

Submission

Independent Public Inquiry Sydney's Long Term Public Transport Plan



**Prepared by NSROC
Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of
Councils**

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WHAT IS NSROC?

The Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) is a voluntary organisation of local governments established to provide strong local government leadership; to work co-operatively for the benefit of the Northern Sydney region; and to effectively advocate on agreed regional positions and priorities. The councils under the NSROC umbrella are: Hornsby, Willoughby, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Ryde, Ku-ring-gai and Hunters Hill.



The NSROC councils are committed to the sustainable management of an area that covers nearly 700 square kilometres, and they serve a population of over half-a-million people. The region is home to a diverse collection of landscapes and communities, ranging from scenic waterways, bushland parks and areas of historical significance through to residential high-rise living and thriving commercial and retail centres.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Good public transport is essential for all areas of Sydney. This submission focuses on the key issues for transport in the northern Sydney region, within and surrounding the NSROC Council areas. However the public transport needs identified in this submission are not simply for the benefit of the northern Sydney region - they are requirements for all of Sydney to function effectively and sustainably.

The NSROC region's Councils face the challenge of inadequate transport everyday and our Councils have been advocating for many years for long term solutions that connect the city, and bring real benefits to its residents, to its economy, and to its environment. As owners and managers of local roads, Councils are a critical player in public transport planning and management. Councils directly contribute to public transport through local transport infrastructure provision, the development of alternative transport options like bike and pedestrian routes, and as direct providers and subsidisers of community transport which, for the most part, is attempting to fill the gaps in existing public transport. The NSROC Councils manage public roads and related transport infrastructure valued at over \$2 billion and spend over \$30 million each year on maintenance. They also provide over \$1 million of community transport services to the region.

NSROC has resolved to fight the most recent changes in transport proposals by the State Government – specifically the cancellation of the North-West, South West lines and Epping to Parramatta Links and the proposal for the CBD Metro to Rozelle. It is seeking that this resolution be supported by all NSW councils at the NSW Local Government Association Conference in late October 2009.

In terms of specific action NSROC recommends the following key projects for the region:

- North-West Rail or Metro link
- Parramatta to Chatswood Rail link
- Second Harbour Bridge rail crossing and fast North Shore line
- Bus or light rail link from Chatswood to the Northern Beaches
- Transport strategies for Military – Spit Corridor, Victoria Road, Pennant Hills Road and the Pacific Highway
- Completion of M2- F3 link into the Sydney Orbital
- Improved regional rail services to the Central Coast and Newcastle

In addition NSROC recommends the following characteristics for Sydney's transport plan:

- A successful transport plan is visionary and creates a transport system that matches other international cities.
- A successful transport plan has a governance process that is transparent and independently governed above party politics.
- A successful transport plan has a funding framework for long term transport provision that is fair and innovative, tapping into different levels of government and using appropriate incentives and penalties.
- A successful transport plan recognises the role of local government in identifying the transport needs of the local community and in managing complementary infrastructure and programs to ensure that the transport network is responsive and improving.

STRUCTURE OF THIS SUBMISSION

This submission is divided into 3 sections:

Section 1 outlines the key facts and features of the NSROC region including:

- Population and Development
- Location and Corridors
- The Economy and Environment

Section 2 briefly outlines the trends in transport for the region including:

- Traffic Congestion
- Increased Car Ownership
- Public Transport Use
- Longer Travel Times

Section 3 briefly outlines the key priorities for the region and suggestions for reform and improvement in transport management including:

- Priority Projects
- Structural Reform

Appended to this submission are related documents on transport prepared by NSROC.

These include:

- 2009 – NSROC Resolution on Rail Infrastructure - August 2009
- 2008 – NSROC Submission to the NSW Legislative Council's Inquiry into the Integrated Transport Needs for the Sydney's North-West Sector - October 2008
- 2007 – NSROC Sub Regional Planning Strategy for 2006-2031

This submission complements the submissions made by NSROC member Councils which provide detailed analysis of transport issues in each specific local government area.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE INQUIRY

The Independent Public Inquiry will create a Long Term Public Transport Plan for Sydney after receiving public submissions. The plan is designed to assist both the public and future governments to make informed decisions about priorities for transport investment. The plan will cover the following topics:

1. The optimisation and integration of existing public transport operations (including ferry, bus, light rail and heavy rail).
2. The expansion of public transport services and infrastructure, as well as cycle commuting infrastructure, over a 30-year planning horizon, taking into account existing transport accessibility problems and integration with future land use changes.
3. The most appropriate governance arrangements to guarantee the plan's longevity to remove the negative impact of single-term party politics and to optimise investments.
4. Key environmental sustainability issues.
5. Key social and economic issues.
6. Proposals for short term and long term funding.
7. The cost-effectiveness of solutions, taking into account short term financial costs and benefits, and longer term environmental, congestion and other external costs and land use and accessibility benefits.

1 – THE NSROC REGION

Population and Development

The NSROC region has a current population of around 550,000 and is growing at 0.5% each year. The region has twice the population density of the Sydney average¹. The neighbouring areas of the North-West, Northern Beaches, the Central Coast and beyond to Newcastle are also growing. The NSROC employment rate is higher than the Sydney average making it a main attractor for workers.

Most significantly the NSROC region is experiencing unprecedented growth. The State Government's Metro Strategy set NSROC regional targets of:

- 56,000 new households - which equals approximately an extra 130,000 residents over the next 25 years; and
- 72,000 new jobs in the region.

Figure 1: Dwelling targets and employment targets for the Inner North and North Sub-Regional Strategies, Department of Planning, 2007.

Local Government Area	Dwelling Target	Employment Target
Hunters Hill	1200	300
Hornsby	11,000	9,000
Lane Cove	3,900	6,500
Ku-ring-gai	10,000	4,500
North Sydney	5500	15,000
Ryde	12,000	21,000
Willoughby	6,800	16,000
Total	56,400	72,300

In addition there are key growth areas which have emerged since these targets were established. This includes the Macquarie Park Corridor and Macquarie University surrounds in Ryde where revised analysis suggests an additional 160,000 workers and students will locate within the region by 2030.

In effect NSROC expects the population of the region to grow to at least 750,000 from a current half a million, with the workforce expanding from 250,000 to 320,000.

Fundamental to the strategic land use approach taken by the State Government has been the concept of concentrating growth on existing transport nodes. In the NSROC region this has largely meant providing for growth around the existing heavy rail train stations, not-with-standing the capacity constraints of the existing system. As such NSROC Councils have been facilitating consolidation of development around transport nodes despite uncertainty about their expansion.

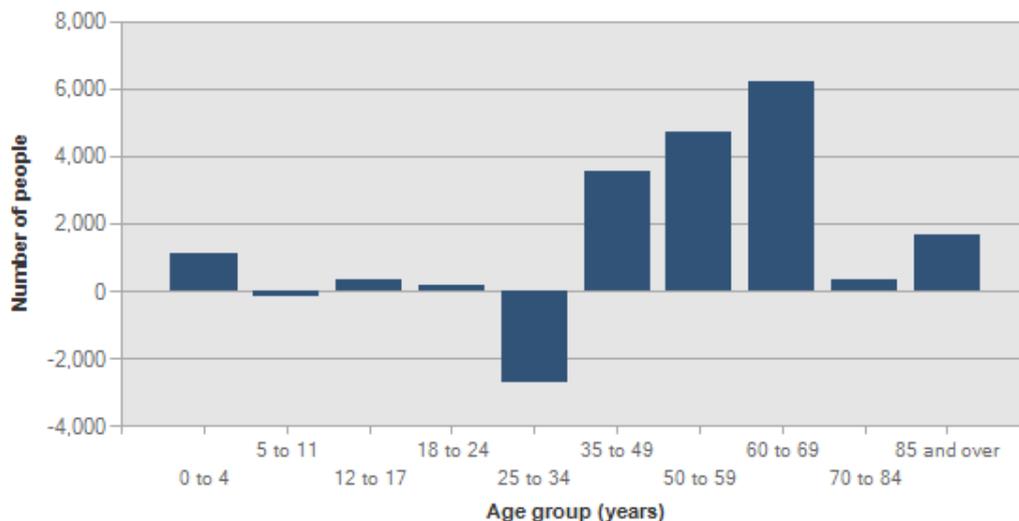
Analysis of the age structure of NSROC region in 2006 compared to Sydney Statistical Division shows that there is a smaller proportion of people in the younger age groups (0 to 17 years) but a larger proportion of people in the older age groups (60 years and over).² In the 5 years from 2001 to 2006 the NSROC has seen substantial growth in the number of people aged 35 years and above (Figure 2).

¹ The NSROC region has around 780 persons per square kilometre compared with 360 persons on average in Sydney Statistical Division - 2006 census data.

² In the NSROC region 21.9% of the population was aged between 0 and 17, and 18.8% were aged 60 years and over, compared with 23.6% and 16.7% respectively in the Sydney Statistical Division.

Figure 2: NSROC Region Age Structure changes

Change in age structure of NSROC Region, 2001 to 2006 (Enumerated data)



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 and 2001 Census of Population and Housing (Enumerated)

NSROC is concerned about whether there will be adequate provision of accessible transport infrastructure for the expected growth levels and population mix of the area. A growing population will generate greater transport demand. Housing location and industry location will need to correlate to good public transport to minimise travel times and costs. This is very difficult task for councils when population density is already high, public transport is at capacity, and there is uncertainty surrounding the placement or even existence of any new public transport.

In addition to the general pressures of population growth, the increase of elderly people in the NSROC population has particular ramifications for public transport. Older people are particularly dependent on public transport. Private vehicle use is not feasible for people faced with aged related physical and mental health conditions. This obviously impacts on the total demand for public transport but also on the complementary access infrastructure such as ramps, bus shelters, safe footpaths and road crossings which are maintained and managed by councils. Councils are required to plan and provide for disabled access and improvements yet investment funds are scarce³. It is essential that a public transport plan recognises the needs of high dependency users and co-ordinates with Councils to maximise accessibility to public transport.

³ The Commonwealth's Disability Discrimination Act 1992 recommends the development of Disability Action Plans for government organisations including councils.

Location and Corridors

NSROC region is strategically positioned as a corridor to the north of the State and across the Sydney region.

Virtually all north coast and central coast passenger and road freight traffic is channelled through the F3 Freeway then diverted at Hornsby to the south west onto Pennant Hills Road or down through the Pacific Highway towards Sydney City. Adjacent are the North-West Hills District and the Northern Beaches. The Hills District is serviced by the M2 but has virtually no rail infrastructure and the Northern Beaches has only arterial roads providing access to key employment centres of Chatswood and North Sydney. Linking to western Sydney is Ryde, Victoria and Epping Roads which ultimately link through to the M7. Despite this critical nexus of road corridors - no substantial initiatives for improving or augmenting the road system in the NSROC region are currently proposed by the State Government.

There are two northern rail lines – the North Shore Line and the Northern Line. However there are critical gaps in provision to the North-west growth area and incomplete projects such as the Epping to Parramatta rail link. While there have been some improvements with the new Epping to Chatswood line and upgrades to North Sydney and Chatswood Stations, there remains ongoing frustration with a rail system that has failed to improve in frequency and timeliness in half a century.

The region has a mix of public and private bus providers. In the recent past, with the cancellation of major rail projects, the State Government default response has been to increase bus transport. However NSROC's view is that additional buses do not solve long term mass transport demand because they rely on existing road networks that are already highly congested and stretched to capacity.

The NSROC region also has ferry services predominantly from North Sydney, Lane Cove, Hunter's Hill and Ryde. The transport potential of our harbour and rivers is another underdeveloped part of Sydney's public transport system.

NSROC argues that these ferry services require review and, where possible, expansion. An initial improvement should be more streamlined interchanges between ferry terminals and buses. Councils have significant constraints on the capacity to offer "park and ride" facilities at certain ferry points but the potential to ease congestion and improve travel times from direct ferry travel can be realised if better modal links were introduced.

The Economy and the Environment

The economy of the NSROC region is vast with a Gross Regional Product of over \$30 billion each year⁴. For an area of only 1 per cent of the State with only 8 per cent of the population - it produces 16 per cent of Sydney's Gross Product, 11 per cent of NSW Gross State Product and 4 per cent of the National Product.

Put another way – 16 cents in every dollar in Sydney; 11 cents in every dollar in NSW; and 4 cents in every dollar generated in Australia comes from the NSROC region.

In terms of jobs – NSROC region employs 250,000 people - primarily in major commercial areas of North Sydney, Chatswood, North Ryde and Hornsby - but also in key hubs such as Macquarie Uni and Macquarie Park. Half of our employees live in the region but the other half who work in the region travel daily from areas such as Blacktown, Parramatta and the Central Coast (Figure 3).

⁴ Economic Contribution of the NSROC Region, NSROC (Centre for International Economics) 2004

Figure 3: Top 10 Local Government Areas of residence for workers in Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, 2006

Rank	Local Government Area	Number	Percent (%)
	NSROC Region * (This area includes several of the areas listed below and is excluded from the total)	126,020	49.0
1	Hornsby (A)	38,789	15.1
2	Ku-ring-gai (A)	25,320	9.8
3	Ryde (C)	21,390	8.3
4	Willoughby (C)	15,694	6.1
5	North Sydney (A)	14,687	5.7
6	Baulkham Hills (A)	13,964	5.4
7	Warringah (A)	11,732	4.6
8	Parramatta (C)	9,664	3.8
9	Blacktown (C)	8,780	3.4
10	Lane Cove (A)	7,933	3.1
	Other areas	89,236	34.7
	Total workers in NSROC	257,189	100.0

Good transport infrastructure is essential to sustaining strong economies. Companies will not locate their business in northern Sydney, if they cannot get their workers to work and get their products moved efficiently. Moreover, if Sydney continues to be uncertain and inconsistent about how its transport system is going to be expanded, then new businesses will see Sydney as too risky and our international competitiveness will be diminished.

The NSROC area is naturally constrained in the northern and north-western parts of region by the natural topography and extant bushland and preservation areas. These areas include National Parks and other highly valuable bio-diverse areas. Transport modes impact on the environment in obvious ways such as deterioration in local and regional air quality and broader carbon emissions which contribute to climate change. But importantly, with the varying terrain of northern Sydney, there are major concerns with urban development run off and its impacts on water quality.

The NSROC region also has considerable expanses of open space which Councils are actively enhancing with alternative transport facilities such as bike and pedestrian paths. These facilities are designed to encourage individual activity and wellbeing but also to improve access and links to mass transport options provided by State Government.

2 – TRENDS IN TRANSPORT

Traffic Congestion

There is general consensus that the Greater Metropolitan Region of Sydney is facing traffic gridlock in the foreseeable future. This stems from extrapolating the association between the rapid growth in private vehicle journeys over the past five years, with proposals for substantial residential growth areas in the outer fringe of the city that are unlikely to be serviced by new rail infrastructure within the next decade.

The NSROC region is facing extreme traffic pressures over the next 30 years, and gridlock at many pressure points well before this time. Looking at RTA data the NSROC region has almost half of the most congested traffic thoroughfares in Sydney. The NSROC region is serviced by five major arterial roads. These are the F3 freeway from the north, the Pacific Highway, Pennant Hills Road, Lane Cove/Ryde Road, and Epping Road/M2 tollway. Anecdotally, peak hours on most of these roads on weekdays already extends from 6.30am to 9.00am, and from 3.30pm to 7.00pm.

All are corridors linking Newcastle, the Central Coast or the Northern Beaches to the city and further south (Pennant Hills Road and Pacific Highway), or the city and eastern suburbs to the western suburbs and the Blue Mountains (Victoria Road and Epping Road), or the south-west region to the north and north east (Lane Cove Road/Ryde Road).

Figure 4: Key road links in Sydney Region



The new M7 tollway has aggravated the existing congestion on Pennant Hills Rd and Epping Rd / M2. Vehicles travelling from Melbourne to Brisbane confront over 20 traffic lights on Pennant Hills Rd before they reach the F3 on their way north. Alternatively, they concentrate on the M2 east of Pennant Hills Rd if they are heading to the city. Longer term, the growth of the North-West sector

and its new growth centre, will also cause more cars to feed out onto both the M2 and Pennant Hills Rd. This congestion can be expected to occur unabated unless the proposed rail line to the North - West growth centre is built.

In the longer term, the population of the Central Coast and Hunter Region are also likely to continue increasing in parallel with the Sydney Basin, be this strategically directed through State government plans or as a product of market forces. Again, there are no short-term plans to augment the rail system between the three regions, so that passenger cars are likely to remain the transport mode of choice. The Pacific Highway at Wahroonga and Pennant Hills Rd at the F3 termination points will be the immediate recipients of this increasing pressure. The evidence points to an inescapable move towards severe traffic congestion throughout the NSROC region well before 2030, and most likely gridlock during morning and evening peak hours

The most relevant data available is that collected in the traffic survey undertaken during 2005 by the RTA as part of a three year repeating cycle covering the whole of the State of NSW. This recorded the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), which is assessed as the total volume of traffic recorded at a specific road location taken over a calendar year, and divided by the number of days in that year.

For the purposes of this exercise, only those roads that recorded a minimum AADT of 70,000 vehicles per day at some point along their monitored length was included, since this figure was considered to represent considerable existing congestion. This showed that, of the 19 arterial roads that exceeded this flow throughout all of the Greater Metropolitan Region, eight were in the NSROC region and another three were contiguous with it (i.e. as feeder or off-take roads). That is, half of the most congested traffic thoroughfares throughout Sydney were either in the region or skirted it. The maximum traffic counts recorded on the key roads of interest were:

Figure 5: Regional Road Vehicle Counts (based on RTA 2005 data)

NSROC Regional Roads	Vehicle Count 2005
Epping Rd	77,000
F3 freeway at Wahroonga (feeder road)	77,000
James Ruse Drive (feeder road)	72,000
Lane Cove / Ryde Rd	77,000
Military Rd	78,000
Pacific Highway	69,000
Pennant Hill Road	83,000
Victoria Road	87,000

(For comparison purposes, certain roads on the southern side of the Harbour Bridge showed inordinate congestion as well: General Holmes Drive carried 145,000; Southern Cross Drive 128,000, Parramatta Rd 86,000, the Princes Highway 89,000 and the M5 East 98,000).

The figure for the M2 for 2005 was around 38,000 which is around half the number of vehicles recorded on Epping Road. This data suggests the anticipated easing local congestion from the M2 is not being realised and reinforces the view that the region is facing a dismal future from heavy congestion.

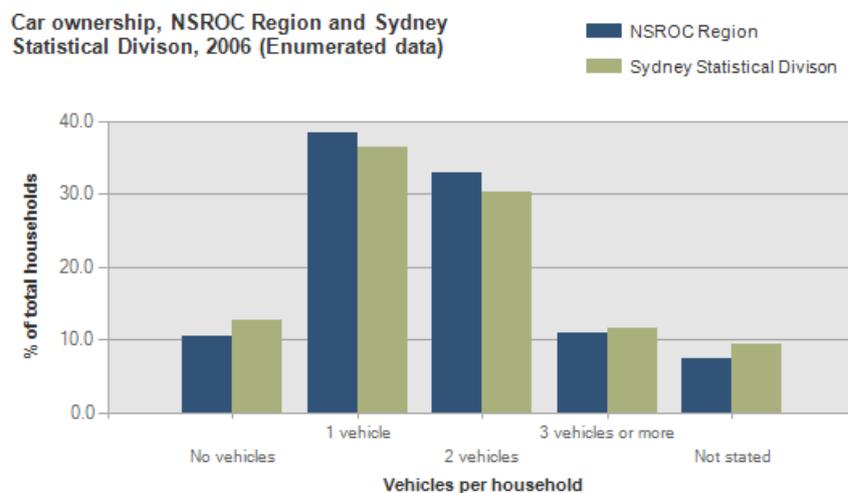
There is one LGA that warrants specific attention in this analysis, and that is North Sydney. It sits at the northern confluence of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Sydney Harbour Tunnel and the Cahill Expressway. The total AADT recorded for the Bridge and Tunnel was 250,000 vehicles per day, all of which travelled past or through the Council's area. The underlying stress on this part of the road system is demonstrated quickly if a car breaks down on any of these Harbour crossings at morning or evening peaks hours. The jam occurs swiftly and can take hours to clear.

A substantial contribution to congestion in many areas is also made by truck movements through the GMR. These are either smaller units working in the light industrial or commercial sectors and making local trips, or heavy rigid trucks or B-doubles carrying upwards of five tons across longer distances. There is an ongoing debate over how Australia will cope with the need to move an increasing freight load around the country, and especially to and from its key shipping ports. Various policy initiatives have been announced at both the Federal and State Government levels that aim to optimise the road-rail freight balance, but there is a growing expectation that cities like Sydney will experience a much greater interaction with heavy vehicles before changes are realised. The most popular estimates are that the number of heavy vehicle movements across Australia will double by 2015. Whilst a substantial portion of this will be cross-country by trucks carrying in excess of 35 tonnes, or by freight trains, almost 70% will involve intra-urban movements.

Increased Car Ownership

Despite initiatives at all levels of government and higher awareness of the environmental impacts of cars, car ownership levels in Sydney are increasing. The most recent Household Travel Survey 2007 (released by the Department of Transport and Infrastructure in September 2009) shows that from 1999 to 2007 the number of private vehicles in the Sydney region has grown from 2,027,000 to 2,388,000. This increase is twice the rate of Sydney's population growth.

Figure 6: Car ownership for NSROC residents 2006



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing (Enumerated)

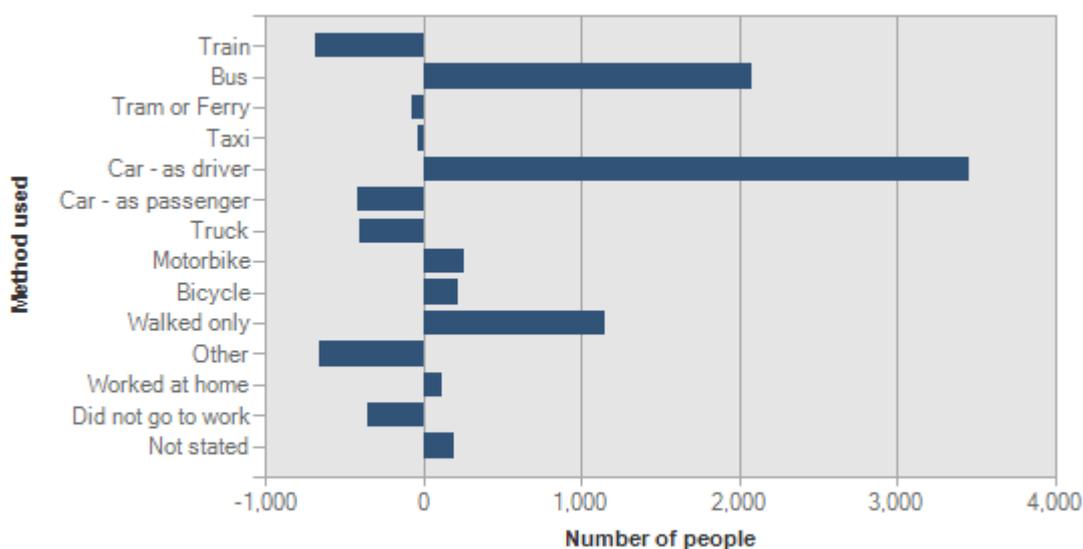
NSROC councils are monitoring car ownership per capita throughout the region. Of specific concern is the relatively high level of car ownership despite access to public transport in many parts of the region and the increase in the number of households electing to have two or more cars. Around 82 per cent of NSROC households have a car and 32 per cent have 2 cars. There are around 160,000 cars in the NSROC region today. Based on additional household targets there will be around 250,000 vehicles in the NSROC region by 2030⁵.

Public Transport Use

Public transport use is declining in the NSROC area - with around 30 per cent of workers travelling by public transport with nearly 60 percent travelling by car⁶. The data below illustrates that within the NSROC region residents are actively moving away from public transport and using vehicle travel to get to work. This same trend is replicated for non-work related travel.

Figure 7: Travel to Work in the NSROC Region

Change in mode of travel to work, NSROC Region, 2001 to 2006 (Enumerated data)



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 and 2001 Census of Population and Housing (Enumerated)

The reasons for this decline relate to the quality and strategic positioning of existing public transport in the region. As previously identified, strategic land use planning is attempting to consolidate development around transport nodes however this is not being matched by the agreed transport infrastructure.

In the case of the North-West Metro or Heavy Rail Link being cancelled, travellers' options remain limited to existing buses or private transport. Existing roads networks will eventually fail due to increased patronage despite the modest increases provided through new road infrastructure such as the Lane Cove Tunnel.

Bus travel from outer suburbs to the city and crossing the inner suburbs is a preferred mode in many areas because it is flexible in routes and timetables. Many commuters choose buses over the private vehicle in inner areas because of their relative efficiency in moving people at peak hours, and especially where the RTA is able to provide preferred lane access. However the bus network in the northern region is constrained by congestion, particularly north of the Harbour Bridge and at Wynyard Terminus. Also bus/rail links require improvements through greater

⁵ Based on Sydney average of 1.5 cars per household.

⁶ Based on 2006 Census – travel to work data for NSROC region

incorporation of car-parks near bus access points in the outer suburbs so that car commuters can use public transport for the last segment of their trip.

The new rail infrastructure from Chatswood to Epping with stations at North Ryde, Macquarie Park and Macquarie Uni has brought new options for public transport to the region. However the line is underutilised with only 4 trains per hour being run because of capacity constraints on the adjacent lines. This means it is a less attractive mode for passengers than a more frequent service.

Longer Travel Times

On average, Sydneysiders are spending 81 minutes travelling per weekday compared with 79 minutes a decade ago⁷. This is not surprising given the congestion, increased car use and public transport capacity issues outlined above.

The negative impacts of these trends cannot be underestimated and are amplified over time affecting all communities. If people are encouraged to build homes in areas not serviced by adequate public transport, as is the case in the North-West, then those communities will not be sustainable. We must recognise that hours of commuting costs us our communities dearly and not just in financial and productivity terms – it also leaves less time for family life, for exercise and for community activity.

Similarly, if people are forced to use their cars because they do not have viable public transport then environmental and health costs will increase - not only in terms of carbon emissions and fossil fuel consumption - but in terms of public health from air and noise pollution and accidents.

The NSW State Plan, released in November 2006, provided overarching goals for all state planning, including: healthy and harmonious communities, a high quality public transport system with cycling and pedestrian networks, improving urban environments, stimulating business investments, providing for open space and the arts and increasing the number of dwellings within thirty minutes travel of a Strategic Centre.

Specifically Priority E5:Jobs Closer to Home includes the target of '*increasing the percentage of the population living within 30 minutes by public transport of a city or major centre in Greater Metropolitan Sydney*'⁸. The data quoted in the State Plan posits that only 59% of the population of the North-West have access to a city or major centre within 30 minutes by public transport. This figure is the lowest in Sydney. Unless additional infrastructure and investment is provided, this target will not be met.

⁷ Based on 2007 Household Travel survey – NSW Dept of Transport and Infrastructure

⁸ NSW Government, NSW State Plan, 2006, p.124

3 – KEY PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 2 of this submission outlined the inadequacy of current transport arrangements including the regional trends of increased congestion, increased car ownership, decline in public transport use and longer travel times. It is clear that the northern region, like most of Sydney, will go backwards in sustainable transport outcomes without major investment and reform.

NSROC has repeatedly advocated for key improvements to the region's transport network that are:

- based on genuine need for the region;
- connected and beneficial to the broader Sydney region; and
- supported by independent assessment.

Many of the priorities NSROC has identified are contained in the proposals put forward in the reports by Mr Christie and Dr Glazebrook and are further supported by feasibility assessments. Also NSROC documents appended to this submission provide an expanded list of transport proposals. NSROC recognises that for each priority there are various configurations of mode and routes with different costs and benefits. Some of the NSROC member councils have specific views on these matters which are provided in their individual Council submissions.

Priority Projects

NSROC believes that the core objective for the Sydney transport system should be to shift from private to public transport dominance. With the projected population growth across the region, NSROC views mass transport systems such as rail, metro and light rail as the most cost effective way to reduce congestion, lower carbon emissions, and improve commuting times.

This emphasis is reflected in NSROC's recent response to the State Government's CBD Metro Strategy. At its Annual Conference in August 2009, NSROC resolved to fight the most recent State Government transport proposals – specifically the cancellation of the North-West, South-West lines and Epping to Parramatta Links, and the proposal for the CBD Metro to Rozelle. It is seeking that this resolution be supported by all NSW councils at the NSW Local Government Association Conference in late October 2009.

However NSROC also recognises that freight transport must also be examined in integrated transport strategy. Both road and rail can operate as shared modes for passenger and freight and this cannot be isolated from public transport planning. This is why transport strategies for the key arterial roads and the M2-F3 link and regional rail infrastructure must be re-examined.

NSROC priorities for the region are:

North-West Rail or Metro link

There is a clear and demonstrable need for an integrated transport system in the North-West region, including road, rail and bus links. The establishment of a North-West growth sector by the State Government without a mass transport link is untenable. The current transport infrastructure simply will not cope with anticipated growth over the next two decades.

Parramatta to Chatswood Rail link

The decision to truncate the Epping to Parramatta heavy rail line has already put significant demands on the regional network and failed to address the need for effective transport between major centres. The completion of the Epping to Parramatta rail line is essential - providing full access between Parramatta/ Castle Hill/ Hornsby/ the City/ Chatswood and Macquarie University/Business Park and catering for the continued growth of the North-West.

Second Harbour Bridge rail crossing and fast North Shore line

The existing train network in the northern region exceeds its capacity. Commuters in northern Sydney experience poor travelling conditions such as “standing room only” trips for long commutes in peak times. However the primary reason for these improvements is to allow new lines such as the Parramatta to Chatswood and North-West rail links to operate at their full potential.

Bus or light rail link from Chatswood to the Northern Beaches

NSROC sees a clear need for transport improvements into the Northern Beaches region to allow those residents to access jobs in the NSROC region and beyond. NSROC does not have a specific preference for rail or bus links.

Transport strategies for Military – Spit Corridor, Victoria Road, Pennant Hills Road and the Pacific Highway

These four corridors are identified as some of the most congested roads in the Sydney area. It is vital that long term strategic transport plans are developed to accommodate their use and alleviate their traffic impacts.

Completion of M2- F3 link into the Sydney Orbital

The productivity, environmental and amenity impacts of the current disconnect between the F3 at Hornsby and the M2 have been previously assessed in feasibility studies. It is simply not sustainable or efficient for the major national North -South road route in Australia’s largest city to be interrupted with over 20 traffic lights along Pennant Hills Road.

Improved regional rail services to the Central Coast and Newcastle

The population growth in the Central Coast and Newcastle drives demand for improvements of this existing regional rail line. In the short term, improvements to signalling and sequencing must be undertaken to the existing rail infrastructure. In the long term, NSROC urges genuine consideration of high speed trains to these major cities. As noted previously an integrated transport system must cater for the movement of freight as well as passengers. Freight capacity of both rail and road options must be considered across this region and into the growth areas of the Central Coast and Newcastle.

Structural Recommendations

NSROC recognises that a successful transport plan is more than list of projects. Planning a transport system is complex: the needs of today and the future must be accommodated; the decision making needs to be fair and open; and there needs to be both certainty for planning and business decisions and flexibility to respond to new technology or demand.

A successful transport plan must also be supported by complementary efforts of :

- 1) locating people near where they work and where public transport nodes are located, so that public transport and active transport can replace car use; and,
- 2) developing an efficient and affordable public transport system which encourages users to abandon private vehicle trips in favour of more efficient public transport modes.

As such in addition to the priority projects in this submission, NSROC believes the following structural and governance issues must be considered to develop a successful transport plan:

A successful transport plan is visionary and creates a transport system that matches other international cities.

The transport plan for Sydney must be long term, and draw on successful features of transport systems in other international cities. A public transport plan must include:

- integrated ticketing and responsive timetabling to improve connectivity between modes;
- affordable, efficient, clean and safe public transport modes;
- priority bus transport movements at peak times and between major centres;
- complementary bicycle and pedestrian networks;
- integrated commercial vehicle and freight movements; and
- appropriate land allocations for expansion and retrofitting of transport corridors in response to technology and demand variations.

A successful transport plan has a governance process that is transparent and independently governed above party politics. To facilitate this NSROC recommends that:

- a single Sydney Transport Authority should be created to co-ordinate and integrate all modes of transport, so as to avoid each mode being planned and operated in competition with each other and to the detriment of the total system; and
- an independent project evaluation process be established which sets objective criteria for project assessment and recognises the most urgent needs of the community.

A successful transport plan has a funding framework for long term transport provision that is fair and innovative, tapping into different levels of government and using appropriate incentives and penalties.

Given the critical role that transport plays in Sydney's economic, environment and social sustainability, long term funding frameworks must be developed. NSROC recommends that the inquiry explore new funding approaches for the substantial upgrades required for the Sydney transport network. Some mechanisms to examine include:

- federal funding conditional on achievement of economic, social or environmental outcomes similar to efficiency dividends or competition policy payments which tie State Government funding to the delivery of reforms or meeting of targets;

- accessing national superannuation contributions eg Future Funds;
- dedicated tolls, charges, taxes or transport levies that reflect the real costs (including emissions costs) of private modes of transport; and
- direct linking charges and payments to public transport funding - similar to the original petrol excise “3 by 3” model.

More direct incentives and penalties should also be explored to encourage individual and business behavioural change in favour of sustainable transport. This includes:

- congestion charging in terms of peak times, multiple passengers and freight vehicles movements;
- vehicle ownership requirements which provide incentives for low pollution, low impact vehicles -eg lower registration costs and parking permits, minimum travel distances (currently the Fringe Benefits Tax incentives are skewed to encourage greater driving distances) and support for share transport initiatives such as car share and community bus transport.

A successful transport plan recognises the role of local government in identifying the transport needs of the local community and in managing complementary infrastructure and programs to ensure that the transport network is responsive and improving.

Local transport management by councils is critical to broader scale transport efficiency and effectiveness. Councils own local roads and are responsible for management of local roads, urban traffic flows, parking, and developing alternative active transport options such as cycling and walking. Poor public transport means more car use, which in turn means greater wear and tear on roads, the creation of rat runs and increased parking management. All of these actions translate to higher cost burdens for Councils and their residents.

NSROC manages public roads and related transport infrastructure valued at over \$2 billion and spends over \$30 million each year on maintenance of these assets⁹. Some funds are directed towards sustainable transport initiatives such as bicycle paths and improved pedestrian facilities. The remaining funds are expended on maintaining roads and traffic associated requirements.

It is important that communities get the most from their transport infrastructure and that expenditure is made appropriately. This can only be achieved when the Council’s roles and activities in relation to transport infrastructure management are integrated into regional transport planning at the first instance rather than as a subsequent process.

Councils directly contribute to public transport through the provision of community transport. Currently NSROC councils provide over a million dollars of community transport for their communities including free bus services and direct demand taxis and shuttles for people with access issues¹⁰. While some of these services are specifically provided at a local government level in concert with State government programs, other services have been developed because of the failure of State public transport to adequately meet local community needs despite the evidence and lobbying from local councils to State transport authorities.

Councils play an important role in educating the community on sustainable transport choices and they have knowledge of the changing transport needs of their communities. Good transport planning should include collating and incorporating this local information as part of the ongoing refinement of the transport system.

*For further information on this submission contact:
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⁹ Based on each Council’s “2008/09 Special Schedule No.7 Condition of Public Works” aggregated “ Cost” values and “Annual Maintenance” of Public Roads (including traffic devices, footpaths, bike paths, street signs, bus shelters etc)

¹⁰ Identified per annum expenditure on community transport initiatives including local buses and direct demand taxi/shuttle services operated by NSROC councils.