

# Transport and logistics

*John Brisbin: Ideas for Mareeba Shire.*



One of the key advantages that Mareeba enjoys is its location with respect to major transport routes. We are ideally situated for all of the traffic coming off the Cape, and for all of the production of both our local area, but also developments to the northwest (Mitchell) and west (Gilbert).

Roads are not cheap or quick. Rail is even more difficult. Airports are expensive and currently limited in their applications. So when we consider how to support and accelerate the competitive advantages that Mareeba can offer, we need to do so in a very careful manner.

Council and local members (State and Federal) have all been vocal in the push for improvement to the road network. There is no fault or lack of effort there...rather, the problem is that \*everyone else\* also wants the same thing. How to decide who's next in the queue? The bureaucratic solution is to rank the relative merit of all proposals in a big algorithm and let it spit out the calculated priorities.

This is seen as a more fair and equitable approach to all the competition for scarce road funding, and it also provide a welcome relief to the politicians since they are able to claim (quite rightly): "It's not my decision...we have to trust the process and wait for our priority to come to the top of the queue."

It's funny how our culture admires people who can stand patiently and politely in a queue. There's something comforting about a group of law-abiding and civilised people forming themselves up into an orderly line. But woe to the adventurer who dares to cut to the front! We loudly condemn such behaviour, but I think (secretly) we all wish to get to the front soon as we can.

Go to India and see how people negotiate a similar situation. It looks like bedlam: people crowding and jostling to the front without any apologies. Somehow there is no rancour or hidden resentment though. Everyone accepts that individual effort is needed, and someone else is just as likely to get

to the front before you. Little old grannies are quite capable of elbowing their way amongst the mass and arriving at the head of the queue without any assistance.

So how do we approach this as local Councillors?

My feeling is that we need to respect the priorities of other regions, but we need to push like heck to get our agenda in front of the queue as often as possible.

Council staff are invaluable players in this process, as are the various specialist consultants who can provide data and models that support our case.

Here's an example from proposals prepared for submission to the federal government regarding the Ootann Road:

Logistics inefficiencies are holding back the development of far north Queensland, leading to productivity inefficiencies and stymying commercial investment:

- costs flow through the economy to end consumers,
- leading to increased living costs (up to 16% for fruit and vegetables) corresponding with lower standards of living;
- and increased business costs impact commercial investment and economic expansion.

These impacts hold back the capacity of the region to be an economic contributor to State and National economies.

Roads are one of our great public achievements. My father was a civil engineer in the heyday of highway building and suburban expansion in the USA. I grew up listening to him talk about signal synchronisation, loop detectors, and the logic of merge lanes.

I look forward to contributing to the challenges and opportunities of Mareeba Shire's road network. And I'm keen to see what's coming next in the evolution of our capacity to move people, goods, and services across the physical landscape!

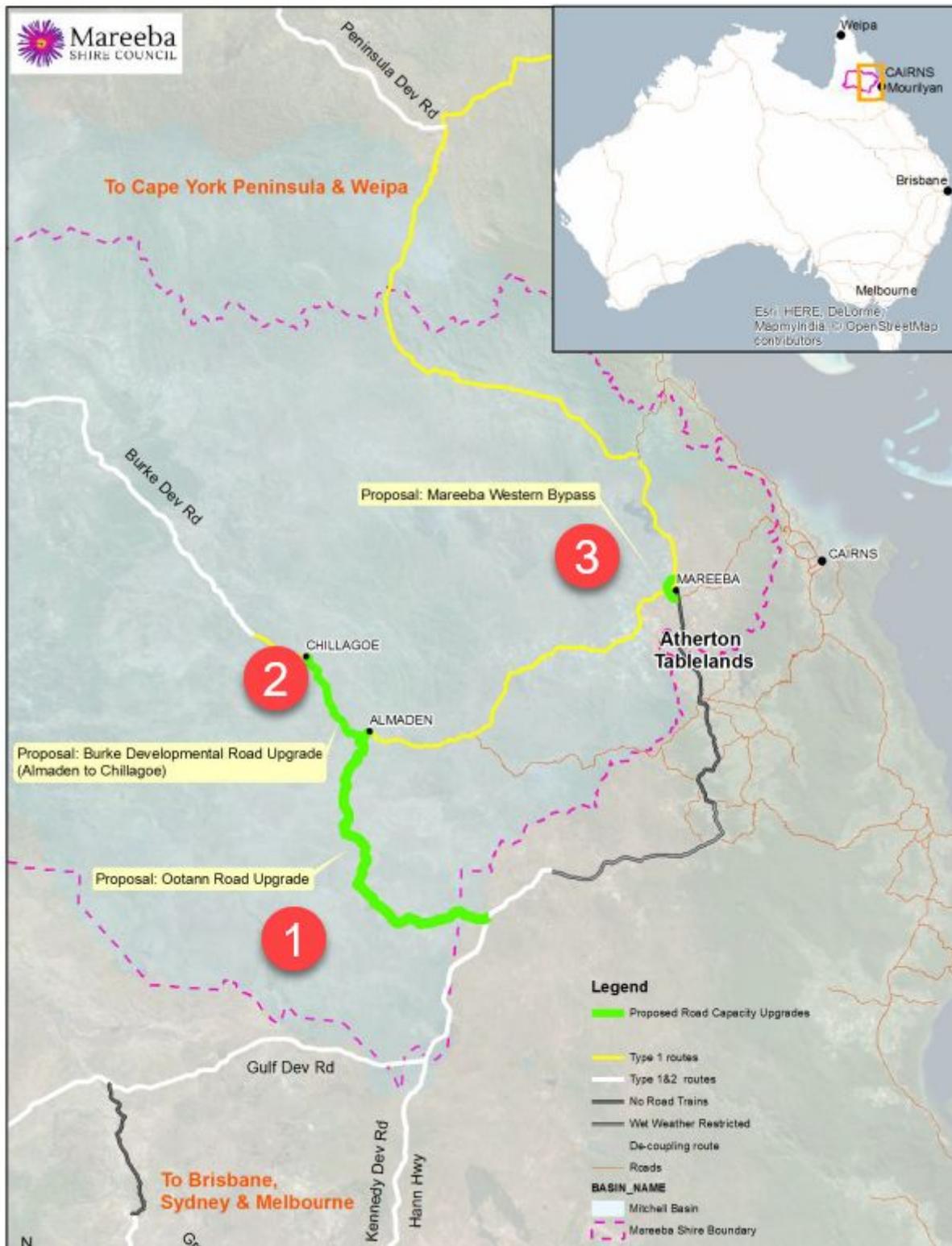


## Three big projects

In 2017 Council put forward three big road projects that would deliver strategic advantages to our Shire:

1. Sealing the Ootann Road
2. Sealing portions of the Burke Devt Road between Almaden-Chillagoe

3. Constructing Mareeba's Western Bypass



The current status of these projects is quite positive. The ...

## Western Bypass

The Western Bypass, in my mind, is one of the top strategic priorities for our future development because it resolves the tension on Byrnes St.

Currently, Byrnes St is our “main street” for major retail and civic activities. But it is also a section of State-controlled road and is the only route for heavy vehicles tranistting Mareeba. As our shire and town grow, these two uses for the one stretch of road are going to be increasingly in conflict.

Indeed, there are already signs that Mareeba’s growth as both a “liveable community” and an “efficient logistics hub” is being stifled due to the situation on Byrnes St.

Heavy vehicle bypasses around a CBD are common and well-understood. They take some incidental traffic away from retail shops, but the overall effect is far more beneficial.

The Western Bypass would allow us to pitch both benefits of Mareeba to targeted groups: a more liveable and safe CBD for new residents and businesses, and a more efficient road network for movements to our Industrial Estate and access to our production regions.



## Kuranda Range Road

Basically, it's hard to grow Mareeba without improved transport across the coastal range. Just about everyone reckons the problem will be solved with a bigger road. Given the amount of cheerleading this concept has already received, I'm not sure more barracking from me is the best use of my time (or yours).

As your Councillor, a big part of my job will be to lobby and advocate for a growing, confident, and sustainable Shire. That's a job I take very seriously.

A bigger road will bring some benefits, and it will also bring some un-intended consequences. That's the way life works. Who knows what sort of demands and constraints are just around the corner. All kinds of new technologies and social expectations are coming at us. Maybe locking a bunch of capital up in highway engineering will turn out to be folly in a few years' time.

Instead of locking ourselves into one "silver bullet" answer, perhaps we can also think about some "outside the box" ideas.

I believe that if we keep ourselves focussed on what we really want, we can find plenty of ways to keep improving our situation. After all, what we want is the prosperity and opportunity, not the actual bitumen.

## **Summary: My positions**

Here are some indications of how I stand. This is where I start from, but it will not be where I finish.

Every decision Councillors make is based on the specific situation and circumstances. This is the role of a good Councillor: to weigh up the various considerations, discuss, and reach the best possible decision in each situation. And then be accountable for that decision.

### **1: Mareeba Western By-pass is a game-changer**

We need a solid proposal to take to our local state and federal members, and to the agencies, so that our case can be heard loud and clear.

Any approvals or decisions that Council need to take to support this project should be brought forward as a priority.

### **2: Provide improved support for logistics**

Logistics companies need clear access routes, affordable power, excellent waste management services, space for facilities, and a trained workforce.

Mareeba needs to be continuously positioning itself as a logistics centre with excellent competitive advantages. Council can assist in this process, and Councillors can take a role in being strong advocates for development.

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**Online version:** <http://brisbin4mareeba.solutions/ideas/transport-and-logistics/>

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*To the extent that this material constitutes a political message, it is authorised by:*

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