

THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR

Organisation: Tourism & Transport Forum

Name: Mr Kary Petersen

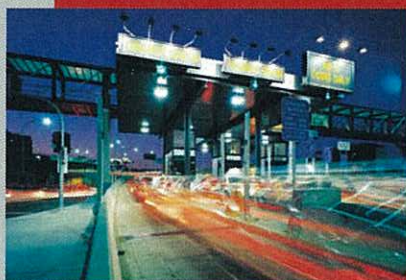
Date received: 17/10/2008

TTF is a national member-funded CEO forum, advocating the public policy interests of the 200 most prestigious corporations and institutions in the Australian transport, property, tourism & infrastructure Subregions.

Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF)

SUBMISSION TO THE NORTH WEST SYDNEY TRANSPORT INQUIRY

October 2008



Contact

Kary Petersen
Transport Manager
Tourism & Transport Forum

P | 02 9240 2000
E | kpetersen@ttf.org.au

TTF 
A U S T R A L I A
Tourism & Transport Forum

CONTENTS

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	2
INTRODUCTION TO TTF	3
SYDNEY'S NORTH WEST	4
• DEMOGRAPHY	4
• TRAVEL PATTERNS	4
• TRANSPORT OPTIONS	4
TOWARDS A NORTH WEST SYDNEY INTEGRATED TRANSPORT PLAN.....	6
• RAIL SOLUTIONS	7
• IMPROVED BUS NETWORKS.....	9
• ROAD PRIORITIES.....	11
• OTHER MEASURES.....	12
FUNDING OPTIONS	15
• INVOLVING THE PRIVATE SECTOR.....	15
• TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT	16
• INFRASTRUCTURE LEVIES	16
THE NORTH WEST RAIL LINK	18
CONCLUDING REMARKS	19

Summary of Recommendations

SHORT TERM (1 – 3 Years)

- Fast-track bus priority measures;
- More public transport vehicles;
- Investigate complete duplication of the Richmond Line
- Expand the Park and Ride program in the North West; and
- Fast-track road 'pinch point' initiatives.

MEDIUM TERM (3 – 10 Years)

- Create an integrating and coordinating authority to coordinate and market public transport across all modes
- Complete the North West Transitway from Blacktown to Castle Hill;
- Commence the F3 to Sydney Orbital link; and
- Implement integrated ticketing.

LONG TERM (10+ years)

- Build the North West Metro Line; and
- Work with local councils to improve planning outcomes at strategic sites along North West transport corridors.

FUNDING

- Examine methods of utilising private sector finance to help fund the North West transport initiatives;
- Employ Transit Oriented development strategies; and
- Consider other funding models for delivering local infrastructure.

Introduction to TTF

TTF is a national, Member-funded CEO forum, advocating the public policy interests of the 200 most prestigious corporations and institutions in the Australian transport, property, tourism & infrastructure sectors.

TTF is committed to improving the quality of passenger transport across the country. TTF's Members include public transport operators, investors, infrastructure developers, consultants and many others with an interest in improving accessibility to passenger transport in Australia. TTF is working to give people genuine transport choices that meet their needs, by encouraging the integration of land use planning, infrastructure development and community and business requirements.

Sydney's North West

• *Demography*

According to the NSW Government's Metropolitan Strategy, the North West Subregion is made up of five local government areas: Baulkham Hills, Blacktown; Blue Mountains; Hawkesbury; and Penrith. The region currently has a population of over 760,000, about 251,000 dwellings, and employs 240,000 people.¹

The North West Subregion has one of the lowest housing densities in the Sydney Region at 145 people per km² compared to the entire Sydney Region housing density of 353 people per km².²

The North West Subregion has been signalled as a key growth region for Sydney with significant land release in the coming years. Under current plans the North West Subregion will accommodate 140,000 additional dwellings and 130,000 new jobs by 2031.³ Of these, around half of the additional dwellings will be located in the surrounding suburbs of Rouse Hill, labelled the North West Growth Centre.⁴

• *Travel Patterns*

Residents in the North West make almost 2.8 million trips a year, at a rate of 3.7 trips per day per person, with 71% of these solely within the North West Subregion. Each weekday, 79% of trips are made by vehicle, 7% by public transport and 13% by walking or cycling. The North West Subregion has the lowest proportion of public transport trips of any subregion in the Sydney Metropolitan.⁵

• *Transport options*

Richmond Rail Line – Congestion on the Richmond line is growing as patronage continues to grow rapidly⁶. The line currently runs just two services an hour during peak periods and is largely constrained by a single track servicing the line from Quakers Hill to Richmond. In 2006 it serviced approximately 2,700 peak hour

¹ NSW Department of Planning, *North West Region Draft Subregional Strategy*, December 2007, pp5-6

² *ibid*, p80.

³ *ibid*, p5.

⁴ NSW Growth Centres Commission, North West Growth Centre Fact Sheet, Sighted at <http://www.gcc.nsw.gov.au/media/7860/fs-nwgc.pdf> on 3 October 2008.

⁵ NSW Department of Planning, *op cit*, p92.

⁶ CityRail, *Planned Major Clearway Routes*, sighted at http://www.cityrail.info/news/clearways_routes.jsp on 13 October 2008.

passengers.⁷ The service is hardly adequate with travel times of one hour to Parramatta and one hour and twenty minutes to the Sydney CBD from Richmond.

Western & Blue Mountains Rail Line – This line is one of the busiest on the Sydney Rail network and is increasingly hampered with problems of overcrowding and reliability. Services on this line are frequent but travel times continue to be a major impediment to attracting more commuters. Express services from Penrith to the Sydney CBD can take less than an hour, but all-station services up to an hour and 20 minutes.

North West Transitway (NW T-Way) –The North West T-Way is an important network of buses linking the major transport corridors in the North West. The first stage of the T-Way opened in March 2007 between Parramatta and Rouse Hill. The next stage between Blacktown and Parklea opened in November 2007. The second stage was originally proposed to extend to Castle Hill however this has been placed on hold. Between November 2007 and June 2008 there were 1.075 million passenger journeys on the T-Way.⁸

Bus Corridors – Of the Government's 43 strategic bus corridors nine are located in the North West Subregion, including the North West Transitway. Despite many of these currently waiting construction, they do/will provide bus priority for services linking subregional centres. More work still needs to be done though to ensure full integration with other transport modes.

Arterial Roads – Arterial roads in the region include the M7, M4, M2, Windsor road, and Blacktown road to name just a few. New upgrades and additions have seen major improvements in vehicle travel times on these roads in recent years. Nevertheless, congestion during peak periods continues and with forecast growth in population and freight movements, the construction of necessary missing links will need to be considered.

⁷ John Watkins, NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport, *News Release: New \$316 Million Richmond Line Expansion To Increase Rail Capacity*, 20 November 2006

⁸ NSW Legislative Council, General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4, *Transcript of the Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas: Transport and Illawarra*, Wednesday 15 October 2008, p14

Towards a North West Sydney Integrated Transport Plan

The urban profile of North West Sydney – low density, low levels of public transport use, and high levels of car dependency – shows a systemic failure of land-use planning strategies for this region over several decades.

In an era of rising fuel prices, concern about greenhouse gas emissions, and rising traffic congestion, it is no longer acceptable to develop communities on the urban fringe with such limited access to transport choices. Looking forward, Sydney must find more sustainable ways to grow.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to solving mobility issues. Road improvements may provide congestion relief but without concurrent public transport investment may only delay a problem, possibly making it more difficult to solve in the future. Recent upgrades to Windsor road, one of the key arterial roads in the region, have provided relief at key pinch points but congestion through the peak periods remains. Road congestion is already having a negative effect on the liveability and amenity of the region, not to mention the lasting impacts on the environment and local economy.

Based on the snapshot of the North West Growth Subregion, the heavy reliance on the car for transport is currently having, and will continue to have, a detrimental impact on mobility in the region. With just 7% of all trips on public transport, it is clearly underutilised in the area reflecting issues both with demand and the supply of adequate services. Bearing in mind the 56% increase in dwellings over the next 20 years, a new approach is needed to increase the mode share of sustainable transport alternatives.

We can not simply build our way out of congestion. Any new projects must be combined with measures to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and maximise the use of existing infrastructure.

Integrated transport planning and investment focused on shifting more trips onto public transport is essential and should form part of a greater North West Sydney

plan based around urban living - incorporating sustainable land use, transport, employment, and amenity.

- ***Rail Solutions***

The North West Metro Line

The North West Metro Link, proposed in March 2008, is part of a wider SydneyLink project which includes a number of new transport initiatives such as an M4 East Extension, the South West Rail Link, a West Metro Link and possible future Metro System to the South East. TTF supports the SydneyLink program as a step in providing the necessary transport infrastructure to ensure efficient mobility for Greater Sydney over the next 20 years and beyond.

There is little doubt that a Metro rail system is suited to Sydney's geography and demography. While some have criticised the plan, noting the low densities in outlying areas such as the North West Subregion, TTF cites Perth's New Metrorail which connects relatively low-density regions as a successful example.

The key benefit of the North West metro line for the North West Subregion is the speed and frequency of service, crucial to attracting patronage. Residents can travel to the city in just 42 minutes from Rouse Hill as opposed to the more than an hour and 30 minutes on the bus or 55 minutes from the neighbouring suburb of Schofields on the Richmond heavy rail line – noting that buses between Rouse Hill Town Centre and Schofields station are infrequent and can add an extra 30 minutes to journey times. The metro, as an independent rail operation, can also run trains every few minutes in contrast to the two services per hour on the Richmond line.

Crucial to the North West metro line will be transport mode and land use integration in and around stations. Local bus services must be transformed to move passengers to metro stations efficiently rather than maintaining services that essentially compete with the rail line. Realising the North West Metro line will not service Parramatta, bus services should utilise the North West Transitway as the key transport option for movements along the Rouse Hill to Parramatta corridor.

TTF proposes for the integration of associated initiatives to be planned from the outset to ensure that the significant investment in the Metro system brings maximum benefits to the community.

Recognising the current stress on the State's financial position, TTF submits that arguments about which metro line is needed more – the West or North West – is counter productive to the mobility needs of Greater Sydney. Both will provide crucial benefits to the Sydney transport system. TTF argues that one metro should not come at the expense of another and both should be planned concurrently.

The proposed Metro network is integral to Sydney's continued economic development, the strategic expansion of new urban centres, increased public transport patronage and increased reliability.



Duplication of the Richmond Line

With just a single rail track between Quakers Hill and Richmond, utilisation of passenger services will be largely enhanced with dual track along the entire line. As part of the Clearways program a \$316 million duplication of the section between Quakers Hill and Vineyard is expected to be complete by 2012. This is designed to cater for forecast patronage growth on the line from 2,700 peak hour passengers in 2006 to 4,500 in 2011.⁹

TTF submits this project as a key rail infrastructure priority for the region and views the complete duplication as the important next step. As with the North West Metro Line, the duplication of the Richmond line should be considered as a further opportunity for transit oriented development and investigation should commence as soon as possible.

Recommendations

- **Build the North West Metro Rail Line; and**
- **Investigate the complete duplication of the Richmond Line from Quakers Hill to Richmond.**

• ***Improved Bus Networks***

Bus networks are not only an attractive public transport mode for their flexibility and speed but also the crucial component of a long term transport network strategy. Due to the long construction timeframes for major rail projects buses provide the solution to the absence of public transport until those projects come in to operation. As a transition solution, efficient bus services will be critical for attracting commuters to public transport over the long term.

It is imperative in an integrated system that all services operate in conjunction to move passengers from A to B. There is a need to integrate any new transport infrastructure with existing transport links to ensure that stations become transport hubs, not underutilised resources. The prime means of achieving this will be through

⁹ John Watkins, op cit.

a reorganisation of the bus network, connecting surrounding suburban areas with the proposed metro and current heavy rail line and Transitway. These ‘feeder systems’ would be important in ensuring the bulk transport systems are properly patronised.

Complete the original North West Transitway

The North West Transitway, over the short to medium term, has provided a crucial service along the transport corridors between Parramatta and Rouse Hill and Blacktown and Parklea.

However, a notable exclusion from the final project was the extension of the Blacktown to Parklea section of the Transitway to Castle Hill. This is particularly important not only to ensure rapid public transport services between the North West subregional centres, but also to link with the Castle Hill to the City bus corridor, demand for which is growing rapidly.

TTF submits that a North West regional strategy must ensure rapid bus links between each subregional centre, including completion of the Castle Hill section of the North West Transitway, and investigate options to fill in other missing links in the bus network.

More Buses

As part of the NSW Government's bus procurement program 100 new buses have been allocated to Sydney's Northwest and The Hills district¹⁰ to cater for replacement of older buses and some growth over the next seven years. In recent times, public transport patronage has been on the rise, largely due to a range of factors such as traffic congestion, rising food and oil prices, the global financial crisis, and growing environmental awareness. Currently on the Castle Hill to City bus route 45,000 passengers commute on 900 buses each weekday – representing a 14% increase in passengers over the past 12 months.¹¹ It is important the number of buses is adequate to cater for the growth in public transport demand. Moreover, TTF submits that any procurement programs consider the latest technologies as a means decreasing emissions, including low-fuel emission vehicles.

¹⁰ NSW Government, *State Plan: Greater Western Sydney Regional Delivery Update 2008*, June 2008, p4.

¹¹ Linton Besser, *Hills District to get 20 new buses*, Sydney Morning Herald, 18 June 2008, sighted 8 October at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/hills-district-to-get-20-new-buses/2008/06/18/1213468480137.html>.

Fast track bus priority measures

Bus priority works are proposed underway or have been recently completed for the following bus corridors:

- Penrith—Blacktown (north via ADI site and Mt Druitt)
- Penrith—Blacktown (south)
- Blacktown—Parramatta
- Blacktown—Castle Hill (North West Transitway to Parklea)
- Castle Hill—Hornsby
- Castle Hill—City
- Parramatta—Castle Hill
- Parramatta—Rouse Hill (North West Transitway)
- Blacktown—Wetherill Park

These measures will allow faster travel times by providing dedicated bus lanes and traffic light priorities. It is essential these measures are implemented as soon as possible to ensure rapid bus services between the North West sub-regional centres. In addition it is essential for services on these corridors to be fully integrated with other transport modes and services such that timetabling enables a smooth transition for commuters.

Recommendations

- **Complete the North West Transitway from Blacktown to Castle Hill;**
- **More vehicles;**
- **Fast Track bus priority measures;**

Road Priorities

Congestion alleviation measures

The RTA is currently investigating “pinch point” initiatives along Richmond Road, Old Windsor Road and Blacktown Road as part of the \$100 million Traffic Network

Management Strategy, or “pinch point” program. This is aimed at improving traffic flows on Sydney’s major road corridors. These will provide necessary flow on benefits to bus services and provide options for further bus priority measures. It is important these initiatives occur without delay.

Sydney Orbital Integration

New road links between the North West Subregion and the F3 have been considered as part of the Justice Mahla Pearlman Review. These would complete the Sydney Orbital taking trucks and cars off arterial roads that reached capacity long ago. Options for a Western link, connecting the M7 in Sydney’s North West with Gosford, and an Eastern link, connecting the M2 with the F3 at Wahroonga are now under consideration.

TTF submits these projects as a priority for the North West Subregion and greater Sydney. The NSW Government must act on the recommendations of the Pearlman Review and allocate funds in partnership with the Federal Government to progress this vital road link. The Purple ‘Type A’ option is now firmly established as the appropriate route, and TTF encourages forward planning to begin on a Western ‘Type C’ corridor for this link.

Recommendations -

- **Fast track pinch point initiatives; and**
- **Priority should be given to the construction of the F3 - Sydney Orbital link.**

• ***Other measures***

Co-ordination Authority

The integration of modes and services requires planning and operational coordination. The Special Commission of Inquiry into Sydney Ferries recommended that an integrating body be established with real teeth so that it can determine changes across modes. The Centre for Transport Planning and Product Development within the Ministry undoubtedly performs some of these coordinating

functions, however without real authority it cannot enforce coordination of timetables and the like. The creation of another division within the Ministry specifically for coordination and integration may be hampered by the same issues, and TTF suggests the Government look to other models such as Metlink in Melbourne and TRANSLink in Brisbane to examine the best outcome for Sydney. Such a body would be best placed to undertake the necessary work to ensure planning and operation is integrated within the North West region.

Local Government consultation

Increased planning densities around the site of rail and Transitway stations, and innovative planning solutions on the sites themselves will provide significant opportunities to improve private sector investment in North West transport projects, provide lower cost housing options and create sustainable jobs close to home for residents. New transport hubs will provide an ideal opportunity to align NSW Government priorities across a range of areas to improve liveability for residents and prosperity for businesses. To this end it is essential the NSW Government work with local councils to improve planning outcomes at strategic sites along the North West transport corridors.

Expand Park and Ride program

TTF strongly supports extending the Government's existing commitments to the development of 'park and ride' car spaces at train stations and bus interchanges within the North West Subregion. Improved car parking will encourage more people to catch public transport, especially important in the outer North West where distances between public transport modes are great, and where people are reliant on their cars for mobility. Where space is restricted, multi-level car parks and the use of 'airspace' over transport corridors would allow more people to drive to their nearest station and take public transport into the city. TTF also supports the construction of private parking facilities near transport hubs, and encourages the NSW Government to make land available for commercial parking developments where possible.

Improved Ticketing Technology

The implementation of an easy-to-use public transport ticketing system will be a major step forward for Sydney's public transport operations, including the North West Subregion. A smartcard ticketing system, for example, would not only make services easier to use, it would speed up travel times and allow for an expansion of travel demand measures, such as off-peak fare discounting, by providing the mechanism for flexible differential pricing. The NSW Government should consider all available options for the new ticketing system ensuring the technology and provider achieve the best value-for-money for taxpayers, while delivering the greatest benefit to public transport customers.

Recommendations

- **That the NSW Government act to create an integrating and coordinating authority to coordinate and market public transport across all modes;**
- **That the NSW Government work with local councils to improve planning outcomes at strategic sites along North West transport corridors;**
- **Expand the Park and Ride program in the North West; and**
- **Implement integrated ticketing.**

Funding Options

• *Involving the Private sector*

Given the constraints on the NSW budget, the Government would be well-placed to look to systems of risk sharing involving the private sector for construction of major infrastructure, such as Public Private Partnerships (PPPs).

TTF notes that involving the private sector in financing rail infrastructure has traditionally been more complicated than with road funding, however there is undoubtedly scope for exploring methods of funding for the rail projects to supplement the capital works budget. This is particularly relevant for the North West Metro line.

The International Association of Public Transport (UITP) recently noted that a method to help fund Metro systems could be in

deriving optimal value from property and real-estate assets along metro lines and around metro stations... Construction of a metro system must make allowance for the project's potential beneficiaries (e.g. employers, property owners) so that the appropriate instruments are developed in order for these people to contribute to the system's funding.¹²

Indeed, in the case of Delhi's new metro system, 7% of the costs were met by raising money through property development¹³. This approach should be explored, along with other innovative funding techniques, for the North West Metro.

As the North West Metro will be independent of the existing CityRail system, there is scope for private sector operation of the service. TTF considers that the international expertise of a private sector transport operator could be harnessed by contracting the Metro operations to one such company under a franchise agreement. Another major way in which the private sector can help deliver this project is through the procurement of rolling stock. Given the success to date of Railcorp's rollingstock PPP

¹² UITP (2003) *The Metro: an opportunity for sustainable development in large cities*, Position Paper.

¹³ E. Sreedharan (2007) *Delhi Metro – The changing face of urban public transport in India*, in UITP, 'Public Transport International magazine', November/December 2007 edition.

with Reliance Rail, a PPP process should be considered to fund, deliver and maintain new train sets.

- ***Transit Oriented Development***

Transit oriented development refers to the more efficient use of land and airspace around transport corridors. It can include retail, commercial and residential development adjacent to or above major transport terminals. This style of development can underpin ‘value capture’ for transport agencies as landlords – providing an income stream to help fund transport improvements, while consolidating urban activities around transport hubs. Such strategies can provide opportunities to fast track transport projects in the North West, particularly the North West metro line.

- ***Infrastructure levies***

Section 94 charges and state infrastructure levies are designed to facilitate construction of local infrastructure. However, the Property Council of Australia found in a recent report that “*state and local government taxes, levies and charges are adversely affecting new dwelling affordability and housing construction.*”¹⁴ More alarmingly these levies have not necessarily flowed to local infrastructure projects – currently there is \$620 million in unspent Section 94 levies.¹⁵

Such a state of affairs may stall the projected new dwelling growth assigned for the North West Subregion and the important infrastructure projects these levies are designed for. This emphasises the important relationship between infrastructure financing models and subregional growth.

Infrastructure funding options should consider generational and horizontal equities and ensure levies do not negatively impact the long term growth of the subregional housing market.

¹⁴ Property Council of Australia, *Ripe for Reform: A submission to the IPART Review of the Revenue Framework for Local Government*, September 2008, p7.

¹⁵ Ibid.

To this end, the Government should consider other options for funding infrastructure, such as the Tax Increment Financing model used in the United States, as a way to ensure local infrastructure is built to accommodate this localised growth.

Recommendations

- That the NSW Government examine methods of utilising private sector finance to help fund the North West transport initiatives;
- Employ Transit Oriented development strategies; and
- Consider other funding models for delivering local infrastructure.

The North West Rail Link

Originally cited in the NSW Government's *Action for Transport* plan in November 1998, the North West Rail link project has since undergone many amendments and delays. The original proposal was for an extension of the Epping to Chatswood Rail link tunnel to the Norwest Business Park with surface rail completing the track to Rouse Hill. An eventual extension to the Richmond rail line at Vineyard was also expected at a future stage.

The line was originally due for completion in 2010 at a cost of \$350 million, however lack of funding and continued delays meant completion times and costs had blown out to 2017 at a cost of between \$4.5 and \$7.5 billion.¹⁶ As at June 2008, \$110 million had been spent on land acquisitions with a further \$132 million budgeted for the 2008-09 financial year.¹⁷

In March 2008 the NSW Government announced the project had changed to a metro style rail system. The direction of the new metro line remains relatively similar to the heavy rail proposal northwest of Epping but now runs directly to the Sydney CBD on an independent track through Sydney's lower north and inner west. The total cost of \$12 billion operates on a similar timeframe as the heavy rail line with completion by 2017.¹⁸

TTF submits that in the medium to long term plans must include a rail link to the North West Subregion. TTF has been supportive of the North West Metro project and maintains this will provide a fundamental boost to public transport access in the region. While there is scope for debate about the type of rail solution, the bottom line is that a mass-transit option is essential to cater for the projected population growth.

¹⁶ NSW Legislative Council, *op cit*, p15.

¹⁷ NSW Treasury, *2008-09 Budget Papers*, Budget Paper 4 p5-47.

¹⁸ Morris Iemma, NSW Premier, *News Release: Premier Iemma unveils Sydney's first Euro-style metro rail project*, 18 March 2008.

Concluding Remarks

TTF welcomes the opportunity to make comment on the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into the Transport needs of Sydney's North West Sector.

It is clear with the forecast growth in the region ease of mobility is going to be a key contributor to ensuring the Subregion remains vibrant, liveable and productive. Large infrastructure projects to link the region to others in greater Sydney are required. Given the time it takes to realise these projects, the Government must commence planning the integrated network of the future now.

Despite current pressures on state finances, now is the time to embrace innovative thinking to ensure critical infrastructure projects are delivered with minimal cost and risk to the taxpayer. Utilising the experience and expertise of the private sector through Public Private Partnerships and the adoption of strategies based around the development of transit corridors can provide the necessary means to see projects come to fruition.