

Western Sydney Transport Position Paper

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community forum

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Western Sydney Transport Position Paper

Introduction

Western Sydney Community Forum (WSCF) represents community organisations supporting and resourcing the most vulnerable and powerless people living in Western Sydney. WSCF seeks to provide regional leadership and facilitate collaborative action to resource and enable community organisations to effectively address issues relating to social justice and social inclusion. We believe our role is in strengthening community sector involvement in transport issues in Western Sydney and contributing all people living in Western Sydney.

Our members range from small community development organisations delivering services and community leadership programs at a grass roots and neighbourhood level, such as youth services, to larger organisations providing community wide support services such as those under home and community care funding program.

Staff at WSCF, have consulted with over 200 networks and interagencies, over the year and the consistent message we received is that the current transport options are poor and urgent work is needed to improve public transport connectivity in Western Sydney.

We believe that there is an obligation on government to provide transport services that the community need and have requested for many years. The failure to invest significantly will have dire consequences, social, economic and environmental which we are currently facing.

Outlined in this position paper is our blueprint of transport policy to contribute to the wellbeing enhancing the liveability of Western Sydney.

We anticipate that this paper will be a “living document”. We hope that this document is useful in assisting your understanding of some of the challenges that Western Sydney and its transport system is facing and welcome your feedback on it.

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Western Sydney Community Forum

Our Transport Position at a Glance

- **Active Living:** Through promoting mobility and accessibility by improving walking, cycling and related infrastructure to promote “active living” by urban design and transit orientated development.
- **Car sharing:** Supporting schemes such as GoGet Car Share, educating people about options to share existing cars in the community, with travel change behavior programs introduced.
- **Buses:** Bus frequency needs to be improved generally and extended to run more frequent services on the weekend and up to 12pm. Bus stops need to be clearly identified and bus shelters installed.
- **Rail:** Better use of rail network to service people living and working in Western Sydney, such as by using the Cumberland line. Enable more cross-regional transport such as the Epping – Parramatta rail link, supporting sustainable growth in the North-West and South West Growth areas.
- **Transport Infrastructure:** Build it now. Further postponement makes the problem worse. Infrastructure investment promotes economic growth, and provides a buffer against the recession. Investment in longer term imperatives such in the North-West and South West Growth areas, will support sustainable growth and reduce carbon emissions.
- **Health Related Transport:** requires a whole of government approach in using spare transport capacity, from the community services sector, health department and other government departments.
- **Demand Responsive Transport (DRT):** We support the use of DRT by community transport where mass transit is not viable, such as in health related transport or to service rural fringe areas of Western Sydney, such as modelled by the Smartlink project.

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Key Recommendations

Cross Regional Transport

- Transport policy in Western Sydney must aim to plan for the 75% of trips that are non work related, undertaken by people living in Western Sydney. The community needs better cross-regional connections for public transport in Western Sydney, with more frequent services.
- NSW Government to provide increased frequency and connectivity of cross-regional public transport services across Western Sydney. This will increase accessibility to regional and sub-regional centres in Western Sydney and encourage sustainable growth away from the CBD.

Car Share Schemes

- Development of projects to investigate car-share schemes that can work for the Western Sydney growth sectors as well as other parts of Western Sydney. These projects need to be well resourced and sophisticated to encapsulate the complex nature of trying to share what are now considered exclusively private goods.

Accessibility

- The NSW Ministry of Transport seek Commonwealth funding to enable local government meet the Transport Standards.
- That the Easy Access program be doubled to \$100 million and prioritised in areas with a greater level of disadvantage.
- Ramps should be left installed when upgrading stations. This will provide access when the lift is not operable.

Social Inclusion

- NSW Government to acknowledge the role that transport plays in addressing social exclusion and to target transport disadvantaged areas with increased connectivity.

Ticketing

- WSCF recommends a time – based zone ticketing system. That the travel pass system is extended to Western Sydney.

Transport Coordination

- That a Transport Coordination Authority for Sydney be established to coordinate decision making, communication and information for all modes of public transport.
- That the NSW government create a specialist government agency for active transport, that will secure funding and lead a whole-of-government approach to the development of infrastructure, facilities and educational programs aimed at making cycling and walking a more acceptable, comfortable, safe and viable for the community.
- Make bicycling and public transport work better together by actively promoting the value of riding to public transport, and by providing a range of bicycle facilities, such as accessible, undercover racks and lockers at stations, and bus stops and transport interchanges. Bicycles should be able to be transported on buses.

Buses

- WSCF believes that the bus network in Western Sydney needs to be integrated into the rest of the public transport system through an integrated ticketing and information system which enables people to travel on a time and zone-based system facilitating mode interchanges without additional charges.
- The bus system needs to aim for high frequency services on all strategic corridor services, providing no less than 10 minute frequencies for peak and 20 minute frequencies for off-peak services from 6am to 10pm each day.
- Services need to co-ordinate with train services as much as possible and information about timetables should be on every bus stop and through 131500.
- All bus stops need to be numbered so customers can easily locate the timetable information using the 131500 service.
- All bus stops need to be numbered so customers can easily locate the timetable information using the 131500 service.
- The Bus Network Review public consultation process is reviewed so that the process is useful and meaningful for consumers, transport providers and the Ministry.
- Work should be done to include Community Transport as an accredited part of the public transport system servicing transport disadvantaged people, people with mobility problems and socially excluded people.
- The development of bus priority and T-way infrastructure be supported but not as an

alternative to the development of the heavy rail into the North West and South West Growth Centres

- WSCF can see a role for The NSW Independent Safety and Reliability Regulator to monitor the safety and reliability as well as the quality of the bus service system.
- The School Transport Subsidy Scheme (STSS) is retained for all students but that an accurate accounting of the usage of student travel is maintained.
- A review is done to assess which bus routes and services are left vulnerable to any changes made to the STSS and these routes and services are discussed with the local community and supported if needed.

Rail

- Increase frequency of train services, such as on the Cumberland line, which promote greater cross-regional connectivity in Western Sydney.
- Re-investment in the rail duplication to Richmond must continue, as this will affect the other parts of the CityRail network. This additional capacity should be integrated into whatever system is developed for the North West sector.
- The rail link connections between Parramatta to Epping and Rouse Hill should also proceed.

Taxis

- Increase the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme amount to \$75.00, due to the larger geographical distances covered by people with disabilities travelling in Western Sydney.

Demand Responsive Transport

- That additional funding is made available to continue the work of the Smartlink project (Great Community Transport), and that the project is expanded across Western Sydney.

Transport in Western Sydney

Western Sydney has 1.85 million people living in 14 local government areas. By 2026, it is estimated that there will be 2.3 million people living in the region. The Gross Regional Product (GRP) of the Greater Western Sydney region was estimated at \$71.5 billion in 2004-05ⁱ. Cross –regional transport options and infrastructure are particularly lacking in the South-West, West and North West Sydney.

Since the 1970's over 100km of motorways have been constructed to serve Western Sydney, including the M7 Orbital which added 40km and largely completes the motorway network. In the period since the 1930's the rail network in Western Sydney has had less than 15km of railway network added. Two bus transit ways have been constructedⁱⁱ.

6.5 million trips are taken each weekday across Western Sydney, with each person averaging 3.6 trips per day on a weekday and 3.2 trips on the weekendⁱⁱⁱ.

“Travel patterns evident from the Journey to Work data from the 2001 Census and the Sydney Household Travel Survey show that the vast majority of trips for both work (71%) and other purposes (90%) by Western Sydney residents are within the region itself (PPM, 2004). Only 7% of workers from Western Sydney travelled to the Sydney CBD.”^{iv}

It is poor planning to base the majority of transport planning around trips to the Sydney CBD. More frequent cross-regional transport linkages in Western Sydney for travel regionally e.g. from Campbelltown to Blacktown, will support the growth of regional cities (Penrith, Parramatta & Liverpool) and regional centres, (Blacktown, Campbelltown, Castle Hill & Bankstown)^v. People who don't work or travel to the Sydney CBD have little option but to drive or face inflexible and or infrequent services. CBD peak services to the CBD are at breaking point^{vi}, and there are clear reasons to promote transport policy to prioritise cross-regional transport connectivity.

The *Household Travel Survey*, surveys travel patterns across NSW on a regular basis and this collection tool is used by policy makers to focus on 'travel to work' trips over the majority of non-travel to work trips that are made. It is a mistake to base transport planning policy decisions around 'travel to work' trips alone, because 75% of trips in Western Sydney are not work related, as identified in Figure 1.

Recommendation:

Transport policy in Western Sydney must aim to plan for the 75% of trips that are non work related, undertaken by people living in Western Sydney. The community needs better cross-regional connections for public transport in Western Sydney, with more frequent services.

Recommendation:

NSW Government to provide increased frequency and connectivity of cross-regional public transport services across Western Sydney. This will increase accessibility to regional and sub-regional centres in Western Sydney and encourage sustainable growth away from the CBD.

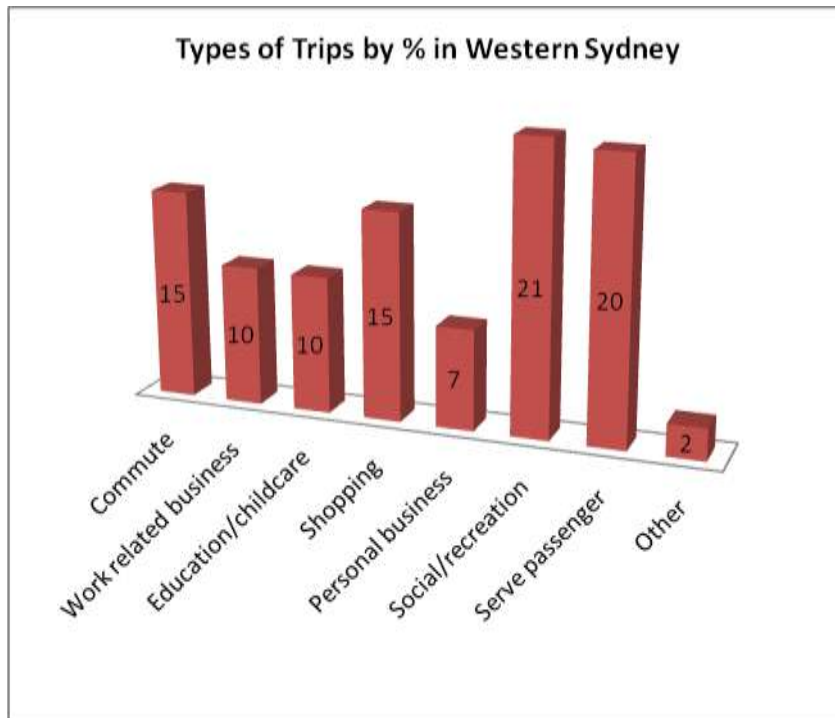


Figure 1 - Household Travel Survey, 2008^{vii}

In Western Sydney, the large majority of trips taken are in private vehicles^{viii}.

“The transport deficit in Western Sydney is most noticeable in areas where there is limited access to rail, in the northwest LGAs of Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury, and in Camden and Wollondilly in the Southwest. In these LGAs there are higher proportions of dwellings with two or more cars (more than 60% of dwellings), lower proportions of dwellings with no vehicles (fewer than 5% of dwellings) and higher rates of journey to work by car (around 60% of people drive to work) compared to Sydney averages.

The costs to households of owning cars are considerable and it has been estimated that a household could save \$750,000 over a lifetime if a second car could be avoided (Newman, 2003)^{ix}.

Recommendation:

Development of projects to investigate car-share schemes that can work for the Western Sydney growth sectors as well as other parts of Western Sydney. These projects need to be well

resourced and sophisticated to work with the complex nature of trying to share what are now considered exclusively private goods.

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to a person's ability to reach goods, services and activities, which is the ultimate goal of most transport activity. Many factors affect accessibility, including a person's mobility (physical movement), the quality and affordability of transport options, transport system connectivity, mobility substitutes, and land use patterns.^x

Accessible transport is the keystone that facilitates a person's participation in their community, society and also impacts collectively on our community wellbeing. Groups who are vulnerable and impacted by lack of transport include the unemployed, older people, young people, single parents, migrants including refugees, the Indigenous community, people on low incomes, and persons with disabilities^{xi}.

Accessible transport enables people to participate in:

- Social and community events
- Educational opportunities
- Community life
- Health appointments
- Work and employment related opportunities
- Shopping and purchasing of goods and services

Positive benefits of people accessing public transport are:

- Improved health outcomes improve through "active living"
- Benefits for the environment
- Less congestion
- Less road accidents and associated trauma
- Volunteering
- Developing rich social capital between people

Mobility

Mobility of transport refers to the ability of all people to be able to use the transport infrastructure that is provided. The *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992)* requires that the delivery of services should provide equitable access for those with a disability. The practical applications of the requirements of the Act are outlined in the Transport Standards.

The Transport Standards establish the specific requirements for access to transport services such as establishing the space allocation requirements for wheelchairs on buses and trains, lift and

ramp access at railway stations and bus/rail interchanges, and access to transport service information.

Many bus stops are not compliant with the Transport Standards and it is local government's responsibility to install and upgrade bus shelters. Local government say that they do not have the resources to upgrade and install bus shelters. This is a significant barrier to improved bus ridership. Without shelters, passengers are often left at the mercy of the elements.

Recommendation:

That Western Sydney Region of Organisation of Councils (WSROC) lobbies the Federal government to provide funding for local governments to meet the Transport Standards.

Although significant progress has been made with the purchase of low floor buses, many more are needed. They also support people using prams, trolleys and those with limited mobility.

“Approximately 1669 of the 4011 buses in the Sydney and Outer Metropolitan Areas (41.6%) are currently accessible (approximately 47% Sydney Metro and 24% Outer Metropolitan areas). 30% of bus services in both the Sydney Metropolitan and Outer Metropolitan areas were timetabled as accessible as at 30 June 2008. It is not possible to more accurately estimate this percentage as a small minority of bus operators have not been able to provide accurate reports to the Ministry on how many of their accessible services are timetabled.”^{xii}

Recently there have been discussions about reducing station staff at CityRail stations^{xiii}. We believe that station staff has an important role to play. These roles are assisting customers with enquiries and unlocking toilets, assisting people with limited mobility and disabilities and the comfort of knowing that staff are present if there is an emergency.

The Easy Access program is CityRail's strategy to increase the accessibility of its train stations for passengers with limited mobility. The program installs lifts in stations. We believe that it is important that ramps are left intact wherever possible.

Rail overpasses often enable access from one part of the suburb to the other. E.g. In 2007 Lidcombe train station lift was rendered inoperable due to a fire from a nearby shop. The impact on the less mobile resulted in a severed suburb. For several months people from the local community were not able to access shops and services such as medical appointments on the other side of the railway station.

Recommendation:

That the Easy Access program be doubled to \$100 million and prioritised in areas with a greater level of disadvantage.

Recommendation:

Ramps should be left installed when upgrading stations. This will provide access when the lift is not operable.

Sustainability

Transport systems (modes, networks and service levels) are internationally recognised as being key drivers of sustainable cities. Vehicle emissions affect air quality and increase the level of greenhouse gases. Our current transport system is not sustainable for Western Sydney residents as it is designed to take people to the Sydney CBD, not within the region, where most people actually travel. As a result, it does not enable people to reduce their car use.

WSROC's *Agenda for Sustainability and Wellbeing in Western Sydney* recommends that infrastructure is invested to develop sustainable transport options which will influence how far people will be comfortable to walk or cycle. This will be influenced by urban planning incorporating vehicle congestion speed and road design^{xiv}.

Generally, it is more sustainable for people to work close to where they live. As travel times are reduced, people can increase their participation in their local community and spend more time with family. Regional and sub-regional centres will be a focus of employment and provide increased opportunities for better work-life balance due to the proximity of home to work.

Social Inclusion

Transport accessibility is particularly important in addressing social exclusion in Western Sydney. People need to travel for a variety of reasons. Those who are socially isolated are more likely to have poorer health prospects, than those who are not^{xv}.

Government welfare programs are often reliant upon frequent and reliable public transport. E.g. Job seekers must participate in employment activities such as attending interviews and job seeking programs and are required to travel for maximum of 90 minutes.

Infrequent and limited transport options coupled with long travel distances are barriers to employment and study opportunities. These programs, designed to promote participation and social inclusion, without providing transport options, will not enable people to participate more fully in society.

Recommendation:

NSW Government to acknowledge the role that transport plays in addressing social exclusion and to target transport disadvantaged areas with increased connectivity.

Vulnerable Communities

WSCF has concerns about the long-term vulnerabilities built into the way in which parts of the Western Sydney growth centre areas are being developed. Dodson and Sipe, believe that this style of development, focused around the use of private transport and located at a distance from urban hubs, increases the vulnerability of the residents to mortgage and oil vulnerability^{xvi}.

Access to transport affects housing affordability in Western Sydney. On average each household in Western Sydney owns 1.7 cars^{xvii}. Each oil price shock will cause people living in transport disadvantaged areas to re-assess the cost of their housing and transport. This may have dire consequences for people in Western Sydney, if no other alternatives are provided.

In consultations with local service providers WSCF was made aware of concerns about the vulnerability of people living in North Western Sydney and their social isolation, particularly for families with limited access to private transport. This is because the urban design principles being used make assumptions about the availability of private transport for all people in the family, now and into the future. Service providers have highlighted concerns about women being isolated in their houses and the negative consequences, such as teenagers will be restricted to their local neighbourhoods because of a lack of transport options.

Transport Modes

Ticketing & Integration

We believe that it should be easy to travel around Western Sydney using public transport. We need a flexible easy to use system to get around. Presently there is no integrated ticketing system in place. Integrated ticketing will mean that passengers pay for one journey, not each part of the journey.

We need a ticketing policy which is easy to understand and can provide incentives for people to use public transport across Western Sydney. Zone based ticketing is used in Melbourne and Brisbane, and enables people to trip-chain, such as picking up the children by bus, travel to the doctors, go shopping and then getting back onto a train. Currently this situation is expensive and in many places not possible, due to low frequency of services outside the morning and afternoon peak periods. The data suggests that using a car is much easier than using public transport in Western Sydney^{xviii}.

Recommendation:

WSCF recommends a time – based zone ticketing system. That the travel pass system is extended to Western Sydney.

Often there are problems with coordinating the variety of public transport agencies involved in providing public transport services; a recent example is the failure of integrated ticketing. We believe that better coordination of all modes of transport will support a better transport system.

A best practice example is London's TravelWatch^{xi}. TravelWatch is a statutory consumer body responsible for representing the interests of the users of London's various transport modes.^{xx} Its roles include:

- Investigating suggestions and complaints from users who are dissatisfied with the response received from the service provider
- Conducting independent research and produce publications on issues affecting transport users
- Maintaining a regular dialogue with operators

Recommendation:

That a Transport Coordination Authority for Sydney be established to coordinate decision making, communication and information for all modes of public transport.

Active Transport - Walking & Cycling

"Active transport" is important for people to be able to move and increase their level of incidental exercise. Western Sydney has many areas which do not have adequate footpaths or walkways and this is a significant barrier to people walking.

"Research conducted by Jackie Kelly (MP), stated that Penrith had 55.8 km of footpaths and Penrith South had only 13.1 km. In contrast, the affluent north-shore suburb of Mosman had 360 km of footpaths. Her research showed 19 per cent of women from disadvantaged areas were obese compared to 11 per cent from advantaged areas. "Women are time poor, if you're looking after children it is hard to go to the gym, instead you just go out and go for a walk. (It is difficult to go for a walk if there are few footpaths)," she said"^{xxi}.)

There has been a 22% increase in people cycling to work in Australian capital cities, but only 9% in Sydney^{xxii}. The economic benefits of current cycling participation to the health system have been calculated to be approximately \$227.2 million per annum. The savings to the economy in terms of reduced congestion is approximately \$63.9 million per year, greenhouse gas emission reductions amount to \$9.3 million. Substantial increases in these benefits will flow from future growth in cycling participation^{xxiii}.

Recommendation:

That the NSW government create a specialist government agency for active transport, that will secure funding and lead a whole-of-government approach to the development of infrastructure, facilities and educational programs aimed at making cycling and walking a more acceptable, comfortable, safe and viable for the community.

Recommendation:

Make bicycling and public transport work better together by actively promoting the value of riding to public transport, and by providing a range of bicycle facilities, such as accessible, undercover racks and lockers at stations, and bus stops and transport interchanges. Bicycles should be able to be transported on buses.

Buses

Buses are an underutilized resource in Western Sydney. Only 2% of all 'trips' in Western Sydney are taken on buses^{xxiv}.

Through our *Connecting with Buses* project, WSCF has been working to encourage the improvement and development of the bus system in Western Sydney. We recognize that the bus system provides a significant part of the public transport system in Western Sydney and has great potential for growth. As we have mentioned, there has been no new development of railway infrastructure in Western Sydney and the bus system has been used to provide the growth of public transport in Western Sydney.

WSCF believes that the evidence shows that increases in the service quality and the service levels of the bus system in Western Sydney could provide significant increases to the patronage of buses, and improved levels of connectedness for people living in Western Sydney^{xxv}.

There has been, however, significant inequalities between the way in which the bus system has developed in the different parts of Sydney. Close to the Sydney CBD the system is mainly provided by the State Transit Authority (STA) while in Western Sydney the system is mainly provided by a number of private bus operators. This has meant that there has been a superior service quality to people using STA services than the Western Sydney services in terms of pricing, ticketing types, timetable frequency, service reliability, route development and information provision. While some of these issues have been addressed, for instance there has recently been an equalization in the availability of the Pensioner Excursion Ticket; the situation still remains largely true.

Recommendation:

WSCF believes that the bus network in Western Sydney needs to be integrated into the rest of the public transport system through an integrated ticketing and information system which enables people to travel on a time and zone-based system facilitating mode interchanges without additional charges.

Recommendation:

The bus system needs to aim for high frequency services on all strategic corridor services, providing no less than 10 minute frequencies for peak and 20 minute frequencies for off-peak services from 6am to 10pm each day.

Recommendation:

Services need to co-ordinate with train services as much as possible and information about timetables should be on every bus stop and through 131500.

Recommendation:

All bus stops need to be numbered so customers can easily locate the timetable information using the 131500 service.

Unfortunately, we are currently a long way from this situation.

WSCF broadly supports the Bus Network Review system that has been happening during the last few years since the completion of the *Unsworth Review* in 2004.

WSCF supports:

- Implementation of strategic bus corridors
- Increasing the use of bus priority and T-way infrastructure
- Improving the reliability, frequency and financial viability of route bus services
- Increasing the incentives to bus operators to improve service quality and patronage through revenue splits

Bus Network Reviews

WSCF has noted, however, several problems with the Bus Network Review as it aligns the bus system to a more 'mass transit' focus.

The public consultation process has, in general, been difficult for all parties involved. The Bus Network Review has gone ahead and changes have been made to the system but many people have been left feeling disadvantaged and unsupported by the process^{xxvi}. The Ministry and Bus Operators have also felt unsatisfied, pressured and frustrated by the process.

We believe this is largely because of the sometimes different interests and needs of the customers, the community, the bus operators and the Ministry of Transport. There are limited resources available to allocate to the Bus Network and when changes are made it seems to create a set of people who feel that they have 'lost out'. There are no additional resources allocated to meet the needs of these potentially 'transport disadvantaged' people. These people tend to be old people and people with mobility problems.

Recommendation:

The Bus Network Review public consultation process is reviewed so that the process is useful and meaningful for consumers, transport providers and the Ministry.

WSCF believes, like the *Unsworth Review*, that there is an opportunity for community transport to provide some of these 'lost' services and to properly integrate with the route bus system.

Connecting with Buses is trying to do some of this work but to do this task properly would require additional resources into the Community Transport Program, support for programs like Smartlink, and legislative changes that enabled Community Transport to fulfil this role. A model for this legislation exists in the ACT but a body of work needs to be undertaken to make this happen and make it integrated with the rest of the system. WSCF also believes that the proposed "Community

Kilometres” mentioned in the Bus Contracts could be part of a solution and that some project trials should be done to test how this would work.

Recommendation:

Work should be done to include Community Transport as an accredited part of the public transport system servicing transport disadvantaged people, people with mobility problems and socially excluded people.

There has been significant interest in the development of bus priority and T-way infrastructure and WSCF supports this movement. This has considerable potential to develop the cross-regional transport links that are badly needed and that we have highlighted this throughout this paper.

WSCF has some concern, though, that these services are being considered as a replacement for the development of the heavy rail infrastructure that has been planned and promised for the North West and South West of Sydney. WSCF does not support that position – the heavy rail links should still be completed and the bus system should integrate with this rail system to provide the needed cross-regional and local links.

Recommendation:

The development of bus priority and T-way infrastructure be supported but not as an alternative to the development of the heavy rail into the North West and South West Growth Centres.

With regard to the monitoring of the service quality of bus service provision, indicators are still to be developed. The NSW Independent Safety and Reliability Regulator (ITSRR) suggests that ‘better service quality would be expected to increase customer satisfaction and grow demand’, and will be conducting a survey into bus reliability in 2009.^{xx}

Recommendation:

WSCF can see a role for The NSW Independent Safety and Reliability Regulator to monitor the safety and reliability as well as the quality of the bus service system.

Student Travel Subsidy Scheme (STSS)

WSCF has also been concerned about reducing the availability of Student Travel Subsidy Scheme. We see two main problems with this change in policy:

- 1) Students are a large part of the business for bus service providers in Western Sydney (and in particular the smaller regional providers) and if fewer students use the bus service it risks the viability of many bus routes in Western Sydney.
- 2) There are a number of education policies facilitated by the availability of free bus travel for students. Specialist High Schools are an example of this. WSCF believes anything that presents a barrier to children and young people attending school should be seen as a bad idea.

Recommendation:

The STSS be retained for all students but that an accurate accounting of the usage of student travel is maintained.

Recommendation:

A review is done to assess which bus routes and services are left vulnerable to any changes made to the STSS and these routes and services are discussed with the local community and supported if needed.

WSCF has developed a detailed *Connecting with Buses Policy Paper*. This Paper looks at the development of the bus service system using the recommendations of the *Unsworth Review*, the agreements outlined in the Bus Service Contracts and models of international best practice as guideposts. This paper is available from our website.

Rail

We recommend that the NSW Government maintain its commitment to building the rail links in the North West and South West Growth sectors. We recommend a return to the recent plan to introduce an integrated heavy rail system into the Growth sectors because:

- they are an integral part of the Sydney Metropolitan Growth Strategy
- this is appropriate for the longer journeys
- does not involve a change of mode to access the North Shore, the North West employment zones and Macquarie business park areas
- has higher passenger capacity (1200 passengers per train)
- can be integrated into the rest of the CityRail network
- will relieve congestion on the Western line and through Parramatta station.

We believe a Metro system can more appropriately service higher density areas such as Parramatta. Trips would be shorter and frequencies higher.

Recommendation:

Re-investment in the rail duplication to Richmond must continue, as this will affect the other parts of the CityRail network. This additional capacity should be integrated into whatever system is developed for the North West sector.

Recommendation:

The rail link connections between Parramatta and Epping should also proceed as well as Rouse Hill.

These rail projects are overdue and there has not been a significant investment in rail in Western Sydney since the 1930's. These links are needed to enable people living in Western Sydney travel within the Western Sydney Region.

Recommendation:

Increase frequency of rail services, such as on the Cumberland line, which will deliver greater cross-regional connectivity in Western Sydney.

Parking at railway stations is particularly important to transport people to and from their homes. It needs to coordinate with trains. This will need a significant investment in travel behaviour change programs such as travel smart programs to enable active transport to railway stations and buses that transport people to railway stations.

Community Transport

If a person cannot access mass transit (i.e. rail or bus), they may be eligible for community transport services. People who are frail aged or young people with a disability or their carers are eligible for community transport services under the Home and Community Care Program, funded by Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (HACC). Those who are assessed as transport disadvantaged by the NSW Ministry of Transport guidelines are eligible to use community transport. The HACC program roughly funds about 95% of community transport in NSW, whilst the remainder is for community transport (transport disadvantage).

Community transport (NSW) funding has not increased in many years and some regions have no NSW Community Transport Funding at all.

At present HACC clients are asked to make a contribution to access community transport. Some people are unable to pay and may miss out on transport services; although most services have and use their discretionary capacity to waive fees, community transport providers cannot refuse to provide a service if the client cannot pay^{xxvii}.

There isn't a flexible parallel service to support people who need to go from point A to point B. The other service that could be used is using a subsidised taxi under the *Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme*. But this can be quite expensive for lower socio-economic groups living in Western Sydney, due to larger distances incurred.

Community transport has the potential to support the mass transit system as well as work with HACC clients, but needs adequate funding and legislative changes to enable them to do this work.

Taxi's

The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) assists eligible residents of NSW with severe or permanent disability to use the taxi service. TTSS participants use vouchers to receive a subsidy on their taxi fare. The TTSS vouchers can be used in both Wheel Chair Accessible Taxis (WATs) and non-WATs. The NSW Ministry of Transport administers the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme.

If a scheme participant travels with a companion who is not a member of the scheme they can choose how to pay using a TTSS voucher for up to 50% of the fare if they choose, subject to the limit of subsidy, which is currently \$30.00.

Recommendation:

Increase the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme amount to \$75.00, due to the larger geographical distances covered by people with disabilities travelling in Western Sydney.

Demand Responsive Transport

Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) is described most simply is any form of transport where day to day service provision is influenced by the demands of users.

DRT should be available to all people where special transport needs are required. It can provide service for health related transport, transport disadvantaged groups and improve accessibility in transport disadvantaged areas where other public transport is unviable or unavailable.

Consideration should be given to providing public transport providers financial incentives to serve major health facilities and investing in demand responsive services such as the *Smartlink Transport Project*.

The *Smartlink Project*, initiated by Great Community Transport Inc comprises of three individual projects:

Transport Register (Community Bus Brokerage): A project using spare capacity or mini-buses in the community sector which can be booked by community groups. A small fee is paid to the community group for hire of their bus and a volunteer driver is sought if needed.

Driver Training: A partnership between Great Community Transport, TAFE and WestBus and aims to educate people who are female, an Aboriginal or CALD background. When students have completed the course, they receive a bus licence and volunteer / work opportunities in the transport industry where there is currently a to skills shortage. Over 66 people have graduated from the course. Driver training has been provided by a consortium between TAFE, Westbus and Great Community Transport. Many drivers volunteer themselves to help community groups who request to hire a community bus from the transport register.

Passengers Choice (DRT): A demand responsive project initiated under the Smartlink initiative, enabling buses and taxis and community transport to coordinate flexible transport solutions. The demand responsive software is still undergoing trial and the project is likely to conclude in June 2009.

This demand responsive transport could be realised by investing funds into community transport or and amending the NSW *Passenger Transport Act* to allow community transport providers to provide this service.

This service model is common overseas with community transport providers operating a “dial a service” or a “paratransit system”. Currently these licenses are restricted and enabling more licenses will allow to service people with a disability or limited mobility. These “Para-transport” services can interact with mainstream transport services to assist those with limited mobility.

It is important to note that our population is an aging population and there will be 2 to 3 times more people to use transport services in the future. At present there are not the systems in place to cater for such demand^{xxviii}.

Recommendation:

That additional funding be made available to continue the work of the Smartlink project, and that the project be expanded across Western Sydney.

North West Sydney Employment

According to the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, jobs are developing in a global arc from the North West employment zones through to the Macquarie Park business area, the North Shore and into the Sydney city.

There is also significant growth in Parramatta and the M4 industrial zones near Blacktown. It is important that the workers in Western Sydney are connected to these areas. Currently they face considerable blockages and high tolls to be able to access their work. It is not an economically sound strategy to make it hard for these people to get to work^{xxix}.

Part of the rationale for much of the North West sector is the growth of residential areas for higher income residents – professional workers. For this strategy to be successful it is important that these highly skilled and professional employees are able to access their workplaces.

Conversely, there will be a need for people with different skill sets, e.g. people working in industries such as retail, hospitality and home care, to be able to move into and out of the North West sector for residence and work. People on lower incomes are more likely to need and use an integrated public transport system, particularly bus services.

Medical Treatment

Health related transport is critical for people who may live alone or do not have access to a car. According to a recent publication by the Cancer Council and Community Transport organisation,

“The delivery of health services in NSW has changed significantly over the years. There has been:

- A concentration of services in fewer hospitals

- Moves towards early discharge and increasing use of day surgery
- A decline in the number of general practitioners in regional areas.

These changes have meant that people have to travel more often to access health services; people without access to a car or reliable public transport face the prospect of not receiving treatment because of access problems.^{xxx}

Access to public transport is part of the solution to enable people to be able to get to medical appointments. Health related transport is not just the preserve of patient transport and community transport operators. There is a need for planners to recognize the potential of other transport operators to develop flexible transport services that can serve major health facilities. See the generally **Demand Responsive Transport**.

Growth Centres

Future Growth in Western Sydney Growth Centres

Western Sydney is designated for significant growth (over 30%) in the next 30 years. Many of these communities will be built in green fields developments. We have an urgent imperative to get the transport infrastructure that Western Sydney needs to be built to serve many future generations to come. The last time any rail infrastructure was built in Western Sydney was in the late 1930's.

This investment is political by nature and needs to be financed with sincere long term government commitment. This commitment must be led by NSW Treasury and NSW Government, by adequately budgeting for long term infrastructure debt. As this infrastructure will service many generations of people living in Western Sydney it is a sensible and prudent investment in the Western Sydney's future.

WSCF acknowledges the importance of transport components that underpin the State Plan and the Metropolitan Strategies.

Failure to budget for and deliver on those plans undermines the rationale and viability of much of Western Sydney. We call on the government to deliver infrastructure, especially heavy rail to these centres.

The role of Government is to facilitate sustainable development in connecting regional and subregional centres which are connected to social, employment, and education and health facilities. At present, those families who do not own multiple cars are transport disadvantaged.

An integrated transport system, supported by integrated ticketing and information, which is easy to use and accessible by most people in Western Sydney, is needed. The backbone of the transport network is currently the road system. This is unsustainable with reducing reserves and higher

prices of crude oil. We need to have longer term planning and an alternative policy framework. There are models for this such as Portland in the USA^{xxxi}.

Financing Public Transport

Public transport infrastructure spending will benefit the local, regional economies and businesses. The infrastructure that is needed will no doubt need significant investment, and it is an opportune time to do so.

Investing in this critical infrastructure is important as it provides employment opportunities in times of economic downturn, which is now. Similar projects such as the Snowy Mountain Scheme and other capital projects have provided such benefits to the economy and the wider community and they still benefit the community many years after they were finalised.

WSCF has concerns about the reliance on private financing and service costing systems which do not consider "externalities" because this can lead to uncompetitive pricing for public infrastructure.

Opportunities for Transport Advocacy

Often transport planning happens at many different levels. This list is just a small way that you or your agency can get involved in advocating for better transport options:

- ❑ Contacting local council & advising councillors of transport issues
- ❑ Making representations at the local council traffic committees, supporting public transport priority and limiting parking.
- ❑ Making a short online submission when there is a proposal to increase fares with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) outlining your opinions.
- ❑ Developing a relationship with your local state or federal member, outlining your concerns and issues with public transport.
- ❑ Join WSCF, so we have a stronger representative voice to government.
- ❑ Contacting WSCF about particular transport issues

Conclusion

We have outlined several of the key transport issues which we believe to be the most critical for people in Western Sydney. Transport development and the building of infrastructure can take many years. So, it is important that transport policy is designed to cater for the whole community and supported by the community, so that the correct decisions are made.

Geography and your local electorate's political views have impact upon the government commitment to new transport infrastructure. With scarce resources being vied for and votes tied to the outcome of decisions, transport policy is political by nature.

In general we believe that a reallocation of resources be investigated to promote reduced congestion through transport orientated development principles^{xxxii}, to reduce car dependency and provide real public transport alternatives, as described by the Victoria Transport Policy Institute^{xxxiii}.

We believe that for a genuine choice in transport options for people living in Western Sydney, transport rhetoric must be followed by financial decisions which indicate that there will be real infrastructure delivered.

We hope that our members will be able to influence transport policy in the longer term by understanding the process and following the debates.

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