

From: [David Levinson](#)
To: [Portfolio Committee 6](#)
Subject: CM: Re: Current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney – Post-hearing responses – 5 February 2024 hearing
Date: Thursday, 15 February 2024 3:44:48 PM



I have no changes to the transcript if I am not allowed to fix my grammar.

In response to the Supplementary Questions:

SQ: How do you propose to balance the immediate need for improved bus services with the long-term investments required for rail infrastructure to ensure equitable access across Western Sydney

Response: While investing for access for a speculated future may foreclose opportunities today by diverting funds, investing for access today does not foreclose future investments, but instead makes them more viable. Public transit and land use comprise a positive feedback system. More transit service reduces waiting time and access distance, making transit more valuable, increases accessibility (the number of destinations that can be reached in a given time) and encourages more transit use. Increased use increases supply, and thus increases access. More access induces land development (makes land more valuable). More land development means higher density. High density drives up transit use. Because this is a positive feedback system, getting it going sooner rather than later creates value. In contrast, delaying services today in hope of better services tomorrow will not achieve the same access as quickly, and defer the benefits farther into the future. As a political question, having more proven users provides a better rationale (and political support) for investment than does empty land serving prospective future users (and future voters).

By all means we should plan for possible future investments and keep options open, and engage in the low risk strategies like preserving rights-of-way and station locations that will be hard and expensive to obtain later. But we can also buy a lot of high-quality buses and busways and active transport links that serve many more people for the cost of a single Metro line. Just as a point of comparison, we could have bought Qantas Airlines (\$9.95 billion <https://www.marketindex.com.au/asx/qan> as of 15 February 2024) for the price of the Western Sydney Airport Metro line (\$11 billion <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-07-27/the-blowouts-and-delays-of-the-sydney-metro-project/102652620>).

I have studied equity a long time, and I don't think there is any possibility of a universally agreed equitable outcome. Space is by its very nature inequitable. Some people are closer to center of the action (e.g. living near a train station, or the Sydney CBD) than others, and pay more for property to save time in travel. By some definitions of equity that is fair, and by others it is not. I personally believe addressing actual and known needs of current residents should have a higher priority than investing in possible future needs with high uncertainty attaching. The level of investment per bus passenger in New South Wales is far lower than that per train passenger, while the operating costs are higher. What is fair and efficient depends.

Safe travels,

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