Submission

No 19

INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

Organisation: National Trust of Australia (New South Wales)

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Mr Charles Casuscelli MP
Chair
Committee on Transport and Infrastructure
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Attention: Ms Vicki Buchbach, Committee Director

Dear Mr Casuscelli,

Inquiry into the Utilisation of Rail Corridors

The National Trust is pleased to make the attached submission to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure's Inquiry into the Utilisation of Rail Corridors.

In its submission the Trust addresses the two issues of the heritage issues relating to the utilization of existing rail corridors and the funding of new rail infrastructure such as the quadruplification of rail on the Sydney Harbour Bridge as originally proposed by Bradfield.

Yours sincerely,

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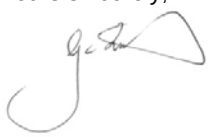

Graham Quint
Advocacy Manager

Submission to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure's Inquiry into the Utilisation of Rail Corridors

The Development Potential of Rail Corridors

The Trust recognizes the extraordinary potential for development of rail corridors as has occurred in other countries such as Hong Kong and Japan. Other submissions to this Inquiry have highlighted the example of Transit Oriented Value Capture (TOVC) in Hong Kong which "has been a recognized form of property development for over 3 decades" and could be regarded as International Best Practice of property development aligned with planning and infrastructure integration. The Trust also recognizes the potential for major railway systems to act as a tool for servicing broader Town Planning objectives such as Transit Oriented Development (TOD).

In its ultimate expression, major, new internationally significant architecture could be sited on rail corridors and recognized as the heritage of tomorrow. For example Hiroshi Hara's 1997 fifteen storey Kyoto Railway Station is one of the gems of Japan's modern architectural heritage. It is the most important transportation hub in Kyoto, Japan, Japan's second-largest train station building and one of the country's largest buildings, incorporating a shopping mall, hotel, movie theatre, department store, several local government facilities and extensive underground shopping malls.

The Potential for Reducing Development Pressures on Heritage properties adjoining Corridors

The use of rail corridor land for development has the potential to reduce the development pressures on land adjoining railway stations which may have a significant stock of heritage-listed commercial buildings dating from the period of railway introduction. However, in such situations there could be problems of over-shadowing from multi-storey development. Both the Kogarah and Hurstville railway corridor developments are of a scale that does not overwhelm nor overshadow the adjoining townscapes of Edwardian and Interwar period two-storey shops. A development of the size and scale of the Kyoto Railway Station may only be suitable for a site such as the railway yards south of Central Railway Station.

Development Below Rail Corridors

There is potential in suburban locations to develop shopping arcades below the railway corridors, accessed from the station platforms and linking under adjoining streets to existing town centre shops. This could increase the commercial viability of developments while minimising their height and visual impacts.

Bicycle Ways and Bicycle Storage Facilities

The Trust supports the general concept of using rail corridors to provide bicycle ways where this is possible. There are often potential cycling corridors next to existing rail infrastructure which may be used by rail maintenance vehicles and staff on an infrequent basis.

These corridors could be turned into cycling paths, removing cyclists from interactions with road traffic, without sacrificing road space used by vehicular traffic. Areas would need to be graded and gravel or bitumen surfaces lain. Safety fencing between the cyclist and the rail infrastructure would also be needed, along with some bridges or local diversions at road and waterway crossings. The more of these facilities that are developed the less pressure there will be for car parking and car parking stations and the more efficiently the rail corridors can be utilised. Of course there needs to be secure storage facilities for bicycles at railway stations, an issue that appears to have not been given due consideration in the past.

The Heritage Significance of some Railway Stations

Some railway stations will have major heritage significance in their own right and remodelling/ redevelopment should not be to the detriment of the historic, architectural and social significance of these heritage values. For example, both Wynyard and Town Hall railway stations are clearly in need of major redevelopment to deal with the present overcrowding, future needs, lack of air-conditioning

and public safety. However, Museum, St James and Circular Quay railway stations should be conserved and maintained in their current configuration and appearance.

The Paris Metro is an excellent case study in balancing the needs of train travellers and heritage conservation. Stations on the Metro's newest line 14) built at depth, comprise 120 m long and double-width platforms and high ceilings. The trains on this line are driverless, and the stations have platform screen doors.

However, on the older historic lines dating from 1900, the stations are a major tourist attraction with their uniform art nouveau decoration.

Rail Quadruplification of the Sydney Harbour Bridge

The Trust believes that the original Bradfield concept of railway lines on each side of the Sydney Harbour Bridge should again be investigated. Trains are far more efficient at carrying travellers than motor vehicles and the connecting tunnels for an eastern rail line still survive and could be brought into operation. The opening of the Sydney Harbour tunnel in 1992 providing an additional four lanes of roadway which should have allowed for the closure of the two easternmost Harbour Bridge lanes and their conversion to rail.

The Funding of New Rail Infrastructure

In its November, 2011 submission to the Chairs of the NSW Planning Review, the Trust concurred with the observations of Professor Stein that, "a strategy must contain more than zoning , such as some mechanism to direct growth, fund infrastructure and open up centres or transport corridors." It was the Trust's opinion and that of other commentators such as Professor Stein that the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy had no framework at all for governance.

Forward investment is required to create amenity. This goes beyond what can be achieved from developer contributions. The initial absence of access and amenity dampens demand. Accordingly increased pressure is applied on areas with existing high heritage values.

Sydney's growth over the past century has been built on the State Government's significant forward expenditure in economic infrastructure. Sydney's heavy investment in ports, rail, power and water supply at the commencement of the 20th century provided the foundation for Sydney's evolution into a global city.

After WWII the Commonwealth government resolved to initiate an unprecedented immigration programme which, when coupled with the baby boom, created enormous demands for new economic and social infrastructure. However, state governments no longer had the requisite income tax base to fund construction following the Commonwealth government's introduction of uniform income tax legislation in 1942.

These actions established the pattern for the second half of the 20th century into the current period. This problem was later compounded with the corporatisation of state utilities. Water and electricity utilities are driven by efficiencies and the need to generate a dividend for the sole shareholder, the NSW Government. Whereas previously development followed the infrastructure, now infrastructure follows development.

NSW needs to sufficiently fund the implemention of its strategic plans or continue to be compromised with unintended collateral impacts on natural and cultural heritage. The failure to adequately forward invest in infrastructure since 1945 has had the single largest impact on settlement patterns.

There is no direct link between the allocation of funds for the construction of infrastructure and the necessary delivery of the numerous strategic plans. Funding of infrastructure is arbitrary with investment sourced from a mix of public-private partnerships, bonds, borrowings, developer levies, planning agreements, consolidated revenue and Commonwealth grants.

The Trust contends that a centralised infrastructure fund is required to replace the loss of income tax revenue after World War II. This fund should be linked to the strategic plan with oversight from a State Planning Commission.

This would also alleviate pressure on s94 contributions. Application of s94 of the EP&A Act 1979 is highly inefficient. Developer levies were initially devised for Greenfield developments. Fringe growth will only realistically account for 20-30% of all new urban development over the next 25 years. After which, the expansion in the Sydney basin will be precluded by agricultural and natural constraints.

The present system s94 and state infrastructure levies is highly inefficient and ineffective with $560 million unspent presently held in a myriad of individual Local Government accounts. A reliance on developer levies transferred through to purchasers is inequitable with narrow tax base paying for a broad range of services for successive generations.

The Trust believes that developer contributions should be codified and retained strictly for local infrastructure. Broader social and economic infrastructure should be funded from an efficient, effective and equitable tax system.

Western Australia has a variation on the regional development fund called the Metropolitan Improvement Fund. The Metropolitan Improvement Trust Fund contains $85 million with $150 million in contingent liabilities.

It levies 0.14 cents in the dollar on land tax. Land tax is paid on investment properties and secondary residences only, as in NSW.

The replacement of stamp duty with a broad land tax would provide the basis for an efficient, effective and equitable tax system, A proportion of this could be allocated towards implementation of regional strategies by assigning a prescribed quantum such as 0.14 cents in the dollar for a Metropolitan Improvement Fund to deliver new infrastructure such as rail.

This would enable appropriate conservation of built heritage in urban renewal areas where the majority of development is expected to occur. Furthermore, it would offer greater protection to natural heritage with areas of high biodiversity being acquired rather than traded through inefficient banking schemes.

Similarly, funding would be available for major economic infrastructure such as rail, roads, ports, water supply and power generation. This is infrastructure which is critical to support NSW's growth for the next 100 years.

The National Trust recommends that the NSW Planning System implement its objectives from funds generated from the legislated rated allocation of an alternative to stamp duty on land transfers, such as a broad-based land tax.