

**Submission
No 17**

SYDNEY METRO WEST PROJECT

Organisation: Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc.

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Action for Public Transport (N.S.W.) Inc.

19 September 2023

Secretary
Committee on Transport and Infrastructure
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney 2000
Submitted via inquiry website

Dear Secretary,

NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure

Inquiry into Sydney Metro West project

Submission

Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc. is a transport advocacy group which has been active in Sydney since 1974. We promote the interests of beneficiaries of public transport - passengers and the wider community alike.

We are very much in favour of constructing metro railways around and through Sydney. We are impressed by the meshes of metro lines that cover maps of several large overseas cities. However, we think that major infrastructure investments merit careful justification. We have not seen proper justification of Sydney Metro West. In particular, we have not seen a clear explanation of how it would fit into the whole personal transport picture.

The following table shows statistics of some metro systems. The number of stations and the system length of the overseas metro systems were taken from a larger table in Wikipedia which is presumably accurate. The average spacing between stations on each system has been calculated by dividing that system's length by one less than the number of stations. It is evident that Sydney metro stations are considerably further apart than stations on some other metro systems.

City	Number of stations	System length (km)	Average station spacing
Paris	308	226.9	0.74
NYC	424	399	0.94
Tokyo	142	195.1	1.38
London	272	402	1.5
Sydney Chatswood-Sydenham	9	16	2.0
Sydney Tallawong-Chatswood	13	36.1	3.0
Sydney West	9?	23?	?

The table illustrates that different metro systems may have different jobs in the transport arrangements of their city. For example, the Paris metro might be useful for a trip between two points only 500 metres apart. It could well save some walking (an important issue for older travellers) and possibly a little time. But the Paris metro might not be the best choice for a 30km trip between two outer suburbs. Compare the Paris metro with Sydney's north-west metro which is heavily used for trips such as Castle Hill to Chatswood but is no use whatsoever for a three-block trip in the Epping business district.

Ideally, trains used for long trips need high speed and comfortable seats. And trains used for short trips need good acceleration and braking, wide aisles and plenty of doors. Unfortunately, the Sydney north-west metro has minimal seating (each seat removed makes space for two standing passengers) despite the long trips made on it. Apparently the western metro vehicles will be furnished similarly.

That being said, what is to be the function of the Sydney West metro? We are told it will save a few minutes on trips between Parramatta station and Wynyard. We deserve a better explanation. Why can't it have stations at a few places that have never had train service? Is it to be extended beyond Hunter St perhaps through Paddington towards UNSW/PoWH and Maroubra? At the western end, could it provide a quicker connection to Nancy Bird Walton than the very indirect route through St Marys?

Discussion of each term of reference

a. The original business case for the project

The business case is not relevant to the planning and construction of a metro railway that is a part of a whole-of-city plan although it might be important to the funding of it. We do not comment on the business case.

b. The establishment of the route and selection of station locations

As far as we know, there is no overall plan for greater Sydney which Metro West is a part of. We suspect that the route and stations were selected by engineers and developers. We think Sydney deserves a properly-planned transport system. Of course, land use and transport need to be planned together.

c. The cause of blowouts in project cost and timelines

Cost blowouts are anecdotally often due to poor or non-existent planning.

d. Whether the Minister at the time considered any other consequential benefits that could be achieved from the project

As already stated, there should be a comprehensive transport and land-use plan of which Metro West is just one component. There does not appear to be such a plan.

e. Other matters relevant to the Sydney Metro West project.

Generally, we think there should be more stations and more opportunities for easy transfer between Metro West and other transport services. We recognise that underground stations are expensive investments. We suggest that there may be locations which could warrant a station in the future but not yet. In such cases, consideration should be given to building an underground box structure suitable for eventual use as a station when proper warrants exist.

Conclusion

We think that Sydney Metro West is a good project but could be better.

Recommendations

We suggest that the project should be re-evaluated with less weight on saving a few minutes travel time and more emphasis on providing railway service to parts of Sydney that don't already have it and on good interchange between different transport services. Possibilities for extension west from Westmead and south or south-east from Hunter St should be investigated now and a plan published.

Hearings

We would be pleased to appear at hearings if desired.

Jim Donovan
Secretary
Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc.

