



Transport
for NSW

Mr Todd Buttsworth
Research Officer
Legislative Assembly
State and Regional Development Committee
Parliament of NSW
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

17 DEC 2012

Dear Mr Buttsworth

Inquiry into inter-regional public transport

I am writing in response to your letter dated 15 November 2012 and the Committees' additional questions in relation to the above inquiry. Please find answers to your questions below:

1. How can the amount of inter-regional travel be increased?

Connecting our regions to major centres and achieving equitable access to transport requires a range of actions that create safe and fast connections for people and freight, provide access to vital services and sustain employment growth. Transport for NSW is taking action to build stronger connections between communities and create opportunities for the regions through the following projects:

Pacific Highway (M1)

One of the largest infrastructure investments in NSW – the Pacific Highway upgrade will vastly improve safety, reduce travel times and move goods more reliably. By 2014, nearly two-thirds of the Highway will be a four lane divided carriageway, with another seven per cent under construction.

Newell Highway (A39)

The Newell Highway, the longest highway in NSW running north to south through the State, will be upgraded to improve interstate accessibility, freight efficiency and safety. We are creating additional heavy vehicle rest areas, building more overtaking lanes and addressing capacity constraints.

Princes Highway (A1 - M1)

We are continuing to deliver the \$472 million upgrade of the Princes Highway between Gerringong to Bombaderry – rebuilding and resealing roads, replacing and repairing key bridges and improving safety.

Regional Transport Plans

In 2013, we will develop Regional Transport Plans for each of 10 regions in NSW to directly act on local transport needs and priorities. These plans will integrate transport with land use planning and respond to each region's future transport needs. This will improve liveability and amenity in our regions and meet travel demands from population and jobs growth.

Other key actions

More of our actions to connect local communities are:

- Improved, modern NSW Train services through timetable, fleet and targeted investment in track improvements
- Better connections between train and bus services, integrating timetables and responding to customer needs
- Additional funding to improve and strengthen community transport in regional areas
- Support for regional air services to and from Sydney Airport
- A NSW Trains Country Passenger Rail Services Strategy to renew rolling stock and increase fleet capacity to meet population growth.

2. How can CountryLink services be improved?

As an outcome of the Long Term Transport Master Plan, Transport for NSW is currently preparing a Country Passenger Rail Services Strategy to inform the future strategic direction of NSW Trains. This study will focus on delivering a better service outcome for people in regional and rural NSW by addressing issues around timetables, travel speeds, service frequency and a variety of other concerns.

3. How can CountryLink be better utilised to increase tourism in NSW?

NSW Trains and CountryLink work closely with Destination NSW to coordinate tourism promotions, including tour packages across the state and fare incentives for family and group travel. A number of annual regional events also receive significant support, such as the CountryLink Parkes Elvis Festival. The Country Passenger Rail Services Strategy investigates how CountryLink services can better facilitate further tourist-focussed initiatives. This will set the strategic agenda for further work with Destination NSW to increase tourism in NSW.

4. Integration between different travel modes has been identified as an issue in the draft master plan. How do you think there can be better integration between the transport services?

Integration between transport services is being addressed in a number of ways including through the establishment of Transport for NSW (in 2011) whose objectives of the *Transport Administration Act 1988* (s. 3D) are:

- (a) To plan for a transport system that meets the needs and expectations of the public,
- (b) To promote economic development and investment,
- (c) To provide integration at the decision-making level across all public transport modes,
- (d) To promote greater efficiency in the delivery of transport infrastructure projects,
- (e) To promote the safe and reliable delivery of public transport and freight services.

The NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan outlines a clear direction for transport over the next 20 years, building on current commitments and underpinned by a record \$13.2 billion investment in 2012-13. It identifies the role of each transport mode in meeting future needs including rail, road, buses, ferries, cycling, and walking. The Plan also supports development of a freight network that maximises the benefits to the economy.

The extensive consultation undertaken in support of the Master Plan has confirmed that some of our key regions have more specific local transport needs and priorities. Transport for NSW has also started work on a detailed Regional Transport Plan for each of the regions identified in the Master Plan.

Regional Transport Plans will be developed in consultation with local communities to ensure that the unique requirements of the region are carefully considered and planned for. This will consider the needs of local communities by integrating transport with land use planning, addressing population changes and planning for anticipated jobs growth.

Some of the things that have or will be implemented to create a modern and customer-focused system and support the integration of our transport services include:

- Beginning the reform of RailCorp into two customer-driven service operators, Sydney Trains and NSW Trains, from 1 July 2013, with improved modern NSW Train services through timetable, fleet and targeted investment in track improvements
- Cutting red tape for NSW freight operators by abolishing stamp duty on new truck trailers
- Working towards better connections between train and bus services, integrating timetables and responding to customer needs
- Improving and strengthening community transport in regional areas through additional funding
- Supporting regional air services to and from Sydney Airport
- Undertaking a NSW Trains Country Passenger Rail Services Strategy to renew rolling stock and increase fleet capacity to meet population growth.

5. In your view, can network linkages between CountryLink train and coach services be improved? If so, how?

From the 1st July 2013, RailCorp is to be split into two operating entities – Sydney Trains (City) and NSW Trains (Regional & InterCity) – which will enable each operator to deliver a focussed service. CountryLink and InterCity services will comprise the NSW Trains core business.

The Country Passenger Rail Services Strategy will prioritise improvements in order to deliver better services across the future NSW Trains network. This will include a number of service options capitalising on opportunities to better integrate the existing train and coach networks over the short, medium and long term.

The Long Term Transport Master Plan includes an action to target future investment in interchanges through the Transport Access Program, including preparing an Interchange Strategy to set the overall direction for improving the management of interchanges across the state. This program includes upgrades of stations, bus and coach facilities and car parks to improve access to the public transport network across NSW.

- 6. The Transport for NSW submission to the inquiry notes the effect on inter-regional rail use due to coach travel being more competitive:**
- a. What measures would make rail travel more competitive?**
 - b. Has your Department completed any reviews on the viability of replacing trains with coaches for inter-regional travel?**

Rail services are, by their very nature, restricted to operational rail lines and thus do not have the flexibility in operation and stopping pattern afforded to coach operations. However, rail travel is a vital component of regional public transport and evidence suggests that replacing rail with road coach operations has a marked deflationary effect on regional public transport patronage. The CountryLink network, comprising rail and coach routes, operates with coach services supplementing and feeding into rail services, rather than directly competing. Operators of long-distance private coach services are required to be accredited by Transport for NSW, but the services they provide are not regulated or operated under a contract with Transport for NSW.

- 7. Will the final Transport Master Plan take into account the objectives of the Visitor Economy Taskforce plan to double overnight tourism expenditure in NSW by 2020?**

The Long Term Transport Master Plan takes into account the objectives of the Visitor Economy Taskforce plan as follows:

- The *Draft Long Term Transport Master Plan* identifies actions to increase rail and bus services to and from Sydney Airport and improve the road network around the Airport.
- The Draft Long Term Transport Master Plan identifies a Precinct Action Plan for Port Botany & Sydney Airport to reduce traffic congestion, improve rail and bus services and improve freight flows to and from Port Botany. These actions will consider directions in the Sydney Airport Master Plan. Also as part of the Transport Master Plan, the 2012 Sydney's Rail Future plan identifies future increases in frequency on the Airport Line (from 8 to 12 trains/ hour in the medium term, and up to 20 trains/hour in the long term).
- The Draft Long Term Transport Master Plan identifies transport demand and economic activity generated by tourists and visitors. The Plan's objectives, such as supporting economic growth and productivity, improving quality of

services for all customers and supporting regional development - are consistent with supporting the visitor economy.

- Transport for NSW is developing a Sydney City Centre Access Strategy under the Long Term Transport Master Plan, which will include consideration of coach and taxi access and infrastructure needs. In addition, the Transport Access Program delivers accessible, modern, secure and integrated transport infrastructure where it is needed most, across NSW.
- CountryLink already works in partnership with Destination NSW. Under the Draft Long Term Transport Master Plan, a Country Passenger Rail Services Strategy is being developed to improve regional NSW rail connections and visitor experience.
- The draft Transport Master Plan refers to extending operating hours and increased frequencies of late-night public transport services to improve customer satisfaction, including improved night and weekend public transport services. Transport services to major events are planned on a case-by-case basis to ensure passenger services are effectively addressed.
- The draft NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan identifies the need to upgrade CBD interchanges, including Central Station – to better integrate multi-modal transport services, improve information dissemination and provide upgraded infrastructure.
- It should be noted that Transport for NSW has also recently provided advice to inform the government response to the taskforce.

8. Please update the Committee on the work of the Transport Coordination Program, in particular, the Transport Coordinators:

- a. Where are the Transport Coordinators based and where have they visited?**
- b. Is the Program working in collaboration with any regional groups?**
- c. Who do the Transport Coordinators report to? And, what analysis is done on such reporting?**
- d. What is Transport for NSW doing to promote the existence of the Transport Coordinators?**

a) Where are the Transport Coordinators based and where have they visited?

There are eleven (11) Regional Transport Coordinators (RTCs) who are located in the regional areas of NSW (coverage map at **Tab A** and list at **Tab B**). The RTCs have visited all parts of NSW and attend rural and isolated towns and communities in the regular course of their work.

The RTCs' role is to find innovative, local solutions to transport problems and to help mitigate transport disadvantage. They do this by communicating about existing transport opportunities to customers, and developing local projects across all sections of the community.

As the RTCs work directly with stakeholders, it is necessary for them to travel and engage with local communities to help people make the best use of existing transport resources and to solve access and mobility problems.

The RTC Program also has seed funding for trial initiatives. The target audience for these initiatives are people who are experiencing transport disadvantage. Transport

disadvantage is defined as 'people with limited or no access to private transport and who have difficulty in gaining access to public transport systems'.

The funded initiatives may provide information, local development of transport related skills, or person centred subsidies such as taxi vouchers and bus charters for specific disadvantaged groups. Non ordinary or irregular bus services may also be trialled under this program with an identified need and within viability constraints.

Avenues are sought, where possible, to integrate successful initiatives with other services such as those provided under the Home and Community Care (HACC) program or transitioned to the Community Transport Program (CTP). Alternatively, they may be assessed as more sustainable under the auspice of external agencies.

b) Is the Program working in collaboration with any regional groups?

The RTCs work collaboratively with diverse regional stakeholders including private and public transport operators and community organisations such as community transport service providers and others.

The RTCs attend at least 270 regular forums and interagency meetings each year. These may include transport working groups, NGO sector meets, youth service groups, emergency management meetings etc. Meetings are scheduled at variable intervals throughout the year, i.e.: meetings may be fortnightly, monthly, bi monthly, quarterly, annual or bi annual.

The RTCs also meet with project partners through the course of the development, appraisal, implementation and evaluation processes associated with initiatives.

c) Who do the Transport Coordinators report to? And, what analysis is done on such reporting?

The Regional Transport Coordinators have a line management reporting process through the Community Transport Agreements (CTA) Branch situated in the Transport Services Division of Transport for NSW.

The activities of the Transport Coordinators are subject to a process of continuous improvement, and are updated to be relevant to current circumstances. Best practice projects are identified and replicated around NSW.

The RTCs work closely with the TfNSW bus contracts managers on local transport needs. They provide advice to bus service planners under the Service Planning Guidelines in relation to public bus services across NSW.

Through consultations, the RTCs have also helped to grow the numbers of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis (WATs) across the regions.

d) What is Transport for NSW doing to promote the existence of the Transport Coordinators?

TfNSW understands that the RTCs are well known in their Regions. They promote themselves when attending public forums and may cold call community groups to introduce themselves where they can see opportunities for strategic solutions.

Transport for NSW often receives positive feedback from community partners about the quality of the Coordinators' work, and their ease of availability to the community to help solve transport problems. Local communities highly value having a 'local' face for TfNSW in their area with expertise that can be tapped as needed.

The RTCs focus most of their promotional activities on the work they do and their engagement with particular initiatives. Media announcements are prepared for every initiative and promotional banners produced for public engagements. The RTCs also produce local transport guides that help the community by providing information across all modes.

9. Please update the Committee on work done by Transport for NSW to improve inter-regional travel for seniors?

Transport for NSW currently employs The Regional Community Transport Coordinators employed by Transport for NSW to reduce the effects of transport disadvantage experienced by a range of customers, including seniors. These officers work within local communities to develop solutions to local transport concerns and improve planning of community transport services.

Eligible seniors living in country NSW receive a number of transport concessions that make inter-regional travel more affordable. Seniors Card and Centrelink Age Pensioners are entitled to half fare concessions on all services including long distance CountryLink services. The \$2.50 Regional Excursion Daily (RED), which provides all day travel on local bus services in rural and regional areas. The \$2.50 Country Pensioner Excursion Ticket (CPE), which provides one-way travel on long distance, pre-booked CountryLink rail and coach services. In addition, pensioners may access four free single trips a year on CountryLink rail and coach services in NSW.

Transport for NSW recognises that the population is ageing and acknowledges that the community transport sector will deliver a larger proportion of the overall transport task for the healthy aged group into the future. The Community Transport Agreements (CTA) branch of TfNSW has a number of programs and initiatives specifically to assist healthy older people:

- Many regions conduct Access and Mobility Days to provide hands on information about transport options in their local area.
- TfNSW has recently received grants from the NSW Office for Ageing (OFA) to support a number of new trial transport initiatives and research projects. These projects target healthy older people living in regional and rural areas to use public transport in their area and build the personal capacity to stay self-sufficient, particularly if a driver licence is lost.
- Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme (CPTIGS): TfNSW administers the Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme (CPTIGS), which provides grants to improve passenger transport infrastructure in rural, regional and remote communities. Improved facilities enhance the customer experience for senior rural passengers, assisting them to locate their local transport services, and increasing the comfort, amenity and security of their journeys.

The needs of transport disadvantaged older people have been considered in the

development of regional transport plans under the Long Term Transport Master Plan.

10. Please update the Committee on work done by Transport for NSW to improve inter-regional travel for persons with disabilities?

Accessible transport requirements are considered in a renewed Disability Action Plan 2012-2017 which is expected to be released in December 2012 and in the development of regional transport plans under the Long Term Transport Master Plan.

On the current CountryLink network, provisional figures identify 27 of 67 stations (40 per cent) as wheelchair accessible based on street to platform access. Another 30 stations (45 per cent) provide assisted access onto the platform. Assisted access is required from the platform to the train. CountryLink coaches are 100 per cent accessible. (This is with the exception of the Taree-Forster-Newcastle coach service. CountryLink purchases seats on the service from another provider).

Transport for NSW is procuring new rail rolling stock which is accessible. All trains in use by CountryLink provide accessible seating, wheelchair spaces and toilet with direct assistance provided to board the train. To ensure that country passenger attendants are aware of customers' requirements, country passengers who require special assistance on board services are currently required to book their trip by calling 13 22 32 or visiting a CountryLink Travel Centre. In future, notification of service requirements for customers with a disability will be added to the NSW Trains online booking service.

Bus services in rural and regional NSW are contracted to private operators. Bus operator compliance with the Transport Standards is a legislative and contractual requirement. Non-compliance is a breach of contract and all tenders for the new contract must address how this requirement will be met. Operators are also required, where applicable, to report on progress against accessible targets and these reports will be available to the public. The contracts also require the provision of information on services (including accessibility) to the 131 500 Infoline and website and the introduction of a new standard bus timetable (including standard notation for accessible services).

There are significant difficulties with bus stop and roadside infrastructure in both metropolitan and rural and regional areas which is owned and maintained by local government authorities. To help address this issue, Transport for NSW's Country Passenger Infrastructure Grants Program will continue to prioritise projects that improve bus stops and road infrastructure in rural, regional and remote areas.

TfNSW administers Government funded community transport programs, including community transport, part of the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program. The Program assists clients to continue living independently in their home and community, and to avoid inappropriate admission to residential care. One of the two

main target groups of the HACC Program is younger people with a disability (and their carers).

All HACC-funded Community Transport services administered by TfNSW provide transport assistance to younger people with a disability. This may be achieved through use of fleet vehicles, wheelchair accessible buses, taxi transport vouchers, and brokered transport.

The Community Transport Agreements (CTA) branch has a number of programs and initiatives in progress that directly assist people with disabilities in regional areas.

Examples include:

- Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) Upgrade project: This project identified HACC funded community transport organisations with no access to a WAV. Eight organisations in regional NSW have been identified and offered the opportunity to gain a wheelchair accessible vehicle for their service.
- Tweed Byron Ballina Community Transport Taxi project: This project is a taxi voucher scheme to help young people with an intellectual disability to participate in supported employment and training options provided by Byron Bay Herb Nursery.

RTC initiatives include:

- Taxis in the Community, (Casino NSW): provides subsidised regular group transport for community members living with a disability to attend day programs in employment and budgeting skills, enabling clients to stay active and increase independent living skills.

11. Please update the Committee on work done by Transport for NSW to improve inter-regional travel for persons with mental health issues?

Persons with mental health issues are included in the definition of disability under the *Disability Discrimination Act* 1992. Provision of service to people with a mental health disability is included in disability awareness training for front line service staff.

RTC initiatives have included:

- Dramatic Minds Rural Transport Connections – Riverina Murray Region

Chartered bus transport was recently provided to young people experiencing mental health issues in the Tumut, Gundagai and Tumbarumba areas to attend the Dramatic Minds Festival in Wagga Wagga. Transport assistance successfully supported young people to attend. The Festival highlighted mental health awareness and has also increased general community awareness around youth mental health issues.

- Riverina Mental health Taxi Voucher Scheme – Riverina Murray Region

This project is a user friendly taxi transport voucher system for young people with a mental illness to attend appointments and health services at Riverina Headspace. This initiative has reduced the frequency of "no-shows" to appointments and counselling at the centre.

- Walking Feat Launch – New England region

This project transported people with a mental illness in the Inverell, Tamworth, Tenterfield, Walcha, Uralla, Glen Innes, Armidale and Dumaresq LGAs and their families to Armidale for the Launch of the Walking Feat Forum in November 2011. The Walking Feat group is made up of a group of people that aims to educate, raise awareness and reduce stigma around living with or supporting someone with a mental illness.

12. Given the growing trend of cycling in the tourism area, how is Transport for NSW improving that situation for tourists who want to utilise cycling as a way to see regional New South Wales?

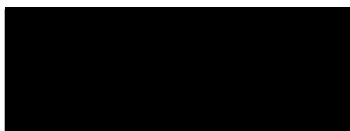
Transport for NSW, through Roads and Maritime Services have a 50/50 partnership with Local Government to deliver local cycleway projects.

13. The Physical Disability Council of NSW published the 'CountryLink Survey' earlier this year. The survey found coach drivers were unwilling to use wheelchair lifts to assist passengers with mobility issues.

- a. Is Transport for NSW aware of this survey?**
- b. What is Transport for NSW doing in response to this?**
- c. Are you aware of any efforts by CountryLink to ensure that drivers are providing this service?**

Transport for NSW understands that CountryLink passengers with mobility issues have reported difficulties in accessing coach. Commencing in 2013, frontline staff (including refresher and new staff) will be provided with disability and age awareness training to improve this interface. This skill development will be included within the criteria for assessing employment performance.

Yours Sincerely



Les Wielinga
Director General
Transport for NSW

17-12-12

DG12/20918
PP12/21094

Regional Transport Coordinators – Location & Phone Numbers

Region	Town/City based	Telephone / Mobile
South East	Queanbeyan	02 6229 7811 0417 218 876
Mid North Coast	Coffs Harbour	02 6648 7231 0438 255 543
New England / North West	Armidale	02 6773 7015 0419 412 211
Orana (Dubbo, Narromine, Warren, Bogan, Cobar, Warrumbungle, Mid Western)	Dubbo	02 6884 6626 0434 073 568
Central West	Bathurst	02 6339 4910 0419 619 003
Northern Rivers	Lismore	02 6621 9424 0419 685 385
Far West (Central Darling, Balranald, Broken Hill, Wentworth, and Unincorporated Area)	Broken Hill	08 8087 7050 0458 283 556
Illawarra	Wollongong	02 8265 6624 0438 659 139
Riverina / Murray	Wagga Wagga	02 6926 8620 0418 227 996
Central Coast	Gosford	02 4337 2313 0407 946 912
Hunter	Newcastle	02 4928 8716 0408 679 202