Submission No 74

COMMUTER CAR PARKING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation:

Name: Ku-ring-gai Council

Position:

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Current state of commuter parking in Ku-ring-gai

Commuter car-parking is a key issue to the residents of Ku-ring-gai. Ku-ring-gai has enjoyed direct and convenient use of the North Shore train line using private vehicle as a first mile/last mile mode of travel with free parking around stations for many generations. Ease of access to rail has underpinned the economic growth of Ku-ring-gai and its residents with significant flow-on benefits to state revenues. Rail commuter car parking demand at the Ku-ring-gai LGA Town Centre Rail Stations is highly significant.

Interview surveys were undertaken in 2007, which recorded the responses of an average 44% sample of all adult rail passengers boarding during the 6.00-9.30 am morning peak period at the five stations as listed below**.**

Sample Sizes for Rail Commuter Parking Survey

Station	3.5 Hour Am Peak Adult Rail Passenger Boardings	Number of Adult Rail Passengers Surveyed	% Survey Sample Size
Gordon	2360	933	39.5%
Lindfield	1510	728	48.2%
Pymble	1240	464	37.4%
Roseville	1210	495	40.9%
Turramurra	1990	1040	52.3%
Total	**8310**	**3660**	**44.0%**

At the five Ku-ring-gai LGA Rail Stations surveyed, the overall proportion of boarding adult rail passengers who were car drivers was 35% with the range at individual stations as follows:

- Gordon, 52%
- Lindfield, 31%
- Pymble, 31%
- Turramurra, 30%
- Roseville, 17%

These proportions are significantly higher than the average for the Sydney Trains network and indicate a high degree of dependence on car travel for access to the rail station. In contrast the proportions for bus travel were an overall average of 9% with the range at individual stations as follows:

- Turramurra, 19%
- Gordon, 8%
- Lindfield, 7%
- Pymble, 2%
- Roseville, 2%

Predicted Future Parking Supply and Demand Situation in Ku-ring-gai Town Centres (Arup, 2008)

Centre and Predicted Floorspace Growth	Council Code Short Stay Demand	Council Code Long Stay Demand	Calculated Rail Commuter Parking Demand	Total Centre Theoretical Parking Demand	Actual Centre Total Parking Supply	Actual Centre Supply vs Theoretical Parking Demand	Actual Centre Peak Parking Usage	Actual Usage vs Actual Supply
Existing Parking Situation in the Centres (1)								
Gordon	1053	1401	1227	3681	2715	-966	2346	-369
Lindfield	598	591	468	1657	1710	+53	1297	-413
Pymble	338	462	384	1184	958	-226	763	-195
Roseville	356	316	206	878	1176	+298	945	-231
St Ives	1314	799	0	2113	1915	-198	1622	-293
Turramurra	647	518	597	1762	1406	-356	1191	-215
Total	**4306**	**4087**	**2882**	**11275**	**9880**	**-1395**	**8164**	**-1716**
Future Predicted Parking Situation in the Centres (1) (2)								
Gordon +42,903m2	2002	1883	1227	5112	4146	-966	3777	-369
Lindfield +15,148m2	904	776	468	2148	2201	+53	1788	-413
Pymble +19,968m2	559	798	384	1741	1515	-226	1320	-195
Roseville +3,862m2	433	364	206	1003	1301	+298	1070	-231
St Ives +18,747m2	2144	1123	0	3267	3069	-198	2776	-293
Turramurra +4,317m2	789	543	597	1929	1573	-356	1358	-215
Total	**6831**	**5487**	**2882**	**15200**	**13805**	**-1395**	**12089**	**-1716**

Note 1: Centre Long Stay Off Street "Private" Car Parking occupancy (as summarised in Section 3.2 of this report) is included in the centre parking supply totals. This parking was not specifically surveyed in each of the centres but is assumed to be fully utilised at most times of the day on weekdays. The future public (non development related) parking supply in each of the centres may increase marginally, as identified in Chapter 7 of this report, but is assumed for the purpose of this summary to remain constant.

Note 2: Rail Station Commuter car parking demand in the centres should not increase in the future as most of the additional future LGA population will be living in Town Centres within walking distance of rail stations. The main exception to this will be St Ives for which a future rail station bus access strategy, with connecting bus services to Gordon Railway Station will need to be developed.

Based on the information above, and assuming the current dedicated provision of commuter car parking in Ku-ring-gai (by Transport for NSW/Sydney Trains) is 770 spaces (40 in Turramurra, 700 in Gordon and 30 in Roseville), indicatively there is a shortage of over 2,100 commuter car parking spaces in the Ku-ring-gai local centres. Assuming a shortage of 150 spaces at each of Wahroonga, Warrawee and Killara railway stations (i.e. similar shortfalls to Roseville railway station), the shortfall in commuter car parking in the Ku-ring-gai LGA would be close to 2,600 spaces.

In mid 2015, the NSW Government provided approximately 165 additional commuter car parking spaces adjacent to Gordon railway station, as well as a complete upgrade of the existing bus interchange. Furthermore, the NSW Government committed to providing 240 commuter parking spaces in Lindfield, and through collaboration with Transport for NSW, these spaces have been identified to be provided underground and integrated within 2 Council-led major project/urban renewal sites in the Lindfield commercial core, in close proximity to Lindfield railway station.

Response to Terms of Reference

a. The effectiveness of current state government policies and programs covering commuter car parking;

- Current stage government policies covering commuter parking are targeted at a high level, with commitments such as customer focused integrated transport planning, connecting people to jobs, reducing congestion and investment in transport infrastructure etc. Although implied, there appears to be no specific mention of commuter parking and how it sits within these policies.

- While there is information to suggest that Easy Access upgrades to railway stations are prioritised based on rail station barrier counts (passengers using the station), it is less clear what the state government criteria is when assessing specific stations for commuter parking provision or upgrade. This needs to be more transparent.

- In the short term, funding for first mile/last mile travel solutions, including commuter parking, should be from funds dedicated to supporting and promoting optimal and overall outcomes related to transport use goals for the overall metropolitan plans. Funding mechanisms would take into account a range of desirable outcomes in both behavioural change and learning, well-being, work and earnings opportunities, environment , state and local economies and rail infrastructure value.

- Relying solely on localised value capture methods to fund car parks could have unintended consequences on local communities and the environment by driving planning outcomes in an unbalanced way. In particular, value capture as a funding mechanism will not always incentivise the desired longer tem behavioural change away from car dependency.. There could also be unintended consequences if long term profit commitments tie up land use in car parks, locking in continued congestion and restricting their potential to be re-purposed as alternative technologies emerge.

- In Lindfield, Ku-ring-gai Council has elected to partner with State Government to co-locate 240 commuter carparks as part of our town centre renewal projects, by designing integrated mixed-use developments with basement car parking situated on Council owned land. Whilst there is a commitment from the State provide a capital contributions for the construction and delivery, further financial consideration must be committed to offset other financial burdens such as:

    - loss of land value realisation (opportunity cost),
    - operational expenses much as responsive and planned maintenance,
    - full lifecycle renewal costings
    - impact on operation reporting and treatment of depreciation.

b. Processes for selecting the location of commuter car parks;

- To provide 2,600 commuter spaces at grade would cost an estimated $26M in capital cost for construction (excluding land value), or nearly $200M if provided in basement parking within mixed use developments (excluding land value). Furthermore, a funding mechanism for responsive and planned maintenance, as well as whole of life renewal costs must form part of any proposed programs and budget allocation. This is a significant capital investment with substantial operational costs that must be fully funded.

- As population has grown, the impacts of free commuter on-road parking around railway stations has contributed to traffic congestion and sterilisation of road area that could be used for shorter term parking or bike and bus lanes. All day parking, whether on street or in a commuter car park, is often at the cost of creating user-friendly pedestrian precincts which are proven to promote better local economic uplift and more desirable places and spaces for communities to live and work in.

- Mini satellite car parks around the fringes of railway stations should be considered, with frequent bus connection to the railway station. They could be modest in size (to minimise traffic impact) and could be located around existing open space/parks, which provides non-conflicting times of parking demand (weekday: commuter/weekend: sports). They could also be located near neighbourhood centres, to stimulate local business and provide dual purpose, stimulate economic growth at other times of day.

- Geography considerations (ridges/peninsulas) can provide both barriers and opportunities. Requirements should consider models and approaches which respond to the geography. Roofs or areas above car parking can provide for other uses such as retail, housing, public open space or recreational and community facilities.

- Heritage precincts are often located directly adjacent to rail stations, where commuter car parks may be considered, resulting in conflicting priorities. If commuter car parks are being considered outside the railway corridor, Councils should be involved early in the process with Transport for NSW when investigating sites.

- Commuter car parks, if appropriate and well planned, can provide positive benefits including economic generation, where the regular flow of pedestrian traffic supports local daily retail and service functions. The market potential for land-uses which are transformative and stimulate urban renewal but also highly transit oriented eg youth tech hub, co-working spaces can be enhanced. Other uses can be integrated with car parks which keep public domain and open spaces active and therefore vibrant and safer such as restaurants and recreational activities which operate out of normal working and trading hours.

- Ku-ring-gai Council has an approach to locate large scale parking underground and utilise the above ground area for open space, community uses or uses that regenerate the local area. This approach ensures that the built fabric is one that

encourages active use and surveillance of the local area, and the built form outcomes are those that are high quality architecturally designed structures that contribute to the streetscapes and to the local and neighbourhood character. This is a key issue for Ku-ring-gai as the area has a fine grain built form character including areas of heritage and biodiversity. The construction of multi-storey above ground car parking structures are not supported by Council due to the high visual impact they have due to their monolithic nature and inability to be modulated and integrated into the immediate area through contribution to the streetscape or local area activation and engagement of passers-by.

Council's DCP requires all car parking to be underground or placed behind retail/commercial/residential uses which front streetscapes, public domain and neighbouring properties. Where at grade parking is provided, landscape screening to the street and provision for large canopy trees for shading are a requirement to ensure minimal heat transmission from hard surfaces so that development is in keeping with Council's sustainability principles which are modelled on State and National directions.

Therefore, in considering new or remodelled commuter car parking, a process for design consultation with Council and incorporation of local approach is necessary to ensure that the provision does not result in out of character built form and that instead the development can have the highest and best outcomes for the local area, its community and commuters.

c. The potential for restricted access or user pays commuter car parks;

- In the short term, until such technologies provide a step-change, free commuter parking should continue to be provided at railway stations.

- Restrictions on use in car parks, where it is known that non-commuters are occupying commuter spaces during peak commuter times, could be implemented. This could be managed by linking free access to the car park with a rail or bus trip (via the Opal card). In the event that use of the car space is not linked to a rail or bus trip, the user could be charged or penalised a substantial premium.

- Parking restrictions should be lifted off peak or at weekends, to allow non-commuter paid parking access, whilst ensuring free access is still provided to drivers parking prior to accessing public transport. Anecdotally off-peak commuters find it difficult to access commuter parking around railway stations. The majority of commuter parking spaces are full by 7am-7.30 am, discouraging off peak travellers (that need to drive to a station) from accessing trains during off-peak periods. This already creates a barrier for certain groups to use rail, including the less mobile and parents. Typically, 4hr on-street parking spaces provide some degree of off-peak access to rail stations, although this is difficult to enforce and is also likely to be used by non-commuters.

- Ku-ring-gai has a car park next to Killara railway station where a modest charge of $5 per day is imposed. The charge results in car spaces generally available outside of the peak periods. Based on this, small sections of existing and new commuter car parks could be allocated with a modest charge, to provide availability during off-peak periods.

- Ku-ring-gai Council has completed significant financial analysis and modelled the capital cost, projected operational expenditure and whole of life renewal cost for required to deliver and maintain commuter carparks. The findings indicate that unless a funding mechanise for whole-of-life cost is secured, the provision of free-parking is not sustainable over the longer term.

- In the medium term, where other viable alternatives to first mile/last mile travel are provided which are convenient and fair and will not discourage use of rail and cause a ‘ghetto’ effect, free commuter parking can be transitionally targeted for reduction to support growth projections.

- Change should be transitional.

d. Consideration of alternative modes of first mile/last mile travel, including point to point transport, active transport and on demand buses; and

- Buses currently play a role in providing access to rail stations but existing bus routes are circuitous (need to be more direct options) and the frequency and time of day of the majority of services is misaligned to commuters needs. Bus services need to cater for working patterns (high frequency until at least 7.30pm) e.g. 6am-10am, 3pm-7pm. Analogy with clear ways. Smaller buses could operate on routes that do not have high passenger numbers (lower cost, easier layover). Bus interchanges need to be upgraded to provide a quality, integrated customer experience which is integrated with opportunities for activities that are now being increasingly carried out as part of the journey to and from work such as entertainment and shopping.

- Mini car parks/satellite around extremities could be considered, with a frequent bus service to railway station. Can be located around existing open space/parks, which provides non-conflicting times of demand (weekday: commuter/weekend: sports). Near neighbourhood centres.

- Bicycles can play a far more significant role in providing access to rail stations. The majority of dwellings in Ku-ring-gai are located within 3-4km of a railway station, which is approximately 10-15 minutes travel time. Cycle routes should be safe, and separated from vehicles and ideally pedestrians in order to encourage use by all age groups and abilities. Separated cycleways could be implemented in the congested areas around railway stations by reallocating the road space, or by removing kerbside parking on one side of the road. Safe and secure bicycle parking (lockers or sheds) showers and changing facilities at the railway station also needs to be provided, as part of the end-of-trip facilities

- Technology advancements now provide the potential to overcome long standing deficiencies in providing last mile/first mile alternative solutions to commuter car parking around stations. These include:

    - Use of geo-spatial and ITS technologies to incentivise first mile/last mile travel patterns;

    - on-demand transportation services;

    - smaller electric buses on more frequent and convenient time-tables with residual parking requirements distributed;

    - electric bikes and small electric vehicles that make it possible for a wider range of ages and motilities to navigate the terrain of Ku-ring-gai.

e. Any other related matters.

Technological change, and timeframes. Technological changes might occur in the next 20 years whereas car parks are being built with a 40 year life expectancy.