

**Submission
No 68**

INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Organisation: Wollondilly Shire Council

Date Received: 6 October 2023

Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC
Committee Chair
Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and the Arts
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Ms Faehrmann,

Re: Inquiry into Current and Future Public Transport Needs in Western Sydney

Wollondilly Shire Council welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Portfolio Committee No.6 on the inquiry into public transport needs in Western Sydney both now and in the future.

As an integral member of Sydney's Western Parkland Councils, this submission serves to endorse the submission made by The Parks on 18th September plus highlight the nuances, challenges & expectations particular to the Wollondilly community.

The Wollondilly Shire is heavily car dependent due to its geographical spread of its towns and villages and the chronic lack of public transport options.

This equity issue is only going to worsen with the growth areas planned for Wollondilly, including Wilton (15,000 dwellings) and Appin (19,000 dwellings).

No clear plans have been developed for timely delivery of efficient and effective public transport for these already rapidly growing communities, despite Council advocating strongly for the NSW Government to prioritise early public transport to minimise car dependency in future. These rezoning's, lead by the NSW Government, are linked by one road being 'Broughton Pass' with a narrow winding road leading to a one lane historic bridge – the road inaccessible by heavy vehicles – yet this road is nominated as the public transport linkage between the two growth centres.

The reliability of the Southern Highlands diesel train network servicing the Shire is questionable, prioritises freight movements (with no dedicated line for passenger services) and does not provide a regular and reliable service.

Given the southern highlands line is a diesel service, connectivity to the broader electricified metropolitan network is challenging resulting in many residents

driving to Macarthur to access a reliable train service. Council is also concerned of reports that train services on the line could be replaced by buses.

In addition, the bus network for Wollondilly does not have access to the Opal card system, to catch a bus in many of the townships within Wollondilly cash is the only option.

The issues and key needs for Wollondilly have been summarised in Councils adopted submission for NSW Future Transport Review, which we append to this submission. The key priorities outlined in this submission are:

- Rail/metro connecting the Macarthur and Illawarra regions and the Airport/Bradfield, providing passengers, employees and products to Bradfield and the Airport, and access to economic opportunities and the exceptional natural beauty for tourism and lifestyle of Wollondilly and the Illawarra
- Progressing as an immediate priority Stage 2 of the North South rail connection from Bradfield to Campbelltown/Macarthur
- Implementing Rapid Bus (B-Line style Bus Rapid Transit) connecting Wilton (via Appin) with Macarthur/Campbelltown within 1-3 years as an interim solution until rail is delivered
- Implementing future electrification of southern rail line to Picton/Wilton in the medium term, 5-15 years.
- *Maldon-Dombarton rail*. Accessibility modelling of the expanding Port Kembla freight terminal (as detailed in Future Transport 2056) and providing freight rail connection between Port Kembla and the Airport/Bradfield, enabling significant economic benefit, via the Maldon-Dombarton rail freight connection, which could be implemented as a passenger line as per the South West Illawarra Rail Link (SWIRL) study, and full rail freight capacity study, Western Line, with aim of transitioning from road to rail.

Further, this issue was discussed by Council at its Ordinary Meeting of 22 June 2022, where Council resolved its key priorities for advocacy are;

- a) Increase train services on the Southern Highlands line including express services to the City*
- b) Increased bus services particularly in outlying areas*
- c) Bus services on Sunday and Public Holidays*
- d) Bus services linking our towns e.g. The Oaks or Warragamba to Picton*
- e) Increase parking at train stations*
- f) Funding for additional bus shelters*

- g) Bus services to Wollongong including the University as currently only Appin has this service*
- h) Additional services from the Wilton Growth Area including passenger train link to Wollongong*

We look forward to the inquiry progressing and would like to discuss with the Committee further the issues raised in The Parks and Wollondilly submissions.

If you would like to discuss further please contact Mike Nelson, Manager Assets, Transport & Engineering on () or via email

Yours faithfully,

Ben Taylor
Chief Executive Officer
Wollondilly Shire Council

RESOLUTION 147/2022

That Council:

1. *Write to NSW Minister and Shadow Minister for Transport calling for the following issues to be addressed:*
 - i) *Increase train services on the Southern Highlands line including express services to the City*
 - j) *Increased bus services particularly in outlying areas*
 - k) *Bus services on Sunday and Public Holidays*
 - l) *Bus services linking our towns e.g. The Oaks or Warragamba to Picton*
 - m) *Increase parking at train stations*
 - n) *Funding for additional bus shelters*
 - o) *Bus services to Wollongong including the University as currently only Appin has this service*
 - p) *Additional services from the Wilton Growth Area including passenger train link to Wollongong*
2. *Hold a Councillor briefing to discuss an advocacy strategy on transport priorities.*

RESOLUTION 352/2022

That Wollondilly Council expresses concerns of reports that Train Services on the Southern Highlands could be replaced by buses. Further Council write to the State Government, Opposition and Wingecarribee Council expressing our support for train services on the Southern Highlands Line.



NSW FUTURE TRANSPORT REVIEW

1 December 2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Council has had concerns for some time on the mis-connection between land use planning and transport planning impacting on our Shire. The review into Future Transport is seen by Council to continue its advocacy for better transport outcomes for the Wollondilly Community. The issue was discussed at its Ordinary Meeting of 16 November where Council resolved to submit the content of this report with specific mention of focus areas of electrified rail, rapid bus and priority road upgrades.

REPORT

CONTEXT FOR WOLLONDILLY

Wollondilly's forward land use vision is for an enviable lifestyle of historic villages, modern living, rural lands and bush.

We want a prosperous, sustainable and resilient future. Our future will be grounded in what we love. The community will be connected, local, healthy and better prepared for climate impacts. We will protect what makes us special - our unique villages and lifestyle within a landscape that people can celebrate, visit and explore.

Our new town at Wilton will be the strategic centre, with new job opportunities, regional facilities, greater advantages for healthcare and education and a variety of open spaces. Our local economy will leverage the opportunities of the Western Parkland City and Western Sydney Aerotropolis, creating more local jobs and benefitting from greater investment in industry, tourism, agriculture and the creative arts.

It is evident this vision can only succeed if all levels of Government work together and help deliver the needed infrastructure, services and planning upfront.

With this in mind, even with recent significant local investment by Council and its rate payers, the performance and condition of the existing transport network is a significant and growing concern for the community and Council. Council has been doing the heavy lifting on filling the gaps on a lack of State investment and a lack of public transport options.

As a shire of 54,000 existing residents, expecting to grow to well over an additional 100,000 residents by 2041, Wollondilly Shire needs and deserves to be well planned, considered and have significantly more investment from the State to provide what we need now and into the future.

Significant development, particularly in the Wilton Growth Area and the Greater Macarthur Growth Area, will only further compound the issues with massive traffic growth; and Council's ability to adequately operate and maintain, let alone upgrade, its higher order roads is not financially sustainable for the community. Connectivity is already challenged between two major growth areas expected to house well over 100,000 people.

These impacts in our Shire are already being felt now. We are already experiencing growth in towns and villages across the Shire and starting to see the growth of Wilton which will house some 50,000 residents in the near future along with a new town centre, putting significance central focus on the immediate need to upgrade the State road network, and immediate implementation of public transport solutions. Upgrades will serve to benefit the Shire, and the broader region for improved connectivity, resilience to natural disasters, economic prosperity and for better health and social outcomes.

Given the strategic location and role Wollondilly plays in the broader regional transport network, the issue of eligibility for transfer of roads to the State will be critical for existing and future growth of the Shire.

Many of Wollondilly's roads are acting as high order arterial roads, providing regional accessibility between the Illawarra and South West Sydney. With projected growth within and adjacent to the Shire (such as the Wilton Priority Growth Area, Aerotropolis, expansion of Port Kembla, and Greater Macarthur), the capacity of many of these roads is modelled to fail, and Council will be unable to deliver on the necessary upgrades, compromising regional accessibility and connectivity. This will also impact on heavy vehicle routes and accessibility; impacting on freight and any potential for expansion to employment lands.

Wollondilly knows all too well the importance of the transport network in times of crisis. Far too often the Hume Freeway sees disruption with motor vehicle accidents leading to detours of significant amounts of traffic to our already near capacity network. Of more concern is the impact during bushfires and flooding and Wollondilly has seen this occur throughout the Shire in recent times with potential calamitous results. Upgrades to the transport network are critical to increase the Shire's ability to evacuate and provide resilience during and immediately after emergency events.

PRINCIPALS FOR TRANSPORT FOR NSW

Council is advocating that the whole transport network is to be safe and fit for purpose, recognising the strategic location of the Wollondilly region and catering for public transport, domestic, freight, commuter and agribusiness traffic.

This should be achieved by:

- Agreed current and future land use assumptions across the Shire.
- Agreed robust future population forecasting which can be relied upon by all levels of Government for planning and investment without unplanned and reactive impact from developers, so that any unforeseen development must be self-supporting without burden to Council.
- A consolidated (State and Local) transport network development plan that factors in development of the Wilton and Greater Macarthur Region, Western Sydney Aerotropolis and Outer Sydney Orbital, including links to the Illawarra. The plan also needs to consider emergency situations including recognition of events patterns and evacuation options.
- Agreed timings for sequencing, deliverables, timings for funding and associated development dependencies.
- Recognition that Cost Benefit Analysis is one assessment tool in determining priorities for infrastructure noting that social, health and wellbeing and resilience outcomes and benefits are often ignored or undervalued.
- Agreed framework of State, Regional and Local level transport links including ownership, roles and responsibilities for implementation, operation and maintenance.
- Modernising and reconciling the significant number of different Transport for NSW plans, policies and projects which all have different inputs, methodologies and data. Importantly Council advocates for clear planning and investment in the Macarthur Region in a fair, equitable and transparent manner.

KEY NEEDS FOR WOLLONDILLY

Specific to Wollondilly, our community and Council have had long term concerns relating to existing transport capacity issues (that will be exacerbated by development growth in the Shire) and these are outlined below. These matters have been raised and supported in various policies and Government endorsed plans, including our Local Strategic Planning Statement, and acknowledged in other Transport Plans for growth areas, the Jacobs Study, Sub District Integrated Network Plan (SDINP), in the Western Sydney and Illawarra Shoalhaven Roadmap to Collaboration.

The key needs for Wollondilly are summarised as:

- Major Public Transport. Connecting the Macarthur and Illawarra regions and the Airport/Bradfield, providing passengers, employees and products to Bradfield and the Airport, and access to economic opportunities and the exceptional natural beauty for tourism and lifestyle of Wollondilly and the Illawarra
- Progressing as an immediate priority Stage 2 of the North South rail connection from Bradfield to Campbelltown/Macarthur
- Implementing Rapid Bus (B-Line style Bus Rapid Transit) connecting Wilton (via Appin) with Macarthur/Campbelltown within 1-3 years as an interim solution until rail is delivered
- Implementing future electrification of southern rail line to Picton/Wilton in the medium term, 5-15 years.
- Maldon-Domarton. Accessibility modelling of the expanding Port Kembla freight terminal (as detailed in Future Transport 2056) and providing freight rail connection between Port Kembla and the Airport/Bradfield, enabling significant economic benefit, via the Maldon-Dombarton rail freight connection, which could be implemented as a passenger line as per the South West Illawarra Rail Link (SWIRL) study, and full rail freight capacity study, Western Line, with aim of transitioning from road to rail.
- Picton Bypass. Improved road linkages from Picton/Tahmoor/Thirlmere to the Hume Motorway – acknowledging the recent commitment by the State Government to finalise the feasibility assessment of the ‘Picton Bypass’. Commitment is now sought to fund its construction. Council’s modelling shows this link is needed between 2026 and 2036.
- Blaxland Crossing. Connectivity issues between Warragamba/Silverdale and Wallacia and other adjoining areas to the east such as Penrith and Liverpool, including the Badgerys Creek Aerotropolis area. Council’s modelling shows an improved connection needs to be delivered by 2036. Notwithstanding, numerous road capacity and safety upgrades need to be delivered in the interim period.

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- Broughton Pass. An improved road linkage between Wilton and Appin (including heavy vehicle access) – currently serviced by ‘Broughton Pass’ plus connectivity issues in and around Appin. This road is the only link between two nominated growth areas. Any development of Appin must be dependent on an improved linkage over Broughton Pass as modelled by the State Government through its modelling of the Greater Macarthur Priority Growth area (aka the ‘Jacobs Study’). Bus linkages between these two key centres cannot be activated until this link is provided.
- Wilton/Greater Macarthur upgrades. Commitment and delivery of other required infrastructure recognised through the development of the State Infrastructure Levy for Wilton and Greater Macarthur including (but not limited to) the duplication of Menangle Road to two lanes each way.
- Picton Rd. Ongoing capacity and safety issues on Picton Road, including the urgent need to upgrade the Hume Freeway interchange and duplication of Picton Road.
- Appin Rd. Ongoing capacity and safety issues on Appin Road, requiring duplication.
- Outer Sydney Orbital. Interconnectivity of the Outer Sydney Orbital (Stage 2) with Picton Road and Appin Road (and Hume Freeway).
- Local job creation. Lack of employment options within the region that compound the need for commuting in and out of the Shire.
- Road reclassification. Critically, an appropriate Regional and State road review and a reassessment of funding support available to Council for key route safety and capacity improvements.