

Submission

No 52

INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

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Inquiry into the Utilisation of Rail Corridors.

To the Chair; Mr. Charles Casuscelli, Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure.

Hunter Tomorrow Inc submission. February 2012.

Our members have had very short notice to respond to this initiative we nonetheless submit the following brief response for consideration by the Committee;

OBSERVATIONS:

The more attractive to commuters public transport is the more chance the government's ambition of "Getting people out of cars" could be achieved. Sydney transport demonstrates the urgency to convince commuters not to join the 25k/h tortuous road journey to their work.

Transport systems can be attractive, effective and efficient when the various modes are operating symbiotically. The more seamless and less frequent the transition from one transport mode to another, the more economic, practical and attractive it becomes. Every suburban rail station should be a bus depot, eg; Newcastle, Hamilton, Kotara, Glendale etc. Trains should be predictably reliable and buses should commence their journey after the train's passengers have alighted.

When transport is so infrequent that it necessitates carrying and referring to timetables, commuters will be attracted towards faster transport modes. Ideal maximum wait time is 15 minutes and it has been established that the average commuter will travel 30 minutes to and from their work. If public transport does not meet this target then they investigate a faster and more convenient mode of travel.

Convenient rail crossings will enable transport mode connection from pedestrian to bus and train to bus. Cyclists should be provided for and encouraged to travel by train and or bus to within a kilometre of their destination.

Parts of Europe use the space above rail lines as cycle ways. The rail is a convenient straight roadway usually with reasonable grades that would be more viable for cycle ways built above them rather than trying to fit into an already overloaded road system..

Existing buildings close to rail lines such as at Honeysuckle and Wickham could be supported to provide aerial pedestrian rail crossings, opening their lifts to public usage and providing crossings above existing rail.

The pending upgrade of freight rail between Sydney and Newcastle is greatly needed as road freight is clearly increasingly and excessively dangerous. The Western bypass would seem to be a long way off and yet the improved freight rail will burden existing lines and crossings even more.

A relatively economical and voter friendly idea would be to raise the rail over the Adamstown gates using the hill behind St. Pious to advantage thus removing the constant delays between St. James and Glebe Roads.

There has been much discussion over the years about taking Stewart Avenue over, under or cutting rail services entirely to improve peak hour traffic flow. However, perceptive observations indicate that traffic between 4 and 5 pm mostly comes South to north or vice versa. It isn't local traffic.

Going around or removing the rail as observed during trackwork has almost no effect on traffic flow and the greatest impact is traffic exiting from Wharf Road to Hannell Street. As soon as Wharf Road traffic is under way Stewart Avenue, Hunter and King Streets reach gridlock within one minute.

Possible improvements:

- Open Worth Place up as a roundabout with Union Street.
- Take Wharf Road over or under Hannell Street.
- Complete the West Charlestown bypass to draw off traffic from City Road and Stewart Avenue.

Kotara Station should be moved down beside Northcott Drive with substantial commuter parking provided. This would encourage park and ride travellers into Newcastle thus reducing road traffic and inner city parking congestion.

Glendale Interchange should be fast tracked for the same reason as Kotara, to provide convenient and economical parking for rail travellers enabling similar advantages.

Public transport users living around Toronto cannot leave Newcastle after 8.30 pm during the week if they are to connect with the last bus from Fassifern. There is no shelter for bus users and able bodied passengers must walk nearly a hundred yards to get to the bus.

Similar limitations exist for Dungog, Singleton and Upper Hunter travellers. If there is any intention to attract commerce, promote city entertainment, education, and work opportunities then people should be urged to leave their cars out of Newcastle. The existing situation is just not good enough.



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