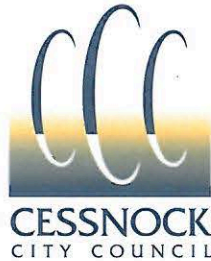


**Submission
No 135**

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Organisation: Cessnock City Council
Name: L J Rosser
Position: General Manager
Date Received: 23/05/2012



The Chair
State and Regional Development Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Chair,

**State and Regional Development Committee
Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport - Submission by Cessnock City Council**

Cessnock City Council appreciates the opportunity presented by the initiative of the State and Regional Development Committee in undertaking an Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport.

Council has recently considered the broader issue of regional transport as part of its submission to Transport for NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan. Council's submission was adopted by Council at its Meeting held 16 May 2012 and, as an outcome of this, I submit to you the elements relevant to your inquiry in the following areas:

1. Cessnock City Council Strategic Transport Objectives;
2. Other Transport Planning Studies;
3. Landuse Planning Integration.

1. Cessnock City Council Strategic Transport Objectives

Cessnock 2020 Community Plan

The following objectives are relevant strategic public transport objectives, as adopted within the 'Cessnock 2020 Community Plan' available on our website, with commentary relating to their consideration as part of your inquiry.

Objective 4.1 – Better Transport Links

- 4.1.1 *Develop a Hunter Regional Transport Strategy which encompasses Cessnock's needs.*

Inter-Regional public transport is a key element of any regional transport strategy and Council would like to think that both the 'Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport' and the Transport for NSW 'Long Term Transport Master Plan' are not undertaken in isolation of each other, particularly once Transport for NSW commences developing the more focussed Regional Transport Plans in 2013.

This submission presents an opportunity for Council to identify broad areas of concern or consideration. However, active participation in a focussed and regionally specific workshop with key government and non-government stakeholders will not only facilitate a two-way flow of information, but will ensure consideration of individual regional needs and maximise the use of local knowledge and context.

The 'Lower Hunter Councils Transport Group' has been established by Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Maitland and Cessnock Councils to provide a regionally focussed forum for regional transport related issues such as this. The Committee is very active, regionally representative and has a breadth of local knowledge on public transport issues - in particular within the Lower Hunter Region. The ability for the Inquiry to link into this Group would be invaluable and I offer you the contact details of the Chairman, (Lake Macquarie City Council) who can be contacted on telephone or by email at

4.1.2 Increase public awareness of current public transport and community transport services.

Council's membership and active involvement in the 'Lower Hunter Council's Transport Group' progresses this issue, specifically in the annual provision of "The Lower Hunter Transport Guide 2012", which provides a single source of information on all modes of public transport (train, bus, ferry, coaches and taxis) within the Lower Hunter Region, as well as advice on walking and cycling.

This is a comprehensive resource and an excellent local initiative, which is supported by Transport for NSW and should continue to be supported and replicated in other regional areas where public transport is provided in various forms by a number of different providers.

4.1.3 Improve public and community transport opportunities between towns and key community hubs in and outside the LGA.

This is an area that requires significant focus, including:

- Multi-model tickets with common fare structure;
- Routes provision - variety of service levels for commuters;
- Route kilometres – convenience – vs - patronage, number of services and routes;
- Type/size of fleet (mixed composition, smaller regional buses, etc);
- Park & Ride Facilities with direct links to key transport routes such as Cessnock to Upper Hunter / Maitland / Newcastle / Sydney.

4.1.4 Work with State and Federal governments to seek increased transport funding for Cessnock.

The Hunter Expressway, and more locally the \$20M Vineyard Roads Project, have increased transport funding within Cessnock LGA and this is acknowledged, although there will be a need to upgrade the condition and capacity of (currently) rural local road network linkages between the Hunter Expressway and the existing State Road Networks - for example, Buchanan Road and Lovedale Road.

Road Network infrastructure backlog for Cessnock is in the order of \$100M and, within Council's current funding limitations, this will increase as the network deteriorates and traffic volumes increase over time. Council's Asset Management Strategy and Long Term Financial Plan define Council's ability to respond to this issue (and not just for transport infrastructure); however, additional transport funding specifically focussed on the renewal of existing infrastructure (as opposed to the provision of new or additional) is required to reduce, or halt, the rate of transport network deterioration within the LGA.

Funding in relation to accessibility for an ageing population into the future, including:

- Disability Discrimination Act compliance, including footpaths, cycleways, public transport stops and links.
- Capacity for mobility vehicles (scooters, wheelchairs, etc).

Additional public transport funding, specifically with respect to route kilometres to provide convenience (and therefore drive patronage), potentially using small capacity vehicles, is also submitted. Funding assistance for the provision of public transport infrastructure through the Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme (CPTIGS) is acknowledged and appreciated.

4.1.5 Investigate the potential to re-instate train services to Cessnock and have buses linked out from that terminal.

The rail infrastructure and supporting legislation for the provision of rail passenger services to Cessnock and surrounding townships is already in place and is currently owned and operated (for coal only) by South Maitland Railway.

In addition to the main Cessnock line, there are many other rail corridors within and extending out from the Cessnock LGA where rail infrastructure has been dismantled, or is not currently in use. These corridors could be considered for possible re-instatement or, alternatively, for Regional Cycleway links between communities from Cessnock to Maitland, Lake Macquarie and Newcastle.

2. Other Transport Planning Studies

There have been a number of transport planning studies undertaken by government and non-government agencies in the past and it is important (and efficient) to consider and review these as part of the Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport.

The recent transport planning studies relating to the Hunter Region include:

- Lower Hunter Integrated Transport Strategy (March 2007);
- Lower Hunter Transport Needs Study (Hyder 2009);
- Hunter Independent Public Transport Inquiry (Aug 2011);
- Getting the Hunter Moving – Transport Initiative Discussion Paper (NRMA February 2011).

3. Landuse Planning Integration

Cessnock City Council is aware of the different timelines between the State and Regional Development Committee and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure with respect

to the alignment of the Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport with the following landuse planning initiatives (which include transport planning elements):

- Draft Strategic Regional Land Use Plan – Upper Hunter
- Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

The need to align landuse planning with Inter-Regional Public Transport planning is critical, specifically as the Inquiry is focussed at the (detailed) regional level and can only be coordinated by the State Government. The difficulty of aligning timelines is appreciated; however, at the very least there needs to be acknowledgement of the ultimate authority or specific responsibilities for public transport planning by the various state agencies involved and the documents produced.

Conclusion

Cessnock City Council submits these comments for consideration by the State and Regional Development Committee's Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport. In particular, Council strongly recommends active participation in a focussed and regionally specific workshop with key government and non-government stakeholders to facilitate a two-way flow of information and to maximise the use of local knowledge and context.

Yours faithfully

L J ROSSER
GENERAL MANAGER

22 May 2012