

Submission

No 60

INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

Name: Name Suppressed

Date Received: 14/03/2012

To: The Committee Manager
Committee on Transport and Infrastructure
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000
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Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to make a submission to the inquiry by the Transport and Infrastructure Committee into the utilisation of rail corridors. I apologise that this submission has been lodged late.

I am supportive of the need to find additional housing to meet Sydney's needs. Clearly, Sydney has a shortfall of housing and I can understand why there is an examination into using rail corridors to provide this housing, given that it is placing new residents close to public transport. However, as a resident living near a rail corridor I provide the following perspectives on this issue that I think need to be taken into consideration:

Noise from freight lines

Rail corridors can be very noisy places and placing residents directly over stations, even with noise mitigation in the apartments, could lead to calls to limit train noise and therefore potentially limit services. This is particularly the case for freight rail corridors which are dominated by diesel locomotives dragging a large number of freight containers.

For instance, the Bankstown suburban rail corridor (which includes my local station of Dulwich Hill) also contains the main southern Sydney freight line from Port Botany. It is vital for the State's economy that there are no constraints placed on the operation of this freight corridor, particularly when there is a need to increase containers travelling on freight as distinct to road.

Due to the major noise impacts of freight trains (particularly during the nighttime when background noise levels are lower) it is possible residents living directly above this noise will complain and therefore seek nighttime curfews (much like with the airport). I can hear freight trains from my house clearly at night and it is probably some 300m-400m from the corridor (however I cannot hear the electric trains). I would submit that building above or near freight rail corridors is not advisable.

Parking

I think many planners would probably assume that people living above a railway station "would not need cars".

However, for the last 12 years, I have lived in two inner-Sydney suburbs which are accessible to public transport. At both of these places, I and the neighbours around me have still needed and used cars, particularly for

weekend family travel. There is no real evidence to show that residents in accessible locations don't use cars. Simply denying carparking to residents in blocks above railway stations means that residents would seek out parking spots on nearby streets.

This is a particular issue for older inner-city suburbs where many people rely on on-street carparking as many homes have been built without off-street carparking.

As such, I would submit that:

- Apartments over or near railway stations should still contain a reasonable level of carparking; and
- As part of the planning assessment of proposed apartment buildings, the potential impacts on on-street parking in the nearby vicinity are assessed and mitigated – perhaps through resident-preferred on-street parking restrictions.

Other infrastructure

It is often considered “good planning practice” to place new residents close to existing public transport infrastructure. However, new residents don't just need transport infrastructure, they also need many other forms of infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and emergency services.

In my local area, parents tell me the local primary school (Dulwich Hill) is currently at capacity, with no ability to take extra students. What's the point of bringing in more residents if the local school is full? Public transport provision is only one part of the puzzle.

Additionally, the Bankstown line is at 140 per cent capacity, with many other lines also over-capacity – see http://www.cityrail.info/about/our_performance/service_capacity.jsp#section1e
Again, I am not sure about the wisdom of bringing in large numbers of extra people living above railway stations if there is no room for them on the trains.

Local control

A key election platform of the Coalition government was to increase local control over development. In line with this, and due to their knowledge of local areas, I believe local councils should be given planning controls over zoning and development assessment matters related to proposed residential apartment buildings in railway corridors.

Other uses for rail corridors

Rail corridors have the potential to be used for active transport, such as cycling and walking. For instance, the NSW Government's Regional Recreation Trails project states that the Bankstown line corridor is a potential sub-regional “Southern Sydney rail trail” (number 4.27) while part of the Illawarra line has the potential to be used for a “Hurstville to Botany Bay” trail

(number 4.16). No doubt, the trails framework also covers other rail corridors throughout Sydney.

If you look alongside the Bankstown line, in many areas around Dulwich Hill, Marrickville and Hurlstone Park there is certainly enough space to run a cycleway and pedestrian path alongside the railway line (perhaps separated by a fence). It is important that any development of the rail corridor does not sterilise or destroy these important and rare linear corridors and leaves space for future regional trails.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Name and address withheld at writer's request