Submission

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INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

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HUNTER TRANSPORT for BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Submission to Rail Corridor Inquiry

Using Transport to Promote Hunter Business Development

Transport for Business Development

The focus of Hunter Transport for Business Development is the strategic role that transport services play in the development of business opportunity. Development of business opportunity is, in turn, vital for opportunities for establishment of new enterprise, growth in employment demand, income growth, and an economic climate supporting growing property values.

Transport supports development of business opportunity when it helps people get to where they want to go, without getting in the way of other people trying to get to where *they* want to go. Therefore the benefit of public transport to business development in particular has a service element, and a congestion relief element. Cost-effective public transport can raise or eliminate ceilings on total business activity and property value in an area that are imposed by congestion from private vehicles, but only if it is sufficiently attractive to appeal to an adequate number of people who wish to travel into the congested area.

The Urban Geography of the Lower Hunter

Business and property development for commercial, professional, leisure and residential is a win-win if there is adequate transport capacity to serve each use. With excessive transport congestion, a zero-sum game develops in which business and property development in support of one interferes with business and property development for the other. Therefore an understanding of the urban geography of a region is the foundation of any analysis for overcoming existing transport bottlenecks and taking advantage of new opportunities to use transport to support business development.

The area of the five Councils of the Lower Hunter is often referred to in general terms as the city of Newcastle. This is true in the general sense that the Lower Hunter is clearly a coherent metropolitan area of over half a million people.

However, when examined in greater detail, the Lower Hunter is not a single urban area. The largest urban area in the region is the Newcastle conurbation, which occupies the northern portion of the Newcastle Peninsula. The Newcastle Peninsula is the dominant physical feature of Lower Hunter urban geography, bounded by the Hunter River, the Pacific Ocean, and Lake Macquarie. The conurbation covers most of the area of the City of Newcastle as well as the northern part of the City of Lake Macquarie.

The second largest urban area is the Maitland conurbation, which together with clusters of outlying suburban development provides the population of the City of Maitland. In the regional context, Maitland is primarily a trip origin, since the dominant commuter flow is into the Newcastle conurbation, and most central regional destinations are in the Newcastle conurbation. However, the central urban core of Maitland is also a secondary trip destination with the City of Maitland area.

The balance of the urbanized portion of the Lower Hunter metropolitan area reside in smaller urban centers and towns north and south of the Newcastle / Maitland axis. The Newcastle Peninsula south of the Newcastle conurbation ("Eastlake") was a major area for suburban land release in the final third of the twentieth century. The mainland shore of Lake Macquarie ("Westlake") features of a series of lakefront towns and small towns, and offers the primary areas for new land release south of the Newcastle conurbation in the decades immediately ahead. Cessnock and its satellite centers function as conventional rural central places, in particular for the Hunter Wine Industry. Nelson's Bay in northeastern Port Stephens is the first of a string of towns extending northward along the coast, while Raymond Terrace in southwest Port Stephens is a typical metropolitan outer suburban community.

Newcastle was originally settled due to a shallow coal seam lying close to the surface and convenient to the reasonably well sheltered riverfront port opportunities offered by the mouth of the Hunter River. The river waterfront was therefore a working industrial port from Newcastle's early days, and the original Central Business District developed along the river floodplain at the foot of the hills to the south. In the twentieth century, river port activities shifted upstream, further west, and the original working river port has since been redeveloped into a series of multiple use professional, leisure and residential development clusters from the Marina to the Hunter River Foreshore.

The Transport Challenges of the Newcastle CBD

The majority of primary regional destinations are located in or around the Newcastle CBD. This presents on of the primary challenges for transport in the Lower Hunter, because the CBD is hemmed in between hills and the riverfront, and the convergence of transport arteries create substantial traffic bottlenecks. The Newcastle Parking and Transport Study has determined that it is physically impossible for the CBD to grow in line with expected growth of the Lower Hunter while continuing to rely on private auto transport at current mode shares.

One reaction to this challenge is to relocate regional destinations to more readily accessible locations, and the CBD is now dominated or as a shopping center by more accessible locations such as Kotara, Charlestown, and Glendale, while the primary Lower Hunter medical center was shifted from the Royal Newcastle, overlooking the Pacific Coast, to the John Hunter, near the western, mainland, side of the Newcastle Peninsula. The result has been to pull important regional destinations away from the Newcastle CBD.

However, the CBD has not been supplanted as the primary regional central place. In several cases, a number of important regional destinations cannot be relocated: since the Foreshore, Newcastle Beach and Nobby's Beach, neither can their leisure oriented businesses. Others have stakeholders that tend to strongly resist relocation, such as the center of the legal profession in Newcastle East, which comprises not just Courts themselves but a network of small establishments in the legal profession.

Further, *except for* transport bottlenecks, the location of the CBD offers many benefits. The amenities of the neighboring Foreshore and Beach are appealing to the young, upwardly mobile urban professionals that professional establishments in a regional area must attract, and that commercial establishments, leisure establishments and residential developers like to cater to. Similarly, Darby Street, extending south from the Civic District and Beaumont Street, to the immediate west of the CBD, offer some of the regions most varied restaurant and independent shopping options.

The CBD suffers from substantial parking congestion today, which shall become increasingly serious bottlenecks to property development in the CBD in the current decade. It suffers from existing peak hour transport gridlock at a few locations, which with continued growth will become widespread gridlock over the next two decades.

These timelines will be reduce by five to ten years if, as is proposed, several Faculties of the University of Newcastle relocate from Callaghan Campus on the mainland side of the Newcastle Peninsula, to a CBD campus. Urban University Campuses are well know sources of serious parking congestion, as large numbers of students congregate in a relatively small area, many of them willing to walk substantial distances in order to save modest amounts on parking.

However, congestion indicates that people want to go to an area, and so there are opportunities for expanded business development if ways can be found to allow them to get there.

So in the Newcastle CBD, the primary strategic opportunity is that if we can attract a greater share of the public onto public transport, we can improve and maintain the accessibility of the Newcastle CBD to private transport, which will enable more rapid development of small business enterprise.

It will at the same time permit new regional destinations to be established, such as a University of Newcastle CBD campus, to the ***benefit of*** existing and other potential new users, instead of ***shouldering aside*** existing and other potential new users. This will allow substantial new regional destinations to increase property values within the CBD, rather than undermining property values by eliminating accessibility to those locations.

The key dimension for transport for business development in the Newcastle CBD is therefore ***congestion relief***. Parking congestion relief can be provided by increasing public transport mode share of trips into the Newcastle CBD. It can also be provided by improving the appeal of public transport for trips within the Newcastle CBD, if pooled parking opportunities are made available at the edge of the CBD. Both of these will also tend to reduce peak hour traffic congestion at the same time.

The Local Transport Challenges of the Newcastle Conurbation

The Newcastle conurbation grew up from the satellite network of small towns across the northern part of the Newcastle Peninsula, originally tied together by heavy and light rail lines. The Newcastle Peninsula exists because of the hills of Newcastle and eastern Lake Macquarie, which gives shape to both the Hunter River and Lake Macquarie. Skirting or climbing the hills results in a network of major road arteries that is far from the idealized grid of urban planning texts.

A substantial transport bottlenecks in the main Newcastle conurbation is at the southern end of the throat of the Newcastle Peninsula. There is a lack of a direct connection between the employment center focused on the Glendale Super Center and the employment center focused on the Cardiff Industrial Estate which means that both are cul-de-sac*s*, separated by the rail corridor.

The solution to this long-studied problem is the Glendale Transport Center, consisting of a road bridge across the rail line, converting this area into a single larger employment center that can be served by more efficient through bus routes, with the entire district naturally connected to the central train station via those same buses. This also provides a counterweight to the commute transport demand of the CBD, as rail and bus services connecting the two will be traveling from one employment center and toward the other in both directions.

A substantial transport challenge across the Newcastle conurbation is maintaining access to public and personal transport alternatives in a region dominated by automotive transport. Rail services ensure effective service at roughly twenty minute frequency or better between origins and destinations along the rail corridor at peak hour and in the peak direction of travel, but there is substantially less frequent service available off-peak and in areas not served by rail. Further, successive waves of efforts to maintain accessibility to bus service to a growing service area with fewer aggregate bus hours of service have resulted in a variety of meandering city bus routes that require far more route miles to connect traffic anchors across the city than a typical car trip.

Within the Newcastle conurbation but outside of the Newcastle CBD, individual business establishments can connect with the majority of potential customers and recruit workers from the majority of potential employees via private auto transport. At the margin, an expansion of accessibility will increase market potential and broaden the labor market, but both of these lost opportunities will be largely invisible, representing customers who do not come through the door and applications for vacancies that are never submitted.

Also largely invisible are the three insurance roles of alternative modes of transport. Alternative modes of transport provide fallback options when the a car is out of service. They support drivers who may be injured or, especially on the return trip home, otherwise impaired. And they provide a cushion against the local income shock that is experienced in the event of a petrol price spike or supply interruption.

The key dimension for transport for business development in the Newcastle conurbation outside of the Newcastle CBD is the ***transport service*** element.

The Regional Transport Challenges of the Lower Hunter

The Newcastle conurbation, as the dominant population cluster of the Lower Hunter, is primarily a destination rather than an origin for regional trips between the population centers of the Lower Hunter. By and large, adequate transport access from the other regional population centers into the Newcastle conurbation also implies adequate transport access for trips originating in the Newcastle conurbation to the other population centers. The most notable exception is transport access to the Newcastle Airport, located in southeastern Port Stephens. This provides a useful alternative to Sydney Airport for business travel on domestic flights to east coast destinations, but connections between the CBD and the airport are far from ideal, in particular for inbound passengers.

The Maitland conurbation enjoys convenient access to most of the Newcastle Peninsula via the New England and Pacific Highways and the access roads from Newcastle to the F3 provide convenient road access from the Maitland conurbation to most of the Newcastle Peninsula. Most major population centers within the City of Maitland are also located convenient to the Hunter passenger rail, with the major stations serviced at the same half hour frequency that bus service provides in many major Newcastle bus routes. This extends to Beresfield, lying over the border with the City of Newcastle, and Raymond Terrace, lying over the border in the western City of Port Stephens. The primary challenge faced by the Maitland conurbation and satellite centers is access to the Newcastle CBD, where in morning peak hours, road traffic from Maitland via the Industrial Highway must pass through the gridlocked intersections of Stewart Avenue with Hunter and King Streets. The alternative rail service provides more rapid commute access to CBD destination during the peak period, but does not have adequate frequency or carriage passenger capacity to cope with normal patronage demand peaks for morning peak travel into the Newcastle CBD. As the morning peak is tightly focused between 8am and 9am while the evening peak is distributed over a longer periods, both of these congestion problems are less severe in the evening peak.

Eastlake is the portion of the Newcastle Peninsula south of the continuous Newcastle conurbation, and provides much of the population of the City of Lake Macquarie. Major land releases in this area are essentially finished, so further Eastlake residential development will take the form of infill development. The Charlestown Bypass has eased one of the most critical bottlenecks for road access to the Newcastle conurbation. For public transport, the principle challenge is the design principle of city bus routes service Eastlake, which are for the most part long linear routes with a Newcastle CBD trip origin and return trip destination. This route design pattern makes it difficult to attain a useful service frequency without substantial operating subsidies, as it divides patronage in two distinct ways. Across space, multiple distinct routes divide longer distance patronage from Eastlake bound toward the Newcastle CBD, and patron demand from Eastlake for access to Newcastle CBD and to northern Lake Macquarie are spread out across the clockface by the transit time taken between the two destinations. An additional bottleneck is access to Sydney by means other than car, since the most convenient rail station for a bus connection for southbound rail travel is at Wyee Station, south of the Lake near the southern border of the City of Lake Macquarie, and lying outside of the traditional service area of the Newcastle Bus Service that serves Eastlake.

Westlake is the portion of the City of Lake Macquarie along the mainland shore of the lake, and offers most of the remaining opportunities for new land release within the City of Lake Macquarie. The development of the F3 has eased the main road access bottlenecks of Westlake both north to the Newcastle conurbation and south to the Central Coast and the Sydney basin. For public transport, both the existing population centers and the main potential land release sites lie along the Main North rail corridor except for Toronto, which is connected to the nearby Fassifern Station by railbus. Rail services at the main Westlake rail stations in the morning and evening peak times run at an approximate 20 minute service frequency – while the average service frequency is slightly higher, the effective service frequency suffers due to the irregularity of the schedule on the clockface. The most serious transport challenge is outside of the peak commute period, when the effective service frequency both northbound and southbound by rail is an hour. This is despite having two service to Newcastle per hour, as the service is organized into a local running all-stations Newcastle/Morriset leading a Sydney service southbound and trailing a Sydney service northbound. This service pattern likely made sense prior to the construction of the F3, but is an inefficient use of rolling stock for current Westlake transport demands.

The City of Cessnock is similar to Westlake in that the development of the F3 eased its primary road access bottlenecks both northeast to Newcastle and south to Sydney. The construction of the new expressway will further ease access between the Newcastle conurbation and the northern part of the City of Cessnock. Unlike Westlake, there is no rail line serving the City of Cessnock, so for alternatives to car transport it relies on infrequent regional bus access to the rail corridor at Fassifern, to the University of Newcastle campus and the Newcastle CBD in the City of Newcastle, and to the Maitland. The main population center is along the axis between Cessnock and Kurri Kurri, near the HEZ Industrial Business Estate, where the principle routes to Newcastle and Maitland divide. The main transport challenge facing business development in the urban clusters of the City of Cessnock is providing sufficiently frequent connections to the primary public transport routes in Newcastle, Maitland and Westlake to reduce the exposure of property values to disruptions in the price or supply of petrol for car transport.

The City of Port Stephens is dominated by water, lying between the Hunter River and the natural harbour of Port Stephens, larger than Sydney harbour. As already mentioned, Raymond Terrace to the west of Grahamstown Lake is in transport terms one of the satellite centers between the Maitland conurbation and the Newcastle Peninsula. In eastern Port Stephens, one main cluster of settlement lies on the peninsula to the south of Port Stephens. Another cluster extends north of Newcastle Airport to Medowie, and a small cluster is located on the Stockton Peninsula, connected to the Newcastle CBD by the Queens Wharf Ferry and acting as an inner suburb of Newcastle. Central Port Stephens has substantial commuter links with Newcastle, via the Nelson Bay Road to Kooragang Island and the Tourle Street Bridge. However, the northeastern population cluster including Nelson Bay is more focused on local maritime oriented industries of tourism and fishing, primarily relying on Newcastle as the location of regional services rather. The primary transport challenge facing eastern Port Stephens is the division of population into two distinct clusters which do not lie along a common transport route to either the Newcastle Peninsula or the Pacific Highway.

Regional Transport Strategies for Business Development

The problems of regional transport can be organized into two groups: linking population centers that lie along an existing rail corridor, and linking population that do not. For Westlake, the City of Maitland, and the suburbs of Newcastle lying along the Main Northern rail corridor, round the clock passenger transport services exist that attract a substantially greater mode share than alternatives to car transport attract elsewhere in the Lower Hunter. However, as these are legacy services, the underlying deign of the services often reflect the patronage demands of decades ago, when the Newcastle Steelworks first, second and third shifts were major patronage drivers and when the rail service to Sydney was competing with car transport along the multiple bottlenecks of the Pacific Highway.

While rail transport services require a top to bottom revamp to make most effective use of existing rolling stock, Eastlake, Cessnock, Raymond Terrace and Eastern Port Stephens can look upon the present outmoded service schedules along the Main Northern rail corridor with envy. While the centers along the main rail corridor can with updated service design hope to see 15 minute tailored service frequencies in peak time and 20 minute clockface service frequencies through most of the day, an hourly connection along an efficient route would be a substantial upgrade in regional public transport service for most centers off the main rail corridor.

These are therefore the immediate targets that Hunter Transport for Business Development advises for a substantial but incremental improvement to the existing regional transport services available in the Lower Hunter.

- Completion of the Glendale Transport Interchange.
- Between City of Maitland and the Newcastle CBD, 15 minute peak time, peak direction service, for 7:30-9am Newcastle Station arrival and 5-7pm Newcastle Station departure, and 20 minute service 6am-10pm, with connection at Hamilton to the Glendale/Cardiff employment center via the Glendale Transport Interchange.
- Between Morriset and the Newcastle CBD, 15 minute peak time, peak direction service, for 7:30am-9am Glendale Station and Newcastle Station arrivals, and 5-7pm Newcastle Station and Glendale Station departures and 20 minute service 6am-10pm
- Between Eastlake and the Newcastle CBD, a "Metro" bus service along the general Pacific Highway alignment from Swansea, 15 minutes peak time, peak direction service 7:30am-9am Charlestown Square and Newcastle Mall arrivals, and 5-7pm Newcastle Mall and Charlestown Square departures, with 30 minute service 6am-10pm and hourly service extending south of Swansee to Wyee Station
- For Cessnock and Raymond Terrace, a 30 minute peak time, both direction "Metro" bus service connecting to the Maitland Line at Taro Station, and hourly service 6am to 10pm
- For Nelson Bay and the Airport, a 30 minute peak time, peak direction service over the Tourle Street Bridge connecting via a loop to the Maitland Line at Waratah Station, the Westlake line at Broadmeadow Station and CBD connections at Hamilton Station, and hourly service 6am-10pm
- For Central Port Stephens and the Airport, a service from Medowie with fare and schedule integration with the Stockton Ferry.

Local Transport Strategies for Business Development

In Eastlake, completion of the Glendale Transport Interchange and provision of the Eastlake "Metro" bus service allows local city bus services to be unlocked from City of Newcastle schedules, with routes running from Eastlake centers to Charlestown Square and then the GTI continuing into routes originating from Charlestown through the GTI to Eastlake centers, and similarly in return. Frequent, high quality connections to primary destinations throughout the City of Newcastle are available at Charlestown Square and at the GTI.

In Westlake, service at close to a 15min and 20 minute clockface frequency at the main rail stations ensures that regional and local rail bus services can connect at the main rail stations with little constraint. These frequencies are maintained by distributing the stations presently served by the Morisset-Newcastle all-stations local service among the Westlake services, so that all services operate Semi-Express, and secondary stations have services each half hour during peak and each forty minutes off-peak. The increase in frequency is achieved by splitting the Sydney service at Gosford between a service that is Express Tuggerah / Wyong / Morriset and a second that is All-Stations Gosford / Morriset, then taking on the Semi-Express stopping pattern due from Morriset. With 3 minute headways and additional all-stations stopping time, the natural gap between the two services at Morriset is 12 m, so that the target intervals at Morriset is easily met by schedule padding on the trailing local. This also means that the local has substantial schedule recovery capacity to ensure reliable timetable service running north to Newcastle. The service pattern is reversed in the southern direction.

In the City of Cessnock, improved local service may be provided by a Glendale Transit Interchange local circulator bus route that connects with the "Metro" bus service through to Taro Station on the Hunter line and with the most important destinations laying away from the express "Metro" bus route. At Raymond Terrace, on the other side of the Cessnock "Metro", laying the "Metro" route out with a terminal loop at the end of the two-way route is sufficient to provide effective local service.

In Maitland, an effective Maitland Line service schedule is for alternate services to run Semi-Express services to all City of Maitland stations and to all City of Newcastle stations along the line. At the proposed service schedules, this provides an incremental improvement in frequency at both main and secondary stations along the corridor. Within Maitland City, local transport service would be improved by a local circulator with a terminal loop from the Heritage Mall to Maitland Station and back, on diversion from the New England Highway on High Street, Raymond Terrace Road and Metford Road to connect to Victoria Street Station, past Thornton Station to a loop through Thornton, then on to Beresfield and a loop through Taro, Woodberry, past Beresfield Station and back to Thornton. This circulator could run with effectively no time lost synchronizing to rail timetables over the schedule slack required for timetable reliability, since 15 minute and 20 minute frequencies at Maitland, High Street, Thornton and Beresfield Stations, whenever it is scheduled to arrive will be both delivering for and collecting passengers.

In Eastern Port Stephens, improved local service may be provided by a local circulator route that operates in a loop from the Salamander Bay Town Center to the shore, and then to and from Anna Bay. This service could be provided independently of a "Nelson Bay Metro" passing through Salamander Bay Town Center, could be provided as a terminal route between arrival and departure from Salamander Bay Town Center.

In the Newcastle conurbation, intra-urban bus service can be substantially improved in cooperation with the Eastlake "Metro", which will require some express route into Newcastle East in the Newcastle CBD. The route of the Eastlake Metro will include some major destinations an omit others since, for example, one cannot run an effective Eastlake Express route that connects to both Kotara Center and to the John Hunter Hospital and terminates in the Newcastle CBD. Therefore, a complementary "Newcastle Metro" is an urban orbital, providing urban Express service along the major road arteries to connect the highest priority transport destinations around the city. It will be desirable to restructure and revamp the existing Newcastle Bus Service route network in the City of Newcastle and northern City of Lake Macquarie once the two Newcastle Peninsula "Metro" services have been put into place and people have become accustomed to their operation. However, another revamp of NBS schedules on the basis of a *promised* improvement in bus service is likely to excite substantial community resistance, so prudence dictates that an actual improvement in service be delivered first, so that the revamp of local bus routes to better connect to the Metro Bus services can be driven as much from the bottom up by community demand as from the top down driven by planners expectations.

In the Newcastle CBD, the critical challenge is congestion relief. Public transport services that are intended to provide effective congestion relief must not be caught up in the same congestion as they are trying to relive. Providing high frequency congestion relief services that have effective priority access ensures that as problems of congestion become more severe, the congestion relief services offer more rapid, efficient transport service to a growing number of travelers. The existing CBD rail corridor, which acts as the passenger trunk corridor, offers one priority access line of travel. Given the expenses of conversion from rail to road, including uncertain environmental remediation costs, and the effective loss of airspace over the rail corridor for airspace property development, Hunter Transport for Business Development advises that the corridor be maintained as a rail corridor. The two principles options for improved transport access along this line are:

- to schedule the Maitland Line and Westlake line services so that they ensure 10 minute frequency, both peak and off peak, as 10 minutes is the maximum service frequency that is generally considered to be viable for "stand and go" use with consulting a timetable
- to replace the heavy rail service with a light rail service connecting at a Hamilton Station terminus.

The first of these options requires investment in additional traffic and pedestrian crossings, with particular attention to Steel Street, Worth Place, Darby Street to Argyle Street, and the Mall to Queens Wharf. It also requires investment in improved access to the CBD rail platforms, so that ideally each platform may be accessed from each side, to maximize the effective 400m and 1,000m reach of each rail platform for walkable urban development. The second of these options requires a terminal station at Hamilton and design study to determine optimal light rail platform location.

In addition to the rail access, effective bus access for both "Metro" and local bus access requires investment in Bus Rapid Transit corridors in the Newcastle CBD. The North/South corridor options include Darby Street and Union Street. The East/West corridor options include Hunter Street and King Street, either both ways on one or one way on each, Parkway Avenue – an old tramline corridor with the most room for a full fledged express BRT corridor – and Glebe Road. For the "Metro" Bus corridors, a BRT corridor along Glebe Road and Darby Street could operate a terminal CBD loop west on Hunter Street, south on National Park Street and east on King Street, avoiding the gridlocked Stewart Avenue intersections.

Transport Infrastructure Investment for Business Development

The transport infrastructure investment required by the strategies in this submission include:

- Completion of the Glendale Transport Interchange
- Alternatively investment in additional level and pedestrian crossings in the Newcastle CBD rail corridor and upgraded pedestrian platform access, or else construction of a Heavy/Light rail interchange station at Hamilton Station and establishment of light rail platforms
- Investment in preferred BRT bus corridor alignments in the Newcastle CBD
- Purchase of "Metro" bus vehicles
- Establishment of a Metro Bus garage and service center
- Investment in bus priority measures at intersections identified as bottlenecks in Metro Bus operations throughout the Lower Hunter
- Investment in Metro Bus stops, with shelters at all stops and live "next service" display at major stops

This also requires an increase in public transport operating spending. Splitting the Sydney / Newcastle train at Gosford into an Express and an All-Stations to Morriset northbound and joining them southbound, requires multiple additional train crews. The revamped Maitland service requires multiple addition train crews. The Metro Bus services require multiple new drivers. And all of these services imply additional ongoing maintenance and servicing costs.

Transport Investment and Operations Funding

Hunter Transport for Business Development supports seeking appropriate investment from the Commonwealth, in particular for the strategic regional transport investments. In addition, HTBD favors the pursuit of the development of rail corridor air rights. Key sites include:

- Immediately east of Hamilton Station, in walking distance to the Beaumont Street district, overlooking Wickham Park and with 10 minute frequency rail access to the Foreshore and Newcastle CBD, either via heavy or light rail. A lease arrangement in which the lease payments help subsidize transport operations connecting to the development would be a win-win, since a substantial amount of the development value of the airspace would be due to the improved quality of transport connection;

- West of Worth Place between Hunter Street and Honeysuckle Drive there is a substantial area for development north of the rail corridor and a smaller area for development south of the rail corridor, where development of air rights would allow the two lots to be treated as one continuous development prospect. This would be a particularly appealing site for the proposed University of Newcastle CBD campus, as it can be served effectively by rail from Civic Station by opening up access to the presently closed western edge of the platforms;
- We propose connecting Argyle Street and Darby Street by a traffic crossing, which will cross what is presently a parking lot. The neighboring property on Centenary Road becomes a more appealing redevelopment opportunity if merged with the development rights above the rail corridor to its immediate south;
- The Newcastle Station Bus Interchange is an inefficient use of space, as a more effective bus interchange location is where the Maitland and Westlake services merge at Hamilton. Relocating station employee parking to Hamilton Station provides for a sufficient footprint for development, but the development value is increased substantially by airspace development above the Newcastle Station rail platforms.

We expect that once the decision is publicized that the rail corridor will be retained for some form of rail transport and the rail corridor airspace in the CBD will be opened for development wherever a mutually beneficial arrangement may be made, additional development opportunities will be developed by interested stakeholders in the Newcastle East, Civic, Newcastle West and Wickham districts.

HTBD proposes that a fund be established for allocating proceeds from this development for infrastructure development within the Newcastle CBD and immediate vicinity, for operations of transport services within the CBD, and for operations of Lower Hunter regional services that connect to the CBD.

This submission has been prepared by Dr Bruce McFarling PhD, Regional and Development Economist with HTBD, a not-for-profit group working to improve public transport in the Lower Hunter.

If more information required please refer to contact details below.

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