

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

**Organisation:** Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue

**Date Received:** 18 September 2023

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# Current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney

**Submission by the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue**

September 2023

## About the Dialogue

The Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue (The Dialogue) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the inquiry on Current and Future Public Transport Needs in Western Sydney. The Dialogue is fiercely committed to enhancing the future of the Greater Western Sydney (GWS) region and has cultivated an extensive network of Partners from within the community, private, and public sectors who share this goal. The GWS region is home to over half of Greater Sydney's population and functions as the third largest economy in Australia, and the infrastructure, or often the lack thereof, that makes up the region has direct implications for these Partners.

Since its inception, The Dialogue has been advocating for sensible, equitable, and transformative infrastructure for the residents of GWS. The Dialogue has always been a vocal proponent of projects that will provide residents with better opportunities, services, and amenities, and enhance their lives, such as establishing recreational water spaces, developing health and education hubs, and increasing community and social housing. To realise the full potential of these projects, a comprehensive, integrated, and thoughtful public transportation network is crucial. Currently the GWS region is inordinately underserved by the transport infrastructure in place for residents, workers, and visitors, especially when compared to counterparts in the east.

The Dialogue has previously supported a number of key transport projects that have the potential to deliver unparalleled benefits for the region through improved connectivity, job-generation and increased access to essential services.

## Recommendations

### TOR #1

1. Consider using bus services to immediately address gaps in public transport access for the North West and South West growth areas. This should include investigating the merits of a significant re-design of existing bus networks, and the provision of new funding for contract operators to deliver expanded services and new routes.
2. The Dialogue encourages the Committee to further examine the role of public transport as an economic enabler and consider the merit of providing greater transport connectivity to socioeconomically disadvantaged communities across GWS.

### TOR #5

3. We would welcome some examination and consideration by the committee of the potential to implement geographically based Opal fare discounts to incentivise public transport use in certain areas and at certain times of the day where there may be a demonstrable benefit to low-socioeconomic individuals and communities who may otherwise become socially isolated or forced into unsustainable car dependence.

### TOR #6

4. The Dialogue urges the NSW Government to consider the role of physical staff presence and other environmental considerations such as increased lighting to improve customers' perceived sense of safety.
5. The Dialogue recommends the exploration of a real-time anonymous safety reporting platform so that rail users can report non-criminal personal safety concerns without fear of retribution from the person/s that are making them feel unsafe. The anonymised data from this platform should also be collected and analysed to identify where further safety improvements can be made.

### TOR #7

6. The Dialogue would welcome a renewed discussion on the merits and potential of value capture to supplement the cost to taxpayers of building and operating new transport infrastructure.

### TOR #9

7. The Dialogue urges the Committee to acknowledge the social and economic impact of the lack of north-south connectivity through GWS and explore future projects to improve this issue.
8. The Dialogue is calling for the government to commence work on a new Sydney Trains timetable to show exactly how and where new City Circle capacity, enabled by the removal of T3 Bankstown Line services, will be deployed to improve rail access for communities in GWS.
9. The Dialogue calls for a new discussion on options to remove the Station Access fee on Sydney Airport's International and Domestic Terminal Stations.

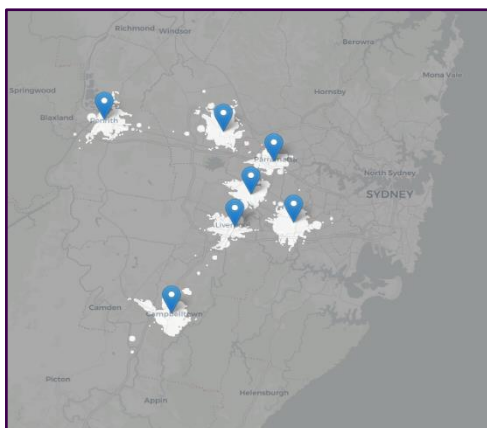
**TOR #1****Availability and accessibility of public transport services across Western Sydney, the adequacy of connectivity between public transport hubs and commercial hubs and any gaps in services.**

The accessibility of Western Sydney's key strategic centres (Bankstown, Parramatta, Blacktown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Penrith, and Campbelltown) by public transport within 15 minutes and 30 minutes is illustrated in the below maps. The footprint of the region's heavy rail and bus network and the extent of highlighted area within 30 minutes of these centres (Figure 2) suggests that in theory, the region is fairly accessible by public transport.

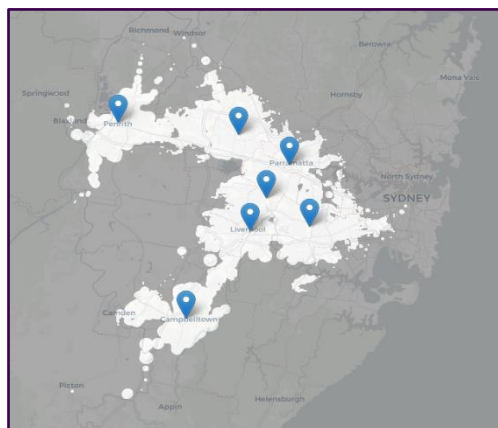
In practice, however, accessibility is poor and mode share for public transport relative to private car use remains stubbornly low across the region. Some factors behind this include:

- Geography and urban form: Lower density neighbourhoods generate longer distance journeys for commuting, trips to school and day to day errands. The relative ease of private vehicles for many of these trips drives car dependency, despite the cost of owning/running a car for lower income earners.
- Safety and security on public transport: While not isolated to Western Sydney, customer safety (perceived and actual) is a major inhibiting factor and barrier for many to choose a bus or train over private vehicles.
- Poorly coordinated connections between bus and rail services: GWS residents often cite trip length and the inconvenience of waiting for connections as a barrier to using public transport. Poor coordination between bus and rail services exacerbates both these issues, as well as add to difficulties around last mile connectivity from homes to transport.
- Last mile connectivity: The ability to physically access public transport is a barrier for use for GWS residents. The low density spread of the region naturally causes many residents to live further than walking distance from a train station or direct bus line. Many suburban bus services are meandering and inconsistent, meaning that those who wish to use heavy rail or a direct bus line are forced to drive and park at a station. The time this adds to a commute often leaves residents deciding to simply drive all the way to their destination.
- Variability of travel times due to road congestion: Chronic traffic congestion, though not unique to GWS, plays a huge role in the relative attractiveness of public transport wherever a journey or part of a journey is taken by bus.
- Unreliability of heavy rail services: TfNSW data shows that Sydney Trains failed to meet monthly punctuality targets since May 2022. Although action has been taken to address maintenance backlogs and defects on the network, the consistent unreliability has the compounding impact of making public transport a less desirable choice.

*Figure 1 – 15-minute access to select GWS CBDs by public transport.*



*Figure 2 – 30-minute access to select GWS CBDs by public transport.*



## Recommendation 1

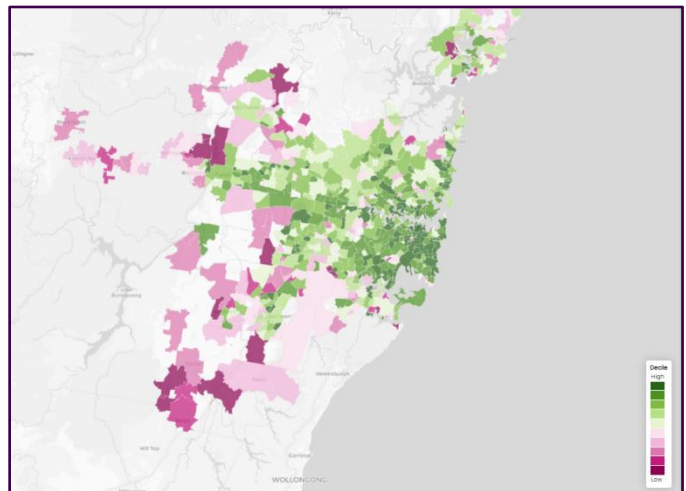
**Consider using bus services to immediately address gaps in public transport access for the North West and South West growth areas. This should include investigating the merits of a significant re-design of existing bus networks, and the provision of new funding for contract operators to deliver expanded services and new routes.**

The most critical gaps in services across GWS are in the rapidly growing North West and South West growth centres, as seen in Figure 3. Like health and education, transport connectivity has not kept pace with population growth in these areas. Traffic congestion and social isolation are now having a tangible negative impact on the liveability of these areas.

Addressing these gaps may require a significant re-design of existing bus networks, and the provision of new funding for contract operators to deliver expanded services and new routes. This may be necessary before the term of the current contract(s) expires.

The Dialogue acknowledges that there are inherent challenges in establishing viable, well-patronised bus services in growth suburbs, however the long-term costs of endemic car dependence, such as productivity loss, reduced liveability of the area, the impact of social isolation, and its influence on the prevalence of chronic lifestyle diseases, need to be factored into decision making more thoroughly from the early in the planning process.

Figure 3 – Proportion of dwellings within 400m of public transport with regular 30-minute weekday service (7am-7pm).



Source: Australian Urban Observatory

## Recommendation 2

**The Dialogue encourages the Committee to further examine the role of public transport as a socioeconomic enabler and consider the merits of providing greater transport connectivity to socioeconomically disadvantaged communities across GWS.**

Another key gap in public transport services across the region was highlighted in BaptistCare Hope Street's upcoming "Forgotten Suburbs" campaign. In this yet to be published project, the transport disadvantage experienced by people living in the 2770 postcode (wider Mount Druitt area) will be placed under the spotlight. The project highlighted the need for elevated service levels in our most disadvantaged suburbs, so that residents could access work, childcare, and other essential services.

Maintaining a reliable and affordable physical connection to these aspects of life is vital for health, social equity, and social inclusion. There are whole corridors of GWS with high rates of entrenched disadvantage, that are also being doubled down on by poor public transport connectivity. This is unacceptable.

The Dialogue urges the Committee to explore how greater public transport connectivity, particularly buses, could be used as a catalyst for improving socioeconomic outcomes for whole areas.

## TOR #2 and #3

### **Current and anticipated levels of demand for public transport services and the public transport requirements to meet this demand.**

### **Changing nature of public transport needs due to shifting demographics, new suburbs, planned infrastructure and increased density.**

Greater Western Sydney is a quickly growing region. As a result, careful future planning will be required to ensure that the future public transport needs of the region are met. GWS is projected to increase its population by one third (32%) in the 20 years between 2021 and 2041. In a year-to-year comparison, this will look like an average of a 1% increase to the population every year.

The North West and the South West Growth Areas are expected to grow even faster than GWS, with a 37% and 51% increase expected respectively.

If current North West Growth Area commuter numbers increased at the same rate as population over the next two decades, this would result in approximately 3.6k additional train users, 1.5k additional bus users, and 41.1k car drivers and passengers.

According to Campbelltown City Council, The Macarthur region is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. Over the next 20 years it's anticipated to grow to between 517k and 615k residents, with the demand for public transport expected to grow with it.

Without provisions for future public transport networks, and assuming a constant rate of employment participation, it is estimated the number of residents within the Macarthur region using a vehicle to get to work will increase by 77k persons. The local road network is insufficient to support that level of traffic generation. Therefore, public transport services require significant improvement.

For years, the residents of outer North West and South West have been grappling with worsening traffic conditions as congestion increases along with the rapid growth in population in these areas. A lack of efficient and accessible public transport alternatives has resulted in an entrenched over reliance on personal vehicles for residents, putting increased pressure on household budgets through tolls, fuel expenses, parking fees, and vehicle maintenance costs.

## TOR #4

### **Social, economic, and planning impacts of vehicle dependency and poorly integrated public transport.**

In reference to the social and economic impacts of vehicle dependency and poorly integrated public transport, the Dialogue refers to the submission to the Committee from the Campbelltown Health and Education Precinct (CHEP).

#### Social

Public transport is also not just about people in seats, it's about which people can get in the seats. This influences a person's inclusion into communities and society. GWS's lack of public transport connectivity often leaves its residents car dependent. This has a doubling effect in the region as its high rates of on-site service-oriented workers means that residents are less likely to be able to work from home.

Households in outer GWS suburbs are disproportionately vulnerable to spikes in cost of living, such as rapid interest rate rises, fuel prices, and groceries.<sup>1</sup> Financial pressures are exacerbated when ready use of public transport, more affordable than driving, isn't an option. This works to exclude residents from accessing goods, services, jobs, and social options, especially for those that are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Social exclusion creates costs for both the excluded person and the wider community. Those who are socially excluded commonly having a higher risk of being unemployed, poorer mental and physical health, being less socially connected and some are more likely to engage in crime and/or substance abuse.<sup>2</sup>

### Economic

Continued vehicle dependence in the region will:

- Have impacts on economic productivity and service supply due to increasing congestion.
- Cause deterioration in the amenity and destination appeal, resulting in challenges to the attraction of skilled workers.

The lack of public transport connectivity in the region continues to drive demand for car ownership, and therefore car dependency, increasing congestion and impacting the performance of our road network in a self-perpetuating cycle. This unhealthy cycle requires a circuit-breaker commitment from government to enhance the public transport services and improve the infrastructure, to make public transport attractive to our residents.

The current levels of congestion in the North West and South West growth areas in particular are expected to continue to increase without intervention, which will negatively impact the region's economic potential. A region's economy does best when its residents spend more time working, using services and recreating, and less time travelling to those places.<sup>3</sup> Long and congested driven commutes have a significant impact on worker productivity, working conditions, and business shipping costs, all of which increase with the length of the trip.<sup>4</sup>

Congestion and commute times and ease are considerable factors for liveability. The relative liveability of an area impacts on its ability to attract skilled workers, and subsequently improve the knowledge-based industries within the region.<sup>5</sup>

### Health

Population health influences both the social and economic outcomes of a region and its residents. Car dependency layers onto other factors like socioeconomic determinants of health and food deserts combine to create an obesogenic environment that residents must battle against to engage in a healthy lifestyle.

The populations of the South West Sydney, Western Sydney, and Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health Districts each have higher proportions of overweight residents than the national

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<sup>1</sup> As seen in the Australian Urban Observatory's VAMPIRE index

<sup>2</sup> 2005, Baumeister, et al., *Social Exclusion Impairs Self-Regulation*

<sup>3</sup> 2015, A., Somuyiwa, S., Fadare & B., Ayantoyunbo, *Analysis of the Cost of Traffic Congestion on Worker's Productivity in a Mega City of a Developing Economy*

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> 2006, COAG, *Urban Congestion Review*

average, and this includes children<sup>6</sup>. Our region also has almost twice as many residents living with diabetes than the rest of Sydney, and a greater proportion of residents when compared to the whole of NSW.<sup>7</sup>

The impact of an overweight population has compounding effects over time which further entrenches health inequities across Greater Sydney. Not only does being overweight substantially increase the risk of a person having a stroke or developing a chronic illness like type 2 diabetes, hypertension, or heart disease<sup>8</sup>, but the stigma experienced by those who are overweight reduces the likelihood of them seeking medical help until issues become acute<sup>9</sup>.

The flow-on effect of high rates of obesity double down on some groups of the region's community. On average, Aboriginal-identifying persons in GWS are younger than but 50% more likely to be diagnosed with type 2 diabetes than non-identifying residents. GWS residents from the Pacific Islands are 40% more likely to develop further complications related to diabetes after diagnosis than those who were born in Australia or Western Europe<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, obesity is both the top risk factor for post-menopausal breast cancer and has found to be a significant barrier to women seeking breast screening<sup>11</sup>.

The rate of diabetes, as well as those of overweight and obesity, and its related conditions experienced by the GWS population is already straining the local health systems. GWS is also expected to see significant increases in population over the next two decades. These factors together contribute to a scenario of unsustainable weight on health services, as well as a serious issue for the region's productivity and resident's socioeconomic outcomes.

Public transport is one lever in the government's toolbox that can be used to help slow the rapid increase of overweight, obesity and diabetes in our region. The use of public transport often involves incidental active transport, like walking to and from transit stops such as train stations or bus stops. Good access to public transport is associated with walking sufficiently each week to meet physical activity guidelines. Public transport use can add eight to 33 minutes of physical activity per day.<sup>12</sup>

Research shows that improving accessibility to public transport will improve population health by facilitating physical activity and lead to healthcare cost savings compared with business-as-usual.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> McBride, K, n.d.

<sup>7</sup> 2021, ABS Census

<sup>8</sup> McBride, K, n.d.

<sup>9</sup> McBride, K, n.d.

<sup>10</sup> 2022, [Western Sydney Diabetes](#)

<sup>11</sup> McBride, K, n.d.

<sup>12</sup> 2012, Rissel, et al., *Key health benefits associated with public transport: a rapid review*

<sup>13</sup> 2019, Brown, et al., *Better transport accessibility, better health: a health economic impact assessment study for Melbourne, Australia.*



**TOR #5**

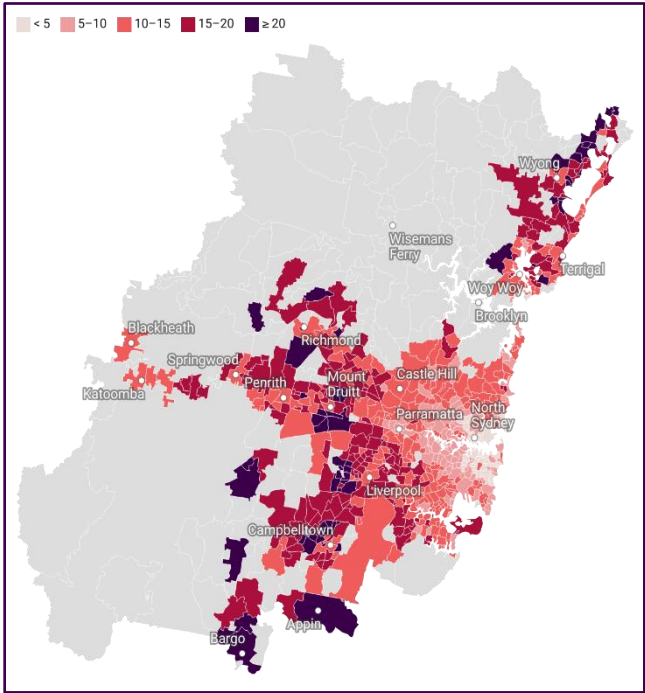
**Affordability compared with other areas of Greater Sydney and New South Wales and relative to means.**

As referenced in TOR #4, households in outer GWS suburbs are disproportionately vulnerable to spikes in cost of living, such as rapid interest rate rises, fuel prices, and groceries, in comparison to other areas of Greater Sydney.

This is seen in the Australian Urban Observatory’s VAMPIRE index, featured in Figure 4. A household’s vulnerability to financial pressures is exacerbated when ready use of public transport, which is more affordable than driving, isn’t an option. This works to exclude residents from accessing goods, services, jobs, and social options, especially for those that are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

An upcoming campaign by BaptistCare Hope Street will highlight the acute transport disadvantage experienced in the Mount Druitt area’s 2770 postcode, where poor and non-existent bus service levels are locking vulnerable people out of participation in the economy and entrenching welfare dependence in many cases. The Dialogue encourages the Committee to examine and consider the costs and benefits of funding additional bus services or grants for targeted on-demand transport that can address transport disadvantage in Western Sydney’s most disadvantaged areas.

Figure 4 – 2021 Vulnerability Assessment for Mortgage Petroleum Inflation Risks and Expenditure (VAMPIRE) index by the Australian Urban Observatory.



VAMPIRE indicates household vulnerability to rising costs and includes 4 major variables using counts: proportion of dwellings with 2 or more cars; average household weekly income; proportion of dwellings with a mortgage; and proportion of residents commuting by car.

**Recommendation 3**

**We would welcome some examination and consideration by the Committee of the potential to implement geographically based Opal fare discounts to incentivise public transport use in certain areas and at certain times of the day where there may be a demonstrable benefit to low-socioeconomic individuals and communities who may otherwise become socially isolated or forced into unsustainable car dependence.**

**The Dialogue also recommends the consideration of funding additional bus services or grants for targeted on-demand transport that can address transport disadvantage in Western Sydney’s most disadvantaged areas.**

## TOR #6

### **The role of public transport and future transport technologies to reduce car dependency in Western Sydney, including barriers to improving public transport services.**

Increasing the attractiveness of public transport use for residents in Greater Western Sydney over private car usage depends on several crucial aspects.

- First and last mile connectivity.
- Interchange facilities.
- Station amenity, including end of trip facilities.
- Safety (perceived and actual).

In combination, these factors can collectively make public transport an appealing and competitive option for Greater Western Sydney residents, reducing car dependency and improving overall urban mobility.

#### First and last mile connections

Improving the first and last mile connections to transport hubs will have a considerable impact on the appeal of public transport in Western Sydney. Public transport becomes a more practical choice when the gap between home or work and transit stations is seamlessly bridged through the provision of reliable and convenient options such as bike-sharing, pedestrian pathways, or shuttle services.

Improvements to access via active transport or other non-private vehicle modes of transport effectively expand the catchment area of transit services, by making them more attractive and convenient for individuals residing farther from transportation nodes.

A critical component of improving the first/last mile and promoting public transport choices in GWS will be the extent to which key amenities and services can be integrated with station developments. For example, providing more station adjacent child care centres or grocery stores can significantly uncomplicate the multiple necessary daily errands that make car travel the more attractive mode choice for so many in GWS.

First and last mile connections, particularly those that promote active transport, also have the additional benefits of increasing incidental exercise and freeing up valuable urban land adjacent to stations and stops previously allocated for parking facilities that can be rezoned for other purposes.

#### Interchange facilities

Well-designed interchange facilities influence the utilisation of public transport by improving the convenience of the service by simplifying the transfer between different modes of transport and reduce travel times when connections are planned appropriately.

#### Station amenity

Enhancing station amenity with clean, well-maintained facilities, comfortable waiting areas, and customer information can significantly enhance the overall commuter experience. Similarly, end-of-trip amenities like secure bike storage, lockers, and easy access to public transport hubs for pedestrians further sweeten the deal for potential passengers.

#### Safety

Improving security across the transport network increases the appeal and patronage of public transport. Ensuring both perceived and actual safety and security by deploying visible staff, adequate lighting, and surveillance measures can effectively address passenger concerns,

reducing the role of safety concerns when considering public transport as an alternative to car travel.

A survey undertaken by Plan International found 92% of young women feel uncomfortable taking public transport at night in Sydney. Locations in Western Sydney, including Blacktown and Parramatta Stations, have previously been flagged in a Committee for Sydney report on women's perceptions of safety as areas routinely experienced and perceived as very unsafe. Respondents commonly reported implementing behaviour changes, such as swapping to personal vehicles, after unsafe experiences at stations and other transport hubs.

#### Recommendation 4

**The Dialogue urges the NSW Government to consider the role of physical staff presence and other environmental considerations such as increased lighting, to improve customers' perceived sense of safety.**

This consideration should include how technology can be employed to either achieve improvements to safety and the perception of safety, or to build upon existing safety aspects to multiply the output.

#### Recommendation 5

**The Dialogue recommends the exploration of a real-time anonymous safety reporting service so that rail users can report non-criminal personal safety concerns without fear of retribution from the person/s that are making them feel unsafe.**

The Dialogue suggests that for this purpose, the Committee should explore technologies which would enable patrons to engage in a live chat with a TfNSW specialist employee, who could then alert the guard on that specific train. Anonymised data from this reporting platform should be recorded and analysed to identify where further safety improvements could be made.

#### TOR #7

**The role of the public and private sector, including local government and the use of innovative funding models, such as transit oriented development and value capture mechanisms, in public transport provision.**

The Dialogue notes that Western Sydney's bus contract regions have been privately operated for many years. We believe that the recent focus on bus services, culminating in the current Bus Industry Taskforce, has unfairly conflated the privatisation of Sydney bus contracts with deteriorating service levels, which can be attributed more to pandemic-induced labour shortages and poor contract design than it can to privatisation alone.

Bus region contracts need to be designed in a way that prioritises customer and taxpayer outcomes over punitive contractor management and enables the global expertise of private operators to work in partnership with government to drive better customer outcomes wherever possible.

Innovative funding and financing models have a role to play in helping to meet capital and operational costs of public transport infrastructure and services, however they are too often

championed as a panacea, distracting from the hard reality that public transport infrastructure needs public funding.

However, with all of this in mind, in the current budgetary context and with the cost of debt now an inhibiting rather than enabling factor in project decisions, it is appropriate to revisit any mechanism which can partially offset the cost of building and operating transport infrastructure. With farebox revenue only recouping approximately 20-30% of the real cost of public transport operations, measures to reduce the taxpayer subsidy should be under constant consideration. Value capture can also be implemented to cover operation costs as well as, or instead of, capital costs of public transport infrastructure.

The Dialogue has been a leading advocate for the use of value capture mechanisms in NSW for many years. Most notably, we convened the WestLine Partnership, a collective of stakeholders campaigning for the delivery of what is now known as Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2 to Sydney Olympic Park. The group included a number of property owners and developers who were at the time strongly in support of value capture on new development to help fund the project. A value capture levy of \$200 per square metre on new residential development was announced at the time by Premier Baird and later abandoned, as the project became de-prioritised.

With Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2 now back on the agenda for the Minns Government, we'd welcome a fresh debate on value capture.

## Recommendation 6

**The Dialogue would welcome a renewed discussion on the merits and potential of value capture to supplement the cost to taxpayers of building and operating new transport infrastructure.**

This is especially pertinent now that Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2 now back on the agenda (noting NSW Labor's election commitment to procure and deliver project) as well the expected station precinct development surrounding new Sydney Metro stations.

## TOR #8

**Staffing and future workforce planning, taking into account predicted service demand based on predicted population growth in Western Sydney.**

The current Bus Industry Taskforce has appropriately focused immediately and urgently on addressing the shortage of bus drivers which has crippled services across Sydney. We note that Western Sydney is better placed to provide work opportunities closer to where bus drivers will typically be able to live affordably.

The upcoming closure of the T3 Bankstown Line will demand more bus drivers, which will be closely followed by the implementation of new rapid buses to Western Sydney Airport. All of this points to a demand for more bus drivers working in Western Sydney over the next three years and beyond.

## TOR #9

**Any other related matters.**

### Recommendation 7

**The Dialogue urges the Committee to acknowledge the social and economic impact of the lack of north-south connectivity through GWS, and explore future projects to improve this issue.**

North-south connectivity across GWS is constantly raised by our Partners as the biggest challenge and highest long-term strategic priority for transport infrastructure in the region. In consultation with reference groups to inform and shape the Dialogue 2023 NSW Election Agenda, north-south connectivity through the “Central River City” was flagged as a high priority by local government, business, and community sector participants.

We believe a long-term project such as the Kogarah-Bankstown-Parramatta-Epping/Hills mass transit corridor flagged in the previous Government’s Future Transport Strategy would mark a fundamental shift in the economic geography of Greater Sydney. Our city has evolved around a paradigm of CBD-centric job growth and east-west commuter patterns, underpinned by the heavy rail and motorway networks. Even with the emergence of Parramatta as a viable second CBD, north-south access from the Cumberland and Canterbury Bankstown LGAs remains a challenge.

### Recommendation 8

**The Dialogue is calling for the government to commence work on a new Sydney Trains timetable to show exactly how and where new City Circle capacity, enabled by the removal of T3 Bankstown Line services, will be deployed to improve rail access for communities in GWS.**

We note that this additional service capacity was originally promoted as a primary justification for the Bankstown Line Metro conversion at the time that decision was first announced, however the whole-of-network benefits associated with this project have been scarcely promoted in recent years.

The Dialogue is calling for clarity on the future of T3 Bankstown Line services west of Bankstown Station. We note that a range of options have been canvassed publicly and internally within TfNSW and Sydney Metro (via documents released under the GIPA Act), which include the potential shut down of rail services and replacement with buses. Naturally, this has become a cause of anxiety for communities on the T3 Line between Lidcombe, Bankstown, and Liverpool.

### Recommendation 9

**The Dialogue calls for a new discussion on options to remove the Station Access fee on Sydney Airport’s International and Domestic Terminal Stations.**

We note that this has been a perennial issue of concern for Sydneysiders, and in particular the tourism industry, for many years. Removing this considerable disincentive to travel by train to the airport would help relieve peak congestion on the M5 Motorway, and would enable efficient and cheap access to travellers and airport workers living along the T8 Line through the South West and Macarthur Region.

The Dialogue reiterates its position calling for a mandated inclusionary zoning rule for the delivery of 30% social and affordable housing for all new residential development within a designated walk-up catchment of new metro and heavy rail stations. We believe the Sydney Metro program has an important role to play as a growth management and housing policy lever over the next decade and beyond. We believe it is appropriate to also consider establishing a new development corporation within Sydney Metro as an exemplar for delivery of sustainable, integrated and inclusive transit-oriented development.

**The Dialogue's position on Sydney Metro West, Sydney Metro South West and Sydney Metro – Western Sydney Airport can be found in the appendix.**

## Appendix

### Sydney Metro Independent Review

#### Dialogue policy position

September 2023

#### Recommendations

1. Stick to a sustainable megaproject pipeline, don't make a sudden infrastructure retreat for quick budget savings.
2. Go ahead with Sydney Metro West.
3. Avoid adding additional stops to the existing route of Sydney Metro West.
4. Utilise a rigorous land use planning regime around the planned stations to deliver more homes at lower cost to the taxpayer.
5. Create a development corporation within Sydney Metro to optimise land holdings and development opportunities.
6. Review Sydney Trains timetables to provide clarity on where new City Circle capacity, enabled by the T3 Line conversion to metro, will be distributed.
7. Where possible, maintain connectivity along the T3 Rail Line for residents throughout construction.
8. Future project pipeline recommendations:
  - a. SMWSA to Leppington/Glenfield.
  - b. SMWSA – Tallawong.
  - c. Oran Park – Narellan – Macarthur SMWSA extension.

#### **Stick to a sustainable megaproject pipeline, don't make a sudden infrastructure retreat for quick budget savings.**

There is obviously a lot of pressure and clear need to find Budget savings wherever possible, and scaling back of mega project commitments is an obvious starting point. The Dialogue, however, urges the government to maintain a sustainable course of action in relation to transport infrastructure, and take advantage of the skill base and economies of scale that have been established locally to date.

The Dialogue believes this is the most sensible approach to infrastructure projects in the context of tightening budgets across the board. Given the ramp up in population growth we are starting to see post-pandemic, GWS will invariably take on more than its share in growth. Public infrastructure commitments will need to recognise this.

#### **Go ahead with Sydney Metro West.**

The construction of Sydney Metro West needs to go ahead, and delays in delivery need to be minimised as much as possible.

The Dialogue requests that the government:

1. Confirm the project as soon as possible, including an updated project delivery timeline.
2. Confirm the preferred procurement approach and timeline for contract packages that are yet to be awarded.

**Avoid adding additional stops to the existing Sydney Metro West route.**

The Dialogue recommends that additional stops not be added to the existing route. Adding additional stops will both slow the project delivery and the travel time of the line upon completion.

Instead, the Dialogue urges the government to maximise the opportunities that will come from shorter trip times between denser precincts. There is significant potential for SMW to act as a job growth and economic development catalyst in Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park thanks to the expected ~23 and ~15-minute journey trip to the CBD, respectively.

Each additional minute added to the current projections will provide diminishing returns to the long-term economic growth that could be offered to Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park.

**Utilise a rigorous land use planning regime around the planned stations to deliver more homes at lower cost to the taxpayer.**

The Dialogue urges the government to implement a rigorous planning regime to govern the delivery of the five already named stations, Rozelle, Pyrmont, Olympic Park, Parramatta, and Westmead. This will be the optimal route to delivering the homes that Greater Sydney desperately needs, in a way that also stimulates economic growth to the area, adds to amenity and does not add additional cost to the taxpayer.

Allowing for easier, streamlined approvals, more height, and requiring best practice design outcomes will be important, if the government is to realise a better return from this plan. These stations would be ideal locations for this approach as there will be no time added to the route. Additionally, added density will have far less impact as many of these stations are already served by intersecting rail, they are established city centres or in built up areas with extensive amenity and services.

**Create a development corporation within Sydney Metro to optimise land holdings and development opportunities.**

As mentioned, with fewer stations and faster journey times Sydney Metro West will need to have a well-executed precinct planning and placemaking strategy to make the most of the opportunity for each station precinct to absorb population growth, improve amenity, and grow jobs.

The Dialogue believes that Sydney Metro ought to become one of the government's primary population growth management and housing policy levers. A development corporation needs to be set up within Sydney Metro to make best use of its land holdings and its ability to integrate above station development and ground transport links with its rail assets.

Much of the residential and commercial development, density and amenity opportunities presented by the development of the North West was not taken advantage of. There is substantial opportunity for urban renewal along the South West Metro line and we do not want to see this passed by.

**Review Sydney Trains timetables to provide clarity on where new City Circle capacity, enabled by the T3 Line conversion to metro, will be distributed.**

At the time of announcing the T3 Line conversion, the former government claimed that up to 60% additional capacity could be unlocked on other rail lines servicing south west Sydney, by



removing four trains per hour from the gridlocked City Circle. This was one of the primary selling points of the project at that time, but little has been discussed publicly on this issue in recent years. The Dialogue would welcome a renewed focus on this aspect of the project, to build confidence and support in affected communities, and in areas of the city which stand to benefit from additional rail capacity.

### **Maintain connectivity along the T3 Rail Line for residents throughout construction, where possible.**

Loss of connectivity along the T3 Rail Line during the construction of Sydney Metro South West will be a serious impediment to the mobility of local residents, forcing many to rely on a car for transport and commuting. The impact of car dependency on household finances is a well-known issue, especially in areas with high concentrations of socioeconomic disadvantage and road congestion, as is seen along much of the T3 Line.

Closing down this line for any period of time will be highly unpopular. Optimising the use of the remaining parts of the T3 Rail line to maintain connectivity between Bankstown and Liverpool and between Liverpool-city via Regents Park should be a priority, and would soften the negative impact of the loss of rail connectivity due to the metro conversion project.

### **Future projects**

The Dialogue advocates for the following projects to be included in the future pipeline:

#### Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport to Leppington/Glenfield

The failure to extend the SMWSA project through to the Leppington Station terminal is yet another regrettable potential missing link in our city's transport network. In addition to this short extension, the Dialogue believes extending metro along the South West Rail Link corridor to Glenfield is a crucial future extension which will establish Glenfield as a key interchange hub, enable rail connections between Sydney's two airports and simplify the journey from both Campbelltown and Liverpool to WSA. The Dialogue also supports a longer term extension of SMWSA through to Liverpool.

#### Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport to Tallawong

This extension would be an important catalyst for the social and economic transformation of the Mt Druitt area, linking it through to North West Sydney. Linking Marsden Park, Blacktown and the Hills District to the new airport would allow the State to realise more residential and job-generating commercial development, and would provide for transformative redevelopment of the State's public housing assets in the Mount Druitt area.

#### Oran Park – Narellan – Macarthur SMWSA extension

The Dialogue would welcome this route remaining in the long-term pipeline for consideration, and for genuine corridor identification and protection and business case development being undertaken. This option would enable rail connectivity between Sydney's two airports via Glenfield and provide an efficient rail link to the Aerotropolis for the rapidly growing Macarthur area.