

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 6 - TRANSPORT AND THE ARTS

INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Supplementary questions: Ms Alison Dench

Answers are to be returned to the Committee secretariat by 6 March 2024.

Question on notice:

Given the disparities in public transport infrastructure across Western Sydney, how do you suggest the government prioritises projects to address the most pressing needs of disadvantaged communities?

Ally Dench - Response:

Prioritising public transport infrastructure projects in Western Sydney to address the most pressing needs of disadvantaged communities requires a multifaceted approach that considers various factors such as accessibility, socio-economic status, population density, existing infrastructure, and community feedback. There is no one silver bullet solution.

The Government should use data analytics to identify areas with the highest levels of socio-economic disadvantage and limited access to public transport. Issues such as routes, accessibility, usage patterns, and demographics of the communities served should be considered. In the data analysis the government should listen to communities stories and ensure all voices are heard to understand their specific place-based transportation challenges and priorities. This will complement and help to understand the quantifiable metrics.

An equity lens should be applied to the decision-making process. Factors such as income levels, mobility limitations, access to employment and essential services and the impact of transport costs on household budgets should be considered when prioritising projects.

Prioritise projects that enhance accessibility for disadvantaged communities, including people with disabilities, seniors, and low-income residents.

Projects that improve connectivity to employment hubs, education centres, healthcare facilities, and other essential services should have priority. These include investments in wheelchair-accessible vehicles, station upgrades, and services tailored to meet the needs of diverse populations.

A focus on projects that improve connectivity between different modes of transport (e.g., bus, train, light rail) to create a seamless and efficient public transport network. This includes improving interchange facilities, implementing integrated ticketing systems, and optimising route planning to serve disadvantaged communities effectively.

Consider multi-modal solutions that provide a range of transportation options to meet the diverse needs of disadvantaged communities. This may include investments in bus rapid transit, light rail, cycling infrastructure, and pedestrian facilities to create a comprehensive and interconnected network.

Targeted investment is needed. It is critical to build bus routes, bus shelters in underserved areas, increase frequency and coverage of services and provide subsidies for low-income individuals.

Reward and incentivise collaborative partnerships and joint initiatives that leverage resources more effectively. This includes co-designing place-based solutions with community input and partner with social enterprises to provide targeted support services. Public-private partnerships, joint funding arrangements, and community-led initiatives can help accelerate project delivery and maximise impact.

Take a holistic and long-term approach to planning public infrastructure that considers future population growth, urban development, technological advancements, and climate change impacts. This also involves investing in sustainable and resilient infrastructure that can adapt to changing needs and conditions over time.

Implement the long-term North-South rail line priority. Delivering this will link Western Sydney with Western Sydney and provide a “back-bone” for other multimodal transport infrastructure to grow off.

An effective and reliable rapid bus service is critical as a short-term priority to enable disadvantage communities to have access to essential services.

Establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of public transport projects on disadvantaged communities over time. This includes tracking ridership data, assessing socio-economic outcomes, and soliciting ongoing feedback from residents to ensure that investments are meeting their needs effectively.

Prioritise smaller public transport projects in transport-disadvantaged, urban-fringe suburbs. These initiatives yield tangible socio-economic benefits, including lower crime rates, increased employment, improved health outcomes and enhanced social inclusion. It is imperative that such benefits are factored into cost-benefit analyses of public transport projects.

A multifaceted approach that effectively addresses the most pressing needs of disadvantaged communities in Western Sydney will ultimately address equity issues, improve access to essential services, employment opportunities, and social inclusion. By investing in equity-based transport options and fostering collaboration across sectors, we can work towards creating a truly civil society where everyone has equal access to essential services and opportunities for socio-economic advancement.

If further information or clarification is required please contact me on _____ or at _____

Regards

Ally Dench

27 February 2024