

INQUIRY INTO PRIVATISATION OF BUS SERVICES

Organisation: Liverpool City Council

Date Received: 31 March 2022

The Director
Portfolio Committee No. 6,
Parliament House, Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000

Via email: portfoliocommittee6@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Director,

RE: Inquiry into the privatisation of bus services in NSW

Thank you for the Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No. 6 invitation to make a submission on the current inquiry into the privatisation of bus services.

Liverpool City Council appreciates the opportunity and would like to make a submission on the inquiry taking into consideration of the term of reference the following:

- Bus services contract model and performance measures.
- Accessibility and mobility and associated social and economic impacts due to lack of bus services and coverage; and
- Transition to an electric bus fleet and supporting infrastructure.

Background

The Liverpool Local Government Area (LGA) is in South West Sydney, approximately 35 km from Sydney Central Business District. Approximately half of the LGA is Sydney South West Growth Centre and has experienced over the last 10 years and is planned to experience significant population growth over for the next 20-30 years.

The planned growth includes urban development and significant population growth in the new suburbs including Middleton Grange, Edmondson Park, Austral, Leppington North, East Leppington, Bradfield, and Aerotropolis core, with over 30,000 new dwellings and additional 100,000 persons.

Comments on the above listed concerns are as follows:

1) Bus services contract model and performance measures

Many of the existing bus services in the Liverpool LGA operate with bus service frequencies of approximately 15 minutes and up to 1 hour during the commuter peak and off-peak periods respectively. The local community is concerned, these service frequencies do not provide adequate services along some bus routes.

It is considered that these service frequencies, which are specified in current bus contracts, do not deliver adequate services, particularly to growing suburbs. Due to their commercial nature, every new bus route/service requires Transport for NSW (TfNSW) funding allocation, which can take up to 5 years.

In addition, most bus services are regular and fixed route services. This model does not work well for low and medium density suburbs as initial patronage demands might not meet high frequent bus service requirements. Hence, high quality bus service might not be introduced.

Recommendations

- a) Council requests TfNSW to review its bus service contract operation model and introduce a mechanism to enable new bus routes and more frequent services to be provided in the growing suburbs as well as low/medium density developments.
- b) Pilot projects are to be carried out between bus operators, councils and other transport service providers for research and development on more flexible public transport and community transport operation models to be included in future bus service contracts. Council is aware of trialling on-demand bus services in the growing suburb Edmondson Park.

2) Accessibility and mobility and associated social and economic impacts due to lack of bus services and coverage

The Liverpool LGA is serviced by three private bus companies – Transdev, Interlink Bus Services and Transit Systems, on contracts with Transport for NSW. Transdev provides services to the eastern and established parts of the LGA, whilst Interline Bus Company and Transit Systems provide services to the western and growing news suburbs.

Bus services to date, has not kept pace with population growth. Hence, Council and Local Members of Parliament, particularly the Member for Mulgoa, have been receiving representations about lack of bus services.

Council notes that the road network in these growing suburbs are being progressively upgraded and planned bus routes/services cannot be provided on the planned road network. However, Council considers that interim bus route/services need to be provided to cater for growing bus service travel demand.

Lack of regular bus services, in these areas, has significant impacts on the community accessibility. It causes traffic congestion due to heavy reliance on private motor vehicles. This affects accessibility of senior citizen, school students, young people or low income earners without a car in these growing suburbs such as Denham Court, Middleton Grange, and Georges Fair (Moorebank). This also affects parents who have to drop school children and workforce productivity, particularly female workers.

An example of this lack of bus service, is in Parkbridge Estate, northern part of Middleton Grange with over 700 householders. The nearest bus stop to the Estate is approximately 1.3 km away, which takes 20-30 minutes. The community has been making representations for bus services for about 10 years and is still yet to receive a bus service.

Recommendations

- c) Bus service contracts are to include a requirement for provision of special need bus services to cater for senior citizens, retirement village and school operations.

3) Transition to an electric bus fleet and supporting infrastructure

Council welcomes the state government commitment to replace existing bus fleets with electric bus fleets and install some supporting infrastructure such as EV charging stations.

Council would like to take this opportunity to work with the NSW state government to develop local manufacturing capacity for electric vehicles and associated accessory industries in Liverpool LGA.

Recommendations

- d) Encourage and develop local electric fleet manufacturing capacity and associated accessory industry in Western Sydney, Liverpool LGA in particular.

Should you require any further information on this matter, please contact me via email.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Wiafe
Service Manager Traffic and Transport