

**Submission
No 46**

INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Organisation: Blacktown City Council

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18 September 2023

Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC
Committee Chair
Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and the Arts
Parliament of New South Wales
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
By submission

Dear Ms Faehrmann MLC

Blacktown City Council – current and future public transport needs in western Sydney

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission to your Portfolio Committee's inquiry into the current and future public transport needs in western Sydney.

At Council's Planning, Development, Historical & Assets Committee meeting on 13 September 2023 the attached report was recommended to be adopted at Council's Ordinary Meeting on 28 September 2023. Our submission is subject to revision pending the final endorsement of Council at its Ordinary Meeting.

Our submission as attached may be published in full on your website under Blacktown City Council.

We commend you and your Committee on initiating this very important enquiry and look forward receiving your Committee's report on its findings.

If you would like to discuss this matter further please contact our Manager Access and Transport, Hendrik Roux on

Yours faithfully

Kerry Robinson OAM
Chief Executive Officer



Blacktown
City Council

Current and future public transport needs in western Sydney

Submission to the NSW Government's Portfolio Committee No. 6
(Transport and the Arts)

September 2023

Preface

Blacktown City, located within western Sydney, is the largest council by population in NSW and has one of the fastest growing (2.26% pa) populations. Our current (2023) population of 415,000 is forecast to increase nearly 50% in the next 20 years to more than 600,000, predominantly as a result of development in the North West Growth Area (NWGA).

The populations in areas such as Riverstone, Schofields and Marsden Park are projected to grow by 6%, 7% and 7% each year respectively over the next 20 years, resulting in an estimated increase of 120,000 for these 3 areas alone.

However, these areas have inadequate public transport infrastructure and services resulting in a car-orientated transport system with poor outcomes such as congestion, pollution and lack of access to valued education and job opportunities. These poor outcomes affect our residents' wellbeing and contribute to high unemployment with a low prospect of improvement.

It should also be noted that Blacktown City has not experienced a decline in birth rate like many other local government areas. We have more than 150 existing schools, some of which have reached pupil totals of up to 2,000. The Department of Education is projecting, to meet future education needs alone, a new primary school needs to be built every 15 months and a new high school every 20 months; this will create further and more significant public transport demand to ensure the school's function effectively.

Public transport should form the backbone around which these greenfield and other infill areas are planned and developed. Unfortunately, the most important and significant public transport mode, being rail, is lagging in finalising future corridors and stations, resulting in misaligned land-use planning and development outcomes.

Figure 1 shows the present rail/metro services within Blacktown City, and highlights the lack of services in the North West Growth Area. The Sydney Metro rail service currently ends at Tallawong Station, and while it is identified to be extended to St Marys station, planning and delivery has not yet been finalised on this 'missing link', which is the most critical public transport infrastructure required in Blacktown.

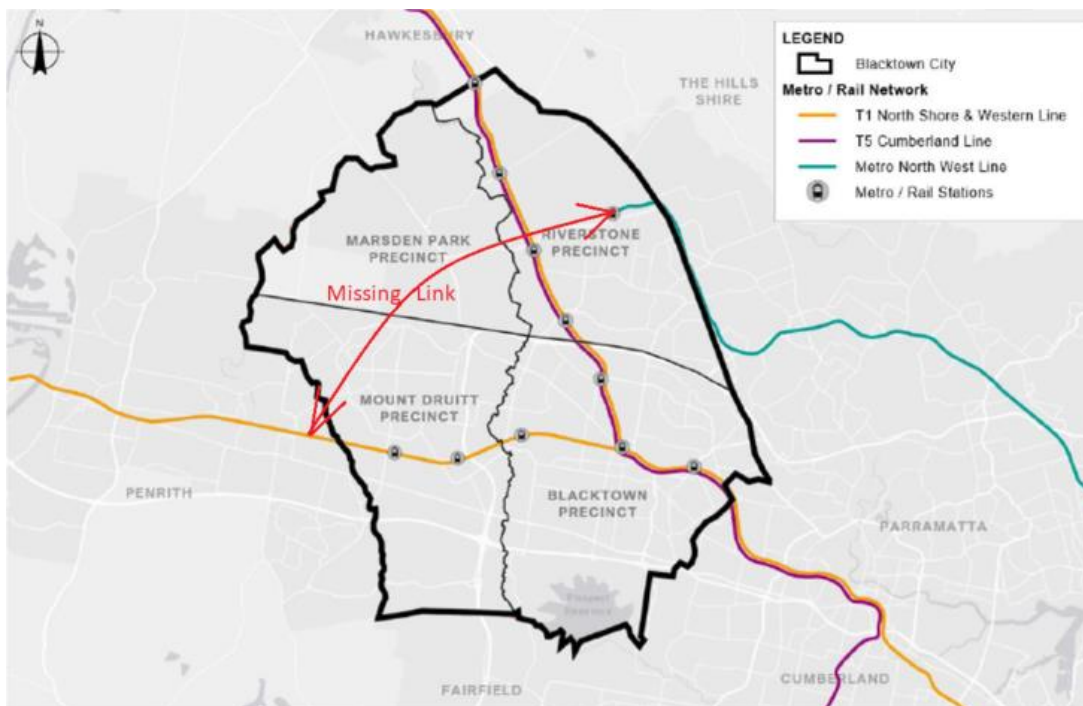


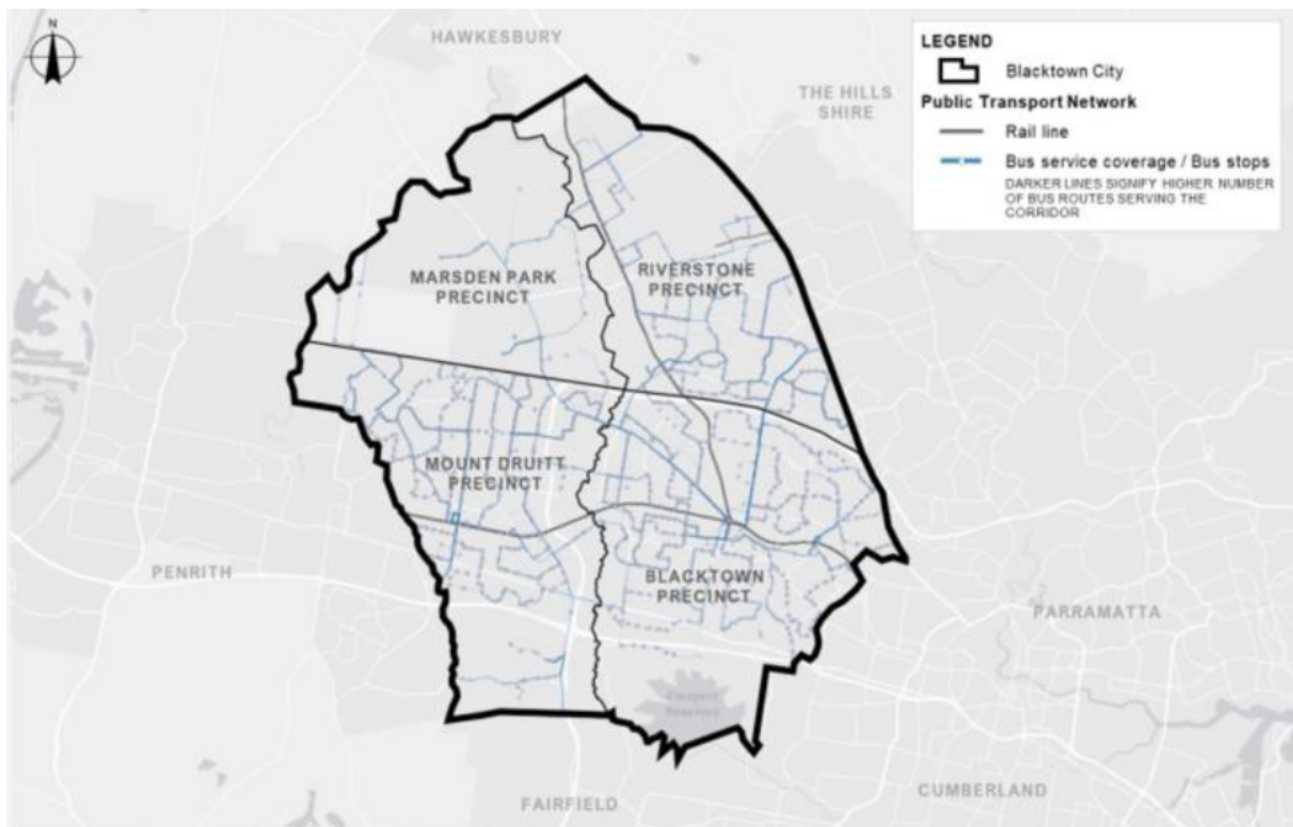
Figure 1: Metro and Rail Network in Blacktown City

Rail transport is the most popular mode of choice for public transport as shown in Table 1 with 16% mode share for rail versus 4% for buses (Source 2016 Census).

Buses are road-bound and therefore suffer the same delays and congestion as cars. Without significant investment in bus priority measures such as 'Bus Rapid Transport' or dedicated bus lanes, it is unlikely that the bus mode share will increase. Figure 2 shows the extend of bus services in Blacktown and specifically the lack of services in the North West Growth Area.

Table 1: mode share (Census 2016)

Main method of travel	%
Train	16.0
Bus	4.0
Car (as driver and passenger)	65.8
Bicycle	0.2
Walked only	1.1
Other	13.0
Total	100.0



Data Source: TfNSW OpenData

Figure 2: Bus service coverage in Blacktown City

Current and future public transport needs in Blacktown

Our needs	Our comments
<p>Early planning and provision of future rail corridors and transport hubs (ToR Ref: a, b, c)</p>	<p>The goal of urban rail should be to connect people to their desired destinations in an efficient, accessible, safe, timely and affordable manner.</p> <p>The rail system is the backbone of western Sydney and Blacktown's development and prosperity, and it is justified to commit significant upfront public funds to achieve the best possible outcomes as the public will reap the benefits for many generations.</p> <p>It is critical that the public transport needs of our City's growth and infill areas are addressed effectively and in a timely manner. Future rail corridors must be confirmed and established so that we can effectively plan for future development. Without clarity on the provision on the transport corridors and/or station locations, we are at risk of creating lasting (generations) ineffective urban development with well-known undesirable outcomes such as low wellbeing, poverty and crime.</p> <p>Rail transport is the core and strongly preferred public transport mode and, as such, timely rail planning and provision is the highest public transport priority for the City as it will influence the future development and urban renewal initiatives of the city.</p>
<p>Planning and construction of the 'missing link' of Sydney Metro (ToR Ref: a, b, c , d)</p>	<p>It is critical for Blacktown City that the Sydney Metro missing link Figure 1 between Tallawong and St Marys be completed as soon as possible to support an effective growing city.</p> <p>The planning of the Sydney Metro missing link must be finalised to ensure appropriate land use planning can be undertaken, such as the provision of higher densities and transport orientated developments at stations; which could reduce the need to use or even own a car.</p> <p>In particular the location of stations should be finalised as well as the alignment regarding location and elevation (e.g. tunnel, viaduct or at-ground level).</p> <p>Construction should follow closely, to prevent car centric developments in the absence of functional public transport.</p> <p>Buses cannot be used as a substitute for a future Sydney Metro as the surrounding road network is already congested, making bus travel an unlikely choice of transport for the community due to the longer travel times.</p> <p>Without security of the geographic location of stations and alignment of the Metro, it would not be possible to undertake optimum land-use planning and transport planning to support and develop a thriving effective future city - the backbone of a thriving city is an efficient rail transit system.</p>

Our needs	Our comments
	<p>Part of the area where the metro needs to be constructed is within the Mount Druitt Precinct, which accommodates large social housing areas and where large proportions of suburbs fall in the lowest 3% of the SEIFA index. This area is currently poorly serviced by public transport.</p> <p>These suburbs/communities need the Metro missing link to effectively gain access to education opportunities and high value jobs that exist in Sydney Business Park, Norwest, Macquarie Park and North Sydney/Sydney and the future jobs centred around the new Nancy Bird Walton Airport.</p> <p>Appropriately located stations within the Mount Druitt Precinct are critical to enable those communities access to these opportunities and facilitate the upliftment of the area.</p> <p>The planning of the missing link extension of the Metro must be done in close consultation with the affected local governments to ensure alignment in planning. The link should be planned as the natural extension of the existing Metro and not a separate rail service that will require multiple transfers at stations for commuters.</p> <p>The completion of the Metro missing link with appropriately located stations will provide impetus for accelerated development of the Marsden Park Town, Mount Druitt and other centres, offering high value jobs at the edge of the metropolis, aiding job containment and reducing the need for long distance commuting.</p> <p>It is therefore imperative that the planning of the missing link and station locations of the Metro be completed and timely construction occur. This will allow for orderly planning and development and the creation of thriving communities that can participate effectively in the economic development and education opportunities Sydney can offer.</p>
<p>Station re-development and parking provision (ToR Ref: a, b, c, g)</p>	<p>Rail stations form the core of a transport hub and not only serve commuters but have the potential to stimulate economic development and urban renewal; creating access to jobs, education and community improvement opportunities.</p> <p>Many Blacktown residents are bound to use a car to access rail stations or transport hubs. Based on 2018 estimates, there is space for over 4,000 cars at the existing station locations. This will need to be augmented with at least a further 2,000 spaces over the next 20 years based on growth projections.</p> <p>The development of new parking spaces should be done in alignment with urban renewal initiatives of local government to maximise the improvement and upliftment opportunities for the community.</p>
<p>Provision of active transport and e-micro mobility infrastructure to support stations</p>	<p>Active transport pathways and end-facilities (e.g. bike sheds) need to be provided at stations to support a healthy community; accessing stations by walking or cycling or e-micro mobility.</p>

Our needs	Our comments
<p>(ToR Ref: a, f)</p>	<p>Transport for NSW recent initiatives in this regard, are highly commended, however, stations with no end facilities for cyclist or/and no safe connection to pathways need to be addressed speedily to capitalise on the active transport surge that occurred during the COVID-19 period.</p> <p>Blacktown City has many stations in need of redevelopment and the provision of active transport pathways and end-facilities at stations with the most notable being Blacktown Station.</p>
<p>Funding of future rail infrastructure and transport hubs</p> <p>(ToR Ref: f)</p>	<p>Funding of rail networks is extremely costly especially in infill areas. Future stations significantly uplift the value of the surrounding properties and it is therefore justified that the rail funding authority should be the beneficiary of part of this upliftment as well as authorities needing to provide community facilities required to sustain the growth. Such a funding source for the government will help ease the burden of the significant expenditure required for rail infrastructure.</p>
<p>Provision of Bus Rapid Transit and bus priority measures</p> <p>(ToR Ref: a, b, c, d)</p>	<p>Bus transport is road based and, as such, competes with private cars for road space and therefore suffers from the same congestion. Bus travel times will stay significant longer than car travel times without significant infrastructure investment in Bus Rapid Transit and bus priority measures, such as exclusive bus lanes. Resulting in buses being poorly supported as a mode of choice with a low mode share of only 4% (Figure 1).</p> <p>Bus Rapid Transit and bus priority measures need to be planned as part of an integrated public transport system and be included early in the land use and transport planning process.</p> <p>Existing road networks are heavily congested, creating significant challenges but also significant travel time saving opportunities for the retrofitting of bus priority measures. The goal should be to have lower journey trip times for busses than cars.</p>
<p>Provision of bus stops/shelters and higher frequencies</p> <p>(ToR Ref: a, b, c)</p>	<p>Blacktown City has one of the lowest bus stop and shelter provisions in Greater Sydney. Most bus stops consist merely of a bus stop sign.</p> <p>The lack of appropriate shelters is especially problematic as temperatures are soaring in western Sydney during summer months. A recent ABC program measured the outside temperature at bus stops in Blacktown without a shelter as high as 65°C.</p> <p>Bus frequencies can be as low as 60 minutes, making unsheltered bus stops challenging for commuters during hot summer conditions.</p>
<p>Provision of bus service in the North West Growth Area</p> <p>(ToR Ref: a, b, c, d)</p>	<p>New developments, such as in the North West Growth Area, initially have no provision of public transport as it is not provided until a it has been substantially populated.</p>

Our needs	Our comments
	<p>During this period, which may be years, the only realistic transport option for the residents is to use their private vehicles. As a family has different members, all with different transport needs, this creates significant challenges for these new communities. The absence of public transport creates a car-centric culture and results in a lack of reasonable access to education and job opportunities.</p> <p>Blacktown City Council strongly advocates for the development of a new strategy on how to effectively deal with the transition period as new areas are developed. These strategies could include on-demand services with smaller busses as has been successfully implemented in the Northern Beaches and other areas.</p>
<p>Affordability (ToR Ref: e)</p>	<p>Transport for NSW have a discount scheme for regular users which could be expanded to ensure public transport is affordable for all users and do not price some users out of opportunities such as education and jobs. This is especially critical for those commuters who need to do multi-modal trips to reach their destination. For example, a multimodal trip could consist of a bus trip to the rail (station) followed by a bus trip to the destination. This will result in 3 fares being collected which could exceed \$15 per trip and thus the daily commute exceeds \$30 per day or \$600 per month. Affordability thresholds need to be considered and implemented.</p>
<p>Improve security on public transport (ToR Ref: f)</p>	<p>The personal security or perceived sense of personal security is of critical importance to commuters and significantly influences their transport mode of choice.</p> <p>While this issue is not of great concern at present, the experience of some overseas cities has shown how personal security can slowly erode to a point where commuters stop using public transport. This is especially the case for vulnerable users, such as women, children and the elderly.</p>