

**Submission  
No 45**

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

**Organisation:** The Hills Shire Council

**Date Received:** 18 September 2023

---



**THE HILLS**  
Sydney's Garden Shire

**THE HILLS SHIRE COUNCIL**  
3 Columbia Court, Norwest NSW 2153  
PO Box 7064, Norwest 2153  
ABN 25 034 494 656

18 September 2023

The Director  
Portfolio Committee No. 6  
Transport and The Arts  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: [PortfolioCommittee6@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:PortfolioCommittee6@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Our Ref: 20867756

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Inquiry into the Current and Future Public Transport Needs in Western Sydney**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the inquiry into current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney. Comments provided herein are from a Council officer perspective and have not been considered or endorsed by the elected Council. However, the infrastructure recommended within this submission are generally reflective of Council's adopted strategic planning framework and transport priorities.

The Hills Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS), its supporting strategies and other key local strategies identify where housing growth will be located over the next 20 years, being mainly within our Station Precincts (including Rouse Hill, Kellyville, Bella Vista, Norwest, Hills Showground, Castle Hill and Cherrybrook) and existing Release Areas (such as Box Hill, North Kellyville, Gables and Balmoral Road). By 2036 the Shire is expected to grow by over 128,000 people, with likely demand for 38,000 additional dwellings and 50,000 additional jobs.

The Hills Shire has demonstrated its ability to meet and exceed its housing targets with approximately 15,440 dwellings approved and nearly 11,880 dwellings completed between 2016 and 2021. Over this period the population of The Hills Shire increased from 157,243 people to 191,876 people (+34,633 people). This equates to a 22% increase in population over 5 years, with an average annual growth rate of over 4%. By comparison over the same period the population of Greater Sydney increased by 8.4%, with an average annual growth rate of 1.7%.

Council has a proven track record of facilitating the delivery of housing and jobs to meet the demand of the Region's growing population and despite the surplus capacity already available within the planning controls, Council continue to play an active role in planning for further growth beyond the existing opportunities and our current target horizon. Evidence of this is Council's recently exhibited Precinct Plans for the Strategic Centres of Castle Hill, Norwest and Rouse Hill which earmark additional growth to 2041 and beyond.

Whilst the Sydney Metro Northwest will be utilised by many Hills Shire residents, the bus networks will continue to be critical in providing equitable access to public transport. Especially given the limited availability of commuter parking at Metro Stations. These bus services assist in enabling

workers, residents and visitors to access the Sydney Metro Stations and enable commuters to access locations that are not serviced by the Sydney Metro. This in turn will make public transport a viable choice for many commuters where this is not currently the case, despite the Metro.

To support future growth, it is imperative that the State Government assist Councils through the identification, funding and delivery of critical infrastructure, including improved transport links, public transport services and road upgrades to assist in bus priority. The following projects are critical to supporting growth and promoting increased public transport patronage. They generally reflect the priorities contained within Council's LSPS and the State Government's Future Transport Strategy 2061.

## **1. Sydney Metro Northwest extension from Tallawong to St Marys via Marsden Park**

The extension of the Sydney Metro from Tallawong Station to St Marys will provide access for our residents to the Western Sydney International Airport and serve workers who travel to The Hills from other parts of Western Sydney. It will provide faster commutes to Parramatta via the T1 Western Rail Line and act as an interim solution while the mass transit link between Parramatta and Norwest is planned and constructed. This project will be critical in achieving the 30-minute city vision in the rapidly growing North West Sydney Region by better connecting people to their closest Metropolitan and Strategic Centres.

Recent amendments to *State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts – Central River City) 2021* give effect to the Marsden Park Industrial Transport Corridor which will protect land for the future North South Rail Line (providing for part of the missing link between St Marys and Tallawong Stations). However, this is only part of the missing link, with the corridor from Marsden Park to Tallawong yet to be preserved. Previous exhibition material released by the State Government indicated that this section of the corridor will be included when the West Schofields Precinct Plan is finalised. It is considered that the land requirements for the transport corridor in this location could be progressed independently from the Schofields Precinct to provide a greater level of certainty for all stakeholders sooner.

Commitment by the NSW Government to the early planning and delivery of the entire transport corridor from St Marys all the way through to Tallawong Station will not only ensure that land is available for the future connection, but will also provide confidence to industry and businesses that this connection will be delivered in the future, encouraging them to invest in employment areas (including Strategic Centres within The Hills), which will provide more jobs close to home for Western Sydney residents.

## **2. Mass Transit Link (Norwest to Parramatta)**

Future Transport 2061 identifies a city-shaping link between Norwest and Parramatta with no firm commitment to planning at this stage. Norwest is a Strategic Centre and has the highest jobs targets of any strategic centre in the Central City District outside of Greater Parramatta. The Strategic Centre will accommodate an additional 16,385 dwellings and 22,400 jobs by 2036. Its success as an employment centre of district significance will rely on efficient connections to surrounding centres. A mass transit link between Norwest and Parramatta will secure the long-term viability of Norwest and support the growth of the Greater Parramatta and Olympic Peninsula (GPOP) economic corridor, cementing Parramatta's role as the Central River City CBD.

Currently, all major connections between The Hills and Parramatta are by road, and these are frequently congested at peak times. The Sydney Metro Northwest will relieve some of this congestion in the short term, however pressure on the existing road network will remain and increase as the population increases. The State Government should identify a preliminary corridor, including station options, and undertake early planning for the mass transit link between Norwest and Parramatta even if it is a medium to longer term infrastructure proposition.

### **3. Bus Priority Measures**

The Hills Shire is traversed by seven strategic bus corridors that carry people to and from key employment areas. These routes must be supported by local routes throughout the Shire to decrease the need for commuter car parking. Previous investment in additional services, bus priority measures and supporting infrastructure has seen a steady rise in bus patronage and a small but significant mode shift away from private vehicle use. Continued investment in bus services will increase bus patronage and support the Sydney Metro Northwest. Council has identified the following bus priority measures for arterial and local roads within its Strategic Planning Framework:

Arterial roads:

- Showground Road – from Old Northern Road to Carrington Road.
- Norwest Boulevard – full length.
- Green Road – from St Pauls Avenue to Showground Road.
- Memorial Avenue – full length.
- Old Northern Road – Castle Hill to Baulkham Hills.
- Windsor Road – Norwest Boulevard to Rembrandt Drive.

Local roads:

- West Pennant Hills – Highs Road, Taylor Street and Aiken Road (from Taylor Street to Oakes Road) with the bus lane extended to Castle Hill via a bus only bridge link over Excelsior Creek in the longer term.
- North Kellyville – bridge from Ross Place to Edwards Road.
- Station precincts including Rouse Hill (along Commercial Road and Withers Road) and Hills Showground (along Green Road, Victoria Avenue and Carrington Road). Bus priority measures are also proposed for other station precincts such as Castle Hill and Norwest. However, these improvements relate to the arterial road network.

### **4. Strategic Bus Link (Rouse Hill to Box Hill)**

Growth in greenfield areas, particularly Box Hill and Gables, will not be directly serviced by rail services. The Box Hill Precinct is expected to accommodate over 51,000 people and 29,000 new jobs. A further 13,500 residents will be accommodated within the Gables Precinct which adjoins Box Hill. Over 63% of the projected residential growth within the Box Hill Precinct has already been DA approved.

To better connect these growth precincts with access to the Sydney Metro Northwest and existing T-way services, a public transport link is required between Box Hill and Rouse Hill. Future growth within the Rouse Hill Strategic Centre, as well as the delivery of the new Rouse Hill Hospital will reinforce the need for this public transport corridor. There is currently a proposed public transport corridor stretching along Green Hills Drive, Mile End Road and Withers Road. However, Council has recently received advice from TfNSW (in response to the public exhibition of Council's Draft Rouse Hill Strategic Centre Precinct Plan) that they do not support the link on the basis that it is not identified in the Future Transport Strategy 2061.

The position of TfNSW on this matter is considered to be extremely disappointing, especially considering the rate of growth being experienced within these Precincts. It is also noted that much of this corridor has already been zoned for this purpose and is owned by Government. It is requested that the State Government progress with the delivery of this critical strategic bus link. If TfNSW is no longer supportive of this particular alignment, it is critical that an alternative corridor be included as part of the next iteration of the Future Transport Strategy to connect significant development areas in Box Hill and Gables to the Rouse Hill Strategic Centre, Metro Station and T-Way services.

### **5. Windsor Road upgrade to 3 lanes in each direction from Schofields Road to Bandon Road**

The North-West T-way is a bus only link connecting the centres of Parramatta, Blacktown and Rouse Hill. The section of the T-Way that serves The Hills Shire runs along Old Windsor Road from

Westmead to Rouse Hill (near Schofields Road). The section of Windsor Road extending from Schofields Road up to the Vineyard Precinct, which is the northern extent of the North West Growth Area, is only 2 lanes in each direction with no T-Way services. The traffic congestion along this stretch of road significantly reduces the efficiency of the local road network and ultimately impacts on the efficiency of bus services. The widening of Windsor Road to 3 lanes in each direction from Schofields Road to Bandon Road would address traffic congestion and will support housing delivery within the North West Priority Growth Area including the Area 20, Riverstone East, Riverstone, Box Hill and Vineyard Precincts.

Opportunities should also be considered to improve the frequency and efficiency of public transport services along this length of Windsor Road by integrating existing routes with the existing T-Way at Rouse Hill and the Sydney Metro Northwest Stations. This could be considered as part of the State Government's planning for a future Strategic Bus Link between Rouse Hill and Box Hill.

## **6. Outer Sydney Orbital M9 Motorway and freight rail line in Western Sydney**

The delivery of the Outer Sydney Orbital will play a critical role in improving public transport services within Western Sydney. The Orbital is a proposed corridor for the M9 Motorway and freight rail line in Western Sydney. A future motorway and freight rail line will result in the following key benefits for the Region:

- Provide for a major transport link between the North West and South West Growth Areas.
- Provide connections to the planned Western Sydney Airport and future employment lands.
- Support growing communities, businesses and new jobs in Western Sydney.
- Provide a freight rail connection between Port Botany, Western Sydney and regional NSW.
- Support the further separation of freight and passenger rail.
- Move freight more rapidly, efficiently and safely by rail.

The delivery of this Motorway will support growth and continued supply of housing and jobs in the North West Growth Area. It will assist in improving bus movement which will enhance the community's access to higher frequency public transport services.

## **7. Congestion on Local Roads**

Many traditional suburbs within Western Sydney are becoming more congested through lack of Motorways and the Government's tolling policy on existing Motorways. This is resulting in significant traffic congestion on local and regional roads. Whilst congestion drives mode shift to a degree it is imperative that the local and regional road networks continue to operate at a reasonable level of service as these roads form part of strategic bus corridors and form part of local bus routes.

The bus network remains vital to moving people between The Hills Shire and the surrounding regions and centres such as Blacktown and Parramatta, whilst also services people within areas that do not have direct access to Sydney Metro Northwest. The State Government's policy position on Motorways and tolling should reduce traffic volume and pressure on the local road network so as to enable bus services to move freely and efficiently within and between key centres. This will ensure that Western Sydney residents are provided with equitable access to public transport.

Should you or your staff wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Council's Manager – Forward Planning, Nicholas Carlton on \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_

Yours faithfully

**Mark Colburt**  
**ACTING GROUP MANAGER – SHIRE STRATEGY**