeholder Feedback

Noosa Council engaged with consultants, key stakeholders and the community to understand both the transport challenges in Noosa as well as the possible solutions. Council has welcomed the hundreds of ideas and suggestions on addressing Noosa's traffic and transport issues.

The Noosa community and key stakeholders were very active through the Your Say Noosa website, writing letters, sending emails and talking to Councillors and staff. At last count, Council received over 1,200 comments during the consultation process.

Residents, employees and visitors alike are becoming increasingly frustrated with traffic congestion and parking difficulties in Noosa's hotspots during peak holiday periods, on weekends and also during major events. In 2016, approximately 58% of visitors to Noosa were day-trip visitors with the vast majority arriving by car.

Population growth south of Noosa Shire is expected to increase by 30% over the next 10 years, thereby increasing the pressure on Noosa's road network even further. For visitors who arrive by car, the message could be "give your car a holiday while you relax in Noosa".

Congestion in key hotspots cannot be addressed in isolation. Rather, any changes to car parking or road configurations needs to address the impact on surrounding areas. In order to maintain the laid-back Noosa lifestyle, it is important to resist the pressure to increase capacity for more cars and more car parking.

While congestion and car parking may be an issue for coastal areas, lack of public transport services and long distances between town centres is a concern for some hinterland residents. Hinterland residents are particularly car dependent. Dispersed populations often make public transport unviable.



A regional, low-density area like Noosa is unlikely to experience the levels of public transport use that high density metropolitan areas enjoy. Demand responsive transport solutions, as well as other community ride sharing services, have the potential to offer alternative transport options to ensure residents are able to access key services and facilities.

There are a number of transport-related areas which fall under the jurisdiction of the Queensland State Government. These include: public transport (bus and train services), plus certain main roads and associated road intersections. The Noosa National Park, including the car park at the end of Park Road, is also State controlled. Noosa Council will continue to collaborate with and advocate to the relevant State Government bodies to address transport matters which fall outside of Council's direct control.

Transport is a complex issue and agreement on solutions can be contentious. The development of this Transport Strategy has been informed by the suggestions of residents and key stakeholders plus the expert advice of traffic and transport consultants.



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## Prioritising the solutions

In order to address current and emerging transport and traffic issues, a change is needed in how residents and visitors travel in Noosa Shire. This Transport Strategy summarises approaches that act as incentives for change as well as actions that act as disincentives to those who increase traffic congestion and parking problems at peak times. To discourage travel by car, there needs to be a range of convenient alternative transport and parking options on offer.

Some initiatives are designed to bring about a voluntary change in travel choices. Such incentives include:

- park-and-ride services
- cycling and pedestrian pathway improvements
- ride sharing and carpooling
- public transport improvements.

Other initiatives are designed to increase the cost and/or reduce the attractiveness of travelling by car compared to sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling or catching public transport. Disincentives to travelling by car could include:

- time-limited car parking
- paid car parking.

The purpose of paid parking would be to provide a disincentive to travelling by car and may also provide revenue to fund alternative transport options.

Noosa Council seeks to actively commit to environmentally, socially and economically sustainable transport and be bold in this commitment. Council has prioritised strategies based on the following assessment criteria:

- What is currently the most pressing issue?
- What is “do-able” in the short term (1-2 years)?
- What will make a significant impact?
- What is cost effective?
- What fits best with the Noosa look-and-feel?

Many of the strategies are subject to investigation, funding and trials. The Transport Strategy will see Council try some solutions (such as Park-and-Ride services during peak congestion times), introduce some new ideas (a Noosa style shuttle bus), along with some car parking changes. Some trials will be successful, some may be temporary and others may not work, but Council is striving to achieve the transport vision for Noosa of an efficient, free flowing, innovative transport system that enhances resident and visitor experiences, and results in sustainable environmental outcomes.

# What's already underway?

There are a number of transport initiatives which are “business as usual” for Noosa Council. These are already addressing transport challenges and improving transport outcomes for the Shire. Existing initiatives include:

- Christmas and Easter Free Holiday Buses
- Council Cabs for people with a disability and people over 60 years old
- Boreen-Point Tewantin Flexilink
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant bus stops and bus shelters
- Collaboration and partnerships with TransLink for public transport service improvements (e.g. Electric bus trial)
- Collaboration with Tourism Noosa to focus on high value tourism
- Council’s Emission Reduction Policy and collaboration with Zero Emissions Noosa
- The new Noosa Plan and its implications for transport, traffic and car parking
- Recommendations from the Noosa Traffic Study 2016-2036
- Wayfinding signage
- Scooter and motorbike parking
- Off-road pathways (e.g. Ben Lexcen Drive)

The Transport Strategy has links to regional plans and other Noosa Council strategies as detailed in Attachment 1: Background: Transport Strategy Development.



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# What's coming up first?

The following strategies have been proposed over the next 1-2 years (2017/18 & 2018/19).

1. Investigate Park-and-Ride services and conduct a detailed study to determine the demand, preferred location, and likely capacity of a successful Park-and-Ride facility with links to shuttle services.
2. Subject to investigation, and in keeping with the Noosa look-and-feel, introduce car parking management controls (e.g.paid parking) in congested areas. Paid parking may allow for variable controls for residents and non-residents, peak and off-peak periods, and paid and free parking at Park-and-Ride facilities.
3. Subject to discussions with TransLink, trial a high frequency Noosa style shuttle bus to service key destinations.
4. Implement Walk and Ride to School programs with supportive schools that experience significant traffic and congestion issues.
5. Investigate the feasibility of priority transport lanes for sustainable transport modes (buses, bicycles, scooters, electric vehicles etc).

In addition there are a number of medium to long term strategies (some of which are dependent on the implementation of these short term strategies) which will be reviewed as part of the ongoing Transport Strategy prioritisation process.

The Noosa Council Zero Emissions Strategy is targeted specifically at Council operations and activities. Council acknowledges its role in providing leadership for the community's transition towards a zero emissions future and aims to inspire change by demonstrating best practice options to the community.



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## Park-and-Ride

Consultant Parsons Brinckerhoff (2016) identified Park-and-Ride as a key strategy to manage traffic demand associated with travel within Noosa. This would provide visitors, employees and residents with a location to park their vehicles before they enter the busy coastal areas and hence reduce congestion and demand on local feeder streets.

To date Noosa Council has trialled temporary Park-and-Ride services during peak times such as Christmas and Easter by utilising sports grounds and ovals.

Key features of a successful Park-and-Ride are:

- located on main arterial roads on approaches to the busy Noosa coastal areas
- serviced with frequent, quality bus links to key destinations
- security/surveillance, visitor information and a kiosk/cafe may add to the attraction and usability of the facility
- more affordable and convenient than parking in the congested areas near the beach or river.

Council will conduct a detailed study to determine the demand, preferred location, and likely capacity of a successful Park-and-Ride facility with links to shuttle services.

*A Park-and-Ride is necessary for Noosa as it is in many other popular small destinations around the world. Day trippers to Noosa will always be a problem unless visitors get the message that the town parking is full during holiday periods*  
*Your Say Respondent*

## Car Parking

Consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff (2016) recommended that Noosa Council consider managing the supply of car parking rather than continuing the philosophy of supplying free parking in response to demand.

Management controls include:

- Control by time (e.g. short term vs. long term)
- Control by price (free vs. paid)
- Control by type (e.g. resident vs. non-resident).

They note that it is important to resist the pressure to increase capacity for more cars and more car parking. It is neither affordable nor practical to attempt to cater for all traffic during our busiest periods. Rather, it is more important to provide for a high level of service during the rest of the year and create alternative transport options for peak periods, such as free bus and Park-and-Ride services.

*I would like to see driving/parking restricted in Hasting St. Shuttle buses to drop off from all directions (smaller buses). I may go there more often if I could hop on a bus & be assured of another to get me back home. – Your Say Respondent*

In an effort to change travel behaviour and reduce traffic congestion, Council will be investigating car parking management controls with a view to implementing changes to car parking in the next 1-2 years.

A locality based approach will be used to find solutions for each precinct based on the level of traffic congestion and car parking availability. Consideration will be given to residents and non-residents, Park-and-Ride services, peak periods and off-peak periods, as well as the impact on surrounding areas.

*Some drivers think the cost of a parking ticket to overstay the 2-hour limit in Hastings Street is “cheap parking” - Your Say Respondents*

Any management controls involving paid parking would be in-keeping with the Noosa Design Principles, and would utilise ‘new generation’ payment systems such as number plate recognition, smart phone apps, etc. as opposed to traditional parking meters. Given the advances in technology, it may be possible to turn on and off paid parking depending on the levels of traffic congestion and demand for car parking.

Paid parking is designed to be a disincentive to driving, therefore revenue generated from paid parking could be used to fund alternative transport options such as Park-and-Ride services, Noosa style shuttle bus, walking and cycling paths, etc.

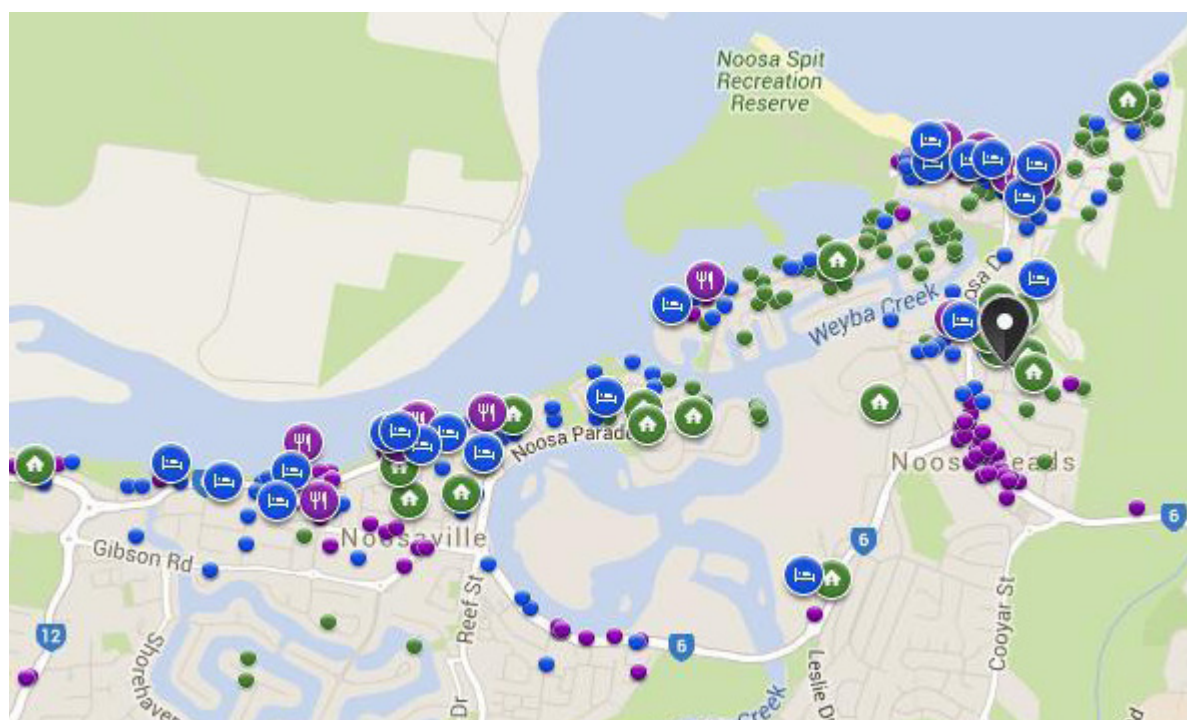


## Noosa Style Bus

In many parts of the world, the local transport has become an iconic not-to-be-missed experience associated with the place itself. Examples are the London red double decker bus, San Francisco cable car or Island “coconut” bus.

The aim of the Noosa style shuttle bus is to provide a not-to-be-missed transport experience associated with a visit to Noosa. However, more importantly, it may assist in alleviating traffic congestion in our most popular coastal areas.

Consultants Parsons Brinkerhoff (2016) sourced from the travel site tripadvisor.com, the following map showing all the restaurants, hotels and other tourist accommodation recorded by that site in the coastal area of Noosa.



*Restaurants and accommodation - Noosa Coastal Area*

Passengers could jump on the shuttle bus without the hassle of circling for a car park. Branding would ensure that the shuttle is instantly recognisable for the service route it provides.

Imagery that evokes positive emotions or pride in our place, like that used on Noosa’s mobile library, might be considered for a Noosa style bus.

*I like the idea of small frequent electric shuttle buses with Noosa branding. If done correctly these could become a tourist attraction in themselves! – Your Say respondent*



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## Walk and Ride to School Program

Traffic congestion at drop off and pick up times is an issue for some schools in Noosa Shire. Students being dropped off at school in the morning also coincide with people getting to work which in turn creates traffic and congestion in some areas of the Noosa road network.

A Walk and Ride to School Program is a behaviour change program which encourages parents, carers, and teachers to consider using alternatives to driving a car to school. These include walking, cycling, scooters, skateboards, carpooling or catching a bus. Schools are frequently catchment based, meaning many people live within a few kilometres of their school.

This makes it ideal to encourage walking or riding bikes and scooters. Active travel to school may not be possible all the time, but replacing even one or two trips a week with a sustainable mode can make a difference.

Benefits of a Walk and Ride to School Program:

- Reduces traffic congestion and parking issues around the school.
- Safety when students walk and cycle in a group or with a parent. Cars around the school gate pose a significant danger to students. Less cars makes the school a safer place.
- Increases physical activity. A Walk and Ride to School Program is a great initiative for health and well-being.
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions associated with driving cars.
- People out and about walking and cycling create a sense of community and foster social interaction. This means people can keep an eye out for each others' well-being.

*The weekday commute times could be eased greatly by encouraging children to cycle or walk to school. Most schools have good cycle paths running nearby –  
Your Say Respondent*

Park and Walk/Ride to School days, class competitions, bicycle education, and national event days could be part of the solution to address congestion around schools.

The focus will be on primary schools. Establishing healthy habits for travelling to and from school at a young age will hopefully continue into high school. Schools will be invited to participate through an expression of interest process.

The success of the program will be dependent on support from school communities, in particular those schools that take ownership of the program to reduce traffic congestion and create a safer, healthier more vibrant school environment.

## Priority Transport Lanes

A priority transport lane is designed to provide an express lane for sustainable transport modes such as buses, bicycles, e-bicycles, electric vehicles, etc.

Council received community feedback suggesting a priority transport lane along Noosa Parade and/or Noosa Drive. A dedicated lane generally improves the speed and reliability for buses and operates during peak hours. An efficient priority transport lane could potentially make using sustainable transport (buses, bikes, etc.) a more attractive option than driving.

*In general our road network is pretty good. If you really want to get people out of cars and onto buses, scooters, bikes etc. do something very brave and replace the parallel parking with priority transit lanes for everything other than cars (e.g. Noosa Parade). You still have a problem however if you have two lane bridges –  
Your Say Respondent*

Council will thoroughly investigate the feasibility of a priority transport lanes at suitable locations.

As with any traffic solution, there are potential impacts and flow-on effects that would need to be considered:

- limited space and narrow bridges which create issues for merging traffic
- potential conflict between bicycle riders and buses
- maintaining the Noosa look and feel
- loss of existing on-street parking.



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## What else?

The Transport strategy will be reviewed at least annually in keeping with rapidly advancing transport innovations to ensure the strategies remain relevant.

The following strategies, to be considered further over the next few years, are in no particular order and will be reviewed as part of the ongoing Transport Strategy prioritisation process.

- Consider ways to encourage the use of motorbikes, scooters and electric bicycles including priority parking.
- Review and prioritise all missing links of walking and cycling pathways.
- Collaborate with community/private sector to establish electric charging stations at key locations.
- Develop a Noosa visitor transport information pack containing details on how to have a “car free & carefree” holiday in Noosa.
- Investigate use of existing pathways as a network for motorised scooters as well as for walkers and cyclists.
- Consider ways to increase the uptake of commuter cycling.
- Consider options for the creation of car free or shared zones which restrict vehicle access to a street or area for the exclusive use of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Consider expanding the Flexilink service to other locations e.g. Kin Kin
- Investigate the potential for Noosa Council to operate its own public transport services.
- Conduct an audit of community buses (Aged Care, resorts, RSL, school buses etc) to identify opportunities for synergies with meeting shire-wide transport needs.
- Encourage the development of a suite of Apps (cycling, park & ride locations, pathways etc.) to facilitate uptake of sustainable transport.
- Investigate establishment of community/private sector bike hire scheme at specific locations (electric/non-electric).
- Investigate using public transport ferries on the Noosa river.
- Investigate the provision of End of Trip facilities (showers, lockers, bicycle parking etc.) in the public domain where there are high employment numbers e.g. Noosa Junction.
- Investigate alternative access options to Noosa Woods.
- Investigate alternative access options to Little Cove.
- Research and investigate smart technology transport solutions and their application to Noosa e.g. Autonomous or driverless buses.

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# Innovation

Transport and transport services around the world are rapidly evolving. Noosa Council has a history of being innovative and embracing new ideas and technologies. Council aims to continue to embrace innovative transport solutions and keep a watching brief on smart technology and transport research to address our transport service and infrastructure needs.

Innovations have the potential to significantly change the way we get from A to B. Below are just a few examples of the future in transport.

- Autonomous vehicles are expected to be a reality with car manufacturers and technology companies anticipating that fully autonomous vehicles will become available for purchase by 2020 (NRMA, 2016). The potential benefits of autonomous vehicles include:
  - Improved road safety through eliminating human error which accounts for 90% of car accidents in the United States.
  - Reduced congestion through vehicle to vehicle communication.
  - Parking efficiencies with autonomous vehicles dropping off passengers and proceeding to remote parking locations.
  - Greater mobility for those people unable to drive a car (older people, children etc.).
- The Western Australian government is trialing a driverless electric shuttle bus in Perth. The tourist shuttle will transport up to 15 passengers and has a maximum speed of 45km/hr. The driverless bus is fitted with multi-sensor technology that allows it to map the environment, detect obstacles on the road and interpret traffic signs
- Data sensors in the road network which allow vehicles to communicate and interact, locate available parking spaces, respond to traffic congestion, and even turn on and off street lighting.
- Mobile phone apps which provide updates regarding traffic congestion, Park-and-Ride locations, parking availability etc.
- Smart bicycles that can pair with a smart phone to provide the cyclist with directions, alert cyclists to passing cars and even act as a charging dock for USB devices.
- Transportation as a Service (TaaS) or Mobility as a Service (MaaS) – Similar to a mobile phone plan or music subscription, TaaS/MaaS takes a value based approach to understanding individual lifestyle needs and then designs personalised products and transport services. It brings every kind of transport option together into a single intuitive mobile app which seamlessly combines all transport options from various providers.

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# Evaluation

The Noosa Transport Strategy has a ten year timespan and will be reviewed at least annually in keeping with transport innovations.

Where possible, key performance indicators will be developed and baseline data will be collected. Example performance indicators may include (but are not limited to):

- Number and percentage reduction in private vehicles in congestion hot spots at peak periods
- Number and percentage reduction in primary school students being driven to school
- Number and percentage increase in public transport use in Noosa
- Number and percentage increase in taxi and ride sharing use in Noosa
- Number and percentage increase in cycling and scooter use in Noosa

There are a number of stakeholders relevant to the success of the Transport Strategy including TransLink, Tourism Noosa, various community groups and business associations, and private operators. Throughout the life of the Transport Strategy, stakeholder feedback will be sought as part of the evaluation process.

The monitoring of key actions will ensure that the Transport Strategy remains focused and effective.