

**Submission
No 17**

**INQUIRY INTO REMOVING OR REDUCING STATION
ACCESS FEES AT SYDNEY AIRPORT**

Organisation: Botany Bay City Council

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Submission to
NSW Legislative Council
General Purpose Standing
Committee No. 3

Inquiry into Station Access Fee – Sydney Airport

Botany Bay City Council welcomes the Committee's inquiry into the removal or reduction of the station access fee at Sydney Airport and the opportunity to provide comment on the proposition.

Council would also welcome the opportunity to provide further oral submissions should that be of assistance to the Committee in finalising its deliberations.

Also Council raises no objection to the publication of its submission by the Committee.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Botany Bay is the major thoroughfare and landside ground level access point to Sydney Airport.

The city's residents and business operators experience the same frustrations and adverse impacts of congestion on a day to day basis as those experienced by private and commercial vehicle operators accessing airport passenger and freight terminals or traversing the airport boundaries.

The cost in terms of the loss of amenity and time in traffic contribute directly to environmental degradation and lost productivity.

The fact that landside airport access is a major issue is undeniable as is the reality that projected increases in throughput at both the airport and Port Botany will further exacerbate the problem.

Current airport line patronage, the impact of fare reduction on patronage at Green Square and Mascot and the impact on patronage if the station access fee were removed or reduced.

The increased patronage at Mascot and Green Square stations following removal of the access fee from ticket pricing wildly exceeded the estimations of both the government (+ 10 to 15%) and the Booz study (+ 17%) reaching + 70% in patronage within months.

Cost as **the** major contributor to this uptake is quite obvious.

Cost of one-way ticket Central to Green Square (2.65km) / Mascot (5.15km) \$3.60
Cost of one-way ticket Central to Airport Domestic (6.7km) / International (8.2km) \$15.90
Cost of one-way ticket Central to Muswellbrook (282km) / Scone (308km) \$8.40

While reducing rail fares to the airport terminals to the equivalent of other such journeys would see a jump in rail patronage this would fall into two "classes."

In the first instances a substantial number of the 28,000 people who work at the airport would be likely to utilise rail in the same way patronage by workers at Mascot and Green Square increased.

At the same time it is unlikely that the level of increased patronage would be matched by airline passengers for a number of reasons.

Firstly Sydney based international travellers would still most likely to be delivered by family or friends while those families with a substantial amount of luggage and without the family/friends option may still choose taxi or hire car as an easier travel option.

Secondly business travellers to or from major ports would still be more likely to utilise taxi's or hire cars to save time and as a charge to the corporate account.

Thirdly other travellers coming from areas not on the direct rail link, particularly those with luggage, may prefer the ease of direct travel by vehicle.

However the benefits in avoiding vehicle congestion and a greater certainty in arrival times coupled with the reduced cost of rail travel compared to other fares or parking fees will also provide positive encouragement to some to choose the rail option.

The funding implications of removing or reducing the station access fee and contract provisions in relation to the station access fee.

While compensation payments to the rail link operator exceeded expectations as a result of the unanticipated uptake at Mascot and Green Square, the impact as a result of airport patronage should be more predictable for the reasons given above.

This, of course, assumes that the commercial arrangements for the airport stations are the same as those relating to other stations on the line and that the access fee would be totally removed from ticket pricing or reduced to a suitably nominal amount so as to encourage maximum uptake.

In any case any additional compensation payable to the operator must be measured against the immediate benefits resulting from a reduction in vehicle movements in the airport precinct and the resulting benefits for airport users, Port Botany traffic and the community generally.

The potential benefits to Port Botany and congestion on roads in and around the airport including the M5.

While it should be possible for relevant agencies to model anticipated positive outcomes it is clear that removal of a substantial number of employee vehicle movements and an increased uptake by airline passengers and staff will provide immediate relief to the congestion which currently exists.

Any reduction in vehicle movements on General Holmes Drive, Southern Cross Drive, Joyce Drive, Qantas Drive, the M5 and Marsh Street will reduce congestion to the benefit of other road users.

Other measures to increase patronage of the airport line.

Apart from the existing fare structure a clear disincentive to use by air travellers is the lack of “luggage friendly” facilities in carriages on the rail system. Many overseas airport rail services have improved capacity to carry luggage in a way that satisfies the needs of the airline traveller (security and convenience) and general commuters using the same system.

There are a range of added incentives in use elsewhere which promote rail as the preferred option.

Strategies such as airport station dedicated check-in facilities or pre-checking facilities prior to boarding the airport train would provide added incentives by allowing users to avoid airport terminal queues.

Any other related matters

While increased patronage of the airport rail service would produce positive results the availability of other forms of mass public transport should also be considered.

Scrapping or renegotiating the existing contract’s “no compete” clause which limits bus services to the 400/401 service between Burwood and Bondi Junction would have a substantial positive impact on mass transfer options and further reduce precinct congestion.

Clearly opportunities exist for improved services to and from areas not easily accessible via the existing rail network.

CONCLUSION

Through the work of the Committee the government has the opportunity to make a positive and immediate impact on the growing problems of access to Sydney Airport and ease the pressure of congestion for other road users.

In addition the provision of an attractive rail option for airport staff and some airline passengers will substantially reduce the problem of on-street parking in surrounding streets and the need to regulate and police these areas in order to counter the problem.