

Submission

No 47

INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

Organisation: Lake Macquarie City Council
Name: Mr Iain Moore
Position: Principal Strategic Planner
Integrated Planning Department
Date Received: 29/02/2012

29 February 2012

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Subject: The Utilisation of Rail Corridors (Inquiry)

Thankyou for the opportunity to make a submission to the report on air space above and land adjacent to rail corridors in the Greater Metropolitan Area of Sydney (which includes the Hunter), currently being conducted by the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure. LMCC is committed to working with the state government towards sustainable transport and land use.

Structure of this submission

Council officers have compiled the following comments for your consideration. The submission has been is divided into 2 sections:

- Section 1 outlines key facts and figures of the Lake Macquarie LGA,
- Section 2 addresses the specific issues relating to the Terms of Reference to the Inquiry

Section 1 – The Lake Macquarie LGA

Population and development

The city of Lake Macquarie is located 90 minutes north of Sydney, 10 minutes from Newcastle, and 40 minutes from the NSW Central Coast (figure 1). The current population of Lake Macquarie is around 200,000 and is expected to grow to 240,000 by 2031. The major growth is occurring in the City's regional centre, Charlestown, the emerging regional centres of Morisset and Glendale and the City's other town centres of Cardiff, Toronto, Warners, Bay, Belmont and Swansea (figure 1).

The Lower Hunter Regional Strategy (LHRS) projects significant housing growth in the Lake Macquarie LGA

The specific locations in the LGA (shown in Table 1) are nominated by the LHRs for new residential development:

Table 1: LHRs housing projections

Location	Type	Dwellings
Charlestown	Infill, centres	3,200
Charlestown –Gateshead (Pacific highway)	Renewal corridor	Not stated
Cooranbong	Urban release	3,000
Glendale-Cardiff	Infill, centres and corridors	4,000
Main Rd Cardiff		Included in the above
Morisset	Infill, centres	600
Wyee	Urban release	Up to 2,000 dwellings

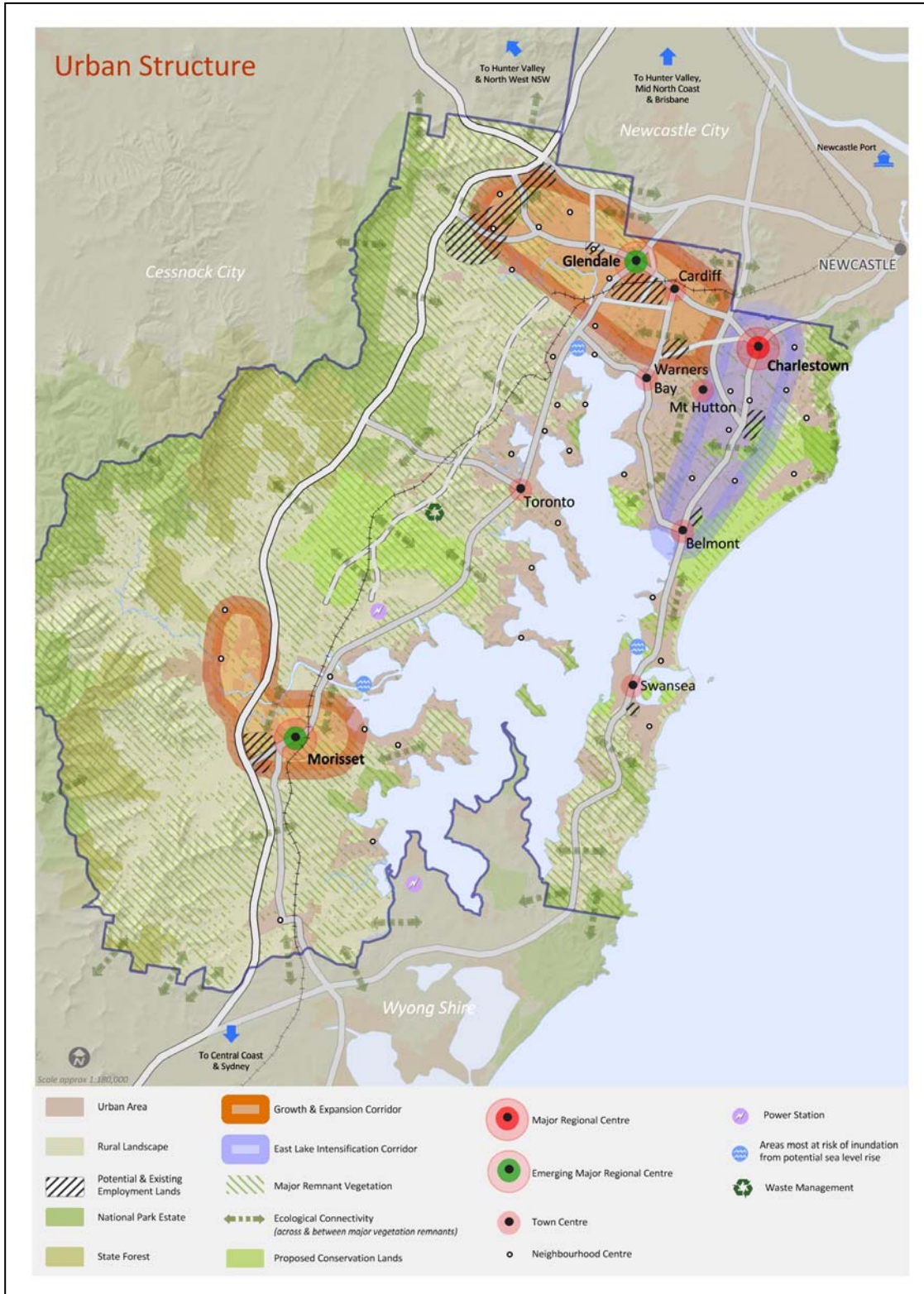
Fundamental to the strategic land use approach taken by Council has been the concept of concentrating growth on existing transport nodes. The concept is reflected in Council's Lifestyle 2020 Strategy and its successor, draft Lifestyle 2030. These strategic plans provide the long-term direction for the overall development of the City. The nine railway stations along the Main Northern Railway line, which traverses the western side of Lake Macquarie, are critical transport nodes. Concentrated growth, in the form of mixed-use development and medium density housing within a ten-minute walk of major public transport nodes, such as railway stations or interchanges, will accommodate much of the projected population growth and slow traffic growth on the City's road network. Master Planning has been completed for Morisset, Glendale and Charlestown to facilitate this development.

The population of Lake Macquarie is also ageing. In 1996, the median age was 35 years; by 2006 this had increased to 50 years. Over the last 10 years, the only age groups showing a significant growth as a proportion of the population were those over 40 years of age, with the 55-64 year old age group showing the highest rate of growth.

Access to the railway is critical to maintain the mobility of an aging population. Facilitating sustainable urban renewal and development; and transit orientated development schemes around railway stations are important strategies to improve the access to railway stations.

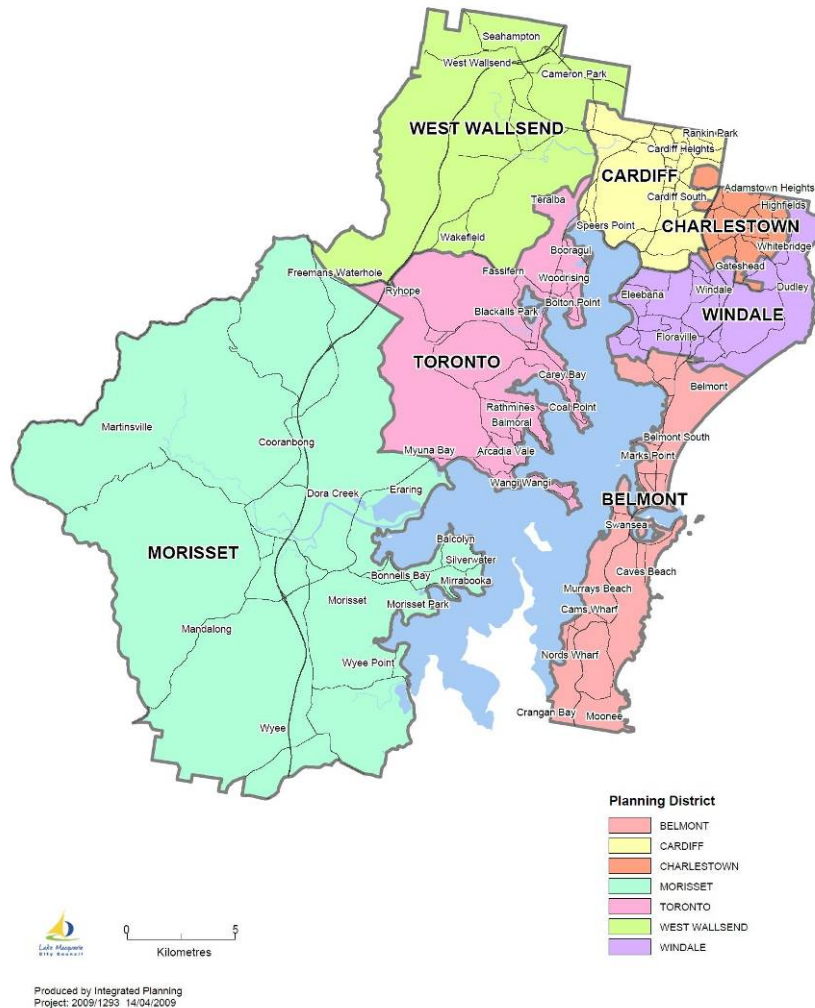
To accommodate an ageing population, Council's LS2020 and draft LS2030 strategies encourage development that supports the effective and efficient functioning of both public and private transport infrastructure. In this regard, Council aims to ensure that no urban area is more than 10 minutes walk from a regular transport route. It is essential that a rail corridor plan recognises the needs of high dependency rail users and co-ordinates with Council to maximise accessibility to rail transport.

Figure 1. Lake Macquarie City Urban Structure showing major centres



Council is monitoring population growth, through seven planning districts as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Lake Macquarie Planning Districts



The Belmont, Windale and Charlestown Planning Districts are connected by the Pacific Highway corridor along the east of the Lake to Newcastle. The railway does not service these planning districts. The combined population of these Planning Districts is around 84,000 and expected to increase to approximately 88,000 by 2020.

However, the land to the west and north of the Lake comprises the planning districts of Morisset, Toronto, West Wallsend and Cardiff. The Main Northern Railway line connects these planning districts.

The Morisset Planning District contains the Morisset Town Centre, which is designated as an “emerging regional centre” in the LHRs and is directly serviced by the Main Northern Railway line.

Urban development in the Toronto Planning District is also generally in the east of the Planning District, adjacent to the Lake shore and along the Main Northern Railway. Toronto is the major district centre.

The West Wallsend Planning District includes significant greenfield urban development at Cameron Park. A potential site for the High Speed Railway Interchange for the Newcastle District is being considered on land in the West Wallsend Planning District as it would be easy to connect back to the Main Northern Railway at Glendale via light rail, and Cameron Park is also at the intersection of the F3 Freeway and the new Hunter Expressway..

The Cardiff Planning District includes the local areas of Glendale, Boolaroo, Cardiff, and Warners Bay. Each of these local areas has a shopping centre or town centre. Glendale is designated an “emerging regional centre” in the LHRS, and along with Cardiff is directly serviced by the Main Northern Railway line. The Glendale - Cardiff area has been identified for significant infill housing proposed along the Main Road and Lake Road corridors, adjacent to the Glendale Regional Centre. A Rail/Bus Transport Interchange is proposed at Glendale.

Section 2 – Responses to terms of reference

The following comments address the issues raised in the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

Providing opportunities for mixed use property development

Lake Macquarie's rail network comprises the Main Northern Railway line, which links Sydney and Newcastle and several coal loading/unloading loops (see figure 3).

Lifestyle 2020 provides key principles for the City's rail corridors:

- They are designed for the efficient movement of high volumes of goods.
- Serve the local and commuter needs of the community.
- Incorporate design measures to minimise environmental impacts, such as noise and vibration on surrounding land uses.
- Provide for the safety and convenience of patrons.

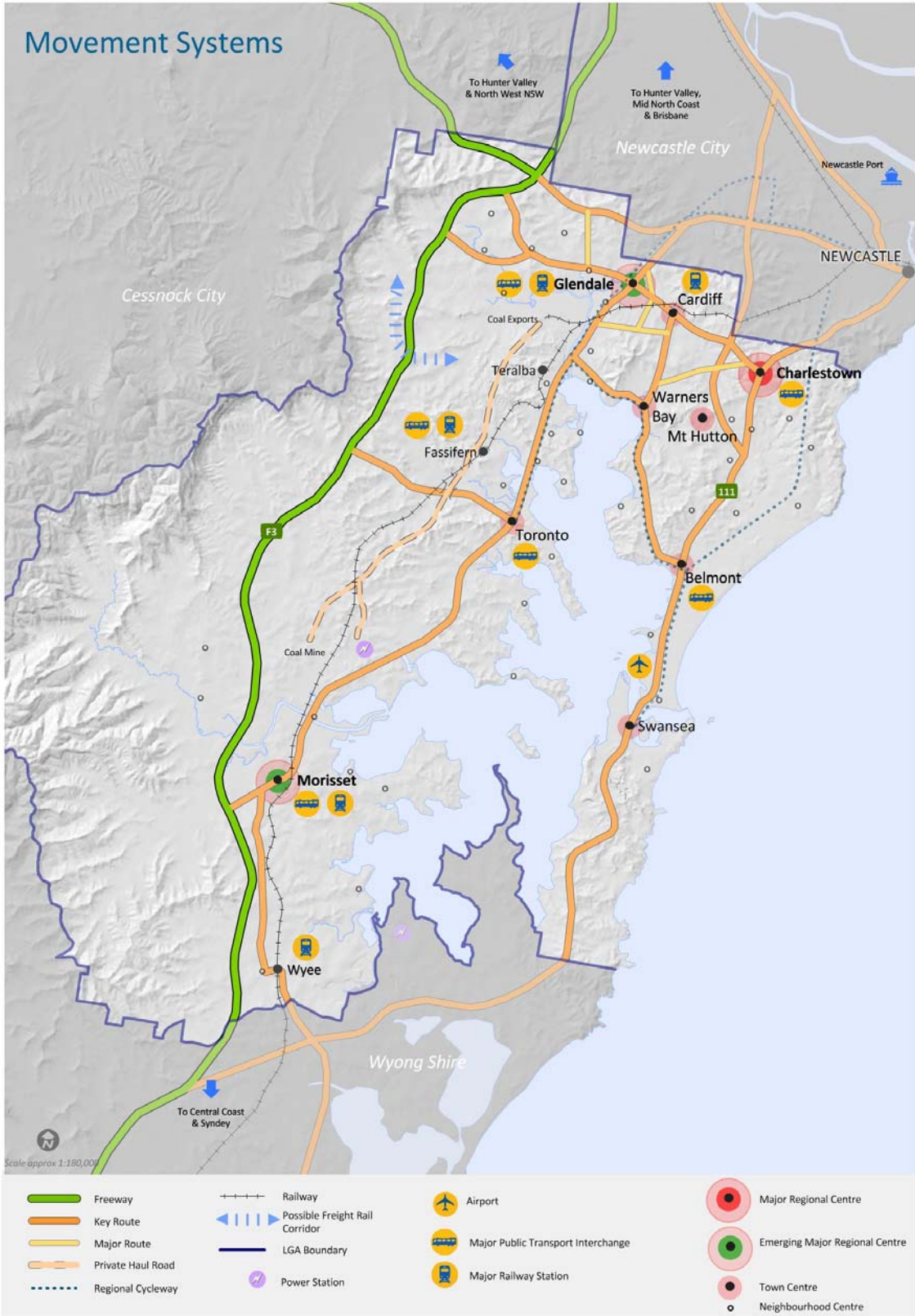
Its successor, draft LS2030 identifies three major priorities for the rail system.

- Ensuring local and commuter needs of the community are met by providing frequent, reliable, convenient, and safe services, together with supportive interchange and cycling infrastructure.
- Minimising environmental impacts, such as noise and vibration, on surrounding land uses should be incorporated where necessary.
- Encouraging freight with an origin or destination in the LGA to use rail as a mode of transport.

Nine railway stations in the Lake Macquarie LGA provide access to the passenger rail service to the Central Coast, Sydney, and Newcastle. Railway stations are located at Wyee, Morisset, Dora Creek, Awaba, Fassifern, Booragul, Teralba, Cockle Creek and Cardiff.

The Lower Hunter Regional Strategy and Council's landuse strategies, encourage growth around stations by promoting the development of mixed-use and multi-unit housing.

Figure 3. Movement system corridors in Lake Macquarie



City

Council supports appropriate opportunities for mixed use development in and adjacent the rail corridor to facilitate transport oriented design. The State government should ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to take advantage of the opportunities.

Council is also mindful that appropriate regulations need to ensure the interface between rail and residential/commercial uses reduces potential conflict.

Council has allocated considerable resources to facilitate the development of Glendale, identified as an “emerging regional centre” in the LHRs. The Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange is proposed at Glendale. To facilitate the development of the Glendale Regional Centre, Council has prepared a Master Plan for the area. The Master Plan includes significant land holdings owned by Railcorp, including the Main Northern Railway corridor and land surrounding the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange. Much of this prime urban land is underutilised.

The opportunity for mixed use development in the rail corridor and adjoining lands in Glendale would assist in achieving Council's long-term vision for sustainable communities. Unfortunately, despite the Master Plan, Council has found it difficult to progress discussions and achieve agreed outcomes with Railcorp to implement the Master Plan.

.Generating income for funding future infrastructure projects

A growing issue for Council is whether there will be adequate provision of accessible transport infrastructure for the expected growth levels and population mix of each of the Planning Districts. Council's land use strategies are ensuring that housing and employment opportunities are located in areas with good public transport, to minimise travel times and passenger and freight costs. However, sufficient infrastructure capacity is needed to support the planned growth of centres, such as Morisset, Glendale, Cardiff and Wyee. Council acknowledges that mechanisms such as Section 94 Contributions and the State Infrastructure Contribution scheme provide sources of funds, but believe that other innovative mechanisms should be explored. This is especially the case where major infrastructure works are required.

For example, the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange, including the Pennant Street overpass, at Glendale, have long been identified by the State government and Lake Macquarie Council as major pieces of infrastructure to support the emerging regional centre at Glendale. LMCC has undertaken investigations to identify income-generating projects that could assist in funding the needed infrastructure. This includes identifying a significant area of land surrounding the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange at Glendale that is owned by Railcorp and at present is underutilised. Council have approached Railcorp on numerous occasions to discuss development options on this land to generate funding for the Interchange. In all approaches, Railcorp have been less than helpful or forthcoming with information to assist the process.

Facilitating sustainable urban renewal and development

Strategic outcomes contained within draft Lifestyle 2030 specifically highlight the need for adequate infrastructure capacity, effective and efficient functioning of public transport and the reduction of traffic congestion to achieve sustainable urban renewal and development. To reduce traffic congestion, Council is advocating to improve public and active transport and has a variety of established programs to promote increased use of public / active transport, such as implementation of planning vision articulated in Lifestyle 2020; investment in infrastructure such as the Fernleigh Track; and community engagement programs with

schools and local communities.

To facilitate the effective and efficient functioning of public transport, more efficient use needs to be made of land adjoining and within the rail corridor. This is particularly the case for land within the vicinity of transport interchanges. Unfortunately, with respect to the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange proposed for Glendale, Council has found it difficult to receive appropriate direction or assistance from Railcorp as to the type and extent of development that can be built over the railway line at Glendale. Council has experienced a lack of clarity as to what policies and procedures apply in seeking development over the railway line. Without a transparent and coherent approval mechanism, continued urban renewal and development of the area is severely hindered. The value of the rail corridor in facilitating TODs, which is discussed below, is in turn limited. State policies and guidelines need to be developed that provide Council's with the necessary standards around which they can plan development.

Should the sale of airspace in urban areas or around the rail corridor be considered, it is recommended that income generated from sales is in turn invested in renewable energy technologies (e.g. solar photovoltaics) either on-site or along the rail corridor. Solar panels could be installed on the roof of existing or new structures (such as tunnels, buildings, train stop shelters), or be free standing in secure areas. Rail corridors provide good opportunities for installation of renewables as they generally have good solar access and provide for distributed arrays that minimise cloud effects. There are also existing high voltage electrical lines for input of electricity directly into the grid without the need for additional infrastructure.

Similarly, for those rail corridors passing through high wind areas, there is opportunity for free standing wind turbines to be installed.

Community-owned renewables projects could also benefit from solar or wind projects in these areas. This infrastructure would also contribute significantly to offsetting the impacts of rail electricity use in NSW and providing the government with access to cost-effective renewable energy. Consideration should also be given to utilisation of rail corridors for cycleways. The relatively flat gradient of rail corridors provides ideal cycling conditions. To fully utilise the corridor for cycling between Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, the tunnel between Kotara and Cardiff stations would need to be widened.

Facilitation of transit orientated development schemes around railway stations

Approximately 48,000 people are employed in Lake Macquarie, an increase of approximately 6% since 2001. The LHRS projects an additional 66,000 jobs in Lower Hunter by 2031. 19,300 or just under one third of additional centre based jobs in the Lower Hunter are proposed in Lake Macquarie. The LHRS nominates the regional centre of Charlestown to grow by 4,400 jobs. The emerging regional centres of Glendale - Cardiff and Morisset, serviced by the Main Northern Railway line, are nominated to grow by 6,200 and 1,600 jobs respectively. The ability to live in close proximity to railway stations is critical to providing efficient access to jobs.

The Lower Hunter Regional Strategy and Council's landuse strategies encourage transit orientated development (TOD) to facilitate higher density urban mixed-use development, improve access to public transport, and allow for better public / active transport use.

The development of rail airspace for mixed-use urban purposes has the ability to increase preferred development intensity to achieve TOD, connect communities either side of railway lines, and generate income for government. These areas also have the capacity to be developed in a way as to demonstrate leading edge sustainable building and design

examples to the community (for example, Sustainability Victoria's "*Sustainable Precincts Program*" and the Victorian Government's "*Zero Emissions Neighbourhoods*"). Sensitive development of transport hubs in the rail airspace corridors can also bring communities together, whilst reducing traffic congestion and reliance on fossil fuels. Developments using rail airspace that demonstrate excellent sustainability design and performance (e.g. 5-star Green Star rating or higher) would be preferred.

The TOD envisaged in Lifestyle 2020 and draft Lifestyle 2030, is heavily dependent on transport interchanges that allow movement from one service to another and/or one mode to another. Their success of Interchanges at Morisset, Fassifern and Glendale depends on the efficient use of Main Northern Railway line corridor within these centres.

Morisset and Glendale Transport Interchanges

Master Planning for the emerging regional centres of Morisset and Glendale has reinforced the importance of the railway as a major source of public transport and the facilitation of TOD. An important principal in implementing the Morisset Structure Plan and the Glendale Regional Centre Master Plan is ensuring that the public transport interchanges, such as the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange, which will be the heart of the public transport system serving Glendale, shall provide safe and convenient public transport.

The Ministry of Transport is preparing plans to create a new bus-rail interchange in conjunction with redevelopment of Morisset Railway Station.

Considerable effort has been made in designing and modelling the development of the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange at Glendale. The Glendale Regional Centre Master Plan, includes the requirement that development on sites surrounding the interchange to be integrated with its design, including

- Encouraging uses that capitalise on, and support, the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange;
- Providing efficient linkages to the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange;
- Providing surveillance of, and activity in, the public areas leading to and adjacent to the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange, and
- Providing supportive infrastructure, such as shared commuter car parking and bicycle storage.

The Master Plan also acknowledges that the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange will generate a demand for commuter car parking, which will be provided in conjunction with other car parking requirements in the vicinity: Carparking will be managed by

- Integration of commuter car parking with the needs of the Stockland shopping mall,
- Providing a link from the commuter car park that will directly connect the railway station at the same level by offering commuter car parking on the upper levels.

The design of the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange and the road system has also been developed to enable buses to reach the Interchange relatively easily and directly. The bus interchange component of the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange needs to be as close as possible to the railway station. Pedestrian access to the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange will involve a minimum of road crossings. No part of the core of the Glendale Regional Centre will be more than a 1,000 metre walk from the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange and 400 metres from a bus stop. The shared pedestrian and cyclist network will provide safe unimpeded access to the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange for all members of the community.

Further bus stops will be located at convenient and secure locations throughout the Regional Centre, and on the shared pedestrian and cycle path network. The public transport network operations will respond to the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange by providing co-ordinated timetables (bus-bus and bus-rail). Direct trunk bus routes will be provided to major destinations including the University, John Hunter Hospital, Charlestown, Newcastle, Belmont, and Toronto.

A critical factor to implementing the Master Plan and achieving the TOD objectives, is achieving appropriate linkages between development on either side of the railway line. However, despite the work undertaken in preparing the Master Plan, Council has again found it difficult to get any form of assistance from Railcorp as to the type and extent of development that can be built over the railway line. Council has experienced a lack of clarity as to what policies and procedures apply in seeking development over the railway line. Without a transparent and coherent approval mechanism, development across the railway is severely hindered. The value of the rail corridor in facilitating TODs, therefore becomes limited. As previously highlighted, State policies and guidelines need to be developed that provide Council's with the necessary standards around which they can plan development.

Council is also mindful that the facilitation of TOD around railway stations needs to accommodate the need of freight rail transport. Whilst there are a high proportion of goods related industries in LMCC, the rail network is generally not used for freight transport by businesses located within the LGA. Bulk movement of some coal being the exception. Nevertheless, an important issue for Council is ensuring that development along the rail corridor and around railway stations remains compatible with the freight transport needs of the City. Council's overarching landuse strategy, Lifestyle 2020 and its successor draft LS2030 encourage the consideration of rail freight as a transport alternative that should be considered in the design of industrial areas near the rail system.

A heavy freight rail by-pass proposal has also been flagged by various state agencies and Council in the past. Commencing near the Teralba rail loop, the heavy freight by-pass would allow freight with destinations north of Newcastle, or to the Port of Newcastle, to completely avoid the urban areas of Newcastle, improving travel times and reducing conflict at level crossings and with passenger services. The removal of a significant proportion of the heavy freight traffic from urban areas in northern Lake Macquarie, and in Newcastle, may also improve the viability of TOD.

Connectivity of communities either side of railway lines

Within Lake Macquarie, connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists at Glendale and Cardiff would be greatly improved with a dedicated points to cross the Main Northern Railway Line. Suitable crossing points have been identified in the Glendale Regional Centre Master Plan at the southern end of the Glendale Shopping Centre, at the northern end of Cardiff Town Centre and near the dead end road of Adelphi Lane and either Taylor or Marianne Streets. Construction of the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange will resolve these connectivity issues.

These improvements, assisted with the provision of station lifts, at Glendale and Cardiff would enable better links to the existing communities currently split by the rail line. The links would improve safety and efficiency with dedicated crossings for pedestrians and cyclists. Such links would enable reduced car dependence in these areas through increasing permeability of the centres. Similar improvements would facilitate connection of current and future development either side of the railway line in Morisset.

Implementation of the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange is also dependent on the development of the Pennant Street overpass at Glendale. This will ensure appropriate bus and vehicle connectivity and has long been identified by the State government and Lake Macquarie Council as major pieces of infrastructure to support this emerging regional centre.

Council also mindful of the opportunities for biodiversity linkages across the railway line. The use of the edges of rail corridors in semi-rural or rural areas in Lake Macquarie (or along rail corridors between Lake Macquarie and other local government areas) could be utilised to improve the health and connectivity of local biodiversity. Depending on rail requirements (or restrictions), habitat could be established or restored along corridor edges, a scenario which has shown to be beneficial for native birds and other fauna in the case of transmission easements. Above-ground fauna crossings could also be retrofitted to existing rail corridors; whereas new rail corridors that pass through hilly areas could be designed as tunnels rather than cuttings to maximise retention of existing habitat linkages.

Other areas of the Inquiry

The current planning and policy framework

Current requirements are outlined in Clauses 85 -88 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure). Clause 87 requires that, prior to determining a development application, the consent authority must take into consideration any guidelines issued by the Director-General for the purposes of this clause, and published in the Gazette. Development Near Rail Corridors and Busy Roads – Interim Guideline is therefore to be considered. This is a lengthy document and appears to remain an interim guide, regardless of the review of the document by the Urban Taskforce in April 2009. LMCC would re-iterate the comment regarding the guidelines in that they should:

1. Define and restrict the applicability of the guideline to meet the requirements of the SEPP;
2. Refer to accepted mandatory criteria;
3. Provide suggestions on how these mandatory criteria may be achieved; and,
4. Allow for alternative design and construction solutions to achieve mandatory criteria.

In their final form, the guidelines should not contain “advisory” information. If necessary, advisory information could be included as an appendix for information purposes only.

Regulatory and policy barriers to implementing rail corridor projects

The Great Northern Railway Line corridor includes both used and disused Railcorp lands in the areas of Glendale and Cardiff in the LMCC local government area. The following comments relate to the two areas:

1. Rail Corridor and Lands in Glendale

- The Department of Planning and Infrastructure identify Glendale as an emerging regional centre. It includes significant (approximately 50 ha) Railcorp lands and includes the proposed Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange and the EDI railway workshop site.
- Council has liaised with Railcorp, Transport NSW, Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation, Railcorp Property, State Property Authority and Hunter Development Authority to negotiate and plan for the future of this area. High staff turn-over in these

organisations, and poorly defined allocation of responsibility to staff, made it difficult to prepare strategic plans and provide of advice on the future structure of the land to other state authorities interested in the development of the land.

- In addition, the possession costs that Council has been advised it will need to pay during any construction period limits the feasibility of such development.

Council has experienced a lack of clarity as to what policies and procedures apply in seeking development over the railway line. Without a transparent and coherent approval mechanism, development across the railway is severely hindered. The value of the rail corridor in facilitating TODs, therefore becomes limited.

2. Rail Corridor through Cardiff

- Cardiff is a long established suburb in the northern part of the LMCC local government area, divided by the Main Northern Rail line. There is a disused corridor to the south of the existing line and this could be better utilised for pedestrian and cyclist connections. Any policies or strategies related to the sale and/or use of disused corridors should be reviewed.

Issues relating to the financing and funding of rail corridor projects

Issues relating to the financing and funding of projects on land adjacent to rail corridors include the following:

- Council finds that there is a large amount of uncertainty concerning operations on land owned by Railcorp. This makes it difficult to obtain forward works plans. The uncertainty ultimately limits the implementation of alternative uses of the corridors , complicating the progression of interim and long term uses of the land;
- Council notes an apparent lack of commitment from the State government to develop the Glendale station.

Methods of assessing the compatibility of projects with the local community

LMCC is committed to open consultation and open communication with the communities affected by development in and around rail corridors. This could be best supported by Transport NSW with clear communications and partnerships that enable information to be passed on at the earliest possible stages of such projects.

Should you require further information, please contact me on 4921 0332.

Yours faithfully



Iain Moore
Principal Strategic Planner
Integrated Planning Department