

**Submission
No 32**

INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Organisation: Fairfield City Council

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Director
Portfolio Committee No.6
Transport and the Arts
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

To whom it may concern

SUBMISSION TO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY – CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Fairfield City Council welcomes the above inquiry being undertaken by the Legislative Council into current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney which is a critical factor for securing the future social economic wellbeing of the Region. In response to Terms of Reference for the Inquiry, Council at its meeting of the 12 September 2023 endorsed the matters detailed in this submission.

The Fairfield Transport Study 2021 (prepared by transport consultants Stantec) forms the primary basis for the issues outlined in this submission.

A. EXISTING SITUATION AND CONTEXT

1. Overview of exiting public transport infrastructure, socio economic factors & travel patterns

The transport network servicing Fairfield City is dominated by several major north-south roads such as the M7 Motorway and the A28 Cumberland Highway, major east-west axis such as The Horsley Drive and Cabramatta Road/ Elizabeth Drive, all of which are accessed via a predominantly suburban road and street network that serves primarily low to medium density residential suburbs in the LGA.

The LGA also benefits from existing passenger rail connections that connect the LGA with Liverpool, Blacktown, Richmond and the central and eastern parts of Greater Sydney, though the train stations are concentrated in the eastern side of the LGA. The central portion of the LGA is serviced by the Liverpool-Parramatta T-way, providing a primarily separated and rapid transit connection to the major destinations of Parramatta and Liverpool from the LGA's suburban and industrial areas.

In relation to active transport, the LGA features major regional cycle routes on east-west and north-south axis such as the Orphans School Creek and Prospect Creek shared paths as well as cycleways parallel to the Tway, the M7 Motorway and the railway line towards Parramatta. As Figure 1 (over-page) shows, the LGA includes the four town centres of Fairfield, Cabramatta, Prairiewood and Bonnyrigg located mainly in the eastern and central parts of the LGA.

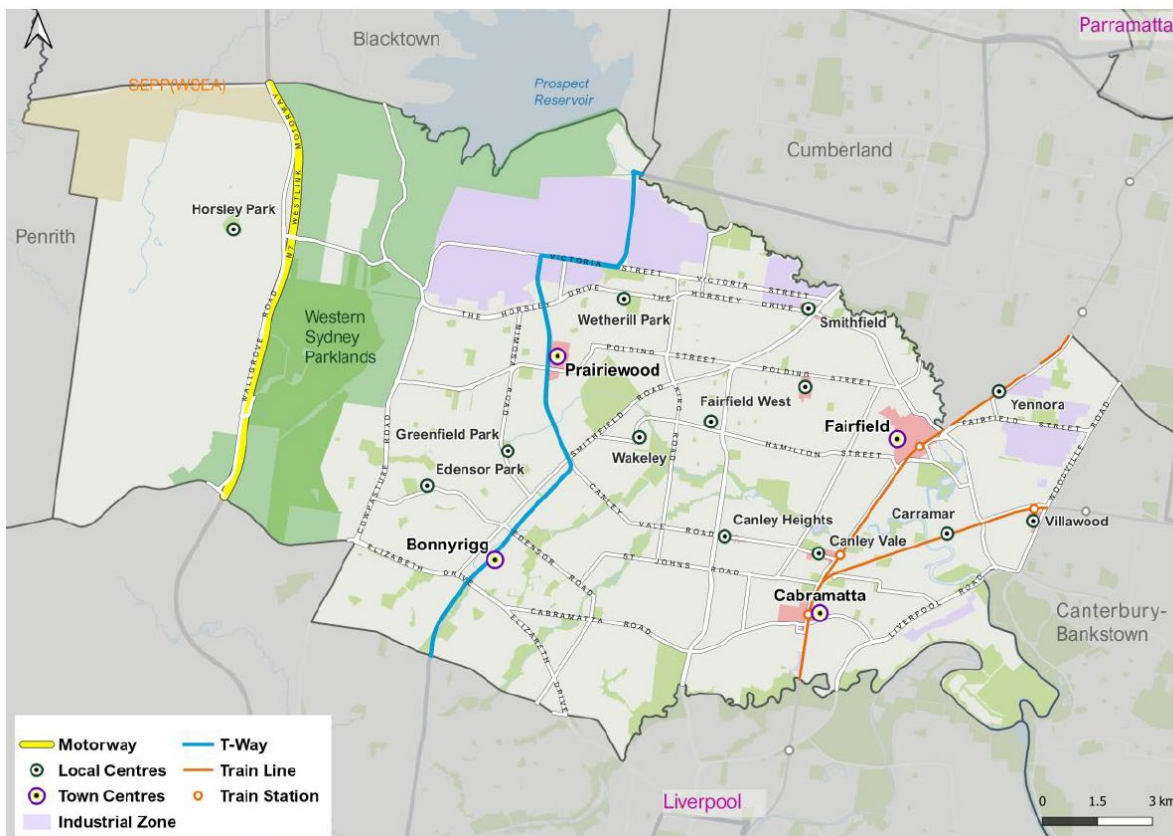


Figure 1 - Fairfield City Council (FCC) (Source: Fairfield Transport Study 2021 - Stantec)

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Disadvantage measures the relative level of socioeconomic disadvantage based on a range of Census characteristics. For the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage, a higher score on the index means a lower level of disadvantage. In the case for Fairfield City, it scored 856 in 2016 compared to Greater Sydney 1,018 which is less than NSW with 1,001 and Australia 1,002.

The community’s desire and need for improved public transport is also reflected in the actions and themes of the Fairfield City Plan 2016-2026, that were developed through extensive community consultation. The City has an average household size of 3.3 which is higher than Greater Sydney average household size of 2.8.

Figure 2 (over page) shows the all-day travel mode share for residents in the LGA based on the TfNSW Household Travel Survey Data from 2018-2019. It is shown that 77 per cent of all trips are undertaken by private vehicle (car driver, car passengers and taxi). Private vehicle trips are likely a reflection of the isolated location of Western Sydney from other parts of Greater Sydney as well as the absence of a high frequency and rapid transit network (trains, metro, light rail or frequent buses).

This mode share is higher than the Greater Sydney average of 69 per cent of all trips taken with private vehicle. In spite of the LGA’s existing Paramatta-Liverpool T-way bus and train services. A further six per cent of trips are undertaken on train and five per cent of trips by bus. About 11 per cent of trips are undertaken by walking and the average distance of these trips is 800 metres.

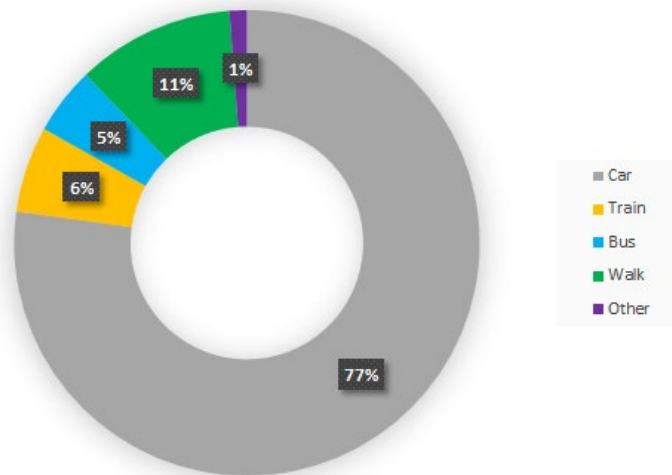


Figure 2 – FCC Mode Share for All Trips by Residents
(Source: Fairfield Transport Study 2021 - Stantec)

The percentage of people walking is lower than the Greater Sydney walking mode share of 17.5 per cent. The low percentage of walking mode share can have different reasons and is not only due to constraints in the pedestrian infrastructure but also due to safety and environmental factors. For instance, the temperature in the LGA is on average 5 degree lower than in the Sydney CBD in winter and 5 degrees higher in summer.

Figure 3. illustrates the per centage of Fairfield LGA’s residents who use public transport to travel to work in comparison with those who drive to work based on Statistical Area 1 polygons (SA1).

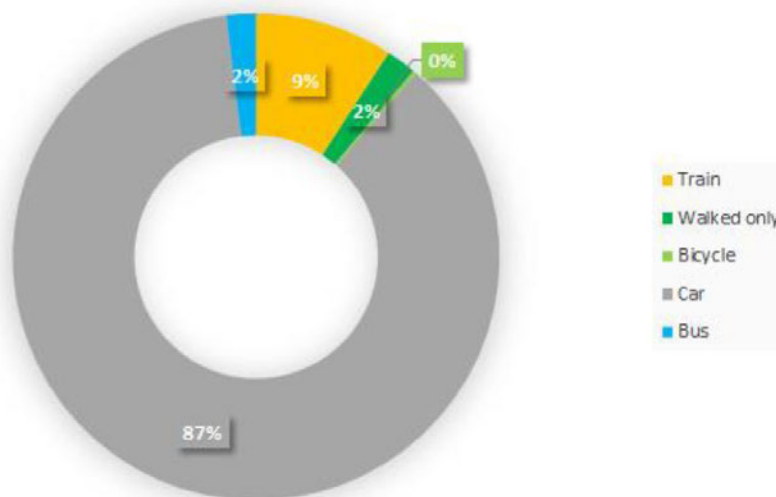


Figure 3 - FCC Mode Share Journey to Work (Source: Fairfield Transport Study 2021 - Stantec)

Although, the map outlines that the key town centres around train stations have the highest public transport (or non-car) mode share, only around 30 per cent of residents are using public transport for their commute.

This part of Fairfield is well serviced by train services toward destinations such as the Sydney city centre. In areas in the west of the LGA and away from the train network between 70 and 90 per cent use a car despite having access to frequent and rapid public transport (T-way).

For example, in Wetherill Park, more than 90 per cent of residents use the car for their commute. This low public transport mode share around the T-way is potentially caused by the slow and indirect operations of the T-way services to satisfy customer expectations or not reaching key destinations.

The western part of the LGA (including Horsley Park and Cecil Park) are characterised by low density living, mostly single dwellings with plenty of on-street and off-street parking available. The area in general is served poorly or not at all by public transport. Therefore, between 50 to 90 per cent residents use a car for their commute versus under 20 per cent of residents using public transport for their travel to work.

2. Trip Containment Levels

The proportion of individuals living and working in the same labour market region is referred to as the level of self-containment and is seen as a positive as it reduces the length of trips and can also lead to greater flexibility at what time the trips are undertaken (eg. outside peak times). Trip containment has important environmental, public transport and road network consequences in its capacity to increase the likelihood of transport to work via methods other than private cars, given distances between home and work are shorter.

Despite the shorter distances, car use may be the only viable commuting option unless appropriate public transport and safe active transport facilities are available between nearby areas within the LGA, rather than a focus on transport infrastructure and services for trips toward employment destinations outside of the LGA.

- For Fairfield 32% of residents also work in Fairfield, while 68% of residents work outside the LGA.
- This makes having good public transport connections to major employment centres an ongoing priority.
- To provide some comparative context, 68% of residents within the Liverpool LGA travel outside of the LGA for work, 69% of Canterbury-Bankstown Council, indicating that comparable LGAs close to Fairfield have similar trip containment rates as Fairfield LGA. Significantly, these LGAs have better public transport networks than Fairfield.

3. Car Ownership Rates

Census data (Figure 4 over page) shows how poor access to public transport is mirrored in car ownership rates for Fairfield City.

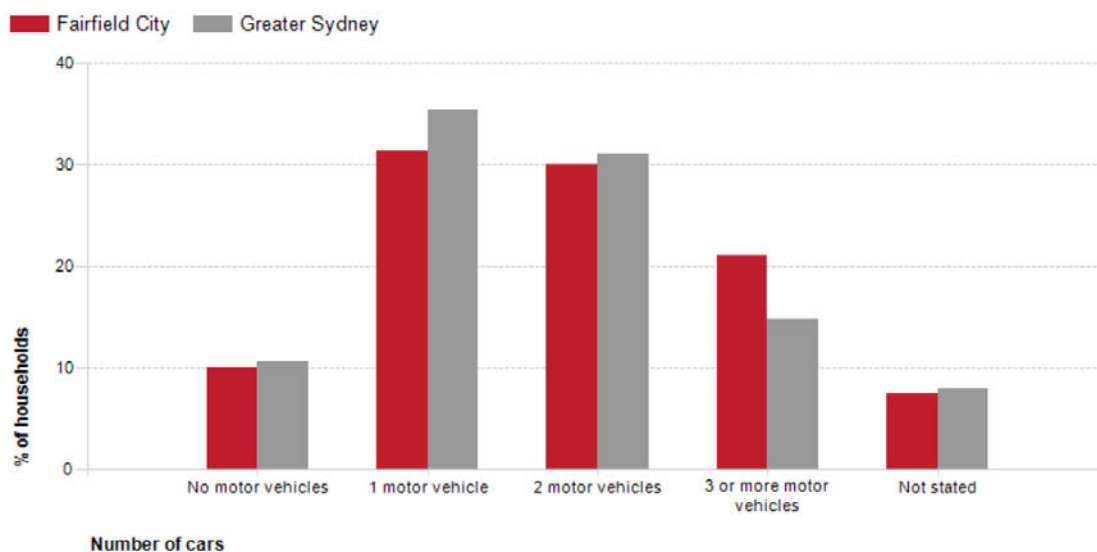


Figure 4 – FCC Car Ownership Rates (Source: Fairfield Transport Study 2021 - Stantec)

Key aspects relating to car ownership in FCC are summarised below:

- Households living in the eastern parts of the LGA have a higher percentage (15%) of no motor vehicle compared to the central part with an average percentage around 5%, likely related to the proximity to train stations in the eastern part of the City.
- Households living in the eastern part of the LGA have better accessibility to public transport and have a higher percentage of owning 1 motor vehicle.
- Overall Fairfield City has a higher percentage of 3 or more vehicle households within the Western part of the LGA having the highest percentage, coinciding with a lack of effective public transport services in these areas.
- The higher reliance on private motor vehicles and the longer journey to work trips for Fairfield LGA residents has significant economic costs through higher vehicle running costs. Due to the inequitable distribution of toll roads and charging regimes, Fairfield LGA residents are also subject to higher toll expenses.

4. Implications for the Arterial Road Network

The Fairfield Transport Study 2021 included preparation of a high-level strategic traffic (mesoscopic) model. The findings of this work indicated that to accommodate continuous background growth in regional traffic levels, multiple upgrades to arterial road intersections across the City of Fairfield will need to be undertaken.

The Study clearly shows that the provision of improved and more extensive public transport infrastructure is required to reduce the pressure on the arterial road networks and help offset the costs of providing new and/or upgraded arterial roads.

B. FUTURE GROWTH & PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEEDS

1. Future Urban Development

Together, the Fairfield Local Strategic Planning Statement 2040 and Local Housing Strategy provide the critical planning framework to guide future growth and delivery of future housing planning in the City of Fairfield as shown in LSPS Structure Plan (below).

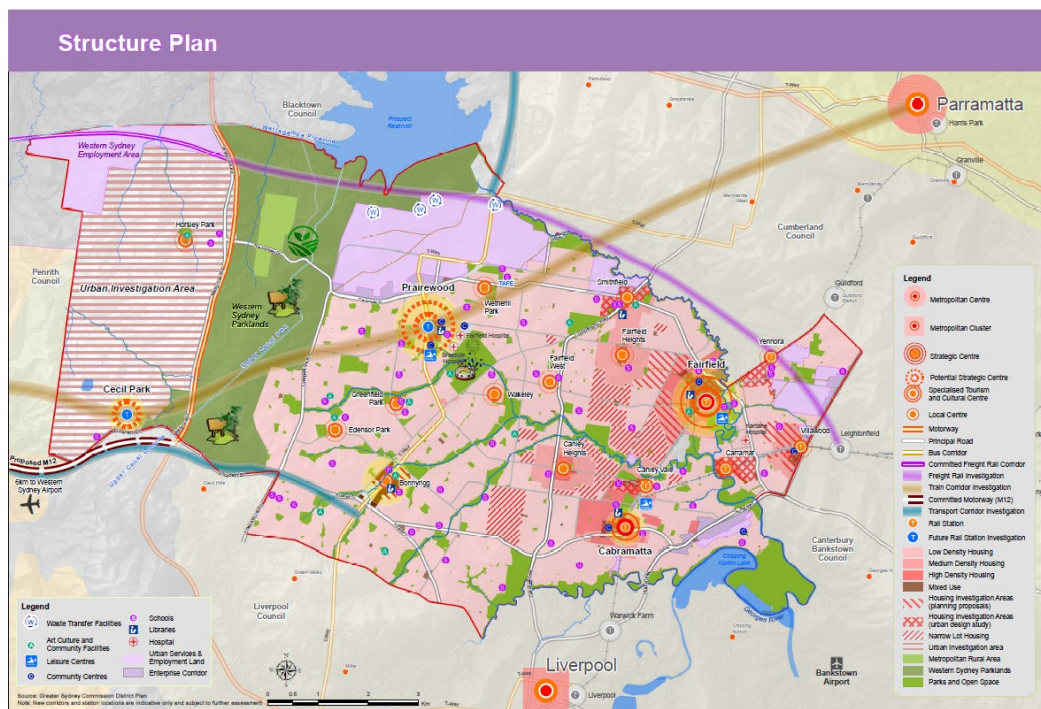


Figure 5 – FCC LSPS 2040 Structure Plan

Key aspects of the Structure Plan relevant to the provision of sustainable future urban development supported by new or enhanced public transport infrastructure include:

- In the short to medium term, the primary focus is to deliver new housing around main public infrastructure (rail) nodes and corridors in the eastern area of the City. In this respect it is essential that the capacity and levels of service of this public infrastructure be maintained to attract housing.
- The provision of an East/West passenger rail line between Parramatta and the Western Sydney Airport would create significant opportunities for addressing the current deficiencies in public transport, as well as unlocking opportunities for new housing in the central area of Fairfield City focussed around the centres of Prairiewood and potentially Bonnyrigg, as well as a significant new centre at Cecil Park.
- To support the above initiatives, there would be a stronger case for provision of rapid bus services to the new train stations in Fairfield LGA to provide a significant social and economic uplift for the future community of the City.

2. Fairfield City's position in the future Western City

Recent analysis being undertaken by Council Officers in relation to future land use directions emerging with the new Western Sydney Airport and Aerotropolis highlights the opportunities for Fairfield LGA, associated with its central location in Western Sydney and proximity to the existing and future regional centres/employment areas.

This locational advantage relates to the principle of creating a 30-minute City contained within the Sydney Regional and District Plans. Some of the key issues relevant to the 30-minute City include:

- The main urban areas in proximity to Parramatta are already well supported by existing public transport infrastructure as well as new public transport infrastructure either being planned or under construction such as the Parramatta tram network and new Sydney Metro Line from Parramatta to Sydney CBD (incorrectly known as “Metro West”).
- To mitigate reliance on private vehicles for access to employment opportunities associated with construction of the Western Sydney Airport and Aerotropolis, there will need to be significant public investment into provision of new public transport infrastructure.
- This step will also help offset the costs of constructing/upgrading existing arterial roads and to provide an attractive public transport alternative for accessing employment and education opportunities at the Airport and Aerotropolis.
- The Fairfield LGA and areas such as the Fairfield Urban Investigation Area (UIA) (Cecil Park and Horsley Park) and Prairiewood are ideally located in being able to deliver new housing and urban growth to support development of the Airport and Aerotropolis. This is subject to the provision of public transport infrastructure to support sustainable urban development and the 30 Minute City.

3. Western City Blueprint & District Planning

Since 2020, Council has been providing input District Planning documents being developed by the former Greater Cities Commission (GCC) (now part of Department of Planning and Environment (DPE)). As detailed below, key issues that have been identified and are relevant to the issues discussed previously in this report and provision of public transport infrastructure required to service future urban development in Western Sydney include:

- There is a major deficit of public transport infrastructure for existing communities in Western Sydney due to the timing and spatial distribution of urbanisation.
- Greater acknowledgment needs to be given to the current disparity in west versus east in order to justify need for prioritisation of the west in respect to, long commuting times, lack of quantity and variety of jobs, lack of facilities, lower socio-economic conditions and higher levels of disadvantage, high proportion of new migrants and refugees.
- Current planning documents prepared by the DPE and GCC do not explain how the physical transport assets in Western Sydney work in a networked way to achieve the 30-minute City
- Progression of investigations for Parramatta-Airport rail is required with consideration of stations at Prairiewood and Cecil Park. This project would link the three cities of Sydney and unlock significant social and economic benefits for Fairfield City and the wider Region/Metropolis.
- No explanation is provided as to the cost/benefits of Parramatta-Airport rail project relative to other planned rail links despite the significant investigations that have been undertaken by the State Government.
- The State Government needs to clearly identify that rapid bus services to the Airport/Aerotropolis will have stops at Prairiewood and Bonnyrigg to serve Fairfield City residents with no change-over at Bonnyrigg.
- All future rail stations need to be fully accessible and served by commuter carparks.

More broadly, a range of important research projects relevant to Western Sydney provides conclusive evidence of significant disadvantage for the community from the lack of public transport and overreliance on private vehicles, as follows:

- McKell Institute report, *'Funding the Infrastructure of Tomorrow'*, concludes the Sydney localities in the top "third with the best access to public transport are all in the East or North districts". By contrast, all the Parkland Councils (incorporating Fairfield) place in the bottom third.
- Analysis by Datu Urbanism and Architecture concludes that infrastructure planning and delivery over the past decade "has reinforced rather than redressed the income inequality between the northeast and southwest halves of the Greater Sydney region".
- The Australian Automobile Association's transport affordability index suggests typical annual vehicle costs in Sydney of about \$25,600.00 a year, with fuel about 20% of costs and tolls about 19% of costs, respectively. Cost impacts will disproportionately fall on households, like those in the Fairfield LGA, with either more vehicles, longer trips, or both.
- Benchmarking suggests average household vehicle expenditure in the Parkland councils is about \$25,000.00 a year higher than in Parramatta and about \$39,000.00 a year higher than for City of Sydney households.

CONCLUSION

This submission highlights key issues relevant to the Legislative Council's Inquiry into current and future public infrastructure needs in Western Sydney. Currently there are major deficiencies in public transport (including Fairfield City) to support the commuting needs of the community and not least the needs associated with future population growth being targeted in the Region by the State Government.

There needs to be a major shift in transport planning policy and infrastructure spend to address the overreliance on private vehicles for gaining access to employment and other opportunities, as well as the burden of inequitable cost of road tolls on the community of Western Sydney

In particular, an east-west passenger rail line from Parramatta to the Western Sydney Airport would help address the imbalance in public transport infrastructure in Western Sydney, help unlock housing supply and create a city shaping corridor that properly links the 3 cities of Sydney, redressing chronic socio-economic disadvantage arising from past poor public transport provision and access to employment opportunities in the Fairfield LGA.

Council appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry and please contact the undersigned on _____ if you require any further clarification into the issues outlined in this submission.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Mooney
EXECUTIVE STRATEGIC PLANNER