

**Submission
No 151**

THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR

Name: Mr Simon Pallavicini and Ms Deb Stewart

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

Dear Sir/Madam;

RE: GPSC No. 4 – Transport needs of Sydney's North-West Sector

We wish to make the following comments in relation to the transport needs within the North-West of Sydney. We intend to highlight issues and make suggestions in regards to the specific terms of references however prior to doing so it needs to be said that at present there is a significant lack of public transport (road, bus and rail) within the North-West. It is our view that this has arisen solely due to the abject failure of the State Labour Government over the last 13 years to invest in this area and to understand that it represents all citizens within NSW.

1. The requirements and plans for an integrated transport system in the North-West Sector, including road, rail and bus links.

At present there is simply no integrated public transport system serving the area we live. Some examples:

- a. I (Deb Stewart) work in Crows Nest. Due to the cost of road transport I travel with my partner (Simon) when as he works in the city as has a company car. Unfortunately he travels frequently (weekly) and when he does I must drive myself to work.

I have two public transport choices to get home from work. One of these is rail from St. Leonards to Pennant Hills via Hornsby followed by bus from Pennant Hills to Cherrybrook. The disfunctionality within City rail is well known however an example for you to consider.

- If the train to Hornsby is late the Connection to Pennant Hills will not wait.
- If the train from Hornsby to Pennant Hills is late – the bus to Cherrybrook does not wait. The next bus is after a one hour wait. Otherwise I have to get a taxi at \$12.00 per trip.

The end result is that on occasion it can take nearly three hours to get home this way. Contrast this with the 35 minutes to drive to work in the morning. So I choose to travel home via State Government bus from Crows Nest to Longueville Road and then Hills Bus express to Cherrybrook. In general the service is acceptable however:

- State Government buses are always filthy. Many drivers do not stop at the bus stops on Pacific Highway and this results in missed connections at Longueville Road.
- Hills Bus provides a good service however it cannot cope with the number of passengers. This means that regularly persons stand on Longueville road to watch buses drive straight past. This is not the fault of Hills Bus, I understand, as services must be approved by the

NSW Department of Transport. But as I stand in the sun (under a glassed roofed bus shelter) watching buses go by I wish I could afford to drive to work (refer comments under Section 4).

- b. There is no decent after hours or 24 hour public transport system within the North-West. Examples:
- The last bus from Castle Towers Shopping Centre to Cherrybrook on Thursday Night (late night shopping) is at 8.00pm. The shops shut at 9.00pm!! This forces shoppers and staff to travel by car.
 - A couple of years ago one of our children gained an apprenticeship at Seven Hills with a start time of 6.45am. Due to bus services in the area commencing at 6.00am and the various connections required he could not get to work by public transport. I (Simon) had to drive him from Cherrybrook to Seven Hills prior to going to work myself in the City.
- c. The M2 does not have bus lane from the western side of the Beecroft tunnel heading east (both directions). What is the point of trying to encourage people to use public transport if we offer no incentive to get them to work and home quicker than by car?
- d. The M2 is gridlocked in the morning and afternoon. The initial proposal from the M2 leaves a two lane section eastbound from Pennant Hills Road to Beecroft. This section is at a standstill every weekday morning. Is the road operator doing this on the cheap again. We have already written to the operator on this matter. Apparently our comments are noted and we are now included on their mailing list. Sounds like more 'spin' to us.
- e. How is it that various levels of government and government departments (Ie State Govt, Baulkham Hills Council and RTA) cannot even manage to widen Showground Road at Castle Hill. This is a single lane each way yet a vital corridor from Castle Hill to Norwest and beyond. It is our reading of this situation that the failure lies with the State Government and the RTA. The contempt shown by our Government is evidenced by former Roads Minister Roozendaal's refusal to visit the area.
- f. Pennant Hills Road is gridlocked all day every day. It is the one and only exit to the north and yet Governments of all kind (Cth, State and Local) cannot agree on the preferred route for a new link and there seems to be no commitment by anyone to actually doing anything.

Suggestions:

1. Properly integrated timetables for all forms of public transport and public investment in City Rail to ensure on time running and increased frequency of bus and rail services.
2. Build adequate car parks at all railway stations. Not everyone lives within walking distance of a train station or bus stop!
3. Increased public investment in private bus companies such as Hills Bus so they may provide the necessary service to the public in the North-West.
4. Fit buses with bicycle racks to the front of the bus. If NSW finds that too difficult I suggest contacting ACTION buses in the ACT. People could then ride from home to the bus stop etc.

5. Bus lane along the full length of the M2. This should be in addition to the proposed widening (not that we have any faith that this will happen in a hurry).
6. Widen the M2 now – 3 lanes each way plus bus lane each way. Total of 4 lanes each way.
7. Widen Showground Road now.
8. Build a new link out of the city – Either under Pennant Hills Road, or as requested a new link all together from the M7 to the Hawkesbury. We are not fully conversant with the arguments for each however something needs to be done and Governments of all persuasion need to stand up and actually do something!

2. The proposed funding of an integrated transport system in the North-West Sector, including the distribution of developer and State infrastructure levies.

The NSW State Government simply needs to understand that Public transport is a public service. Profit or not there are other benefits to having a decent transport system (environment, lifestyle, benefits to the economy). Get rid of the economic rationalists and invest in our future. There is nothing wrong with not having a AAA rating with Standard & Poor's or Moody's. Recent financial events have shown that these ratings are not worth the paper they are written on. There is no point in having a rating at the expense of our environment and lifestyle. It seems to us that this bizarre economic rationalism, in conjunction with poor management by the State Government, is what has led to the decay in our beautiful city. Nothing has been done for 13 years so that we can have an AAA rating.

NSW is not a business!! We live here and we are entitled to have decent services including road, rail and bus services. The State Labour Government needs to remember who they serve and where the money is coming from (the tax payer).

Most of us are well and truly tired of the State/Commonwealth 'blame game'. Sort it out and between you provide the services you are being paid to provide!

3. The plans and funding for the North-West Metro and the NSW Government's decision not to proceed with the North-West Rail Link.

We do not understand the reasoning for the abandonment of the North-West Rail link in favour of the North-West Metro. It seems this was a political decision designed to tackle union power within City Rail. No other rational explanation has been provided. We are not particularly interested in having \$12B wasted so that the State Labour Party and the Unions can play their power games.

We understand that the North-West Rail link is significantly cheaper than the metro; further advanced in terms of planning and seems to get the approval of professionals within the field. There are too many doubts being raised about the viability of the North-West Metro to simply plunge in and start.

Suggestions:

1. General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 should investigate the NSW State Governments decision to abandon the North-West rail Link and make a recommendation as to the preferred rail link. This recommendation should be based solely on the public transport needs of the residents of the North-West Sector.

2. Regardless of the outcome of any investigation by the Committee the NSW State Government should immediately (on receipt of the recommendation from GPSC4 as to the preferred route) commence construction. Delay or postponement simply due to the fact that our current Government has been financially incompetent is not acceptable to the residents of the North-West.
3. If it true that Prime Minister Rudd has expressed the view that there will be no funding for this project as there 'are no votes in it' then the NSW Government should have the 'stomach' to confirm this and publicly campaign for Commonwealth Government assistance. Anything else suggests politics wins at the expense of the public.

Other related matters.

We contend that the NSW State Labour Government has deliberately and knowingly discriminated against residents in the North/North-West of Sydney. There is no other explanation for the M4 and M5 'cash back' system which has not been applied to the M7, M2, Lane Cove Tunnel and Harbour Bridge. The failure of the Government to provide any useful public transport in this area simply compounds the problem as many people are forced to travel by car. Example:

- a. As previously stated I (Deb) work in Crows Nest. For me to drive to work each day involves
 - a. M4 east - \$4.40
 - b. Lane Cove tunnel east - \$2.69
 - c. Parking North Sydney Council - \$13.00
 - d. M4 east - \$4.40
 - e. Lane Cove tunnel west- \$2.69

That is \$27.18 per day - \$135.90 per week. If the cost of petrol is added in (say \$60.00 per week conservative estimate) the Committee will see that it costs nearly \$200.00 per week (\$800.00 per month/\$9,200.00 per year [46 weeks assuming - 4 weeks leave and 10 public holidays]). I am on an average wage and fairly representative of most people who live in this area.

The alternative is to spend significantly more time travelling through to Epping and then all the way down Epping Road. Bear in mind that Sections of Epping Road have now been narrowed to two lanes so that a bus lane can be accommodated. Again instead of widening roads we narrow them in an attempt to force drivers onto the toll roads. Interestingly we have very wide median strips on Epping Road that could be narrowed to accommodate additional lanes. Excuse us for being suspicious of the Government/RTA motives but if we lived in the areas served by the M4 and M5 we would have some relief courtesy of the State Government. Pure politics!!

We also suggest that the State Labour Government has deliberately forced residents in the North-West to travel by toll roads. Here it seems that the Government has placed the needs of big business before the need of the public. Unfortunately it seems to us that the RTA is either complicit in this or simply incompetent. This is clearly evidenced by:

- a. The reduction of Epping Road (over the Lane Cove tunnel) to one lane.
- b. Failure to provide an exit at the end of the M2 to Epping Road (they have made people take the Delhi Road turn off, make a right turn, then left

onto Epping Road and join the traffic jam due to the reduction of Epping Road).

This is similar to what occurred with road closures about the Cross City Tunnel. End result – we have no faith whatsoever in the current Government and RTA's ability to adequately serve the best interests of those who pay their wages. Remember we own and have previously payed for Epping Road. What right did this Government have to take it off us- we suggest none!! The Government backed down in areas around the Cross City tunnel, but not here in the North-West. We wonder why - more politics perhaps?

The next point in relation to the RTA is this continual madness of only building 2 lane motorways. When will the RTA understand that we cannot do everything on the cheap? We build them too small, they become quickly gridlocked and then we dither for years before we widen them. Get rid of the economic rationalism and build roads now that will serve us into the future.

Suggestions:

1. Remove the discrimination – either abandon M4 and M5 'cash back' or provide 'cash back' on all other toll roads.
2. No more Public Private Partnerships (PPP's) that involve high tolls combined with road closures.
3. An independent authority be set up to examine all future PPP's to ensure they are in the best interest of the NSW public.
4. A Legislative Council inquiry should be set up to examine the capabilities of the RTA to serve the NSW public into the future. In particular this should consider its ability to effectively plan roads that will cater well into future.

Our last point is that NSW needs to commit to the reality of Climate Change. Everything that we have discussed in this submission needs to be considered in this context. What is the cost to the environment and our economy by having 4 million plus residents living in a city with no decent public transport and gridlocked roads? Whilst road improvements are vital it is investment in public transport that will ultimately benefit future generations in Sydney and surrounds.

It is most unfortunate that there is nothing positive within our submission. We feel that in terms of transport the residents of the North-West Sector have been abandoned by all levels of Government. We have little faith that things will change.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our submission.

Yours faithfully,



Simon Pallavicini



Deb Stewart.