

THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR

Organisation: Western Sydney Community Forum
Name: Mr Paul Falzon
Date received: 17/10/2008

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000
Fax: (02) 9230 3416

17th October 2008

*Re: Western Sydney Community Forum Submission North Western
Sydney's Transport Needs*

Dear Director,

Western Sydney Community Forum welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Parliamentary enquiry into the North West Sydney's Transport needs. Western Sydney Community Forum is the Western Sydney regional peak organisation providing regional leadership, facilitates collaborative action and develops resources to enable community organisations to effectively address issues relating to social justice and social inclusion.

John Carrigan, Manager of the Community Resource Network, assisted with the preparation of this submission and currently supports over 200 community based organisations in the Blacktown and Baulkham Hills government areas.

Peter Rogers, Executive Officer of Westir provided valuable comment, data analysis for this submission. Westir resources Western Sydney community organisations and government departments with data and statistical analysis of emerging trends affecting the community sector in Western Sydney. We thank John and Peter for their invaluable assistance.

We hope that these submissions may support NSW Parliament in understanding the transport needs of people living and working in North Western Sydney.

Sincerely,

Hugh Worrall & Paul Falzon
Regional Resource Workers
hughw@wscf.org.au / paulf@wscf.org.au
(02) 9633 5068 or (02) 9687 8937

Western Sydney
Community Forum
ABN 15 171 624 226
Level 4, 146 Marsden St
Parramatta NSW 2150
PO Box 208
Parramatta NSW 2124

t 02 9687 9669
f 02 9687 8665
e wscf@wscf.org.au
w www.wscf.org.au

Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. The Metro Strategy	3
2. Family Vulnerabilities	4
3. Professional Employees	4
4. T-way Growth in Demand	5
5. Infrastructure Issues	5
6. Cross Regional Transport	6
7. Not Only Journey to Work	7
8. Work Near Home Initiatives	7
9. Transport Infrastructure Funding	7
10. Conclusion	9

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e wscf@wscf.org.au
w www.wscf.org.au

Executive Summary

The success of the Sydney Metropolitan strategy is underpinned by the transport infrastructure plans. Local community service providers, supporting community residents in North Western Sydney are concerned about the vulnerability of local people to social isolation, particularly for families with limited access to private transport.

Transport planning for North West Sydney needs to provide real transport options for all residents, so that all people, including those currently socially isolated people and transport disadvantaged are able to participate in life.

We understand that the recent T-Way bus systems, servicing Blacktown and Castle Hill, are mirroring the significant growth in demand in the Liverpool-Parramatta T-Way. If this growth of over 30% keeps increasing at the current rates, it is imperative that the NSW Government maintain its commitment to buying more new, accessible buses to service the NW sector. It is also critical that a rail link be built.

It is well known need for better cross-regional connections for public transport in Western Sydney. It is a mistake to base the majority of transport planning around trips to the Sydney CBD. 25% of trips are journey-to-work related¹. The other 75% of trips are for other reasons, which are equally as important.

We hope, for the sake of the communities living in North West Sydney, that they there are more transport choices so that, in future years, that people don't feel like "prisoners (trapped) in their own homes"².

If the NSW government is to be taken seriously on its transport statements, it is critical that they finance and deliver on previous promises and deliver real transport choices.

1. The Metro Strategy

The success of the Metro strategy in North West Sydney is underpinned by the transport infrastructure plans. Failure to deliver on those plans undermines the rationale and viability of the Rouse Hill Town Centre and the larger North West Growth Centres.

¹ 2006 Census Data.

² "Rouse Hill: What's behind the door? 'Rouse Hill Families Connect, research paper based on 300 surveys, October 2008 .

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e wscf@wscf.org.au
w www.wscf.org.au

2. Family Vulnerabilities

We have concerns about the long-term vulnerabilities built into the way in which parts of the North West sector are being developed. We believe that this style of development, focused around the use of private transport and located at a distance from urban hubs, increases the vulnerability of the residents to financial shocks related to changes in oil prices and changes in mortgage payments. But they may be compounded by changes in house values as people revalue the accessibility of the area; access to public transport infrastructure can influence property prices.

In Appendix A, it shows us a mapping of these vulnerabilities. The red areas indicate particular susceptibility to increases in oil and mortgage prices, which have increased from 2001-2006 censuses. Not surprisingly most of these areas are in South Western Sydney and North Western Sydney, where there is little alternative to the private car.

We have consulted with local service providers and are concerned about the vulnerability of local people to social isolation, particularly for families with limited access to private transport. This is because the urban design principles being used make assumptions about the availability of private transport for all people in the family, now and into the future. Service providers have expressed to us concerns about women feeling confined to their houses and the future possibility, and the negative consequences, that teenagers will be restricted to their local neighbourhoods because of a lack of transport options.

3. Professional Employees

Part of the rationale for much of the North West sector is the growth of residential areas for higher income residents - professional workers. For this strategy to be successful it is important for these highly skilled and professional employees are able to access these positions.

According to the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, these jobs are developing in an arc from the North West employment zones through to the Macquarie Park business area, the North Shore and into the Sydney city. There is also significant growth in Parramatta and the M4 industrial zones near Blacktown. It is important that the workers in the North West sector are connected to these areas. Currently they face considerable blockages and high tolls to be able to access their work. It does not seem to be a particularly clever or economically sound strategy to make it hard for these people to get to their jobs.

Conversely, there will be a need for people for people working in lower-paid industries, for example people working in retail, hospitality and home care, to be able to move into and out of the North West

Western Sydney
Community Forum
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t 02 9687 9669
f 02 9687 8665
e wscf@wscf.org.au
w www.wscf.org.au

sector for residence and work. People on lower incomes are more likely to need an integrated public transport system, and particularly are bus users.

4. T-way Growth in Demand

Like the Liverpool T-way, figures for the North West T-way show significant growth in demand for the services since they opened. It is likely that the increase in patronage on the North West T-way will mirror the increases in the Liverpool T-way (*Ministry of Transport, Submission to the 2008 Bus Fare Inquiry*).

The North West T-way data shows a doubling of patronage between April 2007 and April 2008 (Patronage data, private correspondence). For the Liverpool T-way;

“Since the Transitway opened in February 2003 patronage has increased from 9,566 passengers in the first month to 241,470 passengers in September 2007. Patronage of the Transitway may not have hit usage targets in the first few years but now that petrol has passed the \$1.50 per litre mark some lucky residents of Greater Western Sydney have a functioning public transport system already in place that gives them the option of leaving their cars at home.” (Westir, 2008 www.westir.org.au)

The growth in usage data on the new T-ways, the North West T-ways and the Liverpool T-ways, indicates that if you provide good infrastructure, accessible and reasonably priced public transport, people will use it.

5. Infrastructure Issues

We request that the NSW Government maintain its commitment to buying more new, accessible buses to service the North West sector.

We have a preference for a return to the recent plan to introduce an integrated heavy rail system into the North West sector because:

- this is appropriate for the longer journeys to the North West,
- does not involve a change of mode to access the North Shore and the North West employment zones of the Macquarie business park areas
- has higher passenger capacity
- can be integrated into the rest of the Cityrail network
- Will relieve congestion on the Western line and through Parramatta station.

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Parramatta NSW 2124

t 02 9687 9669
f 02 9687 8665
e wscf@wscf.org.au
w www.wscf.org.au

We have a preference for a proposed Metro system to service higher density areas such as Parramatta.

The rail duplication to Richmond continue. This additional capacity should be integrated into whatever system is developed for the NW sector.

We recognize that, in Western Sydney, the large majority of trips taken are in private vehicles.

“The transport deficit in Western Sydney is most noticeable in areas where there is limited access to rail, in the northwest LGAs of Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury, and in Camden and Wollondilly in the Southwest. In these LGAs there are higher proportions of dwellings with two or more cars (more than 60% of dwellings), lower proportions of dwellings with no vehicles (fewer than 5% of dwellings) and higher rates of journey to work by car (around 60% of people drive to work) compared to Sydney averages.

The costs to households of owning a car are considerable and it has been estimated that a household could save \$750,000 over a lifetime if a second car could be avoided (Newman, 2003)”³.

Given these characteristics, we recommend the development of projects to investigate how to create car-share schemes that can work for the NW sector as well as other parts of Western Sydney. These projects need to be well resourced and sophisticated to work with the complex nature of trying to share what are now considered exclusively private goods.

6. Cross Regional Transport

“Travel patterns evident from the Journey to Work data from the 2001 Census and the Sydney Household Travel Survey show that the vast majority of trips for both work (71%) and other purposes (90%) by Western Sydney residents are within the region itself (PPM, 2204). Only 7% of workers from Western Sydney travelled to the Sydney CBD.”⁴

Transport planning in Western Sydney must consider these facts. It is well known that we need better cross-regional connections for public transport in Western Sydney. It is a mistake to base the majority of transport planning around trips to the Sydney CBD.

³ Hurni, A. 2006. *Transport and Social Disadvantage in Western Sydney*. UWS & WSCF http://www.wscf.org.au/uploads/File/Transport_disadvantage_report_web.pdf

⁴ Ibid.

7. Not Only Journey to Work

The other transport planning mistake that we recommend be avoided is focusing all decisions around “Journey To Work”. While it would seem economically important to emphasise journey-to-work trips only 25% of trips are journey-to-work. The other 75% of trips are for other reasons. These are the trips that can minimize social isolation and exclusion and increase social capital.

It is important to also consider “trip chaining” by families. This is where people run a journey for a number of reasons - return from work, childcare pickup, shopping and home. The transport system needs to facilitate a variety of trips and should be an integrated system not just focused on journey-to-work trips. But give people real transport choices through better inter-modal connectivity.

8. Work Near Home Initiatives

We support the work-near-home initiatives promoted in the Metro Strategy, WSROC (*Agenda For Sustainability* www.wsroc.com.au) and Baulkham Hills Council. We think that “jobs-near-home” should be a rolling measure for Western Sydney as it is for the State Plan.

9. Transport Infrastructure Funding

In general, we have concerns about the reliance on private financing and service costing systems which do not consider “externalities” because this can lead to uncompetitive pricing for public infrastructure. Such comparisons can be seen in the increased cost of accessing parts of Sydney’s rail network, with a complication in fees structure (such as exit fees) and uncompetitive pricing. This private financing increased costs and in 2003, it was suggested that it was cheaper to catch a cab to the airport, rather than catch the train.⁵ The company providing the Airport line, Airport link, also went into receivership, because it was not financially viable (although the external benefits may have been accounted for in the public sector).

In terms of the *Special Infrastructure Contribution Scheme* (SIC) 75% of development costs are to be paid by the developer (ultimately passed onto the purchaser) with the state to finance 25% of the total development. It is important to put transport infrastructure in place before housing or employment lands become available. In this way it

⁵ For Sale: Ghost Train to Sydney Airport, Sydney Morning Herald, March 2006.
<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2006/03/10/1141701698598.html>

will encourage transport orientated development as has been Perth's experience in the East Perth TOD Redevelopment project⁶.

As there is a relationship between affordable housing and more transport options, this co-location of affordable housing next to frequent and reliable transport will reduce transport disadvantage by passengers financially supporting the transport system and also enabling people to participate more fully in society. The transport system will require fewer subsidies and may even be profitable.

Under the SIC Budget, transport related infrastructure is heavily weighted in favour of Road based transport (See below). Bus infrastructure is financially disregarded as the poor cousin of rail and car. Our assertions respond to the need for cross-regional transport around Western Sydney, and increased rail and bus can provide this role.

It is unclear, and possibly the role of this enquiry to ascertain the level of investment in buses to provide world class bus services to provide this cross-regional connectivity, such as 6 minute frequency in peak and 15 minute off-peak frequency for people in NW Sydney.

In our recent *Connecting with Buses Discussion Paper*, the authors make reference to other cities around the world, such as Vancouver which have comparable population levels, but far superior service frequency, so it is financially viable.⁷

In the *Special Infrastructure Contribution Scheme Budget 2005-06*, it is unclear how many buses are currently being purchased to serve North Western Sydney's future bus needs. From rough calculations the road budget line item is 10 times that of the bus budget line item (see below). Is there a provision for land to be acquired for specific transport infrastructure?

Western Sydney
Community Forum
ABN 15 171 624 226
Level 4, 146 Marsden St
Parramatta NSW 2150
PO Box 208
Parramatta NSW 2124

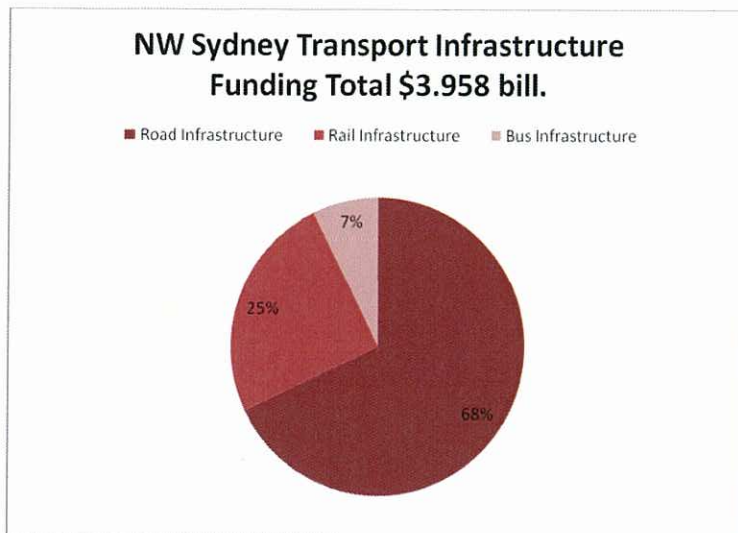
t 02 9687 9669
f 02 9687 8665
e wscf@wscf.org.au
w www.wscf.org.au

⁶ East Perth Redevelopment Project -

<http://www.epra.wa.gov.au/EastPerthRedevelopmentAuthority/Planning/East+Perth+TOD+Study.htm>

⁷ Western Sydney Community Forum, *Connecting With Buses Discussion Paper*, p.18

http://www.wscf.org.au/uploads/File/connecting_with_buses%20discussion%20paper%20v6.pdf



Figures from Growth Centre Commission's Special Infrastructure Contribution Budget 100% 05-06⁸

Financial allocations indicate government priorities. Spending 70% of the total transport budget on roads will not produce the most efficient transport system under the Transit Orientated Development.

We believe that a reallocation of resources be investigated to promote reduced congestion through transport orientated development principles⁹, to reduce car dependency and provide real alternatives, as described by the Victoria Transport Policy Institute¹⁰.

10. Conclusion

We have noted that people in the North West Sydney are disheartened with the ever-receding commitments from Government about plans for transport into the North West. One young woman told us "I seem to have been hearing about this mythical train coming since I was a kid".

We want transport into the North West, like the rest of Western Sydney, to be integrated accessible and affordable. The fewer two-car families that we can facilitate, who also have good connectivity to the things that they want to do, the better.

⁸<http://www.gcc.nsw.gov.au/media/5105/section%20%20final%5B1%5D.090107.%20pdf.pdf> accessed 16th October 2008

⁹ Victoria Policy Institute – Transport Orientated Design Principles
<http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm45.htm> accessed 16th October.

¹⁰ <http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm100.htm> accessed 16th October 2008.



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community forum

Appendix A: Spatial Change in Oil and Mortgage Vulnerability 2001-2006 in Sydney (VAMPIRE Index)¹¹

Western Sydney
Community Forum
ABN 15 171 624 226
Level 4, 146 Marsden St
Parramatta NSW 2150
PO Box 208
Parramatta NSW 2124

t 02 9687 9669
f 02 9687 8665
e wscf@wscf.org.au
w www.wscf.org.au

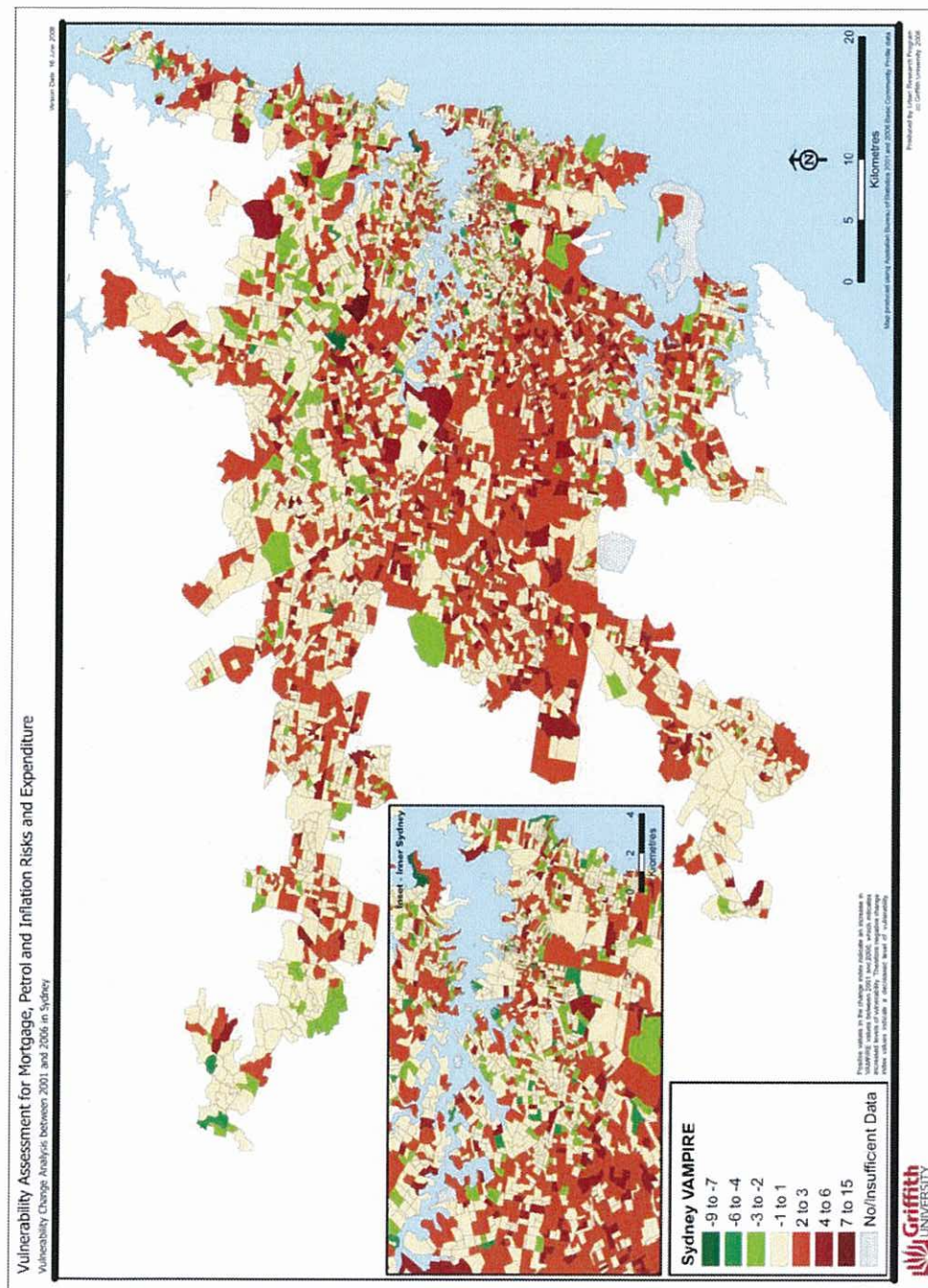


Figure 19: Spatial change in oil and mortgage vulnerability at the Census Collectors District level, Sydney, 2001-2006.

¹¹ Jago Dodson and Neil Sipe, *Unsettling Suburbia: The New Landscape of Oil and Mortgage Vulnerability in Australian Cities* (2008) http://www.griffith.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/88851/urp-rp17-dodson-sipe-2008.pdf accessed 16th October 2008.

Survey responses from residences in Rouse Hill

Rouse Hill Families Connect conducted a research paper in September and October 2008 titled "Rouse Hill: What's behind the door?" This paper was a study into the lifestyles and needs of people living within the developing community of Rouse Hill.

Data collected during the course of this research was done using two methodologies, questionnaires and key consultations. The questionnaires were emailed out to our mailing list which we currently have over 300 families on.

We are still receiving questionnaires from local residences. Two of the questions we asked were;

1. "What were some of the negative aspects of living in this area?" And
2. "If you had the power to change anything in the area what would it be?"

Overwhelming the responses to these questions concerned the lack of public transport in the area. Below are some extracts from the surveys from local residences.

1. What are some of the negative aspects of living in this area?

- "There's no walking footpaths especially down mile end road, withers rd and near Aldi. What going to happen when they build the new high school where are the kids going to walk ..on the road??"
- "Distance to work and lack of public transport."
- "It is really hard being so far away from the rest of our family, places to swim like beaches, or national parks or the city. This is also hard while our children are very small, because the travel time consumes so much of their wake time."
- "Bad public transport, expensive tolls"
- "Not much public transport"
- "Public transport is a disaster. Not enough buses and the closest train station is seven hills."
- "The main roads especially in Castle Hill are always clogged because they are not wide enough for example Showground Road should be 4 lanes not 2 lanes."
- "Probably the lack of public transport that makes it difficult for families to reduce car expenses and contribute to the reduction of gas emissions. The area needs more buses and possible a train line that would help people to work outside the area and have a better paid job but still enjoy living in the suburbs."
- "Lack of public transport facilities (i.e. train). Temperatures a bit extreme. No beach, too far from the city (and too expensive with the tolls)!"
- "Distance from city, lack of frequent transport, increase in traffic over the years and slow improvement in the roads till Windsor road upgrade still

insufficient closer to rouse hill etc Poor connection transport wise between suburbs.”

- ‘My husband works in the city, so he has to leave home early and comes home late, some days he only see the children asleep! Its not right that because of the lack of transport my family is suffering!’”
- “ I feel like I’m in a prison as some weeks I cant even leave my house because my husband has the car and I have no way of doing anywhere, I’m not use to living in a area where you cannot rely on public transport”
- “I’m concerned about my children they are 5 and 8 now but in 5 to 10 years what are they going to do in this area? There are no facilities for youths and the lack of public transport means they are going to be bored and stuck at home which is going to make them what to hang out in the street with friends, something needs to be done so all these young children we see now in the area have more options available to them as they get older so they don’t get bored and frustrated”

2. If you had the power to change anything in this area, what would it be and why?

- “Of course having the rail line out here would be fantastic too... icing on the cake!”
- “There are a lot of people in the shire who are under extreme financial hardship so the only entertainment they get is going to the local parks as it cost to much to use drive outside the area because the tolls are to expensive and petrol prices.”
- “Fix the public transport situation by having more buses and making them more reliable. Also having some sort of rail system here. Fix the major roads like showground road by widening them”
- “I would create more public transport, parks and schools.”
- “Transport system more bus connections- easier to access places without a car”
- “Give me a million and I’d build the damn train line myself!”
- “I have 2 small children and no car during the week, I would give other mums like me more options when it comes to transport, i.e. more buses and more times they pick up and drop off, train line.”
- “Improve the transport between the local suburbs, sometimes I will be waiting for a bus to Castle Hill and it doesn’t even show up!”

Here are some other comments we have received from the community regarding the transport needs of North Western Sydney.

Question: What else would you like to tell us?

I have lived in the Hills for 30 years and commuted with the private bus service for 7 years to the CBD. The service is poor, unreliable, overcrowded and I consider it dangerous. Busses traveling up to, and in excess of, 100km along a freeway with people standing is a hazard which could easily result in a fatality. The North West, in particular the Hills District, have been neglected regarding transport and as the roads continue to crowd with the increase in population to the area. All other regions of Sydney have access to a reliable transport system apart from the Hills District.

Thu, 10/16/08 11:09 AM

2. It is outrageous that the only form of transport supplied to the North-West of Sydney is by private bus (Westbus). All other areas are adequately supplied with rail lines. Hills residents transport costs are nearly double any state rail route. Not only are we paying more but we are under supplied during peak times with many passengers having to stand on overcrowded M2 buses travelling 100kph which is a disaster waiting to happen. It is only a matter of time before there is an accident and serious casualties caused by this obvious lack of safety. The local government have done NOTHING during their 'mighty' reign of the Hills District and the state government have done even less to provide this, the most fast growing area in the metro region with adequate cost effective transport. It is widely known that the ridiculous t-way provides no help to residents of the Hills and outer Hills travelling to the city and at any given time parades empty busses up and down Old Windsor Rd in front of furious motorists using their own vehicles travelling onto the M2 - unable to catch the T-way to the city as it does not go there! The transport infrastructure in the Hills is an absolute joke. Thu, 10/16/08 10:00 AM

3. I have not made much noise about public transport as there has been a train line on the planning table for some time and I was quite happy about that. I feel very let down by this government now that this is being back peddled and we are back to the drawing board. Train travel to the city would make a big difference to the Hills district :(Wed, 10/15/08 1:45 PM

4. As well as living in this area i work at rouse Hill Families Connect with families who have small children aged between 0-8 years old. public Transport is a huge issue for families oyut here and is impacting on all aspects of there life. Some thing needs to be done.. and FAST we are SICK of the talk.. ACTION needs to happen! Wed, 10/15/08 12:48 PM

5. WHY IS IT THAT IT TAKES ME 10 MINS BY CAR FROM HOMBUSH TO GREENACRE AND ONE HOUR BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT????????????? THAT SYSTEM IN PLACE IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO THE NEEDS OF SYDNEY; I'D RATHER DRIVE THEN USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT. I THINK YOU NEED TO TAKE A GOOD LOOK ON HOW TORONTO, CANADA TRANSIT SYSTEM WORKS, THEY TRANSPORT MILLIONS OF PEOPLE A DAY. PEOPLE PAY

ONE PRICE NOT BY DISTANCE TRAVELED AND its FREQUENCY OF THE BUSES (EVERY TEN MINS ON PEAK HOURS.) GUARANTEES YOU TO ARRIVE TO WORK ON TIME, PEOPLE DRIVE LESS BECAUSE THEY USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT ITS CHEAPER AND RELIABLE. Tue, 10/14/08 4:33 PM

6. a train line from north western sydney is a must. i will have to travel from glenwood to rhodes each working day. this involves 1 bus and 2 trains and then paying parking. Mon, 10/13/08 1:27 PM

7. Investment in trains and buses in western sydney is very important to the economic benefit and social functioning of western sydney. Investment will drive behavioural changes and lead to a reduction on car dependency. Children should be more encouraged to use public transport through a very integrated future network.