



Our ref: D22/061658

30 June 2022

Re: Responses to Questions from the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Privatisation of Bus Services

Responses to Supplementary Questions

1. Did TfNSW inform the Council and/ or the wider travelling public that routes would be cut once the light rail was announced or during the construction phase of the project?

I do not recall any consultation with either Council or with the community about changes to bus routes associated with the announcement of the light rail or during construction of the light rail. There was Council and community engagement after the opening of the light rail in late 2021 regarding the changes to Region 9 services.

2. Can you outline your specific concerns around incrementally diminished service levels in region 9 based on what has occurred in other regions?

We are concerned that service provision will be incrementally diminished in 3 ways to maintain the On Time Running (OTR) required under contracts:

- **Reductions in service frequency** (Number of buses serving a route daily)
This will affect the long-term viability of a given route as when the service becomes less available more passengers seek alternatives to meet their needs, this leads to decreased utilisation of a route and potentially further reductions patronage reduces.
- **Rationalisation of indirect routes** (reducing service to inefficient areas)
This reduces network coverage as the indirect routes provide breadth of service that is not provided along the primary bus corridors and thereby serving those members of our community that have limited mobility options such as the elderly or those unable to drive.
- **Removal of bus stops** (reducing accessibility to services)
This reduces accessibility to bus routes and has a similar effect to rationalisation of routes by reducing the size of catchment to a route. This means that passengers will move to private vehicles in response and those without that option will suffer.

The R6BSP Services Contract identifies Performance Requirements (Clauses 6 and 7) and a number of KPI's (Clause 13), there are requirements to meet these measures and penalties specified if operators fail to do so.

Contact us

Phone: 9083 8000 Fax: 9387 1820

Email: info@waverley.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.waverley.nsw.gov.au

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The requirement for an operator to meet these performance requirements is assisted by the requirement upon the operator to undertake service reviews as described in Clause 16.2. These service reviews are required annually and any requested changes to frequency, routes or bus stops are to be approved by TfNSW. Whilst there is a requirement to 'have regard to the needs of passengers and key stakeholders' there is not a requirement to determine the effect upon network coverage meaning that changes to the number of passengers served within a 400m radius of a bus stop. Changes to routes, schedules or stops are likely to be reductions rather than additions to services and therefore a reduction in the overall breadth of service provided.

To address these concerns the following recommendations are proposed:

1. There needs to be a requirement upon the operator to maintain or improve the breadth of coverage in any proposal to TfNSW to amend the Contract Service Levels. Simply reducing service scope to meet performance or budget constraints is not a 'customer first proposition'.
2. Community needs to be given an opportunity to respond to proposed changes to routes or stops prior to a decision by TfNSW to support proposed changes to Contract Service Levels by an operator. These responses need to be publicly available and a rationale provided by TfNSW for supporting or declining the request made publicly available. Ideally any request or decision would remain publicly available over time so that changes made under Contract can be tracked.
3. There is insufficient requirement to deal with 'crowding' (a full bus unable to pick up passengers). Whilst there are requirements under contract to improve the ridership by 1%p.a. this does not adequately address existing crowding issues, nor is this requirement categorised as critical within contractual requirements. Overcrowding has an equally significant effect detrimental effect upon patronage as does the other reductions in service.

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