

**Submission
No 135**

THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR

Organisation: Mr Ray Williams MP

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The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4
Parliament House
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Submission to General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 Parliamentary Inquiry on the Integrated Transport Needs of Sydney's North West Sector

The terms of reference for the inquiry are:

That General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 inquire into and report on the integrated transport needs of Sydney's North-West Sector and, in particular:

- 1) The requirements and plans for an integrated transport system in the North-West Sector, including road, rail and bus links,
- 2) The proposed funding of an integrated transport system for the North-West Sector, including the distribution of developer and State infrastructure levies,
- 3) The plans and funding for the North-West Metro and the New South Wales Government's decision not to proceed with the North-West Rail Link, and
- 4) Any other related matters.

In my submission to the Inquiry I would like to comment on the following issues:

- 1) The provision of a heavy rail or metro rail service to Castle Hill by 2015 and Rouse Hill by 2017.

- 2) The protection of developer levies (Section 94) for future community services provision within Baulkham Hills Shire Council and Hawkesbury City Council to provide local services such as roads, footpaths and bus sheds which are important local components which contribute to the overall performance of public transport.
- 3) The proposed distribution of State infrastructure Charges (SIC) through the Growth Centres Commission to the North and South West sectors.
- 4) Integrated Bus routes from the suburbs of Rouse Hill, Kellyville and Beaumont Hills to Blacktown, Parramatta, Castle Hill and Sydney using the T-Way, to be reviewed as a matter of urgency to assess their adequacy and viability for the public.
- 5) The extension of the M7 at Dean Park to the F3
- 6) Provision of lights at Glenhaven Road and Old Northern Road, Glenhaven
- 7) Integrated ticketing system
- 8) Upgrading of, New Line Road and Old Northern Road two State controlled roads
- 9) Purchasing of buses for the Private Bus industry

1) The provision of a heavy rail or metro rail service to Castle Hill by 2015 and Rouse Hill by 2017.

The North West development area has been the fastest growing area in New South Wales over the last 12 years in terms of housing.

Unfortunately it has been the worst serviced areas in terms of adequate public transport. The continual failure of the New South Wales State Government to provide the North West with a heavy rail line has forced residents into a car dependent society with little alternative. This has forced an excessive amount of vehicles onto local and state roads, which has created traffic gridlock throughout peak am and pm times across the entire North West of Sydney.

A heavy rail line to Castle Hill and subsequently Rouse Hill from Epping is the only sustainable means of public transport provision possible to cater for the current growth and the expected continued growth across the North West of Sydney over the next twenty years.

A suitable railway line with minimal impacts to the community must be implemented immediately.

The decision to construct a 7 metre high viaduct over half a kilometre in length at the junction of Windsor Road and Old Windsor Road to cater for the North West

Rail Line to Rouse Hill is abhorrent and represents a degree of contempt for residents currently living in the Elizabeth Macarthur Estate and surrounding areas who will be severely disadvantaged by noise and the unsightly nature of this rail line proposal.

The importance of an immediate commencement of this rail line to maintain a quality of life and a suitable means of public transport in this area cannot be overstated.

- 2) The protection of developer levies (Section 94) for future community services provision within Baulkham Hills Shire Council and Hawkesbury City Council to provide local services such as roads, footpaths and Bus sheds which are important local components which contribute to the overall performance of public transport.**

The recent legislation forced through New South Wales State Parliament at 2am in the morning removed Section 94 developer contributions from the control of local Councils.

This vital community funding is essential for providing local roads, footpaths, bus shelters etc, which all add to the viability of public transport across the North West and newly created suburbs.

Section 94 developer contribution funding should be immediately returned to local councils to ensure these services are not jeopardised in the future which will further exacerbate the problems currently encountered.

- 3) The proposed distribution of State infrastructure Charges (SIC) through the Growth Centres Commission to the North and South West sectors.**

The State Infrastructure Charges (SIC), which is an additional charge to developers across the new North and South West areas, has crippled development.

These charges were originally proposed to be collected by the New South Wales State Government to build large-scale infrastructure in these new release areas of the North and South West developments.

There was no firm commitment to ensure these charges were to provide funding for large infrastructure (rail lines) in any particular area, meaning funds raised in the North West areas could be spent in the South West areas and vice versa.

These charges should be abolished immediately to restore housing growth and the expected loss of up to a billion dollars a year in stamp duty. Stamp duty proceeds from the sale of homes in each particular area should be directed to

large scale infrastructure in the North and South West areas such as heavy rail lines.

The imposition of an additional charge to be imposed on developers is a double dip by the State Government and impacts on the viability of future housing.

4) Integrated Bus routes from the suburbs of Rouse Hill, Kellyville and Beaumont Hills to Blacktown, Parramatta, Castle Hill and Sydney using the T-Way, to be reviewed as a matter of urgency to assess their adequacy and viability for the public.

The implementation of the Rapid Bus Transitways from Rouse Hill to Parramatta/Blacktown and the City has been welcomed, however the failure to provide attractive services where local residents can access buses close to their homes and travel in an acceptable timeframe to their destination point is disappointing.

The length of time required to complete a journey from Rouse Hill to the parking station on Samantha Riley Drive is currently 30 minutes by bus and yet the distance is less than three kilometres in total. When compared to the Dural to City service which takes just under 50 minutes in total, it is little wonder that the Dural to City service is one of the most utilised bus services in the North West of Sydney at present.

The length of time between destination points has discouraged residents from utilising these bus services and encouraged them to drive their vehicles from home (even though the bus is driving past their front door) to access the same service just three kilometres away.

The current feeder routes from collector streets should be revised.

Smaller collector areas should be encouraged with frequencies of two to three an hour from a particular area during peak am and pm periods.

An example of poor planning in terms of current collector or feeder routes currently exists in Milford Drive, Rouse Hill where there is an oversupply of buses with very little to no patronage utilising these services.

On the contrary, services originally to Adelphi Street, Rouse Hill and Wellgate Avenue, Kellyville which were well utilised were cancelled, forcing passengers to walk up to a kilometre to catch the nearest bus at Aberdour Road, Rouse Hill or Withers Road respectively. This problem is common in several other areas across the North West of Sydney and requires community consultation and strategic adjustments of current routes.

Current electronic fare records combined with driver feedback can be used to assess areas where immediate adjustments are necessary.

Routes should be planned to provide service to existing needs of the community, not a one size fits all approach which we currently have, where money is wasted on under-utilised services while other areas only a short distance away have demand by passengers outstripping the supply of bus services such as those travelling on the M2.

Prior to 2002 all collector streets within Rouse Hill were serviced by a dedicated public transport provider, as per the New South Wales Government's Service Guidelines. Busways operated two routes in the area, the 741 services between Riverstone and Blacktown railway stations which travelled through Adelphi Street and Milford Drive, and the 746 services Box Hill to Rouse Hill, which travelled along Withers Road and Adelphi Street.

Westbus had four routes in the area. The 608 Windsor to Castle Hill and the 618 Rouse Hill to Castle Hill, both routes travelled along Adelphi Street, Withers Road, Bentley Avenue and Wellgate Avenue. The 601 Rouse Hill to Parramatta and 615 Rouse Hill to the City, both routes travelled along Adelphi Street.

In 2006 in preparation of the completion of the North-West T-way, the following changes were made to the routes within Rouse Hill:

- Removal of Routes 601, 615 and 618.
- Removal of Adelphi Street from Route 608 Windsor to Castle Hill
- New route 664 between Rouse Hill and Parramatta.
- New route 617 peak hour weekday service between Rouse Hill and the City.
- Route 610 was extended from the City to Castle Hill to Rouse Hill.
- Route 741 Blacktown to Riverstone via Rouse Hill was to continue through Milford Drive and Mile End Road.

These changes removed four services from Adelphi Street, leaving the only Busways 746 between Riverstone and Box Hill Service (nothing to Parramatta or the city), providing only 10 buses per weekday for this area.

The three replacement services were re-routed through Mile End Road and Milford Drive, increasing the bus routes servicing this street and increasing the buses travelling along these residential streets from 45 to **145 per day**, in an area that provides almost no patronage for any of these services currently operating and only serves as a turn around point for buses.

March 2008 saw the completion of the new Rouse Hill Town Centre and Interchange. The North West T-Way was also extended to include the Rouse Hill Town Centre interchange. In addition, the T-Way bus network was set up to provide direct services from Rouse Hill Town Centre to an extensive number of metropolitan wide and local destinations such as Blacktown (which is vastly over-serviced and under-utilised), Parramatta and the City.

In May 2008, in conjunction with the Ministry of Transport a review was undertaken to Region 4 bus network services, with proposals given for the new bus network.

Following the Region 4 bus network review, after repeated requests by the community, there were no changes to the routes 610, 610X, 617X, 746 and T75. With the Parramatta T66 services replacing the T64 in the Rouse Hill area, and route 608 to no longer operate between Rouse Hill and Castle Hill, removing the only bus route currently servicing Bentley Avenue and Wellgate Avenue in Kellyville. These changes effectively remove all bus services from collector streets within the Rouse Hill area with the exception of Mile End Road, Aberdour Road and Milford Drive.

The failure of these bus routes to effectively service the areas of Rouse Hill previously serviced such as Adelphi Street and Wellgate Drive has forced previous patronage to now drive their cars to Samantha Riley Drive parking station where they can park and ride and travel to Parramatta in only 30 minutes on the T-Way compared to the long drawn out trip through areas of Rouse Hill with little patronage and a trip that takes up to one hour. Little to no thought has gone into these routes or subsequent proposed routes.

The changes have meant residents are using their vehicles more than ever because the feeder trips are either too long, or are not accessing areas that require public transport such as Adelphi Street or Wellgate Avenue and several other areas.

This theme is repeated across the areas of Beaumont Hills, Kellyville, Kellyville Ridge and Bella Vista where services are repetitive and produce excessive lengths of travelling time between destination points.

The services to individual areas should be reduced to no more than three per hour but split up to cover the areas quicker, thereby minimising total travelling times between destination points such as Rouse Hill to Parramatta (40 minutes) a reduction of 15 minutes per trip, or Beaumont Hills to Parramatta (35 minutes).

Community consultation is immediately required to ensure an adequate bus service is provided to Rouse Hill, Kellyville and Beaumont Hills residents to cater to residents needs, not the one size fits all approach that currently exists.

5) The extension of the M7 at Dean Park to the F3

There is no doubting the success of the M7 between Liverpool and Baulkham Hills, which has almost completed the orbital of Sydney's metropolitan area. The final missing link is the vital extension between Dean Park and the F3. The completion of this road would remove massive amounts of traffic currently utilising the F3 from Berowra, through Hornsby, the Pacific Hwy and Pennant Hills Rd. This traffic, much of which is heavy vehicles currently travelling to distribution areas of Silverwater, Blacktown, Wetherill Park and Liverpool would benefit from an extension of this road.

The benefits to road freight and subsequent safety aspects is obvious however this road would also link two of Sydney's best known tourist attractions, the Hawkesbury River and the Central Coast with a travelling time of as little as 30 minutes.

Commuters travelling to work to large employment areas such as Norwest Business Park, Blacktown and the Parramatta CBD would also minimise travelling times and negate the need to travel through heavily populated areas of Pennant Hills and Hornsby.

6) Provision of lights at Glenhaven Road and Old Northern Road, Glenhaven

The intersection of Glenhaven Road and Old Northern Road is the only major intersection in the North West of Sydney that does not have any traffic treatment such as a roundabout or traffic signals. Glenhaven Road is a public transport corridor for Glenhaven and the new suburbs of Rouse Hill and Kellyville.

Old Northern Road is a State controlled road and therefore this intersection should be immediately upgraded with an suitable set of traffic lights to enable local residents and the available buses routes greater access, and reduced time in queues at this intersection in peak am and pm times, which would enable more people to leave their cars at home and catch a bus.

7) Integrated ticketing system

The failure of the New South Wales State Government to implement an integrated ticketing system for Sydney commuters discourages commuters and wastes time and money for passengers, drivers and station workers.

A simple ticketing system of minimal sections with provision for pensioners, students and general public can be found in most countries of the world.

In 1997 Glenorie Bus Company introduced a Faresaver card for the residents of the Hills. Almost 3500 cards were in operation at that time, offering discount fares of up to 15% on each trip. The system operated successfully until the company was purchased and the system discontinued by its new operators.

If a private company can provide a simple ticketing system, which was effective, cost efficient and so easy to use that even children who were not eligible for free bus passes used it extensively, it says little of a New South Wales Government who to date has wasted over 100 million dollars on the failed T-Card system with nothing to show for it.

8) Upgrading of New Line Road and Old Northern Road two State controlled roads

New Line Road and Old Northern Road are State owned roads and encompass the rural area of South Dural. This area which is in close proximity to the M2 and major transport routes has been overlooked by the Department of Planning for redevelopment. Currently there is a proliferation of Senior Living apartments being constructed near this area, which adds to the daily gridlock of traffic.

These two state controlled roads should immediately be upgraded to four lanes to cater for existing vehicles in the area.

9) Purchasing of buses for the Private Bus industry

The NSW Government now provides total funding for the purchasing of all new buses for private companies.

Over the past three years hundreds of Scania chassis buses have been implemented into private bus companies which are proving inferior to older Volvo or Mercedes Benz chassis buses in terms of reliability, fuel consumption and emissions control.

Given the tax payers of New South Wales now fund the purchase of these vehicles, an appropriate, accountable and rigorous tender procedure should be implemented that can be publicly scrutinised to ensure the New South Wales tax payers are receiving the best possible return for their investment.



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