

Submission  
No 39

## THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR

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# Transport Needs of Sydney's Northwest Sector

This is a personal submission based on my experience as a public transport user and a resident of Kellyville Ridge.

I would like to make the following points:

1. Residents of Northwest Sydney are currently disadvantaged relative to residents of eastern suburbs in the following ways:
  - a) **We do not have access to combined tickets that fairly price the cost of a journey.** In particular we do not have access to combined multi-modal tickets such as the travel pass.

For example, a person living in Manly and working at Cronulla would be able to buy a Purple TravelPass for \$57 for a week. This person would be entitled to take a Manly Ferry and then a 38km train trip to and from work and then, on other occasions, to use all Sydney Buses, all Sydney Ferries and all train services within the Sydney area for that week.

In comparison, a resident of my area, working in Strathfield would be required to repeatedly pay cash to purchase 10 bus tickets (\$46.00 per week) and a weekly rail ticket between Parramatta and Strathfield (\$28).

Not only has the North West resident paid \$17 more per week to travel less distance, they have also lost the flexibility to travel anywhere other than their commuting route.

- b) **Distance based fares are unfair.** Cityrail sets its fares based on distance travelled which reflects on the system design rather than the utility to the traveller. The passenger should not be held responsible for a train route that takes a big loop to the south. Residents of the Northwest particularly suffer from these long train routes and it is most pronounced when combined with the need to take buses to get to the transport hubs.
    - c) **We are served by an inferior bus system.** The Northwest comes under private bus contracts with the State Government, particularly Busways and Hillsbus. Commuters now pay the same price as residents served by Sydney Buses however:
      - i. These private bus companies do not follow the same standards of driver conduct as Sydney Buses. For example, local buses frequently have the driver's choice of radio blasting through the buses---these frequently impact comfort (too loud), are uncomfortable (the drives taste in music) or offensive (the drivers choice of talk radio).
      - ii. These private buses have no cashless options such as TravelTens. This slows entry substantially as passengers and drivers argue over fares and struggle to make just the right amount of change.
      - iii. These private buses frequently have no discounted options such as TravelTens. Hence residents of the NW pay more to go the same number of sections.
      - iv. These private buses do not update citywide timetable databases such as 131500. For

example, 131500 did not know about the Blacktown to Parklea T-Way until more than 6 months after the T-way section was opened.

- v. These private buses often follow unreasonably long routes. For example the city to Kellyville Ridge service can take over an hour more than the direct BulletBus route. See below.

2. Bus services as structured, do not make up for a lack of trains in the area, but they could.

The North West Sydney area is lucky to have the new T-Way, however the way that it is implemented means that it is no where near as good as a train system. For example:

- a) T-Way buses are slow:
  - i. There are many stops
  - ii. They wait at lights on side streets, whereas traffic on the nearby main road move straight through. This is due to the failure to implement a light priority system
  - iii. The buses have very conservative timetables which mean that you have to wait a long time for a bus---the buses don't want to be ahead of their timetable.
  - iv. The speeds on the T-Way are lower than the nearby main road.
- b) There are many different types of T-Way buses going to different ultimate destinations, meaning a long interval between the correct T-Way bus.
- c) The T-Way bus timetables mostly do not align with the trains. The timetables appear to be pessimistic about the timeliness of the buses and trains so there is usually a long waiting time at an interchange.

These issues could all be rectified by redesign of the system or alignment with the original plans for the system, to speed up buses and make them more train-like. See recommendations below.

The Northwest has many buses that follow long and unnecessarily complex routes to try to get as close as possible to everyone. This is not how a train system is designed and so there should be some component of the bus system that follows the same philosophy. For example the BulletBus is a privately operated service ([www.bulletbus.com.au](http://www.bulletbus.com.au)) which offers direct point to point express travel into the city. This appeals to many people who do not want to waste the extra hour each way to get into the city. These people are either happy to drive to the pick-up-drop off point or to walk the extra distance. This is a system that could be rolled out across the outer-city, and as the BulletBus has shown, can be profitable, popular and efficient without government subsidy—although with government promotion this could become more efficient and successful.

3. Cycle and walkway planning for accessing public transport is poor.

Cycling is an effective way to access public transport. It allows people to access stations that are further away from their homes and it lowers carbon emissions and promotes health. In the Northwest efficient and pleasant cycle routes connecting residential areas to stations do not exist, or a poorly designed or slowly implemented, and cycling amenities are limited.

For example, the Kellyville Ridge area is 6km from the Quakers Hill Station. This will take

less than 30 m to cycle or just under an hour to walk. Nevertheless, there is not yet a clear cycleway that connects them, and it was only recently that a bridge suitable for cycling was put in to allow relatively safe back-route cycle access. That is, provision of non-automotive access routes was *the last thing* that the local land developer Landcom put in. In the case of the link between Seconds Pond Creek development, the walking/cycling bridge to Quakers Hill was complete but fenced off for more than 2 months.

Cycleways that are provided in the area often follow inefficient paths that require many road crossings. Also they are not put in for the benefit of commuters, rather people cycling for pure enjoyment.

Cycle parking areas at stations need to be expanded and improved.

**My recommendations:**

1. *Give all residents of Sydney access to TravelPass, TravelTen and other flexible tickets regardless of who their state contracted bus service provider is.*
2. *Require all private bus companies to exceed the standards set by Sydney buses, in particular to follow all rules of driver behaviour that Sydney buses have.*
3. *If distance based rail fares are used, they should be based on an "as the crow flies" distance between origin and destination rather than a rail distance between stations. (Even better, all bus+trains or other inter-modal fares should be based on straight-line distance, suitably modified to accommodate the possibility of stopping the journey part way through at a more distant point.)*
4. *Improve the performance of the T-way by speeding up buses through*
  - a) *Quickly implementing priority and pre-emptive lights*
  - b) *Bus scheduling based on interval between buses rather than fixed timetables More end-to-end services rather than T-way+Suburban Loop services.*
  - c) *Increasing speed limits*
  - d) *Implementing cashless ticketing to speed boardings*
  - e) *Less pessimistic delays between arrival of trains at hubs and connecting bus services. (If fixed timetables are retained).*
5. *Encouraging or implementing fast point-to-point Express bus services like the BulletBus where passengers are expected to walk/cycle/drive a reasonable distance to the start/end points.*
6. *Improve planning for cycling as part of an inter-modal commute (e.g., cycle+train). This would involve putting cycle/walking paths in that connect to train stations, particularly early on in new developments, and installing cycle-parking areas at stations.*