

THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR

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The implementation of an integrated transport and land use plan is not being realised to its full potential due to the lack of a comprehensive multi modal transport plan that addresses issues in sufficient detail at a regional/sub regional and local level. For example, at a regional level the conversion of the North West Rail Link conversion to a Metro service and change of route, conflicts with years of planning and policy contained in the Metropolitan Strategy and the Metropolitan Rail Expansion Program. At a subregional level, bus priority has not been introduced at at-grade intersections along the North West T-way and has eliminated one of the main advantages of the system. At a more local level, opportunities to incorporate 'best practice' transport planning at major development sites, particularly in the field of travel behaviour change have not been realised. State and local government agencies have often not recognised the benefits of travel behaviour change as a tool in effectively reducing the demand for travel and there also appears to be a lack of co-ordination in the introduction of the public transport services needed to complement these innovative travel demand measures. The situation is exacerbated by the continued provision of road capacity based on the predict and provide approach which promotes the use of private cars over public transport.

It is recommended that a comprehensive, multi-modal transport study of the North West Growth Centre, that incorporates a strategic, macro-level model, is undertaken, so as to ensure that the integration that is required between the various modes of transport, and between land use and transport infrastructure, can be accommodated and is achieved. Due to the uncertainty around the North West Metro, future scenario planning with and without rail/metro should be undertaken, in order to be able to plan for either eventuality

The uncertainty surrounding Metro connections and continued emphasis on planning for private vehicle use will increase pressure for more costly road infrastructure to be provided which is unlikely to be met by funding that is available, and divert funding away from public transport initiatives.

Efficiency of existing and proposed road transport connections would be impacted significantly by delay or termination of the North West Metro project. The failure or further delay to deliver a rail or metro service to an area where this has been planned for many years, and against a background of strong population growth, will exacerbate any existing problems and possibly lead to greater reliance on bus and car. Planning for a scenario without a metro/rail link may not have been undertaken in sufficient detail, and will only encourage the continuation of the predict and provide cycle of planning.



17 October 2008

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

Dear Sir

Re: Legislative Council inquiry into the transport needs of Sydney's North West Sector

The GPT Group (GPT) has spent \$470 million creating the vibrant Rouse Hill Town Centre which is managed and owned by GPT. Rouse Hill Town Centre will sit at the heart of the 120 hectare New Rouse Hill site which includes \$1 billion of residential and commercial development undertaken by the Lend Lease/GPT joint venture over a period of 12 years on land earmarked for development by the Department of Planning.

The Parliament of New South Wales: Legislative Council: General Purpose Standing Committee No 4 has established an inquiry into the transport needs of Sydney's North West Sector, with the following, self-referred, terms of reference:

1. The requirements and plans for an integrated transport system in the North West Sector, including road, rail and bus links
 - At a state level, there have been a number of policy documents relating to the development of the North West sector (particularly the growth centre) and the development of an effective transport network required to serve the region, such as *NSW Government's Metropolitan Strategy (Dec 2005)* and *The State Plan (Nov 2006)*. Both documents outline new transport infrastructure to link Sydney's growth area, such as the North West-CBD-South West rail link and a network of strategic bus services, road infrastructure upgrades as well as improvements to the existing transport network, such as the Epping – Chatswood Rail Line, North West Transitway (T-way), Parramatta Transport Interchange, Chatswood Transport Interchange, M7 motorway, Lane Cove Tunnel and the widening and upgrading of Windsor and Old Windsor Rd, all of which will improve accessibility in North West Sydney.

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- At a subregional level, a draft subregional plan for the North West Subregion has been developed. Key transport directions include enhanced connections to the North West Growth Centre, through implementation of the planned North West Rail Link (including planning for six new stations at Cherrybrook, Castle Hill, Hills Centre, Norwest, Kellyville and Rouse Hill), connection with the Western Sydney Employment Hub and integration of transport and land use opportunities. The existing dispersed pattern of development in the sub region has resulted in the relatively high car dependency. Implementation of the integrated bus network including strategic bus corridors and new transport infrastructure, such as the North West T-way and the North West Rail Link will help to improve public transport in the North West Subregion.
- Generally, the policy statements referred to above promote improvements in transport planning through strategic, subregional and place planning, particularly through systematic and full integration of transport and land use planning.
- However, the implementation of an integrated transport and land use plan is not being realised to its full potential due to the lack of a comprehensive multi modal transport plan that addresses issues in sufficient detail at a regional/sub regional and local level. For example, at a regional level the conversion of the North West Rail Link conversion to a Metro service and change of route, conflicts with years of planning and policy contained in the Metropolitan Strategy and the Metropolitan Rail Expansion Program. At a subregional level, bus priority has not been introduced at at-grade intersections along the North West T-way and has eliminated one of the main advantages of the system. At a more local level, opportunities to incorporate 'best practice' transport planning at major development sites, particularly in the field of travel behaviour change have not been realised. State and local government agencies have often not recognised the benefits of travel behaviour change as a tool in effectively reducing the demand for travel and there also appears to be a lack of co-ordination in the introduction of the public transport services needed to complement these innovative travel demand measures. The situation is exacerbated by the continued provision of road capacity based on the predict and provide approach which promotes the use of private cars over public transport.

- It is recommended that a comprehensive, multi-modal transport study of the North West Growth Centre, that incorporates a strategic, macro-level model, is undertaken, so as to ensure that the integration that is required between the various modes of transport, and between land use and transport infrastructure, can be accommodated and is achieved. Due to the uncertainty around the North West Metro, future scenario planning with and without rail/metro should be undertaken, in order to be able to plan for either eventuality.

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

- The State's *Urban Transport Statement (Nov 2006)* included a \$660 million package of new and accelerated initiatives to address Sydney's present and future transport needs, stating that the NSW government is committed to delivering practical, workable transport solutions, recognising the strong relationship between planning for transport, land use and other areas, such as economic development, education and health, and that integration is needed across these sectors and across levels of planning, locations and decision makers and committed to moving forward with transport solutions within the framework set by the Metropolitan Strategy, Regional Strategies and Subregional Strategies.
- Among the Growth Centre Commission's main functions are preparing plans for the funding and development of regional infrastructure, and the administration (including collection, holding and management) of the Special Infrastructure Contributions (SIC) to pay for regional infrastructure. These SICs were introduced for use in special growth areas, which includes the North West Growth Centre. The SICs were reviewed in Oct 2007, where it was stated that they are now to recover 75% of State infrastructure costs (including roads, rail, schools, hospitals and emergency services facilities) that is attributable to new development, not that driven by population growth. Contributions were also reduced by 30 to 40 per cent, with an expansion in infrastructure funded by the State government, reduction in the type of projects funded directly through State and local government infrastructure levies. An Urban Improvement Fund to hold State government and developer contributions for infrastructure in new land release areas was created. It was discovered that a large amount of unused developer levies was

sitting in local government hands, which could be used to contribute towards meeting the infrastructure needs of the growth areas.

- The significant and rising costs associated with infrastructure provision will test the capacity of the Urban Improvement Fund to meet the needs of the Growth Centres. The uncertainty surrounding Metro connections and continued emphasis on planning for private vehicle use will increase pressure for more costly road infrastructure to be provided which is unlikely to be met by funding that is available, and divert funding away from public transport initiatives.

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

- Plans for a rail link to the North West have been around since the 1968 Sydney Region Outline Plan. In 2006, the NSW government announced a staged plan for the North West Rail Link with train services from Epping to Castle Hill to be complete by 2015 and the entire line to Rouse Hill to be complete by 2017. In March 2008, the project was converted to a Metro system that would extend to the Sydney CBD via an alternative route south of Epping. This change has been criticised, as it will mean that there will either be a lack of train services to accommodate the number of people that may interchange at Epping or else commuters will have to interchange at Wynyard Station, which is already congested, to access north shore services. As noted, this is contrary to years of planning and the policies contained in the Metropolitan Strategy and the Metropolitan Rail Expansion Program.
- From a funding viewpoint, the North West Metro project was omitted from the list of transport priority projects that the NSW government sent to Infrastructure Australia for Commonwealth funding. When the project was announced in March 2008, it was stated that the NSW government and the private sector would fund the project. The funding of the North West Metro is now rumoured to be funded wholly by private sector funding with potential for developer contributions along the route of the Metro. Reliance on market conditions, through the use of developer contributions, could have an impact on the delivery of sufficient funds for

the Metro scheme. A State mini-budget is expected in early November 2008 which should clarify the funding of the project.

- Efficiency of existing and proposed road transport connections would be impacted significantly by delay or termination of the North West Metro project. The failure or further delay to deliver a rail or metro service to an area where this has been planned for many years, and against a background of strong population growth, will exacerbate any existing problems and possibly lead to greater reliance on bus and car. Planning for a scenario without a metro/rail link may not have been undertaken in sufficient detail, and will only encourage the continuation of the predict and provide cycle of planning.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Kirkland
Project Director