

Submission

No 35

INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

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Date Received: 29/02/2012



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29 February 2012

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Charles Caususcelli MP
The Chair
Legislative Assembly –
Committee on Transport and Infrastructure
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY 2000

Dear Sir

INQUIRY INTO UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

I refer to the above and the call for submissions. At its meeting on 28 February 2012, Holroyd City Council considered a report regarding the Inquiry and resolved to make a submission as follows:

Mixed Use Property Development

The concept of development of the rail corridor lands is attractive. However, there is relatively limited scope at most stations, which are the obvious sites for mixed use development (as opposed to single-use redevelopment of less-centrally located surplus railway lands such as disused marshalling yards or rail lines). Among the factors that limit the potential for mixed use development are:

- few stations are entirely within cuttings, where airspace construction is easiest;
- the high cost of construction over operating railways;
- existing commuter car parking within rail corridor limiting the available land within rail corridor but outside the immediate envelope of the operating railway; and
- the difficulty of providing basement car parking within the rail corridor land.

In addition, where there is scope for property development, the high cost of construction necessitates considerable density and building height to ensure an adequate return on investment, e.g. airspace development at Chatswood and St Leonards. The resultant form of development is not necessarily attractive to the market in many locations around the metropolitan rail network.

Property development within the rail corridor may be possible where surface commuter parking exists if replacement car parking within multi-storey structures (either above or below ground) is provided. Redevelopment of surface commuter car parking for other uses is a feature of future planning around light rail stations in the San Francisco area, with the aim of increasing revenue and patronage. The inquiry should examine opportunities for increased commuter car parking to serve larger low-medium density catchments, which could be funded by commercial / residential development and would increase rail patronage in outer areas of the Greater Metropolitan Area.

Possible locations for development incorporating rail corridor land in the Holroyd local government area are the bus interchange and commuter car park at Merrylands and commuter car park at Wentworthville. Additionally, there may be some limited potential for development in the rail corridor at Pendle Hill, in association with the adjacent Pendle Sports Club site. Westmead Station

would be ideally suited for commuter car parking and interchange facilities. It is noted that these are indicated as potential locations for further investigation only. No feasibility has been undertaken and a more detailed study and review would be required.

Income Generation

The limited scope for development will limit potential revenue. Despite this, the proceeds from any sale or lease of rail land for development should be directed to fund public transport infrastructure (rather than infrastructure generally).

Sustainable Urban Renewal

The centres-based planning approach generally adopted under Metropolitan Strategy, with the majority of strategic centres located on the rail network, supports sustainable urban renewal. However, such centres-based planning has to date been applied in such a way as to mainly high density residential development, with less emphasis on employment. The development of employment areas, either through the expansion of existing centres and zones or the release of new employment lands, has not been closely associated with the rail network.

While it is important to achieve residential growth around rail stations, encouraging travel to work by rail (or walking) also requires employment to be located at stations. Residential development is relatively easily achieved on private land compared to commercial development, due to differences in achieving finance and the longer pay-back periods involved with commercial development. Government owned land therefore presents a unique opportunity to ensure commercial development in the longer term, which will be needed to deliver jobs closer to home.

Transit Oriented Development

There are various definitions of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) but they generally agree that it is development that is not only located adjacent to transit stops (such as rail stations) but is higher density development that is designed:

- to encourage transit use;
- to actively encourage non-car travel;
- to maximise access to transit for the surrounding area.

The inquiry should make recommendations that will encourage genuine TOD rather than simply higher density development adjacent to rail stations. While there has been considerable higher density development around rail in the Greater Metropolitan Area, this has seldom fully met the above criteria, in particular the opportunity to improve pedestrian access between stations and the surrounding area. Car parking needs to be carefully managed to deliver the appropriate balance between ensuring the wider catchment can access rail stations and at the same time rail travel is a preference, particularly for people living at rail stations. This will need to vary depending on the circumstances of the location and surrounding area. Future development of surplus lands within rail corridors should be focussed in achieving the above aims of TOD and improved access to and from stations would, in-turn, facilitate TOD on surrounding land. Obviously, increased patronage can only be achieved if TOD is matched by improvements to services.



Connectivity Between Communities

Many parts of the metropolitan rail network currently act as barriers rather than connections between communities on either side of railway lines. This is due in large part to local topography and

Railcorp's preference against level crossings on the electrified network. This is particularly the case in western Sydney, where, due to the flatter topography, road over- and under-bridges crossing rail corridors are few and separate pedestrian crossings are mainly limited to those provided at stations.

The inquiry should address whether greater funding should be directed to providing more connections across rail corridors for pedestrians and cyclists. Where mixed use development is proposed, a mandatory requirement of approval should be the provision of improved pedestrian and cycle links across the rail corridor.

The inquiry should also examine potential for cycle and pedestrian links along rail corridors. In various locations around the metropolitan rail, space exists within the rail corridor for parallel cycle – pedestrian paths, which in many cases will be suitable for dual use for access for track maintenance.

Planning and Policy Framework

The inquiry could investigate changes to State guidelines (i.e. those published by the former Roads and Traffic Authority) related to parking, considering particular circumstances of different locations adjacent to rail stations and transit more generally. Minimum parking requirements in such locations might be reduced and maximums introduced on residential parking, in order to encourage rail rather than car travel. Further, both minimum and maximum parking standards should reflect the quality of service at the relevant station and the likely trip destinations of the community, rather than impose general or even regional standards. At the same time, additional commuter parking might also be provided to serve wider, low density catchments.

Regulatory and Policy Barriers

Amendments may be required to the LEP Standard Instrument Order and State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007 to facilitate development on or adjacent to rail corridors. Currently, residential, retail and commercial development is permitted within the rail corridor "if the development is wholly or partly above a railway station". To facilitate transit oriented development, it may be necessary to extend this to parts of the rail corridor not above stations and to adjoining land.

In addition, the inquiry should address the organisational impediments inherent with development on or adjoining rail corridors, particularly the culture and responsiveness of Railcorp. Local government and private landowner dealings with Railcorp have generally proven difficult and prone to significant delays. This has significant implications for project viability, whether for public infrastructure (such as new or widened bridges over rail lines) or for development of rail corridor and adjacent land.

Assessing the Compatibility of Projects

Local government input into the assessment of any project is essential. While the State may wish to amend the Infrastructure SEPP, or make a new State Environmental Planning Policy to regulate property development within or immediately adjacent to rail corridors, Councils should remain the consent authority.

Best Practice

Examples of transit oriented development (TOD) and air space development from other Australian jurisdictions worthy of investigation include:

- Subiaco and Joondalup in the Perth metropolitan area (major brownfield and greenfield suburban centres as TOD);
- Box Hill in the Melbourne metropolitan area (an air space shopping centre and station); and
- Proposed development adjoining the new Varsity Lakes station on the Gold Coast (TOD).

Internationally, relevant examples of TOD worthy of examination include:

- Pleasant Hill and Fruitvale Bay Area Rapid Transit stations within the San Francisco Bay Area (TOD constructed on former commuter car parking lots);
- Various locations adjoining the Skytrain system in Vancouver, such as New Westminster, Metrotown and Edmonds (high-rise brownfield TOD);
- various new town developments in Stockholm, such as Vällingby and Skärholmen (medium-rise greenfield TOD associated with the extension of the Stockholm “T-bana” metro).

Internationally, good examples of air space development include:

- Various central London rail termini (Victoria, Charing Cross and Liverpool Street, with the Kings Cross rail lands currently undergoing renewal);
- New York – Penn & Grand Union stations;
- Various stations across the Japanese rail network, in particular the central termini of private rail lines in Tokyo.

Conclusion:

Rail corridor land has significant potential for development to compliment centres and encourage rail travel. The inquiry’s focus on such development supporting sustainable urban renewal and development is worthy of support.

If you require any further information regarding this matter, please contact Council’s Manager Strategic Planning on (02) 9840 9803.

Yours faithfully

Tim Butler
ACTING GENERAL MANAGER

Per:



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