



Action for Public Transport (N.S.W.) Inc.

P O Box K606
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Secretary,
Cities and Suburbs Unit,
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and the Arts,
Canberra.
Submitted via website

Dear Secretary,

National Urban Policy

Submission on May 2024 consultation draft

Introduction

Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc. is a transport advocacy group which has been active in Sydney since 1974. We promote the interests of beneficiaries of public transport - passengers and the wider community alike.

We are particularly interested in the draft's aim for cities to be liveable and **sustainable**.

We would of course be pleased to meet with your staff to review any of the following points.

Discussion

We refer to Sustainable Development Goal No. 11 of the United Nations which seeks to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The topic of sustainable transport is discussed at <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/sustainable-transport>. More specifically, Target 11.2 is to:

by 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons¹

The reader should bear in mind that urban transport planning always has land-use ramifications and vice-versa.

We emphasize "expanding public transport". Unfortunately, several opportunities for expanding public transport have been missed ...

A few missed opportunities in Sydney.

- **Woollahra railway station.** Planned and part-built but never opened, apparently because local residents were concerned at the potential traffic and loss of street parking. We understand that the site is too small to comply with modern standards and hence the station can never be opened even though frequent trains pass through.
- **U.T.S. campus railway station,** Lindfield. Cancelled at the last minute because planning officials did not think a warrant existed to construct it. It cannot now be added to the underground track.
- **Stub tunnels for future northern beaches railway,** Roseville. Deleted from plans when re-grading made them awkward. The new cross-harbour extension to Sydenham has enough capacity to support a branch at Chatswood.
- **Stub tunnels for future south-eastern railway,** Sydenham. There could be enough space south and west of the metro platforms for a grade-separated junction. Even though the new cross-harbour extension from Chatswood has enough capacity to support a branch at Sydenham, we have seen no planning for a junction.
- **Station box under Prince of Wales Hospital,** Randwick. Could have been a good site for a UNSW/PoWH station.
- **Station box under Northern Beaches Hospital,** Frenchs Forest. Could have been a good site for a station.
- **Metro station(s) at University of Sydney main campus and RPAH.** Could have been good site(s) for stations but were ruled out due to cost and a desire to maximise travel speed by minimising stations.

The common theme is that steps providing future enhancements and savings, such as boxes for future underground stations, were missed due to narrow focus on costs and benefits of one project, not its integration into wider urban system.

However, many opportunities exist:

A few opportunities in Sydney.

- **Shortening walking distances** around Central station and the ironically-named Railway Square. Central Walk could and should be directly connected westwards to Henry Deane Plaza.
- **Moving the Lavender Bay train storage facility** to north of St Leonards station. This would free some valuable harbourside land and a corridor.
- **Easing pressure on the L1 line,** allowing expanded services, by:
 - **Constructing a second L1 CBD terminus** west of George St, perhaps on the eastern end of Pyrmont Bridge or behind UTS building 6, reducing conflicts with L2/L3 at the Hay-George intersection and with buses which use Pitt St.
 - **Granting tram priority in Hay St,** especially at Darling Drive.
 - **Constructing a light rail tunnel under Harris St,** then splitting L1 into a casino service and a fast Dulwich Hill service. By closing Fish Market station, the casino service could be extended westward across the old Glebe Island bridge.
- **Easing pressure on the L2/L3 lines,** allowing expanded services, by:
 - **Constructing a second northern terminus for L2/L3,** perhaps at Bondi Junction, Kings Cross, St James, Green Square, Redfern or Darlington. This would ease the constraint of George St, allowing L3 expansion southwards to Eastgardens-Matraville or Maroubra.
- **Extending the new Parramatta Light Rail stage 1** underground from Carlingford to Epping, including a stop at Carlingford Court.
- **Extending the Eastern Suburbs railway** to UNSW/PoWH, Kingsford and Maroubra. This railway needs more stations to justify its operation.
- **High speed intercity rail links** need to be planned for, something between possibility and likelihood. A decision will need to be made regarding a Sydney terminal of a future east coast (Melbourne - Brisbane) link. Possibilities might be Parramatta, Olympic Park, or Central. Whichever is chosen will affect planning and operation of Sydney transport.

- **Implementing road access pricing:** Everyone knows we need it (if only to bolster shrinking fuel tax collections) but no-one is prepared to bell the cat. Meanwhile, politicians give toll rebates to drivers who make long trips in single-occupant cars. Those rebates are a travesty of good planning and obviously weaken public transport patronage.
Replacing a long road trip with a long bus/rail ride is a bigger win than replacing a short trip.
- **Raising the Richmond rail line** at Riverstone and Mulgrave-Clarendon to mitigate flooding. That would help assure services.
- **Constructing new rail tunnel Asquith-Brooklyn**, speeding-up central coast trains. This would potentially be part of the larger high speed network.
- **Extending the planned Leppington-Aerotropolis railway** to Western Sydney Airport terminal.
- **Bus services:**
 - Planning for these should include proper infrastructure with effective and visible shelters with real-time service information. This is necessary to make bus routes an appealing and legible part of the transport network.
 - Some deleted bus stops which were victims of various recent projects to "improve" services might be restored.
- **Reviewing free parking:** Disciples of Prof. Donald Shoup² argue that all parking should be charged for at a rate that sees 15% of it vacant. Obviously the rate would vary widely by location and time-of-day. The benefit of this would be that wherever you went there would be a vacant parking space on that block.
The extra public transport patronage resulting from implementing this measure is difficult to estimate but could be substantial, resulting in more revenue and thereby enabling improved services.
- **Using helpful station names:** eschew names like Yallamundi and Gadigal which have no relevance to familiar place names.

A few opportunities outside Sydney

- **Building fairly fast rail between Ballina and Gold Coast Airport**, connecting with GCLR. The conurbation spans the state border, hence federal involvement is warranted. Also, there should be an efficient connection to SCU at Lismore.
- **Straightening the track Menangle-Mittagong**, speeding-up passenger services to Canberra and Melbourne. And there are opportunities between Goulburn and Cootamundra.
- **Completing the Maldon-Dombarton line**, taking slow freight trains off the Como bank and thereby permitting consequent improvement in passenger services.
- **Constructing new rail tunnel Waterfall-Thirroul**, speeding-up Illawarra trains. This would potentially be part of the larger high speed network.

The need for better planning in Sydney

Day and Day (2024)³ discuss a number of recent transport planning decisions and conclude that there is a need for more integrated planning which is less influenced by political factors than at present. They also cite projects which were constructed despite Infrastructure Australia advising that they were unwarranted or without IA being consulted at all.

Failures of co-ordination and provision between parts of public transport networks have shown the drawbacks of viewing each new project in stand-alone cost-benefit terms rather than benefits to the overall network and level of public transport service.

There would seem to be scope for the Commonwealth to adopt a supervisory role for large state projects including transport. The role would be to insist that the planning process be followed properly, that important decisions not be swayed by political considerations or the desire of a tenderer to make a profit and that completed projects be monitored to ensure that desired goals were being met. A suitable head of power might be s.96 of the federal Constitution. Or, in the case of PPP projects, tax concessions could be made conditional on the project's consequences, favourable and unfavourable, being in balance favourable.

Conclusions

More could have been done to make public transport projects in NSW more efficient. Better procedures could be followed in future. That would help with environmental sustainability; public transport is known to be more sustainable than private car transport.

Urban strategy in future should aim to make public transport the dominant mode, the mode of first choice, within cities, rather than the residual role of peak-hour commuting and a service for those too young, old or poor to drive, as currently.

Recommendations

We recommend that:

- the Commonwealth seek ways to pressure states towards their urban transport projects being sustainable
- the Commonwealth require in every case that assessment of transport projects always take consequent land-use changes into account.

Jim Donovan
Secretary
Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc.
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Footnotes

¹[Indicators and a Monitoring Framework](#)

²*The High Cost of Free Parking* by Donald Shoup, 2005. updated 2011, ISBN 1884829988, American Planning Association, Routledge.

³[Funnelling congestion: How Sydney exacerbated congestion after spending tens of billions on transport infrastructure](#)