

Submission: Macquarie Point Northern Access Road – Concept Design

1. Overview

COTA Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft concept designs for the Northern Access Road connecting the Tasman Highway with the Macquarie Point Precinct. We note the project is intended to support a northern entry into the Port of Hobart, improve connectivity, and support public transport operations during stadium events, with construction anticipated to commence in late 2026.

COTA’s interest is ensuring the precinct and its supporting infrastructure are safe, accessible and legible for older people and people with disability – not just on event days but, crucially, in everyday use.

2. Key position

Universal access and pedestrian safety must be treated as core design requirements, not discretionary “urban realm” add-ons that can be reduced later through value engineering.

3. COTA’s priority outcomes and design requirements

3.1 Safe, comfortable, walking and wheeling routes (universal design)

The Northern Access Road will change movement patterns and introduce higher volumes of vehicles at times (including potentially heavy vehicles and event traffic).

To avoid creating a barrier, COTA requests clear commitments that the final design will include:

- Continuous step-free paths of travel along desire lines (not just “compliant” isolated segments), suitable for mobility aids and slower walkers.
- Safe road crossings that prioritise people on foot and wheels:
 - generous crossing times;
 - refuge islands where crossing widths are significant;
 - tactile ground surface indicators;
 - strong lighting and clear sightlines; and
 - crossings placed where people actually need to cross.
- Physical separation/buffers between pedestrian routes and traffic lanes where speeds/volumes are higher.
- Wayfinding that works for older users (simple, consistent, high-contrast signage; clear landmarks; minimal “decision points”).
- Seating and rest points at reasonable intervals on key pedestrian routes (important for stamina, balance and heat/cold management).

These elements are essential if the road is to “improve connectivity” for all users rather than reduce it for those with lower mobility.

3.2 Event bus plaza and the “last 500 metres”

We note the concept includes a dedicated bus plaza for event operations.

For many older patrons, the success of public transport hinges on what happens after they alight - shelter, seating, safety, legibility, and manageable walking distances.

COTA requests that the detailed design explicitly addresses:

- Shelter, seating, lighting, and accessible toilets associated with event bus operations.
- Clear and accessible pick-up/drop-off arrangements (including taxis/rideshare and accessible passenger set-down), with safe pedestrian priority routes that are separated from vehicle conflict points.
- Crowd management measures that do not force slower walkers into fast-moving flows or require excessive detours.

3.3 Construction impacts and temporary access

Given construction is expected to start in late 2026, COTA requests early commitment to a construction management approach that protects access for people with limited mobility:

- safe temporary routes, clear signage, and good lighting;
- maintaining step-free access where reasonably practicable; and
- proactive communication of closures/changes in formats accessible to older people.

3.4 Off-site links must be funded and delivered, not assumed

Accessible outcomes will depend heavily on off-site footpaths and connections beyond the immediate project footprint. COTA encourages the Department to make these enabling works explicit - funded, staged early, and publicly reported - so accessible connectivity is achieved in practice (not just “within the precinct”).

4. What COTA is asking the Department to do

COTA requests the Department of State Growth:

- Publish (or clearly commit to) a universal access/ inclusive design framework for the project that will guide detailed design and be auditable.
- Confirm that pedestrian and wheeled access outcomes (continuous step-free routes, safe crossings, seating, lighting, wayfinding) are core scope, protected from later reductions.
- Provide clear information on how the design will cater for older people and people with disability during event operations, including the bus plaza interface and accessible set-down arrangements.
- Commit to transparent reporting via the promised consultation report and an ongoing stakeholder engagement process as detailed design proceeds.

5. Closing

COTA Tasmania appreciates the opportunity to contribute during the consultation period. We would welcome further engagement as the recommended option is refined and as detailed design progresses.