

**Submission
No 132**

THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Transport needs of Sydney's North-West Sector (Inquiry)

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission to the General Purpose Standing Committee Number 4 Inquiry into the transport needs of Sydney's North West Sector.

The Department of Planning has previously consulted with local government and community stakeholders during preparation of the North West Sub Regional Strategy. This strategy was prepared to guide land-use planning in the region until 2031. Key directions of the strategy include implementation of the planned North West Rail Link and integrating transport and land use opportunities.

The key directions of North West Sub Regional Strategy and those of the broader Metropolitan Strategy have already provided sufficient insight into the requirements and plans for integrated transport systems in the North West Sector. What is required now to advance the key directions of the strategy is the development of an infrastructure spending strategy. Council is concerned that the current inquiry will only delay implementation of key directions of the strategy, in particular the time line for providing the North West Rail Link.

Notwithstanding, Council wishes to make the following submission regarding aspects of Sydney's North West Sector transport needs:

- **The redevelopment of Epping Station without supporting traffic flow planning and commuter parking facilities.**

Council is concerned that the State Government has recently completed redevelopment of Epping railway station for the Epping Chatswood rail link without any provision for increased commuter parking. TIDC is now in the process of evaluating options for a new North West Metro station at Epping and there is no indication that parking will be considered in any detail.

This is a serious issue as local businesses are affected by traffic congestion and limited parking availability. Commuter parking has swamped on street parking around Epping and Council is under pressure to remove parking to improve traffic flow. Council's ability to provide parking for existing businesses is severely limited by the capital cost and lack of suitable sites for off street parking. Bus services are regularly delayed by traffic congestion in Langston Place despite the provision of new traffic signals as part of the Epping station upgrade. Until the problems on Beecroft Road and Epping Road are addressed, vehicle access around Epping will remain an issue for local businesses as well as commuters.

Council submits that a co-ordinated approach by Council, the RTA, Railcorp/TIDC and STA is required to ensure traffic flow and commuter parking generated by major rail projects is managed effectively.

- **The need for completion of the Epping to Parramatta rail line as being essential to cater for the continued growth of the North West Sector. This will provide full access between Parramatta/ Castle Hill/ Hornsby/ the City/ Chatswood and Macquarie University/Business Park.**

A number of studies have confirmed that a large proportion of trips through Hornsby Shire involve Parramatta, Macquarie Park, Chatswood, North Sydney and Sydney CBD as an origin or destination. Traffic congestion on the Cumberland Highway makes bus services slow and unreliable and the railway link from Carlingford is indirect and involves a change at Clyde.

The current Epping to Chatswood rail link represents only part of the original Parramatta to Chatswood rail link proposal and completing the deferred section between Parramatta and Epping will be an enormous benefit in reducing demand on existing transport and other infrastructure serving Parramatta CBD and Sydney CBD.

Council submits that it is essential that the Parramatta to Epping section of the Parramatta to Chatswood rail link be a high priority to consolidate transport infrastructure in north western Sydney and ensure the transport infrastructure can meet the demands of the full development potential of the area.

- **That if the North West Metro option proceeds, (in contrast to the heavy rail originally proposed for this link), the continuation and integration of this Metro Line must be made a priority.**

Council is concerned that given the history of the original Parramatta Chatswood rail link proposal the full value of the current North West Metro proposal will not be realized unless the Epping to Sydney CBD section of the Metro is available. Residents and businesses in North Western Sydney will not have direct and convenient public transport access to Chatswood, North Sydney and the city even after the Epping Chatswood heavy rail link is operating because there will be modal changes required between the Metro and heavy rail. Each change adds time and reduces convenience, particularly when connections are missed.

Council submits that a heavy rail connection between the north west and the city would have provided a direct connection through Macquarie Park to Chatswood. Now that a Metro system for the north west is proposed it is essential that a through link to Sydney CBD be provided so that Metro commuters need not change modes.

- **Any future/further development of Epping Station to accommodate the North-west Rail, regardless of the form it may take, must include meaningful community consultation.**

The consultation process for the North West Rail Link did not take into account the administrative requirements of Council. In particular the timing of public meetings and deadlines for submissions adopted by NWRL left little time for Council officers to investigate issues and report to Council prior to Council adopting a position on an issue. The ability of the community to make comment and engage in the decision making process independently of Council was also compromised by the short time frames and inappropriate consultation methods adopted by the State.

Council submits that future consultation by state government agencies must include a factor to allow Council and the community to make a properly considered response.

- **Sufficient "kiss and drop" facilities to be included at all stations along any proposed new rail lines, with other (bus etc) public transport linkages and parking facilities being provided where assessed (in consultation with the local community) to be appropriate.**

Access to Epping railway station relies heavily on road space formerly used by local businesses. Bus and taxi operators regularly request more parking and complain about delays to schedules caused by congestion. Bus operators are also requesting visitor parking be removed from Epping CBD to improve traffic flow. TIDC has not provided additional parking to compensate for the loss of prime visitor parking in the Epping Town Centre due to the reconstruction of the bus interchange.

Council submits that as developer, the State Government should ensure local residents and businesses are not adversely impacted by increased traffic congestion and loss of on street parking and that facilities for commuters be provided and clearly separated from facilities.

- **Reiteration of Council's support for a North-West Rail line to include a station under Carlingford Court Shopping Centre, referencing the proposed additional dwellings in the adjacent precinct within Baulkham Hills Council boundaries, which will have a severe impact on traffic and parking within Hornsby Shire.**

In order to meet State Government population targets both Baulkham Hills and Hornsby Councils regard the area around Carlingford Court shopping centre and Carlingford railway station as appropriate for higher density redevelopment. More efficient peak hour links are required to ensure local residents and businesses have direct access between Epping, Macquarie Park, Chatswood, North Sydney and Sydney CBD.

During the Preferred Project Report consultation, Council requested that the North West Rail/Metro route be amended to include a station near Carlingford Court. The heavy rail proposal would tap into an area earmarked for significant future population growth with only a moderate increase in cost and travel time over the proposed route.

Council submits that the heavy rail option still has benefits for residents living in north western Sydney and that an amended route via Carlingford should be further considered.

- **Concern with pace of providing planned infrastructure development generally.**

In addition to the above issues, Council also submits that in spite of the acknowledged significant traffic growth in the region, expenditure on roads has not matched this growth. As a consequence, there are severe capacity problems and congestion experienced at critical locations along main arterial routes. The RTA is aware of the problems that are being experienced in the north western part of the Shire and have previously commissioned the Old North/New Line Road Strategic Route Development Study. Ten years have passed since this study was completed and yet most of the recommendations of this study have not been implemented. Other notable locations in the North West section of the Shire where severe traffic problems are experienced include Boundary Road, Castle Hill Road, the intersection of Boundary Road with Pennant Hills Road and the intersection of New Line Road with Shepherds Drive/County Drive. Problems experienced at these locations severely affect bus services and the problems will not go away on their own unless specific and targeted measures are implemented to address them. Council considers that the measures proposed under the Strategic Bus Corridors Program are extremely simplistic, for example, providing Bus Early Start facilities on roads which currently are so congested that getting the bus to the head of the queue would require demolishing kilometres of housing to provide an extra lane.

A comprehensive review of traffic and transport requirements should be undertaken to identify bottleneck locations in the regions and how they should be addressed. The review should include all the critical junctions along arterial and sub arterial routes such as the intersections of Boundary Road with Pennant Hills Road and New Line Road with Shepherds Drive. Pedestrian access across these roads to bus stops should be included as a specific term of reference in any review.

Council is requesting the Committee to consider the issues raised in this submission and should report on the:

1. Need to expedite implementation of key directions of the Sydney North West Strategy, in particular the planned North West Rail Link/Metro.
2. Need to integrate all transport systems or modes in the region including road, rail and bus links.
3. Requirement to develop an infrastructure spending strategy of identified works.
4. Need to develop a schedule of works and a time line of the program of implementation.

- **Conclusion**

While Council acknowledges the efforts of the State Government to meet the transport needs of residents and businesses in Sydney's North West, successive state governments have allowed extensive development to occur prior to efficient transport infrastructure being provided. A rail service to the North West Sector has been promised by successive governments, and its provision is long overdue. Council is committed to ensure its local needs are included in any transport infrastructure proposals.

The Committee is invited to observe first-hand, the ongoing congestion that occurs on arterial roads in the Shire, particularly during peak hours.

If you require further information please contact Council's Manager Traffic and Road Safety, Lawrence Nagy, on 9847 6616.

Yours faithfully

R J BALL
General Manager