

**Submission**

**No 48**

**INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS**

**Organisation:** Bankstown City Council

**Name:** Mr Matthew Stewart

**Position:** General Manager

**Date Received:** 29/02/2012

The Committee Manager  
Committee on Transport and Infrastructure  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Committee Manager

**SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE'S INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL  
CORRIDORS**

**Bankstown City Council**

**February 2012**

Council welcomes this inquiry into the utilisation of air space above, and the land adjacent to, the rail corridor in the Greater Metropolitan Area of Sydney, including the Hunter and the Illawarra. Council's comments relate to the current planning and policy framework and the challenges and obstacles that need to be overcome if we are to meet our future community needs.

**Planning for the future of Bankstown**

The City of Bankstown is located about 20 kilometres southwest of the Sydney CBD. The City of Bankstown covers an area of around 77 square kilometres and is located in the central ring of the metropolitan area. It is, strategically, on a number of key transport corridors including 2 major rail lines.

As part of the State Government's plans to grow Sydney and accommodate more people, the City of Bankstown is expected to increase its housing numbers by 22,000 and generate 6,000 new jobs.

The challenge for Council is to find a way to make these increases and still ensure that transport, infrastructure and services keep pace with the growing population, without negative impact on the environment.

A core direction of Federal, State and Local strategic planning policy is to facilitate urban growth and renewal in centres with access to good public

transport. In the City of Bankstown, the centres identified for growth under these policies are located along the East Hills and Bankstown railway corridors.

Council is committed to strategically plan for urban growth in our centres and this is reflected in the adopted Residential Development Study (2009). The study commits Council to facilitating additional dwellings in, and around, our key centres, in particular those with rail stations.

Key areas of investigation as part of this process are:

- Being able to 'unlock' potential in, and around, rail stations and along rail corridors.
- Ensuring centres with greater density have accessible stations to support greater public transport patronage.
- Greater utilisation and integration of stations with the surrounding commercial and residential landuse

### **Council leading the planning process**

Council has led numerous initiatives to deliver on the better utilisation of land surrounding our key rail centres. This includes:

- amending its planning instruments to encourage mixed use property development around rail centres;
- facilitating sustainable urban renewal and development through its Town Centre Improvement Program;
- promoting transit oriented development schemes around railway stations though concentrating future development growth in the major centres.

However the planning and implementation of works in these centres has largely been led by Council with mixed involvement of State agencies, in particular Railcorp. Below are some specific examples of the leadership role Council has taken and the obstacles and challenges encountered.

### ***Bankstown Station***

The Bankstown Central Business District is the "City for the City", a major activity and transport hub that services the City of Bankstown and the wider West Central Subregion. The Bankstown CBD is and will continue to be a place of strong population and economic growth.

The State Government and Bankstown City Council identify the Bankstown CBD as a preferred location for residential and employment growth due to its proximity to jobs, shops, public transport and community facilities. By 2031, the Bankstown CBD is expected to grow by 8,470 residents and 4,000 new jobs.

Council is responding to this challenge by undertaking comprehensive strategic planning to ensure the amenity, safety and economic vitality of the Bankstown CBD substantially improves as growth occurs over time.

On 17 March 2004, the New South Wales Minister for Transport released the final report of Barrie Unsworth's Review of Bus Services in NSW. As a result of this review, Bankstown was identified as a key hub requiring improvement. Recognising this, Council initiated and coordinated a major renewal of the public domain adjacent and over to the Station. At the time Council also sought Railcorp engagement in the local area planning process for the Bankstown CBD. While many of the other State agencies actively participated in the improvement to the centre, unfortunately it did not extend to the station and Railcorp lands itself.

The outcomes have been a major infrastructure city renewal project, at a capital outlay of approximately \$10M, to achieve a bus interchange; improved north south connectivity across the Bankstown Line both above and below the rail line; and significant capital upgrades in relation to the public domain and physical infrastructure.

This was the opportune time to consider the opportunity for the use of airspace and rail corridor lands and the ability of these lands to contribute to agreed dwelling and jobs targets while at the same time renewing the aged and dilapidated Station to a modern and accessible Station befitting the gateway to South Western Sydney. Unfortunately, planning for Bankstown Station was not elevated in priority.

More recently Railcorp engaged with stakeholders from across the City in workshops to discuss the future of the station. However despite numerous requests for information or results of the workshop, little has been provided by Railcorp in relation to either a long term view of the Station and airspace above; or a short term view in terms of alleviating the difficulties within the existing station environment.

Regrettably, the non-alignment of the Railcorp's master planning processes with NSW State planning process and Council's planning for the City has hindered co-ordinated planning for our centres and led to lost opportunities for more integrated urban renewal.

### ***Yagoona Station***

Yagoona is another key rail centre in which Council has taken a lead role in planning its future. This commenced with the development of a Renewal Strategy for the Town Centre as well as the Hume Highway Corridor Strategy.

The first stage of the Hume Highway Corridor Strategy (adopted by Council on 22 November 2005) has led to the rezoning of lands within the retail core of Yagoona to Zone 3(b) Business and there have been a number of DCP amendments to allow for development of certain sites up to a height of 8

storeys. The second stage involved the rezoning of land to allow opportunities for mixed use development within the town centre and immediate surrounding the station (Gazetted in 2009).

This has been supplemented by significant street and public domain improvements with over \$2 million invested.

However, early in the Yagoona planning phase Council approached Railcorp with a view of better utilising the airspace and connections to the adjoining public and Railcorp owned land. Council developed several schemes which would have benefited the provision of rail services, improved commercial and development opportunity and access to the station. Unfortunately, the identification of priorities by Railcorp did not match. Council also sought commitment from Railcorp to make Yagoona an accessible station given the expected increase in population around the station. Railcorp were unable to engage with Council's strategic planning process as Yagoona Station was not flagged as a priority under their master planning program.

While Council has delivered on significant improvements to the Centre, this was another lost opportunity to more holistically plan and implement an integrated list of works and development for the area.

### ***Chester Hill Station***

Chester Hill is currently being investigated as a location for urban renewal by the State Government due to its significant land holding in the area. Council is also working with the Department of Planning on its plan to deliver on the housing targets for the centre. Council has previously tried to engage with Railcorp on accessibility of the Station but have been informed that again this is a low priority centre. Again this example typifies the non-alignment of priorities within the various State government Agencies.

While this project is at its early stage, it is an opportune time to try to re-align the existing high priority of Housing and Department of Planning for Chester Hill with that of Railcorp.

### ***Freight movement***

It is recognised that efficient freight movements are vital to growth in our economy. However there appears to be incompatibility between the need to protect freight corridors by restricting adjacent incompatible landuse (such as residential development), and the Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036, which is promoting development around rail centres. It is understood that the NSW Government are in the process of developing a Freight Strategy which will be integrated into the overall NSW Transport Master Plan, however there is little reference to its impact on new development along rail corridors. With this potential conflict unresolved, the broader planning for rail corridors is difficult.

## **Opportunities for Improvement**

The above examples demonstrate the lack of coordinated priorities amongst various agencies and the lost opportunity in working together to plan rail corridors. Enhancing the opportunities for urban renewal in these centres requires:

1. Greater coordination of strategic planning processes between State and Local Government and stakeholders than has existed in the past.
2. Railcorp to engage in the planning for centres or the reallocation of planning functions to a more integrated 'Urban Renewal' entity.
3. Greater clarity on which corridors need to be protected due to freight movements and which are appropriate for future residential/commercial consolidation.
4. A condition that any strategy for a centre is not only endorsed by local Government but also the relevant State government agencies who have critical infrastructure in the area.
5. The newly formed Ministry of Transport to ensure this co-ordination and endorsement occurs and are enshrined in the proposed Transport Master Plan.
6. While not specifically discussed above, the current planning framework cannot address broader economic realities where property development and existing high land value and improvement, along with multiple land owners, makes any urban renewal in an existing built up centre extremely challenging. For renewal of these centres to occur it may require further incentives from Government, or clear powers to ensure that redevelopment is achieved.

Council requests that our comments will be taken into account in any recommendations made. Please contact Scott Pedder, Director City Planning and Environment on 9707 9472 if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely



Matthew Stewart  
**General Manager**