

**Submission
No 77**

INQUIRY INTO SYDENHAM-BANKSTOWN LINE CONVERSION

Organisation: Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc

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Secretary,
Portfolio Committee No.6 - Transport and Customer Service
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney 2000

Dear Secretary,

Inquiry into Sydney-Bankstown Line conversion

Submission

Action for Public Transport NSW Inc. (APTNSW) is a transport advocacy group, which has been active in Sydney since 1974. We promote the interests of beneficiaries of public transport - passengers and the wider community alike. We respond to your call for submissions. We are acutely aware that the conversion of much of the Bankstown line to metro may well be unstoppable.

Our response is organised in sections corresponding to paragraph 2 of the terms of reference.

A. the adequacy of the business case and viability of Metro

In our view the Committee should not place too much store on business cases, as they rest on cost-benefit analyses which are systematically biased against public transport initiatives.

Similarly, we are wary of what is entailed in the Committee's consideration of the "viability" of Metro. In this case, two existing and functioning lines have been or are being taken from the existing rail system and converted to metro operation (and two other lines converted to light rail operation). It may be that this enhances the viability of Metro but it is not a good thing.

We hope this is the last time this approach is taken. There are many gaps in the existing rail system that Metro can and should fill in preference to cannibalising the existing system - see below in section L.

B. the consideration of alternatives for improving capacity and reducing congestion

We see Westconnex and other road projects which work against public transport being built and we see projects which encourage passengers to use a different mode rather than increasing the coverage of the public transport system. Both are wrong. The only way to reduce congestion is to build public transport that is faster than car travel.

C. the factors taken into account when comparing the alternatives and the robustness of the evidence used in decision-making

There is no public evidence of alternatives being compared and so we cannot comment on what factors were taken into account. There are press reports from 2012 that suggest the plan for a North-West rail link (compatible with Sydney's existing rail system) became a plan for a Metro because:

- It could be built as a driverless system

- It could more easily be transferred to a private operator
- A separated system could alleviate "knock-on" effects when system breakdowns occur

The North-West Metro could have formed the beginning of a system that augmented and complemented the Cityrail system, had it been extended from Epping along a route not served by rail, such as via Drummoyne to the city centre. Instead, a decision was taken to convert the recently completed Epping to Chatswood line to Metro operation and to require most passengers to change at Chatswood.

D. whether metro is a suitable means of transport over long distances

See the discussion of the term "metro" in section L below. With longer trips, provision of adequate seating for all passengers over 40 and some others is essential. With shorter trips, closer and quicker stops are desirable.

E. the consultation process undertaken with, and the adequacy of information given to, community, experts and other stakeholders

The present government set up four advisory committees in 2012 to help formulate a transport master plan. These committees were excluded from the decision to introduce metro-style trains on the north-west railway rather than retain the double-deck crewed trains used everywhere else around Sydney. There was no consultation on that fundamental point.

F. the impact on the environment and heritage conservation

For us, the preferred impact on the environment is to get passengers out of cars into some form of public transport. Moving them from one mode of public transport to another is not the aim of the exercise.

G. any lobbying, political donations or other influence of the public or private sector in relation to making that decision

We have no comment on this matter.

H. the tender process for appointing private operators

We have no comment on this matter.

I. the contractual arrangements entered into in respect of the project

We have no comment on this matter.

J. the adequacy of temporary transport arrangements during the conversion process, including for people with a disability

The conversion process necessarily involves major disruption. In this case, the disruption seems likely to run for many months or even years. If the conversion proceeds it is imperative that temporary transport arrangements are comfortable, fast, frequent and connected to the remaining Sydney Trains system at several points.

K. the impact on the stations west of Bankstown

Answering this question is easy: cutting the line at Bankstown would seriously disadvantage suburbs from Yagoona to Liverpool which currently benefit from efficient public transport via Bankstown. Cutting it instead at Yagoona would have similar adverse consequences. Our preferred response to this impact would be to extend the Bankstown metro south-west to Liverpool on a new route through suburbs which have never had a railway.

L. any related matter

- **What is "metro"?**

Metro is a type of heavy rail as distinct from light rail which uses smaller vehicles called trams when they run on roads. Because of heavy rail's speed, it has to operate in its own reservation. Heavy rail vehicles are generally coupled together into trains. Heavy rail includes long-distance

trains, suburban rapid transit trains and metro trains. Metro trains are intended to serve short trips (often between 1km and 5km) in the dense hearts of large cities. Typical metro trains are designed with numerous doors and open vestibules in order to reduce dwell times at platforms. Because trips are usually short, not every metro passenger need be seated.

Using Metro rolling-stock on a railway does not make it a metro. Nor does putting the word "metro" in the railway's title.

New York City and many large Asian and European cities have well-developed metro systems. Typically, there are several lines that do not all intersect at a single central station. Rather, there are interchange stations at numerous smaller centres with the resultant benefit that many trips need not pass through the centre.

Larger Australian cities, including Sydney, would benefit from similar systems.

- **Gaps in Sydney's railway network**

There are large swathes of Sydney, including some quite close suburbs, that don't have rail transport but would benefit from it. An all-areas list is at <http://aptnew.org.au/gaps.html>. The list shows some peculiar gaps, including Tallawong-Schofields which affects metro.

Sydenham is well-placed as a starting-point for possible metro branches to the east (Eastlakes, Kingsford, Maroubra) or to the south (Brighton-le-sands, Sans Souci, Sylvania, Miranda, Caringbah South). Serving these areas is at least as important as amplifying capacity on the Bankstown line yet there don't seem to be any plans to do so.

- **Station spacing**

It should be clear to the reader that the average spacing between stops on a urban railway is closely tied to the job that the railway does in its city. If the stops are too far apart, the railway cannot be used for short trips. If the stops are closely spaced, longer trips will be disadvantaged due to the cumulative effect of many stops.

There is a table of metro systems in Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_metro_systems#List) showing the number of stations and the total length of track in each system. Dividing the length by the number of stations gives a rough indication of how far apart the stations are. Some cities have average spacing under 1km (Lausanne 0.5km, Paris 0.7km, New York City 0.9km). Tokyo's average spacing is 1km, London's 1.5km, Moscow's 1.7km.

The Sydney existing and approved metro lines generally compare very unfavourably with all of these. Average spacing between Chatswood and Tallawong is 3km. There is to be only one metro station between Chatswood and North Sydney. And there is to be only one metro station between Central and Sydenham. Why won't the land between Chatswood and Sydenham have more metro stations?

- **St Peters and Erskineville**

Current plans may disadvantage St Peters and particularly Erskineville. The latter has been a small suburb until recently. Development of the Ashmore estate will double its population yet its rail service is apparently to be downgraded.

- **Where is a comprehensive transport plan for Sydney?**

There is known to be a document called Medium Term Rail Development Plan - Suburban & Intercity 2017. A GIPA application to release it was refused earlier this year but members of Portfolio Committee No 6 could presumably request to see it. It may well be material to this Inquiry.

- **Capacity considerations**

Consider running 30 trains per hour each way Chatswood-Sydenham (the technology on the north-west metro is apparently capable of much more - perhaps 40 trains). Chatswood-Sydenham could and should carry two lines at the Chatswood end - Tallawong and a new Northern Beaches line branching off just north of Chatswood. The Beaches line would obviate

both the destructive Western Harbour road tunnel and its feeder Beaches Link road tunnel. There would be a train every four minutes on each of the north-west and Beaches branches.

Similarly, the Sydenham end could support two branches, ideally one towards Miranda via Brighton-le-sands and another towards either Liverpool or Maroubra. Or if the Bankstown line is converted to metro, a new metro branch towards Miranda or Maroubra could be built from Sydenham. There would be a train every four minutes on each of these southern branches.

That arrangement would maximise the return on the investment in metro from Chatswood to Sydenham.

We would be happy to give evidence to the Committee at its public hearings.

Jim Donovan
Secretary
Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc.