

Submission  
No 26

## INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY

**Organisation:** Business NSW & Business Western Sydney

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# Submission on the Inquiry into Current and Future Public Transport Needs for Western Sydney

Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and the Arts

**SEPTEMBER 2023**





Dear Committee members,

On behalf of Business NSW and Business Western Sydney, we are pleased to provide you with a joint submission for the inquiry into the current and future public transport needs for Western Sydney. This inquiry covers a multitude of critical factors that are of utmost importance to the residents and businesses of our region.

Business NSW is NSW's peak business organisation with almost 50,000 member businesses. We work with businesses spanning all industry sectors including small, medium, and large enterprises. Operating throughout a network in metropolitan and regional NSW, Business NSW represents the needs of business at a local, state, and federal level.

Business Western Sydney is one of the region's leading not-for-profit business organisations representing more than 130 of the region's largest organisations in industry, business, government, and community sectors. Our goal is to support greater private and public investment that will reduce the region's job deficit and make it a better place to live, work, learn and play.

The efficiency and accessibility of public transport in Western Sydney are integral to the success of local businesses. A well-functioning public transport system contributes to reduced traffic congestion, allowing businesses to operate smoothly and cost-effectively. Moreover, it sustains housing development and density by making Western Sydney an attractive place for both residents and businesses.

The criticism of the lack of public transport in Western Sydney has been well documented for decades. The McKell Institute's report, [Funding the Infrastructure of Tomorrow](#) (March 2022), highlights that areas in Greater Sydney with high historic disadvantage correlate with lower infrastructure provision.

The table below from the McKell Institute report (p.21), based on Transport for NSW data, confirms that all the Western City District's eight LGAs are in the lower tertile when it comes to access to public transport. The Central City District, centred on Parramatta, has only marginally better public transport access with three LGAs in the middle tertile and one in the lower tertile. The Eastern City (Sydney CBD) unsurprisingly and the Northern District have far better access to public transport.

**TABLE 8** DISTRIBUTION OF ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR SYDNEY DISTRICTS

| Greater Sydney Districts  | Mean income | LGAs in the upper tertile | LGAs in the middle tertile | LGAs in the lower tertile | Total LGAs |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Eastern City (Sydney CBD) | \$101,621   | 7                         | 2                          | 0                         | 9          |
| Northern District         | \$91,657    | 4                         | 4                          | 1                         | 9          |
| Southern District         | \$60,869    | 0                         | 2                          | 1                         | 3          |
| Central City (Parramatta) | \$57,804    | 0                         | 3                          | 1                         | 4          |
| Western City              | \$57,256    | 0                         | 0                          | 8                         | 8          |

Source: Transport for NSW

This inequity needs to be urgently addressed through better public transport policy and investment in Greater Western Sydney.



Business NSW and Business Western Sydney would like to put forward the following issues and recommendations for the Committee to support in improving public transport in Western Sydney:

## 1 A Dedicated Western Sydney Transport Strategy

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A comprehensive transport strategy for Western Sydney that includes sub-regional plans for each of the region's major cities (Liverpool, Campbelltown, Penrith, Blacktown, Parramatta, Bankstown, Fairfield etc) needs to be developed and supported by a robust funding approach. This plan would prioritise transport investment across the region with a focus on better inter-regional connectivity.

## 2 Continue to Expand the Sydney Metro Network

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We have developed a strong capability to deliver metro rail lines in our city. We need to ensure we do not lose this capability by developing a responsible and timely pipeline of additional Sydney Metro rail lines over the coming decades. We need to plan and expand the Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport line to improve connectivity with the network to the north and south and plan for future metros through Parramatta and Western Sydney.







## Availability and Accessibility of Public Transport

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It is imperative to assess and have accurate information about the availability and accessibility of public transport services across Western Sydney. This evaluation should include an analysis of connectivity between transport hubs and commercial centres, identifying any gaps in services that need to be addressed. We urge the Committee to consider the specific needs of underserved communities.

## Current and Anticipated Demand

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Understanding current and anticipated levels of demand for public transport is paramount. Transport for NSW (TfNSW) possesses strong data analysis capabilities to support this assessment. Post-pandemic reassessment of peak demand expectations is essential due to the entrenched changes in behaviour. For fixed capacity transit systems, like Metros and heavy rail, it is crucial to consider flexibility and cost-effectiveness in adapting to shifting demand patterns.

## Community Engagement and Changing Needs

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As residents are more inclined to stay within or near their communities, there may be a heightened demand for localised services. To address this, we encourage ongoing community engagement and business consultation to comprehensively understand evolving travel requirements and ensure tailored public transport solutions can be delivered to Western Sydney residents.

## Changing Demographics and Infrastructure

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Demographic changes, new suburban developments, planned infrastructure, and increased population density influence public transport needs. These factors overlap with the above points and necessitate proactive planning to accommodate future demands.

## Supporting More Jobs Closer to Home

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Business Western Sydney released a report, [Closer to Home](#), that explores the opportunities of COVID-19 to restructure employment in the outer suburban centres and makes several recommendations on how Government can make some of these behavioural changes more permanent as we move past the pandemic. The report identifies a key role for Government in supporting the development of working hubs or “*touch down pads*” in the metropolitan centres of Western Sydney and developing a Local Centre Amenity Fund with other levels of government and private landowners to significantly improve the quality and attractiveness of our city centres to drive further investment and local job creation. We encourage the NSW Government to set a target of providing 5,000 sqm of co-working space for public servants in each metropolitan centre in Western Sydney. This investment should be used to leverage an additional 5,000 sqm of private investment to support local job creation and spending in local economies.



## Social, Economic, and Planning Impacts

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Vehicle dependency and poorly integrated public transport have significant social, economic, and planning impacts. Addressing these issues can alleviate congestion, reduce costs to businesses, and mitigate environmental impacts such as pollution and fuel expenses. Furthermore, we want to highlight the substantial investment required for electrification in Western Sydney, especially considering the anticipated increase in electric vehicles.

## Affordability and Dynamic Pricing

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Affordability, compared to other areas of Greater Sydney and NSW, is a concern. Implementing dynamic pricing structures to encourage non-peak travel can enhance affordability and promote responsible use of public transport as an alternative to car use and costly motorway tolls.







## Reducing Car Dependency

- 10 While car reliance is not inherently bad, efforts should focus on reducing car dependency where feasible. Recognise that public transport may not be a suitable substitute for all business-related travel due to flexibility, convenience, and the need to transport tools and goods.

## Public and Private Sector Involvement

- 11 Both the public and private sectors, play crucial roles in providing effective public transport services. Innovative funding models, such as transit-oriented development and value capture mechanisms, should be considered. Supporting all options for value capture is essential, even recognising that land values in Western Sydney may not yield substantial contributions.

## Private Sector Operation of Public Transport

We support private sector involvement in public transport operations. On the issue of bus services, we support and recommend:

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- Demand-responsive service flexibility
- Route varying flexibility
- Incentives for alternative ‘last-mile’ options
- Incentives for new technology investments, including electric and autonomous vehicles, real-time trackers via apps, and ‘bus on demand’
- Additionally, prioritising the user experience through cleanliness, safety, maintenance, and post-Opal system payment improvements is paramount.

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## Expand Bus Services in Western Sydney

Buses play a pivotal role as a short to medium term measure to bolster public transport services in Western Sydney. With the region’s rapidly growing population and evolving transportation needs, buses provide a flexible and adaptable solution to address immediate transit challenges. They serve as a critical link, connecting neighbourhoods, employment centres, and key transportation hubs, helping to alleviate congestion and reduce dependence on private cars. Buses can be rapidly deployed to meet shifting demands, offer cost-effective options for expanding the public transport network, and serve as a crucial bridge until more permanent infrastructure, such as metro lines or light rail, can be developed. Moreover, they enhance accessibility, providing residents with a reliable means of reaching jobs, educational institutions, and recreational areas, thereby contributing to the overall liveability and sustainability of Western Sydney.





## Expand the Parramatta Light Rail Network

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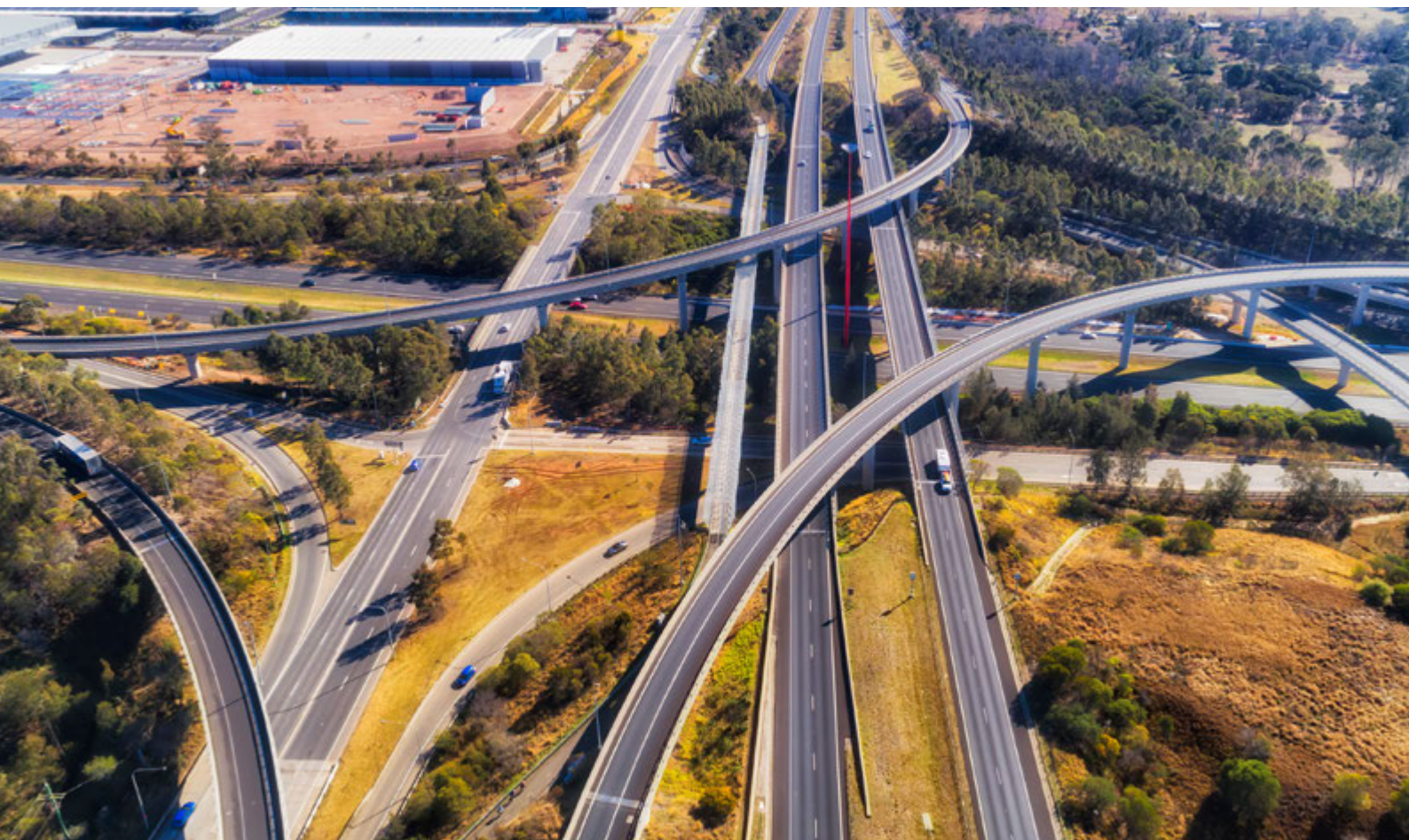
Expanding the Parramatta Light Rail network is a critical imperative for the continued growth and development of Sydney's Central City. Stage 1 as it nears operational phase by mid-2024 has already reshaped the urban centre of Parramatta, driven greater private sector investment, and supported new active transport links. We continue to be strong advocates of building Stage 2 of Parramatta Light Rail through to Sydney Olympic Park. We'd encourage the finalisation of the Environmental Impact Statement for Stage 2 and the commitment of funding to build the project. Stage 2 will transform the northern shore of the Parramatta River allowing better connectivity for a broad range of socio-economic disadvantaged people. It will also support connectivity of communities to the future metro west station at Sydney Olympic Park. We also encourage planning for the next stages of Parramatta Light Rail beyond Stage 2.



## Undertake a Review of Western Sydney's Logistics Networks

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This is paramount for the region's rapid growth and evolving transportation landscape. Western Sydney serves as a vital economic hub, and its logistics networks play a pivotal role in facilitating the movement of goods, services, and people. However, with increasing population density, escalating freight demands, and a growing emphasis on sustainability, it has become imperative to reassess and optimise these networks. Such a review will not only address critical issues like congestion and efficiency but also promote the integration of Electric Vehicle (EV) provisions, enhance the region's commitment to achieving net-zero freight emissions, and encourage the utilisation of public and cycle transport solutions during daytime hours. This holistic approach to logistics will not only benefit businesses but also enhance the overall quality of life for residents, making it a pressing and transformative undertaking for Western Sydney. A report by ARUP, [\*The Future of Australian Logistics and Our Cities\*](#), provides further details and recommendations.





## 16 Transparency in Public Transport Investment

Greater transparency and engagement with transport expertise is encouraged in the early design of major transport projects such as the Sydney Metro Network. NSW Government agencies are often very secretive with information about the rationale, economic benefit and construction strategy of major projects. It comes as no surprise that as a result cost estimates and timelines are often found to be incorrect and subject to accusations of ‘cost blowouts’. A more open and constructive engagement with communities and private sector expertise through the life of a major transport project would support more accurate understanding of the issues and solutions that may be available.

## 17 Greater Investment in Active Transport

Western Sydney is poorly serviced by good active transport connections. Encouraging greater walking, cycling and active transport in Western Sydney needs to be a priority. Increased investment in active transport is a multifaceted solution that addresses congestion, public health, community well-being, and environmental concerns, making it a vital priority for Western Sydney’s future. Opportunities to active waterways and rivers through Western Sydney with active transport pathways is a strong recommendation.

## 18 Task INSW to Measure and Consider Equitable Access to Infrastructure When Making Decisions

The NSW Government’s infrastructure budget is finite. Every dollar spend on one project is a dollar that can’t be spent on another. We encourage INSW and the NSW Government to consider the equitable access to public transport when deciding to fund public transport and other infrastructure projects. Vast areas of Western Sydney have little to no access to good public transport compared to other parts of Greater Sydney.

## **Set Long Term Target for Infrastructure Investment Rate That Maintains a Consistent Five-Year Average Like Current Levels**

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This is a prudent approach that ensures stability and sustainability in funding additional transport infrastructure. By maintaining a steady and predictable rate of investment, governments can foster an environment of confidence for businesses and investors, encouraging long-term planning and commitments. This approach also allows for the efficient allocation of resources, preventing the boom-and-bust cycles that can be detrimental to both the construction industry and the broader economy. Consistency in infrastructure investment helps us tackle critical challenges such as ageing infrastructure, urbanisation, and climate change adaptation with a measured and strategic approach.

## **Superannuation funds and other savings pools should be utilised to maintain constituent investment pipelines**

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These funds represent a massive pool of capital that, when strategically invested in infrastructure projects, can drive economic growth, and deliver stable returns to retirees. By channelling such funds into infrastructure, governments can address the pressing need for modernisation, expansion, and maintenance of critical public assets without overburdening their budgets or taking on excessive debt. This approach not only promotes long-term financial security for retirees but also ensures that the benefits of infrastructure investments are shared across generations. In essence, harnessing superannuation funds and savings pools for investment pipelines can create a win-win scenario that bolsters economic resilience while safeguarding the financial futures of individuals and communities.



## Workforce Planning

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We would like to emphasise the importance of workforce planning that considers predicted service demand resulting from population growth in Western Sydney. A skilled workforce is essential to maintaining the high quality of public transport services.

In conclusion, we commend the Committee undertaking this critical inquiry. Addressing the current and future public transport needs of Western Sydney is pivotal for our region's growth, sustainability, and quality of life. I trust that the findings and recommendations of this inquiry will lead to an improved, efficient, and integrated public transport system that benefits all residents and businesses alike.

Thank you for considering our submission. we look forward to the Committee's findings and the positive changes they will bring to our region. We would be delighted to appear before the committee to discuss on of these issues in more detail.

Yours sincerely

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