

**Submission
No 253**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

Name: Mr Jim Donovan

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This submission relates to inquiry topic (f) the extent to which the project is meeting its original goals. One implicit original goal is to reduce traffic congestion in the area served by the project. This goal may have been expressed in terms like "enable more Sydney residents to make essential trips" but the reason the residents wouldn't make the trips without Westconnex is that the trips would have taken too long and made them stop at too many sets of traffic signals.

Large cities with traffic congestion are unlikely to clear the congestion by roadbuilding. There simply won't be enough land to build the roads that would be required. Something else should be tried.

Considerations:

1. It is possible to reduce the need for private vehicle travel. Proper urban planning tries to put destinations closer to trip origins. Building roads like Westconnex works against this by facilitating long trips.
2. Raising fuel taxes wouldn't help because different vehicles have varying fuel consumption, especially now there are many hybrid vehicles and some electric vehicles. As economists would say, fuel taxes are inefficient at controlling travel.
3. The tax should instead be on distance travelled. This is called road access pricing. It's usually aimed at peak-hour travel, being less necessary at quiet times.
4. The eastern part of Sydney is cut into districts by several watercourses - the Parramatta, Lane Cove, Georges and Cooks rivers.
5. With modern toll tags, it would be technically feasible to impose a road access charge on eastern Sydney with a limited number of toll points.
6. For example, see the attached diagram showing 23 toll points contrived so that long trips inevitably pass several of those points yet shorter trips such as those within a region don't.
7. An indicative toll for peak hour might be \$5 per vehicle. Off-peak tolls should be less. 10pm-5am might be free.
8. Another scheme would be to charge vehicles by the exact distance travelled. However, fitting all of Sydney's 3 million cars with suitable GPS metering would be quite a challenge. I have heard the figure of 2c/kilometre suggested for this sort of pricing.
9. It's important to also look at charging for parking. Shoup gives a useful target - setting the charge so that 15% of parking is available. Of course, that means varying charges for different locations and times.
10. These charges (distance and parking) could be revenue-neutral.
11. Road access pricing has been mentioned many times in Australia but politicians have never made much effort to sell the idea to the voter. Most of the mentions are in terms that road access pricing will be necessary eventually but not yet. Eliminating free parking is almost unheard-of in Australian transport discussions.
12. Here are some recent references on the subject:

<https://grattan.edu.au/how-to-fight-congestion-in-our-major-cities/>
<https://grattan.edu.au/report/stuck-in-traffic/>
<https://www.railexpress.com.au/stuck-in-traffic-we-need-a-smarter-approach-to-congestion-than-building-more-roads/>
<https://theconversation.com/road-user-charging-belongs-on-the-political-agenda-as-the-best-answer-for-congestion-management-65027>
<http://usa.streetsblog.org/2017/09/29/why-peak-period-road-pricing-is-fair/>
<https://theconversation.com/city-wide-trial-shows-how-road-use-charges-can-reduce-traffic-jams-86324>
<http://www.governing.com/topics/transportation-infrastructure/gov-toll-roads-congestion-pricing.html>
<http://kuow.org/post/what-these-seattleites-think-tolling-downtown>
<https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2018/04/londons-congestion-charge-needs-updating/557699/>
<http://kuow.org/post/take-congestion-pricing-might-blow-your-mind>
<https://medium.com/100-hours/is-congestion-pricing-fair-to-the-poor-62e281924ca3>
<https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2018/05/29/eight-reasons-why-congestion-pricing-goes-great-with-the-fast-forward-plan-to-fix-nyc-transit/>
<https://www.railexpress.com.au/ia-pushes-for-road-pricing-public-transport-franchising/>
<http://theconversation.com/our-new-pm-wants-to-bust-congestion-here-are-four-ways-he-could-do-that-102249>

City-shaping Network

2018

Provides high capacity turn-up-and-go services across Greater Sydney and between the three cities.

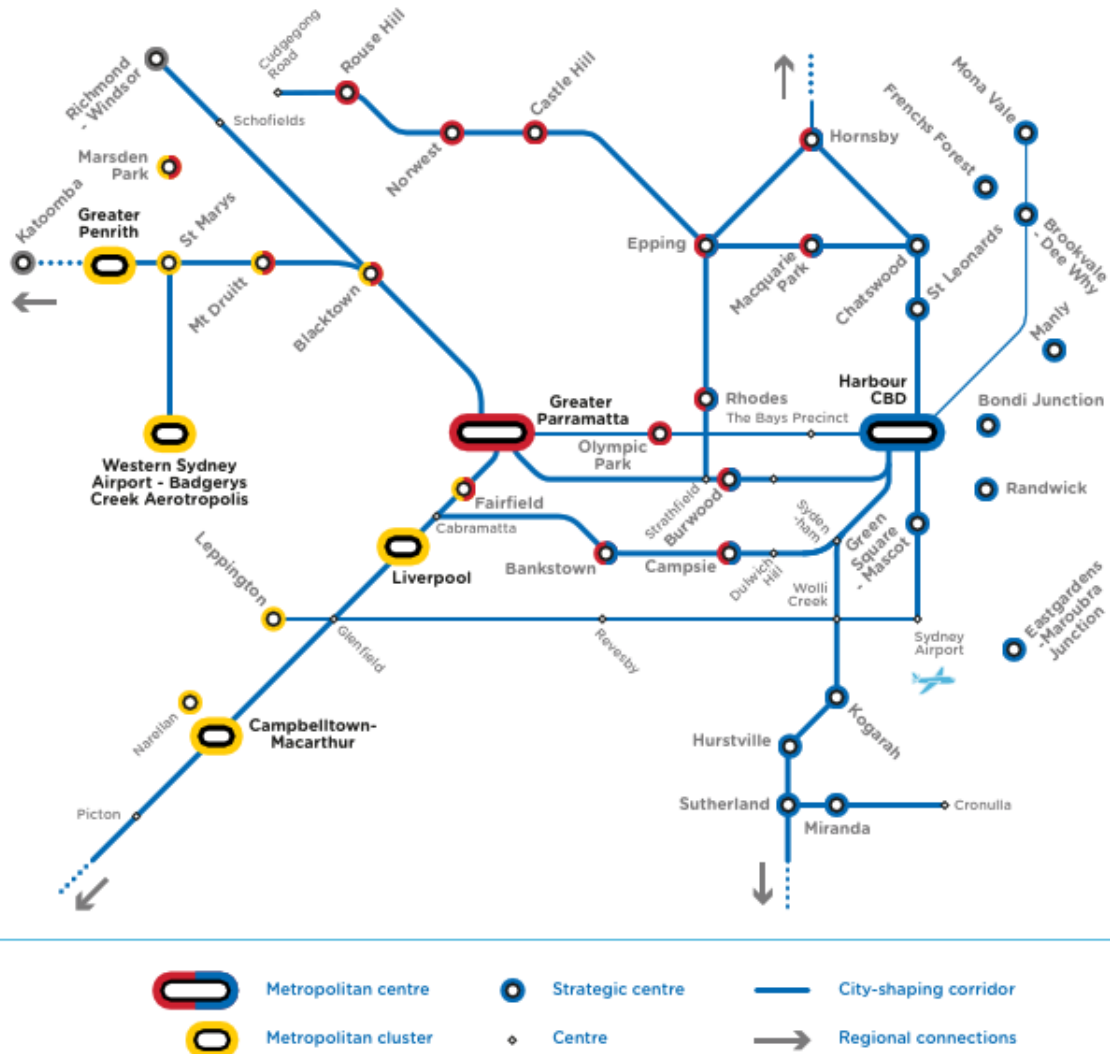


Figure 50: Greater Sydney Mass transit/train Network (committed and existing)

City-shaping Network



2056

Provides high capacity turn-up-and-go services across Greater Sydney and between the three cities.

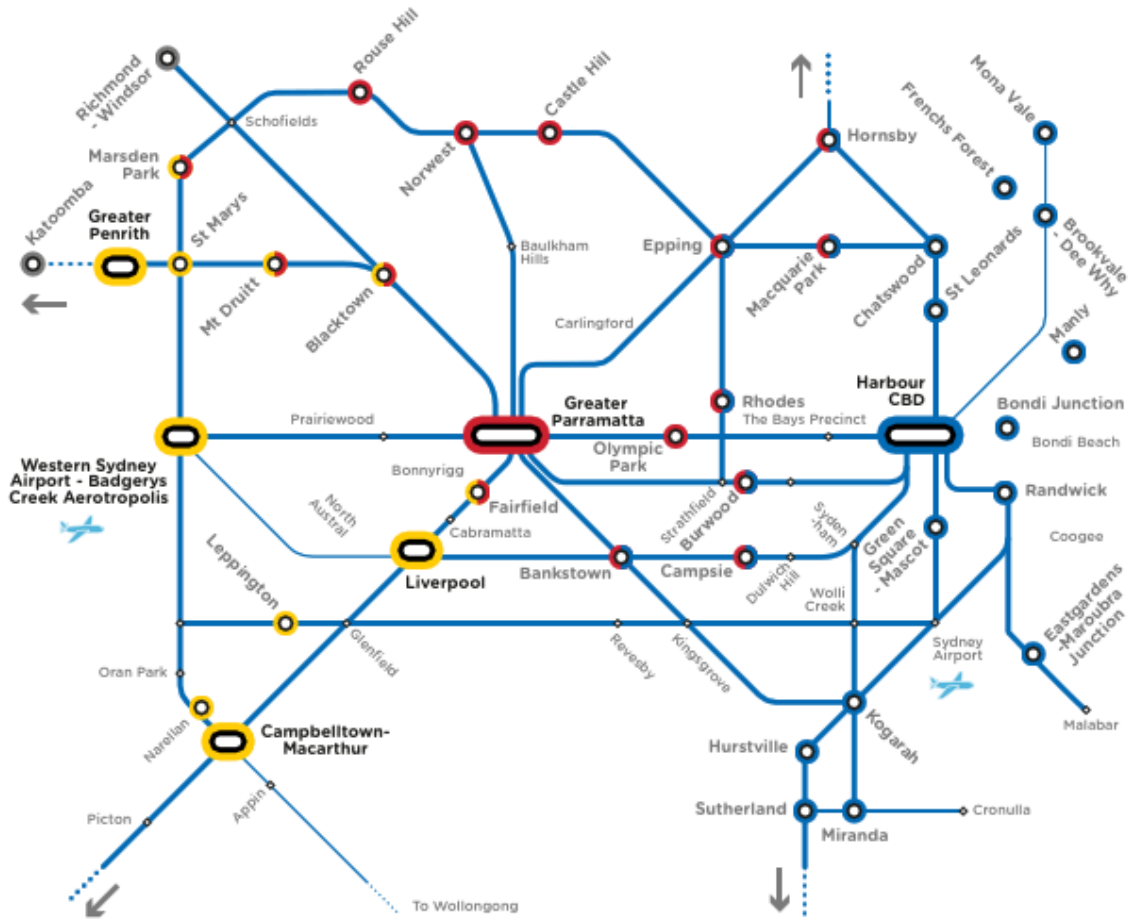


Figure 51: Greater Sydney Mass transit/train Network (visionary)