

Submission
No 36

INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Organisation: Committee for Sydney

Date Received: 18 September 2023

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To Chair, Deputy Chair and members ,

Re: Inquiry into the current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney

The Committee for Sydney welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into the current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney. We are an urban policy think tank advocating for the whole of Sydney. We focus on developing solutions to the most important problems our city faces. We are proud to have more than 160 members, representing key business, academic and civic organisations across Sydney.

Introduction

Few places in the world have an urban history as complex or as interesting as Western Sydney. It's a story full of twists and turns, ups and downs, failures as well as success. It's a story of the emergence of a region unlike anywhere else – one of the most multicultural communities on Earth, a dynamic and growing economy, and a beautiful and challenged environment.

Over the last 10 or so years, Western Sydney has transformed with large transport infrastructure projects, including light rail and metro, WestConnex and the soon to open Western Sydney Airport. While these projects are invaluable to the region, and Sydney as a whole, there is still more to do.

Western Sydney residents are largely car dependent. This is in part due to lower density land use patterns, but it is also an outcome of lower investment in the growth of public and active transport services and infrastructure compared to other parts of the city.

While this inquiry focuses on public transport needs, public transport cannot be considered in isolation. This inquiry should also consider the integration of public transport with other modes – particularly active transport and shared or micro-mobility options.

We are putting forward nine recommendations for how to address the current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney:

1. **Set a target for trips taken by sustainable transport modes.** Parramatta and Harris Park are the only suburbs in Western Sydney where most people use public or active transport to get to work.¹ The high number of private car trips in Western Sydney is a result of low-density neighbourhoods and poor investment in sustainable transport infrastructure and economic centres. A sustainable mode shift target should be set in the Greater Sydney Region Plan to ensure transport planning, land-use planning and employment planning focus on achieving the same outcome.

¹ <https://www.movementandplace.nsw.gov.au/place-and-network/built-environment-indicators/mode-share>



2. **Deliver the strategic cycleway corridors.** Strategic cycleway corridors for Greater Sydney have been loosely planned. It's time the NSW Government does the work to properly plan and deliver the corridors so people can choose to cycle if they want to. Now, cycling in Sydney is unsafe and difficult, with the few bike paths we have concentrated in the eastern city. Transport for NSW should commit to funding Sydney's strategic cycleway corridors and deliver the network by 2033 at the latest.
3. **Build or upgrade footpaths to integrate with the broader transport network.** Many residential areas in Western Sydney do not have footpaths. Often this is not due to a lack of space, as typical street designs include large grass verges intersected with driveways. Some people may walk on the grass, but for those with low mobility or prams, this makes walking almost impossible, or requires unsafely walking on the road. In other areas, footpaths are narrow compared to the width of the verge, which can also make it difficult or less comfortable to walk. The NSW Government should work with local councils to prioritise which streets need footpaths built or upgraded. Local councils will need funding support from the NSW Government to achieve this.
4. **Make sure active transport routes have shade, shelter and places to rest.** Where possible we should look to increase street trees, and awnings where possible, to make it more comfortable to walk no matter the weather. Priority walking connections should be upgraded first. Also, having places to sit and rest is essential for some people to be able to make a walking trip. People with children, elderly or less mobile people, or even with a few heavy bags of shopping, need places to stop on their journey. Ideally these places are sheltered and welcoming.
5. **Make stations and town centres multi-modal mobility hubs.** The town centres of Western Sydney face a dilemma: they are trying to be islands of walkability amidst a sea of car dependency. Local councils have a difficult task of providing better options for access by foot, bike and public transport, while at the same time being realistic about the fact that many, if not most, people will arrive by car. To accommodate micro-mobility, mobility as a service and on-demand mobility services, Western Sydney town centres should work hard to upgrade footpaths, add bike lanes and create car-sharing spaces to give people more options in the long run, even while being realistic about the need to accommodate driving in the short term.
6. **Improve public and active transport connections to places people work, including industrial estates.** Western Sydney houses many industrial estates, which employ thousands of workers. These estates are often located on highways that are extremely difficult to access via any mode other than the car. For example, a commute from Mount Druitt to Oakdale West Industrial estate takes 15 minutes by car, or up to 1.5 hours by three modes of public transport. These locations need to be better served by public and active transport routes – and should be considered when identifying possible Bus Rapid Transit routes.
7. **Identify bus routes or suitable corridors for conversion to Bus Rapid Transit and additional lines and services.** Western Sydney has lower passenger demand for buses compared to the rest of Sydney. However, this is undoubtedly due to the fact Western Sydney also has fewer bus services compared to the rest of Sydney, and growth in bus



services has not kept up with the population. At the same time, bus services in Western Sydney run less frequently and have shorter hours of operation. This makes buses in the west far less convenient than buses elsewhere across the city.

8. **Improve Western Sydney ferries.** We recommend improving the frequency and speed of ferries between Parramatta and the Sydney Olympic Park ferry wharf in Wentworth Point. This route is a key connector for people to get to jobs and services. Increased frequency and speeds will let more people use this service.
9. **Consider extra stops for West Metro west.** Metro West is a city-shaping project that will strengthen key precincts such as Westmead, Parramatta CBD and Sydney Olympic Park. It will increase accessibility and mobility for people living, working and visiting Western Sydney. To maximise the benefits of the project, we recommend additional stations along the Metro West line at Camellia and Newington to support planned and future growth.
10. **Finalise Parramatta light rail through funding Stage 2.** Parramatta light rail will connect the GPOP (Greater Parramatta and Olympic Park) region to public transport, unlocking new housing and jobs – and ensuring dense communities across the region are able to access good quality public transport.
11. **Consider extra stops for metro west.** This city-shaping project will strengthen key precincts such as Westmead, Parramatta CBD and Sydney Olympic Park. It will increase accessibility and mobility for people living, working and visiting Western Sydney. To maximise the benefits of the project, we recommend additional stations along the line at Camellia and Newington to support planned and future growth.
12. **Connect the Central River City with the metro.** The River Rail link, connecting Kogarah with Bankstown, Parramatta and Epping, would link Western Sydney to itself and the rest of Sydney. This cross-cutting line would stitch together many of Sydney's rail and metro lines, while reinforcing Parramatta's central role. The Epping connection also links to the northern line and populations in northern Sydney and the central coast, which currently have to transit through the eastern city before getting to Parramatta.
13. **Start planning for cross-cutting rail lines.** The metro lines detailed above are just the start. For Sydney to become a truly successful world city, where commuters, residents and tourists alike are able to easily and efficiently get from everywhere to everywhere, we need to keep going. That means adding more rail lines over time to serve more places, stitching Sydney together so it becomes possible to get from anywhere to anywhere. One of the most important design goals for the system is to build cross-cutting lines. This means instead of every line feeding into the Sydney CBD, our city will have a grid of rail lines with frequent service, making it easy to switch lines and get where you need to.
14. **Connect the Western Sydney Airport metro with the rest of the network.** It is essential that we better connect the new Western Sydney Airport. People who arrive in Sydney, at any time of the day or night, should be able to access any part of Sydney quickly and easily. The Western Sydney Airport Metro should have connections:
 - To the north, with northwest metro at Tallawong or Schofields to link Sydney's north and northwest to the airport and employment centres at Penrith



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- To the south-west, via Leppington, to connect with Sydney's heavy rail network at Glenfield, creating faster rail journeys from Liverpool
- To the south, to Macarthur, to connect into Campbelltown centre and the Southern Highlands
- To the west, with metro west at Parramatta
- To Kingsford Smith Airport and through to the CBD.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry. If you have any questions regarding our submission, please feel free to reach out to Harri Bancroft, Public Policy Advisor –

Kind regards,

Eamon Waterford
CEO
The Committee for Sydney