

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

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**Date received:** 17/10/2008

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News and Views of the residents of West Pennant Hills Valley.  
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The Hon. Jenny Gardiner MLC  
The Legislative Council's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4  
NSW Parliament

16<sup>th</sup> October 2008

This submission responds to a request from the GPSC4 for submissions relating to the integrated transport needs of Sydney's North West Sector.

The West Pennant Hills Valley Progress Association (WPHVPA) represents the views of the residents of the West Pennant Hills Valley, which is bounded by Castle Hill Road, Pennant Hills Road, the M2 and Bidjigal Reserve in the Shire of Baulkham Hills. The WPHV has a population of over 10,000 residents.

Transport and traffic issues which have an impact on the West Pennant Hills Valley have both their source and solution outside this area. Our response details the history, the current situation and the hope for the future.

The WPHVPA has made representations to Baulkham Hills Shire Council, the NSW State Government, Hillsbus, Transurban, and tldc, and has been engaged in community consultation in relation to the North West metro link.

Carol Flanagan, President and Margaret Whalen, Traffic Representative, of the WPHVPA, would be delighted to participate in the public hearings proposed for early November 2008.

Should you need clarification on any point, please contact Margaret Whalen, Traffic Representative for the WPHVPA, on 02 9871 4231 or [margaretwhalen@hotmail.com](mailto:margaretwhalen@hotmail.com).

Margaret Whalen  
Traffic Representative, WPHVPA

# WEST PENNANT HILLS VALLEY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION TO GPSC4 OCTOBER 2008

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It is recognised and acknowledged that the way forward is to invest in transport infrastructure. Not just "infrastructure", but ecological sustainable infrastructure. Within the Sydney Basin, air quality, noise impacts and other environmental issues dictate that public transport needs to be an integral part of any and all urban expansion. Affordable efficient public transport attracts commuters, reduces car dependence, and provides social equity and economic advantage.

In 1995, the NRMA was lamenting the fact that the provision of transport services in western Sydney had failed to keep pace with population growth, population change, employment opportunities and urban activities. Little has changed.

The WPHVPA believes the way forward is to address the following major issues

- 1. Build a heavy rail link between Rouse Hill and Epping**
- 2. Build a heavy rail link between Epping and Parramatta**
- 3. Build the Sydney Orbital - F3 link between Deans Park and Kariong**
- 4. Improve the bus network and bus services**

Baulkham Hills Shire Council (BHSC) has been advocating for improved public transport infrastructure over the past 20 years. The WPHVPA is cognizant of this lobbying and applauds their efforts. The WPHVPA believes that the north west sector has been seriously disadvantaged by the lack of public transport infrastructure and seeks to have this redressed through the GPSC4.

## **Rail:**

1. North West Rail Link
2. Epping to Parramatta Rail Link
3. The Carlingford Line
4. Commuter Parking

### **North West Rail Link:**

The North West Rail Link (NWRL) continues to be eagerly awaited by the communities which it will serve. The State government abrogated its responsibilities by not having this rail link built prior to the development of the North West Sector.

The demand is there, the cost of petrol is rising and changes in attitudes regarding car use reflect a captive market. The question has always been **when** will it happen rather than should it happen.

Rouse Hill Town Centre, Castle Hill Town Centre and Norwest Business Park were to be linked by the NWRL. These centres provide business and employment opportunities, entertainment and social choices, shopping facilities and are important nuclei within the community. The NWRL would have provided a public transport spine to those residents who are now dependant on their cars to access these facilities.

The management and union problems within State Rail and RailCorp are not sufficient reasons to justify a change from the long planned North West Rail Link to a Metro system because they do not address the following issues:

- The distance involved, from Rouse Hill to the CBD, is too great for the vast majority of people to be standing as will happen with a metro system, given the design of the carriage
- The cost of the new metro rolling stock required for the projected 7-10 min headways will be significant, and may equal the cost of heavy rail carriages which would also be interchangeable within the whole rail system
- There are currently no plans to have Epping as a major modal interchange hub, which would be absolutely essential with a metro link. Given the physical limitations of Epping, the (projected) volume of commuters using the metro, the challenge would be to provide a user friendly interchange.
- The initial plans were for a rail link from Rouse Hill to Epping, to complement the Epping to Chatswood line, facilitating easier travel to Macquarie, Chatswood, North Sydney and the CBD. The conversion to a metro system between Rouse Hill and Epping then required a metro link from Epping to the CBD at more than double the original cost
- Those using the metro and not traveling to the CBD would be forced to change at Epping to another mode of transport, most likely a crowded bus or train. Given that only a limited number of people would actually be able to walk to the metro, all others would require 3 modes of transport, with an associated increase in travel time and cost.
- The rail link from Rouse Hill to Epping was aimed to facilitate uncomplicated access to the technology arc across the suburbs of Macquarie, Chatswood, St Leonards and North Sydney to the CBD. Converting to a metro system will not accomplish that.



- While the actual construction costs per kilometer are less for a metro system, that alone should not be the criterion according to which a significant and considerable piece of infrastructure is chosen.

### **Epping to Parramatta Rail Link:**

This link was abandoned due to cost blow outs on the Epping to Chatswood line. That costs could be underestimated, miscalculated, and mismanaged to this degree is of great concern, not only because of the amount of money involved but because of the ramifications .....  
**NO** Epping to Parramatta link.

The lack of a connection between Epping and Parramatta has now compromised the service on both the Northern Line and the Epping Chatswood line. Due to capacity constraints and clearway initiatives at Hornsby, there is insufficient rolling stock available to provide an appropriate service to these 2 lines. The rail link from Parramatta was to bring passengers **AND** carriages through to Epping and onto Chatswood.

This link was to facilitate regional commuter travel, and, as such, was to be an integral part of the development plan for medium to high density housing in the surrounding suburbs. The apartment developments currently around Carlingford Station were undertaken in anticipation of Carlingford Station being part of an interlinked system

### **The Carlingford Line:**

Carlingford Station is at the end of a single track branch line. All commuters need to change at Clyde. Access to the station from within the West Pennant Hills Valley, requires 2 buses, and available time of at least 40 min. It is not an attractive option, and the station is mostly used by those who can walk or drive there.

Carlingford Station was to be part of the Epping - Parramatta link, with all the advantages that that would bring.

Baulkham Hills Shire Council is proposing to have the Carlingford precinct redeveloped as a medium to high rise residential area. The cancellation of the Epping – Parramatta link means those residents will now be seriously disadvantaged from a public transport perspective. Without an efficient rail link, is such higher density development a viable option?

### **Commuter Parking:**

Planning for the Franklin Road Station, NWRL, needs to address some significant issues relating to safe access for buses, cars, cyclists and pedestrians, and the ramifications of continually stopping traffic on Castle Hill Road. Coordination with Hillsbus is critical to provide a local and extended feeder service for the station, thereby reducing the impact of overflow commuter parking on the neighbouring streets and reducing the traffic congestion associated with rail stations.

### **It is crucial that;**

- 1. A heavy rail link be built in the designated corridor between Rouse Hill and Epping,**
- 2. A heavy rail link be built in the designated corridor between Epping and Parramatta.**

Both these projects need to have funds committed so their construction can be commenced in the immediate future.

## **Bus Services:**

### **The “M2” Bus Service:**

After the M2 was completed, a bus service was provided from Castle Hill to the CBD along the M2. Over the years this has grown so that the routes begin at more outlying suburbs, go to an increased number of destinations, and provide a basic weekend and evening timetable.

**The greatest challenge for the bus company has been to provide enough buses to service the demand, especially during the morning peak. Since the inception of the service, the number of buses has been inadequate to meet the demand.**

**Residents want more buses, improved routes and more direct access to destinations.**

**We need;**

#### **1. CBD:**

- Services through the West Pennant Hills Valley (and other suburbs) later into the evening.
- Services through the West Pennant Hills Valley on weekends

#### **2. Macquarie Business Park, Macquarie University, and Macquarie Shopping Centre:**

- A well lit bus stop closer to Macquarie University
- Services later into the evening
- Evening services through the West Pennant Hills Valley and onto Castle Hill

#### **3. North Sydney, which incorporates stops at Lane Cove and St Leonards**

- A direct route to North Sydney from Castle Hill via the West Pennant Hills Valley
- Services later into the evening

Whilst not within the north west sector, the following improvements would make bus travel more time efficient and thus more appealing to its intended patrons.

#### **Travel to the CBD/North Sydney via Lane Cove could be improved by:**

- A dedicated bus lane the WHOLE length of the M2
- A dedicated busway at the M2 off ramp and the Delhi Rd intersection.
- A dedicated busway along Delhi Road and onto Epping Road.
- Bus bays for all bus stops for State Transit buses along Epping Road – currently M2 buses get caught behind buses stopping where there is no bus bay, slowing their traveling time.

#### **Travel from the CBD could be improved by:**

- Dedicated bus access and preferential treatment at traffic lights leaving the CBD, especially around the Queen Victoria Building
- A dedicated bus lane from the CBD along the Gore Hill Freeway – M2 to Epping Tunnel
- A dedicated bus access lane ( no traffic allowed to stand in this zone) from the bus lane on Epping Road through the Delhi Road intersection and onto the M2 onramp

It is acknowledged that these potential changes will slow traffic within the CBD, along Epping Road and the M2. However, the prime objective is to move the buses in an effective and timely manner, making them more attractive as an alternative to the car.

**Macquarie:**

“Macquarie” incorporates a university campus, theological school, major shopping and entertainment centre and business park, with an extended care facility close by.

The direct bus links should service university classes, business working hours or an evening of entertainment.

**Beecroft Station:**

This is the nearest station to residents of the West Pennant Hills Valley, and utilised by many more. Buses servicing this station stop around 9pm during the week, around 7pm on weekends.

**Parramatta:**

Many government offices are located in Parramatta. There is also a large shopping and entertainment complex at Westfield, plus shops, restaurants, parks in close proximity with The Riverside Theatre beside the Parramatta River

Access is via several buses over an extended period of time, whether you travel via Pennant Hills Road or Castle Hill.

A circular route linking the suburbs would address the current anomalies.

**Castle Hill:**

The lack of a bus transit lane between Castle Hill and Parramatta, and Castle Hill and Blacktown, increases the difficulties of movement between the centres, and reduces the appeal of public transport as a means of travel.

**An integrated ticketing system would benefit all.**



## **ROADS:**

The objective of a road system is to move traffic. Whilst this smacks of the obvious, what is not obvious is the rationale behind many of the proposed road construction projects.

### **Linking the Sydney Orbital to the F3:**

**Be aggressively proactive, build the link from the M7 at Deans Park to the F3 at Kariong. Now.**

By 2021, or sooner if the projections have underestimated demand, Sydney will need either another route north with a second crossing of the Hawkesbury River or widening of the F3 to 4 lanes in each direction.

Given that scenario, why even consider a tunnel “under” Pennant Hills Road to link the M2 with the F3. It should not be built

The M7 – M2, Pennant Hills Road and the F3 form part of the National Highway Link. The M2 traverses the greater Sydney region just north of its current demographic centre. The needs of suburbia are intermixed with road freight traffic. During the morning peak, delays for east/north bound traffic along the M2 extend from Lane Cove all the way to Windsor Road on a regular basis.

The volume of B – Doubles and other commercial vehicles has significantly increased since the opening of the M7 and the development of the \$600 million Western Sydney Employment Hub at the Lighorse Interchange (M4 and M7). The freight traffic generated by this development then travels into and through suburbia. B-triples are anticipated within the next 10 years

Scenarios that projected flow southbound from the “tunnel” were predicated on the widening of Pennant Hills Road between the M2 and James Ruse Drive. This concept was then rejected. However, there is no evidence that the scenarios were recalculated. There is a very real chance that the “tunnel”, and/or the surrounding streets will be gridlocked during the morning peak. It should not be built

### **Building the M7 – F3 link between Deans Park and Kariong will:**

- **Provide an alternative route north from Sydney**
- **Build a road link that will be required in the near future**
- **Responsibly use limited financial resources**
- **Facilitate the efficient movement of freight, with the associated cost savings**
- **Keep road freight out of suburban traffic**
- **Allow a rail link in the transport corridor**

From a strategic point of view, to have only one route north out of the Sydney Basin (ie the F3) could be considered imprudent. To choose the “tunnel” route based only on it being the cheapest option is an ill-considered use of public monies.

### **The M2:**

The M2 motorway is 4 - 5 lane toll road feeding cars to and from the eastern parts of Sydney. There is a bus only lane for a short portion between Old Windsor Road and Epping Tunnel. The delays experienced by the commuter buses could be addressed by having:

- A bus only lane the whole length of the M2 eastbound
- A bus only lane along the Gore Hill Freeway to the Epping Tunnel westbound

A major function of the M2 Tollway is to remove through traffic from the surrounding suburban streets. This would be better facilitated had the west facing ramps at Windsor Road been



built. The decision not to build the west facing ramps does not reflect well on the decision makers of the time. It is disappointing that the M7 was allowed to be integrated into the M2/Sydney Orbital without this vital access point.

Of concern is the fact that Transurban has recently advised that it wishes to undertake a proposed upgrade of the M2, which will include widening from 2 to 3 lanes eastbound between Windsor Road and Pennant Hills Road, as well as a number of other works. Extensive noise problems are already caused by the existing road, and adjoining residents are experiencing excessive and unacceptable noise levels. Numerous representations to Transurban and the RTA have not resulted in any improvements. Accordingly, any proposed road widening will be vigorously opposed by local residents until there are guarantees that the existing and future noise problems can, and will be resolved to the satisfaction of the affected residents.

It should be stressed that the alternative link between Deans Park/M7 and Kariong/F3 mentioned above, would provide a more direct and efficient route for commercial vehicles, thus greatly reducing the volume of these vehicles on the M2 and the associated noise impacts.

Not only for adverse noise impacts, but also for safety reasons, B-Doubles, B-Triples and other interstate transport vehicles with freight and goods should not be required to mingle and share the M2 with local Sydney traffic. Building a tunnel, with all its associated problems, under Pennant Hills Road, will not improve this local situation, nor will it address the considerable limitations of the F3 north of Wahroonga.

With the growing population in the north-western regions of Sydney, there will always be demand for the M2 Tollway. As travel patterns change and commuters use public transport (NWRL and M2 buses), commercial vehicles elect to use an outer ring road to bypass Sydney completely, (M7 to F3), this will leave/create "space" on the M2 which can be taken up by drivers leaving the suburban rat runs and achieving what the road was supposed to do, remove traffic from local roads and provide a user friendly road between east and west.

#### **Showground Road:**

Showground Road is currently a 2 lanes and is the major road link to Castle Towers Shopping Centre, Castle Hill Library, BHSC Council Chambers, BHSC Showground, Castle Hill RSL, and local schools. It also provides access across Windsor Road to the Norwest Business Park and the further reaches of the North West Sector.

The RTA has failed BHSC and the residents who need to access these centres by not upgrading the road to 4 lanes in a timely manner. The upgrade would also facilitate the inclusion of the Blacktown Castle Hill bus T-way.

#### **Discriminatory Tolls:**

The M7, M2, Lane Cove Tunnel and the Harbour Bridge or Tunnel are tolled.  
The M7, M2 and Lane Cove Tunnel are tolled both ways.  
The M4 and M5 are tolled

However, residents who live in the western and south western areas linked by the M4 and the M5 receive a "cash back" on their tolls. The residents of western and south western regions can also choose to travel by rail or bus.

Residents of the north west have very limited access to rail without significant driving.  
Residents of the north west do not have enough buses to service the demand.  
Residents of the north west face serious challenges when planning interarea travel.

Residents of the North West have limited choices if they wish to abandon their cars  
Residents of the north west get no "cash back" but are charged multiple tolls when they do

use their cars.

It is estimated that its costs around \$4000.00 pa for a resident of West Pennant Hills who works in the city to use the toll system.

**Conclusion:**

**For Sydney to grow into the future, the following infrastructure is critical:**

- 1. The North West Rail Link**
- 2. The Epping to Parramatta Rail Link**
- 3. Linking the Sydney Orbital at Deans Park to the F3 at Kariong**
- 4. Improved bus network and associated bus services.**

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