

**Submission
No 12**

**INQUIRY INTO PLANNING PROCESS IN NEWCASTLE
AND THE BROADER HUNTER REGION**

Name: Ms Julie Jordan

Date received: 1/10/2014

I make this submission as an individual train commuter.

My employment is at Honeysuckle and I commute by train Monday to Friday at the beginning and end of normal business hours.

Reasons I commute -

- train travel is efficient and saves time. e.g. the train time to travel only from Hamilton to Civic station is 4.5 mins. To drive can take up to 25 mins and this is not only due to the Stewart Ave railway gates. I have found it can take me 15 mins to travel from the Honeysuckle all day parking to the traffic lights at Hannell St, a distance of around 1.2 kms
- parking at Honeysuckle is very limited. Very little available space after 8.00am.

I am concerned about the proposed interim measures with the plan to cut the train line from Boxing Day 2014. I have experienced the use of buses at times of train line maintenance and note that there is very little benefit to travelling by bus compared to driving my own vehicle. The travel times are close to the same, and there are multiple stops when using the bus and that does not include the multiple traffic lights along Hunter Street.

With the opening of the University Law Faculty and the Courthouse the options of all day parking are further reduced. I also think it is shortsighted use of public transport when there is a train station located at the University of Newcastle campus where students reside which will bring them directly into the Civic railway station in less than a third of the time that it takes to travel by bus.

I appreciate the need to be forward thinking about the traffic issues and the separation of the city and the waterfront caused by the train line.

An interim measure for 2 years of buses being the only public transport is a poor option. This approach will only increase the likelihood of workers and students using motor vehicles as bus travel is slow. For example... I can drive from my home near Wallsend and arrive at work in 15-20 mins. The same travel by bus takes one hour. I feel for beach users as there is no provision to carry surfboards/boogie boards on buses significantly disadvantaging people to use public transport to make use of our best attractions.... our beaches. Commuters from Maitland area are especially disadvantaged.

I understand that another option is to encourage people to use pushbikes. Great idea, if it wasn't so dangerous. Considerable planning and changes would need to be considered before this could be a reasonable option including safe storage of bikes. I own a pushbike but the current limits on bike lanes amongst traffic is a recipe for accidents.

Whilst I can see merit in the light rail system, I think there is a better option. Without sounding frivolous..... why not dig a tunnel under the existing corridor. I understand that this is unmined area and could support going underground. This would alleviate the problem with commuters changing from heavy rail to light rail, the cost savings would be significant and it would still allow for the above ground to be opened up for easy movement between Hunter St and the waterfront. Most large cities have underground railway as their commuter facility.

Initially I believe that the proposal to cut the rail line on Boxing Day is pre-emptive. The interim measures prior to opening of the light rail is poorly formed and a band aid measure. This city deserves much better than clogging up the current roads with more buses, less parking and poor bikeways.

Unfortunately this is a further display of poor vision and second class patching.

The rush to take the above action creates a real scepticism about the transparency and validity of the proposal. With the current investigations at state government and business development this is not the time to race half considered decisions through that cannot withstand scrutiny and give the impression of "deals being done".