

Metropolitan Transport Plan
GPO Box 1620, Sydney
NSW 2001
Date 28-4-2010

Western Sydney
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Re: Western Sydney Community Forum submission on the Metropolitan Transport Plan

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To whom it may concern,

Western Sydney Community Forum welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Metropolitan Transport Strategy.

Western Sydney Community Forum is the Western Sydney regional peak organisation which provides regional leadership, facilitates collaborative action and develops resources to enable community organisations to effectively address issues relating to social justice and social inclusion. Funded by Transport and Infrastructure, WSCF has a long involvement connecting the community sector with transport issues.

Should any clarification or further information be required please do not hesitate to contact our Regional Resource Transport Workers, Hugh Worrall on 9633 5068 hughw@wscf.org.au or Amy Williams on 9687 8937 amyw@wscf.org.au.

Sincerely,

Mary Waterford
Executive Officer
Western Sydney Community Forum

RECOMMENDATIONS

WSCF recommends:

1. Consideration be made to the recommendations of the Independent Transport Inquiry regarding the governance structures for an independent Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority.
2. The Epping to Parramatta Rail link be included within the NSW Metropolitan Transport Strategy.
3. The following transport projects are prioritised accordingly:
 - Rail link to the North West
 - Fast and direct buses into Campbelltown and Narellan from the South West Growth Centre
 - Rail link into Leppington coordinated with the development timeframe of the South West Growth Centre. WSCF also proposes that this rail link be extended to Bringelly Road to service the areas north of Leppington such as Bringelly, Rossmore, Austral and two industrial zones as they are developed in the long term.
4. For the future, a West Metro strategy should be considered which improved connections with the poorly serviced, higher density, areas of the South West (Bankstown, Liverpool, Fairfield, Parramatta, Auburn and Strathfield).
5. Western Sydney takes priority in the 'Better Bus Connections' project
6. Local bus routes are given a higher priority in the bus planning hierarchy so that people are not disadvantaged by the focus on strategic corridors and regional routes
7. In planning bus priority corridors, the Government:
 - Prioritise the Bankstown, Liverpool, Fairfield and Parramatta corridors.
 - Reserve and develop T-Way corridors into Blacktown, Mt Druitt and Riverstone to coincide with the readiness of the Marsden Park industrial area.
 - Develop a bus lane or T-way along Camden Valley Way to service the first release precincts of Tuner Road, Oran Park, Harrington Park, Harrington Grove, Edmondson Park and the New Release Precinct Leppington North. This bus corridor would also serve as a feed into the Leppington Town Centre, the South West Rail link and Narellan at the other end.

- Reserve and develop T-Way corridors that connect the South West Growth Centre with employment zones such as Wetherill Park, Smeaton Grange and Turner Road and other high employment areas in Campbelltown and Liverpool.
8. The Government fix the 'missing links' along M2 bus transit lanes
 9. That a bus transit lane on or near the M5 and/or increased capacity along the train lines to the South West are much more effective and sustainable options to reduce congestion than adding lanes to these roads
 10. The Government incorporates a MyZone Multi 2 only, a MyZone Multi 3 only and a MyZone Multi 2/3 as part of the MyZone ticketing options.
 11. That several improvements be made to 131500
 - Expand the 131500 languages line resource to the 131500 website
 - Include 'How To' videos and explanatory notes on the website, such as how to purchase tickets, how to use tickets on public transport and how to best use the website
 - Better market the 131500 mobile service
 - Include details of interchange layouts, transport services, kiss and ride facilities, park and ride facilities, taxi ranks and amenities on the website
 - Enhance the Transport info line website journey planner by including the ability to plan part of the journey by car or taxi – this can help encourage a gradual change in transport behavior
 12. The responsibility for bus stop infrastructure is transferred to a separate entity such as Transport Infrastructure Development Council (TIDC).
 13. The Easy Access program budget be doubled
 14. Priority is given to stations to undergo the Easy Access upgrade in areas that have a high prevalence of disability based on census data.
 15. The focus of the Metropolitan Transport Plan be broadened to more strongly include transport options that are not about journey to work, local transport, and transport within Greater Western Sydney (as opposed to journeys into the Sydney CBD).
 16. A coherent road pricing strategy be developed
 17. Planning for Community Transport be included in the Metropolitan Transport Plan

18. Strategies to address 'the gap' are included in the Metropolitan Transport Plan. In addition to this WSCF recommends that the Government commission and independent study to assess 'the gap', ascertain the nature of the problem, and make recommendations about how to solve this problem

INTRODUCTION

As part of the community services sector, WSCF is very interested in how transport disadvantage and social inclusion (or exclusion) interact to improve or reduce individual and community wellbeing. The WSCF 2006 report "transport and social disadvantage in Western Sydney" says "social exclusion occurs where people are prevented or restricted from participating fully in society ... from participating in the production and consumption of goods and services, from political engagement and from social interaction" (p14)¹. WSCF strongly believes that transport planning for Sydney must provide real transport options for all residents, so that all people are able to participate in life. As McManus points out;

"Too often the idea of transport can become an end in itself, with policies and plans designed to facilitate mobility tending to devalue the reason for the use of transport, which is accessibility"

The integration of the Metropolitan Transport Plan and the Metropolitan Strategy is welcome as is the integrated approach to transport and land-use planning. Combined with the restructure and integration of the various transport, land-use planning and infrastructure development bodies within the Government this should assist with a more coherent strategy and implementation aimed at delivering better liveability, sustainability, social inclusion and productivity outcomes.

1. OUR NEW APPROACH TO TRANSPORT AND LAND USE PLANNING

1.1 Governance

WSCF supports the Government's commitment to better governance structures and its move towards integrated transport and land use planning systems. The

¹ Transport and social disadvantage in Western Sydney. A partnership research project. WSCF & UWS. Ann Hurni. 2006

amalgamation of the 13 transport agencies into a single entity; NSW Transport and Infrastructure and the combination of transport and land use planning within the *Metropolitan strategy* are important steps forward.

Governance problems have been a key deficiency in the system of transport and land-use planning for many years now. The lack of a strong, governance structure to coordinate decision making, communication and information has, in part, contributed to the many changes to the planning and development of transport planning over recent decades, debilitating public and investor confidence.

The Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority (SMDA) has the potential to deliver new housing, infrastructure and investment with strength and independence, re-inspiring confidence in Sydney's transport. However, WSCF has concerns that the independence and strength of the SMDA will be heavily influenced by shifts in politics, as can be seen in the case of the Growth Centre's Commission.

The governance structure for Sydney's transport and land-use planning systems must be adequately strong and independent so that it has the power to coordinate across all levels of government and across the full spectrum of transport related services. Simultaneous to all of this, adequate accountability to government and the people of NSW must be maintained. The Independent Transport Inquiry sponsored by the Sydney Morning Herald has made some recommendations on these matters which WSCF believes are worth considering.

1.2 Urban Renewal: The Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority

WSCF supports the SMDA's mandate to re-develop existing areas, rather than Green Field sites, such as the Growth Centres.

Development on the urban fringes and can lead to deficit in the provision of urban infrastructure and services. While the creation of the Growth Centres Commission has improved this, suburbs on the outskirts of Sydney, Western Sydney in particular, often have long lead times for the provision of major facilities and services. According to the University of Western Sydney's Urban Frontiers Program, *A new vision for Western Sydney-Options for 21st Century Governance*;

'Decades of under-investment of policy and fiscal resources in Western Sydney by successive State and Federal Governments have left many of the region's cultural, social and environmental needs unmet'.

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Redevelopment of existing areas is likely to improve housing affordability, reduce travel distances, time and costs, improve community connections and improve sustainability outcomes.

2. THE TEN YEAR FUNDING GUARANTEE

2.1 The Western Express

WSCF believes that the Western Express, providing faster and more frequent services between Western Sydney and the city will be of benefit to the commuters of Western Sydney. The city relief line is important for Western Sydney, reducing travel times and avoiding delays caused by train merging procedures.

2.2 Duplication of the Richmond Line

WSCF supports the introduction of an express service to Richmond station.

The combination of mostly all station stops and the single line infrastructure is currently creating a strong disincentive to use the Richmond line. An express service will encourage increased patronage and will be a vital piece of infrastructure as the North West Growth Centre develops.

2.3 Deferral of the Metro Train System

WSCF supports the Government's decision to defer the Metro Train System.

The deferral of this project allows capital to be distributed to a variety of higher return and more urgent projects; projects that; in particular, improve the transport options for the people of Western Sydney.

WSCF does not object to the long term goal of introducing a Metro which compliments and integrates with the existing transport system. In particular, WSCF would support a West Metro strategy which improved connections with higher density areas of the South West (Bankstown, Liverpool, Fairfield, Parramatta, Auburn and Strathfield).

2.4 Absence of the Epping to Parramatta Rail Link

WSCF strongly recommends that the Epping to Parramatta Rail link be included within the NSW Metropolitan Transport Strategy.

The Strategy places a heavy significance on Parramatta as the 'second CBD', a reality that has been brought to fruition through the consistent efforts of the

current State Government and the Parramatta Council. Parramatta is now the beneficiary of improved transport infrastructure, improved urban development plans and the home to major Government departments.

The Epping to Parramatta Rail link would further establish Parramatta as the 'second CBD' of Sydney and provide a myriad of benefits to the whole of Sydney by improving the links between the West, South West, North West and North of Sydney, including to the 'Global Arc'.

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2.5 The North West and South West Line

WSCF is strongly supportive of the reconfirmation of the North West and South West Rail Links as part of the Plan. However, WSCF has concerns with the development timeframes for the two rail lines:

2.5.1 The prioritisation of the South West line over the North West line

WSCF recently (February 2010) conducted a study tour of the North West and South West Growth Centres. The study tour highlighted the stark differences in development time frames between the North and the South. Development in the North West is significantly more advanced than the South West.

Despite this, the Transport Plan priorities the South West Rail line, with the South West obtaining a rail line 8 years before the North West. This has resulted in a reinforcement of dependency on the private motor vehicle for residents of Sydney's North West. The combination of no rail line, poor inter-regional bus connections and poor bus connections with employment zones such the North West 'Global Arc' through to North Sydney means that many North West commuters rely on the private cars for their personal and work travel.

2.5.2 Surrounding infrastructure to support the development of the South West

The construction of the South West line from Glenfield to Leppington has commenced in the southern part of the \Growth Centre, near Narellan.

At present Narellan, in particular the Narellan Town Centre, has very little infrastructure to support the development of the South West Growth Centre. As the population of the South West Growth Centre increases, more and more pressure will be placed upon Narellan to service the needs of the population. Narellan must be equipped to support this demand with adequate bus corridors and bus services to and from developing areas such as Harrington Park and Oran Park.

WSCF recommends that the transport projects are prioritised accordingly:

1. Rail link to the North West
2. Fast and direct buses into Campbelltown and Narellan from the South West Growth Centre
3. Rail link into Leppington coordinated with the development timeframe of the South West Growth Centre. WSCF also proposes that this be extended to Bringelly Road to service the areas north of Leppington such as Bringelly, Rossmore, Austral and two industrial zones. The Department of Planning estimates that these areas will house 70,000 people.

2.6 Active Transport: Getting Sydney Moving- promoting a happy, healthy and active lifestyle.

WSCF approves of the Government's commitment to support active transport to create a healthier more sustainable city.

The release of the NSW Bike Plan and the Sydney Metropolitan Strategic Cycle Network missing links project are important components of a holistic active transport strategy. Infrastructure that supports active transport, such as footpaths, is of particular importance to residents of Western Sydney. In 2003, Jackie Kelly (MP) found that the Western Sydney suburbs of Penrith had 55.8km of footpaths and Penrith South had 13.1km. In contrast the north-shore suburb, Mosman had 360km of footpaths.

WSCF supports the principles for active transport in the Healthy Spaces and Places project found at www.healthyplaces.org.au and recommends that the Metropolitan Transport Plan and the Metropolitan Strategy, Sydney towards 2036, seriously consider these design principles for Active Transport. In particular:

- The importance of a movement network of interconnected pedestrian and cycling routes. At the moment the Metropolitan Transport Plan has a heavy focus on cycling, despite the fact that in 2004-05, walking was the most common form of exercise for those aged 15 years and over, with nearly half (49 per cent) reporting walking as a form of exercise in the previous two weeks²
- Guiding the structure planning process around the needs of active transport at the regional and local level to ensure active transport is the base from which an access and movement strategy is built
- Public transport that is easily and directly linked with pedestrian and

² [Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004-05].

cycling networks.

- New growth areas that have a variety of destinations within walking or cycling distance and high residential densities to support these.³

The re-development of existing areas through the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority (SMDA) provides a timely opportunity to put in place infrastructure that supports and promotes active transport. WSCF strongly supports re-development that provides opportunities for walking and cycling as a mode of transport to access shops, schools, medical centre's, social support services and public transport. This is particularly pertinent in Western Sydney where there is a heavy reliance on cars coupled with long stances between homes and services that people use.

2.7 Better bus connections

WSCF strongly supports the government's plan to create "Better Bus Connections". Better bus connections are of crucial importance to those living and working in Western Sydney. Western Sydney is characterised by a land use planning approach that has spread the location of retail, health, educational and industrial facilities across the region. A combination of urban sprawl and poor rail connections has created a region heavily dependent on road infrastructure and the private motor vehicle.

With large pockets of Western Sydney without rail, direct and feeder bus services are the only form of public transport available to this region.

If the Government is serious about '*providing effective services for areas not served by the rail network*' (pg 15 Metropolitan Transport Plan 2010) WSCF recommends that Western Sydney takes priority in the 'Better Bus Connections' project.

2.7.1 Recommitment to strategic bus corridors and 1000 new buses

WSCF supports the Government's continuation of the 2006 State Plan commitment to 43 Strategic bus corridors and 1000 new buses. The new buses will be a welcome support to the increased patronage expected as a result of the upcoming release of MyZone.

2.7.1.1 The two components of bus network routes; equally important

The creation and promotion of strategic corridors is important to re-creating the bus system into a more viable effective mass transit service. This can be seen

³ Healthy Places and Spaces http://www.healthyplaces.org.au/site/active_transport_-_full_text.php

and measured by the success of both the Parramatta- Rouse Hill T Way and the Liverpool- Parramatta T Way. WSCF applauds the Government's efforts to recreate Sydney's bus system as a viable alternative to the private motor vehicle.

Strategic corridors are, however, only one component of bus network design. Whilst they provide direct services along strategic corridors connecting key centres and are essential for the provision of an efficient, fast and attractive public transport system, the second component of bus network design is of equal importance. Feeder services along local primary routes feeding into corridors and local secondary routes servicing local centres and lesser railway stations are essential for universal access to transport.

Current transport policy and resource allocation tends to focus on the commuter end of the transport spectrum, to the detriment of those reliant on public transport as their only means of movement. Feedback to WSCF's from local transport advocacy groups indicates that, whilst the implementation of new routes along the corridors provides more direct service, many local routes have been removed from people solely dependent upon them.

Those reliant on feeder services are often the most disadvantaged; those unable to afford a private motor vehicle, those unable to drive, older persons and people living with personal mobility restrictions who do not fit into the Home and Community Care criteria, and people living in urban fringe areas. These people must not be left isolated and further disadvantaged.

It is essential that transport policy and resource allocation reflects the equal importance of strategic corridors, feeder and local bus routes. Those who are disadvantaged by new strategic corridors must be provided with transport options tailored to remedy the impact. WSCF has concerns that whilst the various transport community groups the WSCF is involved with are able to make themselves heard, there are many who are not able.

Without equal consideration for the important role of each type of bus network route Sydney's transport system could become heavily focused on fast direct links for the commuter, to the detriment of those reliant on public transport for local links.

2.7.1.2 Bus corridors to be prioritised

To date, it appears that the Government is struggling to implement the PTIPS (Public Transport Information and Priority System). The success of PTIPS seems tied to the adequate development of the strategic bus corridors.

WSCF encourages the Government to:

- Prioritise the Bankstown, Liverpool, Fairfield and Parramatta corridors.
- Reserve and develop T-Way corridors into Blacktown, Mt Druitt and Riverstone to coincide with the readiness of the Marsden Park industrial area.
- Develop a bus lane or T-way along Camden Valley Way. This would service the first release precincts Tuner Road, Oran Park, Harrington Park, Harrington Grove, Edmondson Park and the New Release Precinct Leppington North. This bus corridor would also serve as a feed into the Leppington Town Centre and the South West Rail link and Narrellan at the other end.
- Reserve and develop T-Way corridors that connect the South West Growth Centre with employment zones such as Wetherill Park, Smeaton Grange and Turner Road and other high employment areas in Campbelltown and Liverpool.

2.7.2 Missing links along bus routes

WSCF supports the Government's re-commitment to fixing the 'missing links' along bus transit lanes. In particular, WSCF recommends the fixing the missing links along the M2 be made a priority, especially considering that the North West Rail link will not be completed until 2024. At present, buses are forced to slow down and merge with peak hour traffic at several points along the length of the motorway making travel on the bus less attractive and less efficient.

2.8 Increasing the efficiency of the road network

WSCF does not support the Government's plan to add an extra lane in each direction on the M2 and M5 Motorways. Whilst the WSCF agrees that these two motorways experience significant congestion problems, money would be better spent developing and enhancing public transport infrastructure in these areas. Especially since there is evidence to support:

- Building more roads induces traffic growth and results in more carbon, air, water and noise pollution⁴.
- Road building is the most expensive option per passenger kilometer travelled. Dual carriageways cost about 1½ to 6 times more than two track railways per passenger kilometer travelled⁵

⁴ Zeibots ME (2004) Rethinking transport evaluation methods: do we have the best tools to help us make cities more sustainable? 4th Conference of the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development, Cardiff, 22-25 March 2004. Online at <http://www.google.com.au/search?hl=en&sa=X&oi=spell&resnum=0&ct=result&cd=1&q=Zeibots+induced+traffic+growth&spell=1>

⁵ The 6.6 km Alstonville, NSW bypass will cost \$102 m; the 12.4km Ballina, NSW bypass will cost \$660m and each could carry 4000 people per hour; the 72km Mandurah, WA rail line cost \$1.22 billion and could carry 20,000 passengers per hour. See <http://www.auslink.gov.au/projects/ProjectSearch.aspx>

- Reduced car ownership (through better public transport options) would lower transport costs for families by reducing the need to purchase cars.⁶

WSCF argues that a bus transit lane on or near the M5 and/or increased capacity along the train lines to the South West are much more effective and sustainable options to reduce congestion.

It has been proposed that the bus lane bridge into Epping along the M2 be removed to accommodate the M2 lane expansion. This bus lane is one of the only pieces of public transport infrastructure connecting the North West with Epping and is a key component in connecting Western Sydney with the Epping to Chatswood rail link.

As a fundamental principle, bus transit lanes must be increased and improved across Sydney, not lanes on motorways. Local transport groups tell WSCF that bus access into Epping from the North West is poor and that better bus access into Epping would improve the usage of the new Epping to Chatswood link.

3. A BETTER CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

3.1 MyZone

WSCF strongly supports the Government's decision to introduce integrated ticketing through MyZone.

MyZone enables the public transport system to compete more efficiently and effectively with the private car for flexibility, convenience and value. MyZone recognises:

- Longer distances travelled by Western Sydney commuters
- Higher costs of transport for those living in Western Sydney
- Private bus companies operate the majority of bus service routes, with very few Government run services in Western Sydney
- People travelling in Western Sydney are often forced to make mode or route changes to arrive at their destination
- Higher numbers of low-income households in Western Sydney

MyZone, however, fails to recognise one very important fact: the majority of people who live in Western Sydney work, shop and socialise in Western Sydney. MyZone Multi targets the CBD and is not useful for people who only travel in Zones 2 or 3.

⁶ Warman B (2001) Cars-where are they taking us? Charter, Keck, Kramer Research, Strategic Property Consulting, Research Insight, March, in Scheurer J, Kenworthy J & Newman P (2005) The Economic Benefits of Investing in Public Transport in Melbourne Metropolitan Transport Forum, Melbourne p21

WSCF recommends that the Government incorporate a MyZone Multi 2 only, a MyZone Multi 3 only and a MyZone Multi 2/3 as part of the MyZone ticketing options.

3.2 Improvements to the 131500 Transport Information Line

WSCF believes that the 131500 Transport information line is a vital resource for both improving the customer experience of those already using public transport as well as a support for the community on how to use public transport.

Through regular contact with users of the 131500, WSCF has some suggestions as to how NSW Transport and Infrastructure can improve this vital service:

- Expand the 131500 languages line resource to the 131500 website
- Include 'How To' videos and explanatory notes on the website, such as how to purchase tickets, how to use tickets on public transport and how to best use the website
- Better market the 131500 mobile phone internet service
- Include details of interchange layouts, transport services, kiss and ride facilities, park and ride facilities, taxi ranks and amenities on the website
- Enhance the Transport info line website journey planner by including the ability to plan part of the journey by car or taxi – this can help encourage a gradual change in transport behavior

3.3 Accessibility

WSCF acknowledges the Government's commitment to accessible transport in NSW.

WSCF, however, has concerns with the ambiguity of the statement within the transport plan '*We will deliver: improved access to the transport network for all passengers regardless of age or ability*'. The WSCF seeks further advice from the Government on how and when plans to increase the accessibility of public transport infrastructure and information will be undertaken.

3.3.1 Bus stop infrastructure

Bus stop infrastructure is the interface between alighting and embarking on a bus service. It can include; waiting areas, accessible pathways, street furniture, shelter, lighting, signage, boarding points and bus service timetable information. As the interface between the street and a bus service, the bus stop plays a vital role in ensuring:

- Bus services are accessible for people with a disability, mobility impairment, vision impairment, older persons and people with prams.

- Bus users feel safe and comfortable whilst waiting for the bus to arrive
- Bus users are able to access time table information and/or directions to services when embarking on or alighting a service.

The provision of infrastructure at the bus stop is a local government obligation in NSW. Whilst local governments may appear to be the best medium to deliver this local infrastructure resource, there are several issues with the current way in which bus stop infrastructure is delivered across both Sydney and NSW;

- Bus service provision is the responsibility of three different entities; NSW Transport and Infrastructure determining the routes of bus service, Bus companies providing the service and local councils providing bus stop infrastructure. If, for example, a local council puts bus stop infrastructure in place and NSW Transport and Infrastructure decides to change a bus route, this can cause resource difficulties for both entities.
- Bus stop infrastructure is costly and can be difficult for smaller councils to resource. This is supported in the findings of the *2008 Review of the Disability Standards for accessible public transport (page 56)*
- Many local councils do not have a clear and transparent mechanism to collect data on the status of bus stop infrastructure so that in many cases local councils are unable to provide information on how many bus stops are accessible. The Local Government and Shires Association assert:

*'There appears to be an absence of consistent data available on the extent of the infrastructure issue facing Local Government and the degree to which councils are planning, progressing or implementing the Transport Standards.'*⁷

WSCF recommends that the responsibility for bus stop infrastructure be transferred to a separate entity such as Transport Infrastructure Development Council (TIDC). This will help to ensure that provision of bus stop infrastructure is supplied equitably across the state, that funding is available and that data is collected at one central source.

⁷ Local Government Shires Association, 2002, *Submission to the Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport*. Last accessed 27 April 2010 from http://www.ddatransportreview.com.au/downloads/submissions/26_LGSA_NSW.pdf

3.3.2 Easy Access Program

WSCF is supportive of the Government's Easy Access program and encourages a concentrated commitment to increasing this program beyond the 2008 level of 36% accessible CityRail stations⁸.

WSCF has a few suggestions for improvements to this important program;

- Priority must be given to stations to undergo the Easy Access upgrade in areas that have a high prevalence of disability based on census data. The NSW State Government outlines in the submission to the 2008 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport that *'Prioritisation for easy access upgrading is based on a number of factors including station patronage, access to educational and medical centres, parking, bus services, shopping, tourism and whether the station is a rail interchange'*. Whilst these factors are important, including disability prevalence as a deciding factor in the deliverance of the Easy Access program will ensure that accessible services go where they are most needed as quickly as possible.
- Attention must be given to upgrading train station facilities to support not only people with a physical disability, but other forms of disability such as intellectual disability or vision impairment. At a recent forum with the Council for Intellectual Disability, WSCF heard that people with intellectual disability have difficulties with the speed at which the electronic signs change. Provision of information on these signs at a slower pace and larger writing would help people with an intellectual disability independently access information. The poor sound quality of announcements made on trains was also cited as a difficulty for people with intellectual disabilities.

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⁸ Ministry of Transport, 2007, *Accessible Transport Action Plan for NSW Transport, Roads and Maritime Agencies*, Last Accessed 27 April 2010 from http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/using_trans/access-trans-action-plan.html

4. WHAT IS MISSING FROM THE TRANSPORT PLAN?

4.1 The Focus of Travel from Western Sydney to the Sydney CBD is Misplaced

Once again transport planning for Western Sydney is mainly about commuters to the Sydney CBD.

The majority of travel done in Western Sydney is to destinations within Western Sydney and for reasons other than commuting to work. This is described in the 2006 Transport Data Centre Journey to Work data⁹. The Sydney Household Travel Survey shows that 90% of trips made by Western Sydney residents are for purposes other than work and are within the region itself¹⁰.

4.2 Absence of a Coherent Road Pricing Strategy

The current unplanned and unfair system of road tolling is not helping as much as it should with traffic demand management and paying for public transport. It is hard to see how transport patterns and land-use planning can be properly coordinated without a more coherent road-pricing strategy. At the moment people in the South West and North West can feel justifiable aggrieved with the way in which tolls are applied and the services they receive for their tolls.

4.3 Local and Community Transport

Whilst frequent, fast and well connected buses are crucial to reduce transport disadvantage, there are some people who find it difficult to use regular services, due to health, age, mobility, geography or other socio-economic considerations. Social disadvantage and social exclusion is exacerbated by this lack of access to transport. Community Transport is therefore a vital component of our broader transport system. Good Community Transport systems are essential to ensuring that the gap between those who can access mainstream public transport and those who cannot is not further widened.

To the detriment of the entire transport system, community transport was not incorporated as a part of the Metropolitan Transport Plan. WSCF views this as a deficit to achieving a holistic transport system and strongly argues that Community Transport be incorporated into the Plan. The Metropolitan Transport Strategy should recognise Community Transport, in particular the Community Transport Program component of Community Transport, as one part of the solution to bridge the gap between those who can access public transport and

⁹ Transport Data Centre, 2006 *Journey to Work Atlas*, Last Accessed 27 April 2010 from <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/tdc/jtw-atlas.html>

¹⁰ PPM, 2004, *Greater Western Sydney Regional Transportation Profile*, Blacktown: PPM Consultants for Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils

those who cannot. However, this is only possible if both the funding for Community Transport is increased in addition to the widening of the eligibility criteria. Therefore WSCF recommends:

- Local and Community Transport be incorporated as part of a holistic transport plan for Sydney
- Community Transport Program is extended all NSW Community Transport providers to enable transport services to support people with transport disadvantage who are not eligible for HACC services.

4.4 Strategies to reduce 'The Gap'

Current Metropolitan bus planning guidelines aim to ensure that a bus goes within 400m of every residence in peak times and 800m in off-peak times. The aim is to meet this guideline in 90% of cases.

Community transport provides a service for frail-aged and disability customers who are able to manage themselves on to and off the bus which comes to their residence. This is a very specialised service with limited frequency, usually once a week, at a considerably higher price to the customer than the route bus, usually \$5 - \$10 for a return trip.

The '360m gap' (which actually often turns out to be a much bigger gap) refers to the difference in access to the services provided by the route bus system and the community transport system. It is the difference in access for people who do not qualify for community transport (HACC eligible) or do not find community transport services adequate for their needs, but find the distance to the nearest bus stop too difficult and are left without access to a service able to meet their needs. The people most commonly found in this gap are active, well, older people and people with mobility difficulties or restrictions. The local topography and the urban layout can also affect the importance of the gap.

There may also be situations where 'the gap' is bigger than 800m; for instance on the city fringe, in areas where it has been deemed uneconomic to run buses. The people effected in these circumstances may be different types of people but it may be that the solutions to bridging the gap are the same or similar. For instance young people on the city fringe in areas such as Camden, Penrith, Wollondilly and Hawkesbury can find getting home after socializing on weekend nights very difficult.

As the Bus Reform process has progressed, putting an emphasis on faster, more direct bus services which do not circulate through the suburban side-streets as much as they did previously, there has been an outcry from many older people who are feeling the effects of this as social exclusion because their bus routes have changed and they can no longer access the services they once

enjoyed. They resent having a service taken away and often feel neglected by the Government and services providers - as if they "don't count" anymore.

This also raises the question of how many people have experienced this exclusion even before the bus reform process and continue to experience it now. In 2006 (prior to most of the Bus Reform process) a WSCF report estimated that 700,000 people in Western Sydney experience social exclusion related to transport disadvantage.

Of course private cars and taxis already operate in this gap and provide a demand responsive, door-to-door service. Private vehicles are not available to people who do not have licenses, the capability to drive or cannot afford to own a car. Our experience at WSCF is that the main impediment to the increased use of taxis to solve this problem is cost, but there may also be some other social, psychological and cultural reasons why taxis are not considered a solution to this problem at this time.

WSCF recommends that the Government commission and independent study to assess 'the gap', ascertain the nature of the problem, and make recommendations about how to solve this problem

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