

Submission
No 59

THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR

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Greater Sydney®

*Working Towards
a Sustainable
Greater Sydney*

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Director

Re: Inquiry into Transport Needs of Sydney's Northwest Sector

10,000 Friends of Greater Sydney (FROGS) makes this submission to the *Inquiry into the transport needs of Sydney's North-West sector*. The comments are based on findings from the *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project undertaken by the Warren Centre at Sydney University in which members of FROGS were involved and which FROGS has the carriage off to fruition; and subsequent work by FROGS in pursuit of its task to produce a more sustainable Sydney.

CREDENTIALS FOR MAKING THE SUBMISSION

Two hundred of Australia's leading professionals and practitioners invested 3¹/₂ years and \$4 million in the *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project (STSC). The project's leaders and contributors covered a wide range of disciplines including urban planning, transport, economics, law, community behaviour, health and education. They were drawn from all States of Australia and included invited overseas specialists from the UK, Europe and the United States. Almost 2000 persons drawn from the wider community were involved in the project.

The *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities'* findings have been well received by government, industry and professional associations and the project won the prestigious Bradfield Award for Engineering Excellence in NSW.

FROGS was established specifically to pursue implementation of the STSC findings and broaden that to the objective of developing a sustainable Sydney in areas of water, energy, waste, transport and biodiversity.

BACKGROUND TO THE SUBMISSION

This submission relates the findings of the *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project and other work by FROGS to the specific terms of reference for the NSW Government Upper House Inquiry into Transport for the North West Region of Sydney.

CORPORATE MEMBERS

- Boral Ltd
- Bovis Lend Lease
- Caltex Australia
- Cardno MBK
- CCROC
[Gosford & Wyong Councils]
- City of Sydney Council
- DesignInc
- Federation of P&C
Associations of NSW
- Gavin Anderson
- GHD Pty Ltd
- HATCH
- IAG Limited
- Integral Energy
- John Holland Group
- Landcom
- Leighton Contractors

- Macquarie Infrastructure Group
- Metro Transport Sydney
- Museum of Contemporary Art
- NCOSS
- North Sydney Council
- NRMA Ltd
- Parramatta City Council
- Parsons Brinckerhoff

- RTA
- Rotary Club of Sydney
- Sinclair Knight Merz

- The Warren Centre for
Advanced Engineering
- TAFE NSW
- Tourism & Transport Forum
- Transfield Holdings
- Transurban 1
- Unions NSW
- University of Sydney
- Veolia Transport NSW
- Willoughby City Council

This submission comprises this letter and the attached:

- 10,000 Friends of Greater Sydney Annual Report 2008;
- *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* Summary report summary – *Towards a City of Cities*; and
- *Sydney Integrated Transport Strategy* discussion paper

The projects covered by the above reports highlight the aims to:

- Improved lifestyle for the community increasing access for everyone to everything;
- Increased use of public transport walking and biking to reduce growth of private motor car use;
- Improved freight logistics to enhance economy of movement;
- Increased social and financial equity;
- Reduced energy use; and
- Reduced atmospheric pollutants and their contribution to climate change.

STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

Below are the strategies and projects that are essential and feasible for North West Sydney. FROGS' investigation and research has shown these strategies and projects to be practical, socially responsible, environmentally acceptable, economically sound and financially viable.

STRATEGIES

1. *Establish an independent body (NW Region Transport Board) to develop an integrated transport plan for the North-West (NW) sector as an example to other Regions and the whole of NSW.*

The lack of will by government to develop an integrated transport plan for Sydney and NSW is the greatest impediment to the economic advancement of this State and especially its capital city.

We persist in considering transport mode by mode and Government body by body (silo by silo). As a result we have no comprehensive integrated transport plan for NSW or Sydney in particular, no integrated land use/transport plan for our cities, and no all inclusive investment strategy for transport.

The *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project illustrated that while we are investing sufficient funds into transport to achieve an effective sustainable system, we are investing it so poorly that transport performance is progressively getting worse year by year - most evident in state rail.

We established an independent body for the Olympic transport task with great success by drawing on other transport bodies and the private sector. Let us emulate that success for the NW Region as an example to the State.

Comparably, South East Queensland which has similar growth forecasts to Western Sydney has an infrastructure vision and detailed implementation plan which is fully funded.

2. Undertake a comprehensive transport analysis of transport needs (transport demand) of the NW sector now and for the next 25 years related to the land use planning for the Region.

Transport in NSW and Sydney in particular over recent years has been based on an evaluation of solutions without an assessment of the size of the problem (transport demand). This has resulted in inappropriate solutions to problems and at times solutions to problems that do not exist. Examples are the over-indulgent Cross City Tunnel and Lane Cove Tunnel, and the now proposed additional Iron Cove Bridge.

Such an analysis is needed to consider a range of growth and land use scenarios for the region, including that contained in the metro plan for Sydney but it also envisages the impact of the change that may be suggested on land use and population growth.

3. Undertake a comprehensive assessment of transport options to meet demand covering all transport modes and integrated alternatives.

There is a tendency in transport planning to focus on achieving the most economical engineering solution rather than the best overall solution (sustainable outcome) for moving people and goods.

This approach has inhibited the opportunity to evaluate a variety of alternatives across modes to achieve the best outcome in terms of social, environmental, economic and financial performance. For example, the best solution to a transport issue may be a land use change to inhibit the need to travel rather than a new super highway.

Equally, many short local trips could be undertaken by active modes of transport (walking and cycling) promoting a healthy life style. Transport and related land use options that promote active travel should be incorporated into the plan.

Likewise, there is no comprehensive consideration of transport as a whole, leading to distorted investment and hindering optimal outcomes. The bus network currently being introduced in Sydney has the potential to service most trips not met by rail but has been constrained by a lack of investment in buses and bus routes. In contrast road investment has been rapidly increasing in an attempt to keep pace with growth in travel demand.

The *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project showed that a Very High Speed Train (VHST) could be the incentive or nucleus for a major change in travel behavior due to attractive travel times, and increased use of other public transport to access it, like buses.

4. Undertake a comprehensive evaluation of all projects on a consistent basis covering social, environmental, economic and financial aspects.

Economic evaluation seems to be limited to travel time savings and safety rather than wider considerations of improvements to the economy, the environment and lifestyle.

This is exacerbated as solutions to problems are focused too narrowly on single modes without any integration and co-ordination between transport bodies. For example, the Victoria Road corridor upgrade will increase road capacity and improve traffic flows towards the CBD, however it ignores

the fact the CBD cannot actually accommodate more cars – congestion in Sydney currently costs the economy about \$3.5 billion each year.¹ At the same time, the rail planning body has proposed a Metro train along the same corridor. This latter project would in fact provide significant benefits by decreasing the demand for the road in the first place, providing greater environmental and lifestyle improvements as well as negating the economic costs of congestion. This example shows how a solution to a road capacity problem is not necessarily to build more roads but may be a rail or bus solution.

5. *Look to undertake works through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs).*

A full range of funding options needs to be considered, and projects need to be packaged in a manner that optimizes their market attractiveness. This minimizes the direct costs to the community and increases the ability to deliver projects. Only economically sound works should be undertaken, and PPPs should be based on the ethos of ‘investment’ with borrowed funds to be repaid rather than borrowing that increases public debt. This will ensure PPPs are viable.

6. *Work with the Federal Government to Re-introduce the concept of the Better Cities program to produce a more cohesive city structure.*

Congestion is occurring and increasing in our major cities due to the over reliance on roads to move people and goods and under-investment in public transport due to the narrow focus of the authorities involved - this especially applies to investment in rail.

The *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project clearly showed that we could not build our way out of congestion through infrastructure investment, especially road investment. A comprehensive assessment of travel demand for the future city structure is required in conjunction with an evaluation of solutions embracing land use changes, integrated multi-modal transport, and pricing measures to provide the incentives to change.

Transport is a major contributor to carbon emissions, accounting for 14% of Australia’s total emissions.² The concentration of emissions is especially evident in cities. To reduce the negative environmental impacts, the primary focus should be to reduce dependency on car travel and increase train and bus travel.

However, there are many barriers to the adoption of cost-effective, low emissions public transport. The key barriers are:

- Lack of provision of effective public transport as a viable alternative to the car in cities;
- Lack of effective integration of transport modes and land-use by State Government; and
- Lack of leadership by Governments in taking up viable initiatives including past lack of interest of Federal Government in cities and their transport.

¹ BITRE (2007) *Estimating urban traffic and congestion cost trends for Australian cities*, Working Paper 71, p xv.

² Department of Climate Change, *Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme: Green Paper*, July 2008, p99.

PROJECTS

1. Bus Network for NORTH WEST sector

Work associated with the Sydney Olympics in 2000 and subsequent work by FROGS showed that a regional network of buses operating at high frequency could materially influence public transport attitude and increase patronage in cities. Work is proceeding in Sydney to this end but funding allocation, including individual funding from Government departments, has inhibited the opportunity to introduce the solution in a timely manner.

The Sydney Integrated transport Strategy (SITS) discussion paper presented the case for a bus network in the North West sector arguing for 10 minute frequencies all day to service 95% of the population. Key elements of this are high speed bus links between Castle Hill and Parramatta and Castle Hill and the Sydney CBD. This system could effectively meet the public transport needs of the NW sector for the ensuing 10 years.

Travel data shows that the key destination of people from the North West sector (outside of the sector itself) is Parramatta followed by Macquarie Park (and in the future Norwest Park) with the CBD a much lower demand location. This means that there is a need for a high speed, high capacity public transport link between the North West sector and Parramatta as a first priority - initially a bus link and ultimately a light rail or Metro train.

The bus link between Castle Hill and Parramatta needs to be planned and developed as quickly as possible with options examined for a future upgrade to light rail or Metro train as the first step to an ultimate public transport link to the sector.

The bus link between Castle Hill and the Sydney CBD can be established immediately via Crane Road and Taylor Road to the M2 Motorway with a bus only bridge over Excelsior Creek – a very low cost, immediate solution to public transport from North West sector to CBD.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ***Develop and introduce an integrated bus network in the NW Sector (as an example for other Regions of Sydney)***
 - ***Timing: within 3 years***
 - ***Funding: approximately \$50 million***
- ***Develop and open a high speed bus link from Castle Hill to Parramatta.***
 - ***Timing: within 3 years***
 - ***Funding: approximately \$300 million***
- ***Develop and open a high speed bus link from Castle Hill to the CBD.***
 - ***Timing: within 2 years***
 - ***Funding: approximately \$50 million.***

2. Plan a Metro Rail System to serve the North West sector.

As indicated above, the primary destination for trips outside the North West sector are Parramatta (by far the greatest), Macquarie Park and in the future Norwest Park; the Sydney CBD is less a destination. Of course the major destination of trips is with the North West sector itself.

For efficient operation, most rail routes in Sydney should be changed to Metro trains (20-40 % greater capacity than present suburban double deckers) with suburban trains reserved for the longer trips (over 15 kms). The State Government has proposed a Metro system largely in costly underground construction in lieu of the relatively inexpensive conversion of most of the existing surface network.

Metros are being considered for Brisbane for the reasons above and the State Government should heed this development.

The bus network with powerful links to Parramatta, Macquarie Park, Norwest Park and the Sydney CBD can readily serve the needs of the North West sector for the ensuing 10 years. Hence there is time to properly plan a Metro system to be in operation some time thereafter. The basis of this rail planning should be on the following factors:

- Data derived from current travel demands forecast for the next 25 years. Transport solutions to meet this demand should canvas all options and mixes to develop the most sustainable option;
- Priority should be given to public transport to meet demand, where viable operating on 10 minute frequencies; and
- Metro rail should be based on meeting demand within a 15 km radius from the major centres of the Sydney CBD and Parramatta.

RECOMMENDATION

Comprehensively plan the transport system to serve the North West sector as part of an overall plan for Sydney with a primary focus on Metro rail to meet demand where viable.

- ***Timing: planning to commence immediately with a view to commence introducing Metro rail into the sector within 10 years.***
- ***Cost: \$2 million for planning.***

3. Plan a Very High Speed Train (VHST) network to link the North West sector to major centres in Sydney and incrementally extend the network from Sydney to the other east coast cities of Brisbane, Canberra and Melbourne.

Work undertaken by The Warren Centre at Sydney University in the *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project and subsequently confirmed by FROGS showed that a VHST was both economically viable and financially practical in connecting the major centres within a city. In Sydney it could link the CBD to the North West and Parramatta, the Central Coast to Newcastle, and Campbelltown to Wollongong. If this concept were adopted in other major cities it could lend itself to incremental extension to provide an eastern coast link between Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane.

The *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project also showed that the introduction of a VHST in the major cities would represent the greatest initiative ever to behavior change in transport usage in our cities. Modeling of a VHST network showed it to be so attractive that it became the primary attraction,

capturing patronage to such an extent that it increased overall patronage of the public transport network, with rail and buses used to access the VHST.

RECOMMENDATION: Plan with the Federal Government to finance a study of VHST for Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne with a view to linking each network in the future (drawing on the work to date by FROGS) under an expanded Austlink Program. Thence propose the Federal Government allocate \$1 billion to each State under that program as investment seeding to implement networks consistent with each other as PPPs with debt to be repaid.

4. F3 –Sydney Orbital Connections in Sydney

The Justice Mahla Pearlman review in 2007 illustrated the need for two separate connections between the F3 and the Sydney Orbital - an Eastern link between the M2 and the F3 at Pennant Hills and Western link connecting the M7 to the F3 in the vicinity of north Gosford.

Notably, the Pearlman assessment altered the parameters for the previously established single Eastern link proposal by shifting the focus of the alignment to the east – the need for a western alignment for the Eastern link lessening by the future Western link.

Work by FROGS (the subject of a separate, more comprehensive assessment to be submitted to Minister Albanese) has shown that a more easterly link to that currently proposed for the Eastern F3–M2 connection provides greater benefit to the Sydney traffic network. A partial surface connection could also save close to \$1 billion with comparable environmental and social impacts to other options. This opens the opportunity for stage 1 of a Western link to be achieved in the shorter term

RECOMMENDATION

Plan with the Federal Government to review the F3-Sydney Orbital Connections based on the preliminary work by FROGS and for early implementation of a Western link to link the North West sector to the Central Coast and Newcastle

Yours faithfully
Desmond Dent CEO



*Desmond Dent
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