

SUBMISSION ON FUTURE TRANSPORT 2056

Greater Sydney Services & Infrastructure Plan

Trunk Corridors

An important corridor that is conspicuous by its absence, compared with previous transport studies, is a direct link between Macquarie Park and Parramatta. These are two of the largest strategic employment centres in the metropolitan area and it beggars belief that it's not considered important enough to warrant inclusion as a major trunk route. Perhaps this is a consequence of the Greater Sydney Commission's proposal to truncate the Global Economic Corridor Arc at Macquarie Park, instead of the previous strategy of extending it to Parramatta. A retrograde step in my view.

Previous Metropolitan Planning Strategies had stressed the importance of investigating improved transport links between Macquarie Park and Parramatta, but this now appears to have slipped off the radar. This should be reinstated.

Future Networks

Initiatives for Investigation (10-20 Years) –

South - East Mass Transit Link

In addition to a South - East Mass Transit link, an extension of the Eastern Suburbs Railway should be investigated from Bondi Junction to North Bondi via Bondi Road, and Bondi Beach, with a branch to Bronte Beach via Charing Cross and Bronte. The potential capacity of the ESR is grossly underutilised and these extensions would assist in increasing patronage as well as relieving road congestion.

Parramatta to Epping/Macquarie Park Mass Transit Link

The Parramatta to Epping Mass Transit link investigation should also include consideration of an alternative route from Parramatta to Macquarie Park via Eastwood. The focus on this corridor should be on a direct link between Parramatta and Macquarie Park, which will be the major trip generators. There is no need to transit via Epping.

The route via Eastwood is more direct and faster than the circuitous route to Epping and assuming it is impracticable to link into the proposed North - West Metro, avoids the inevitable interchange congestion at Epping, which will already be subject to interchange between the metro and Northern Line. The route via Eastwood still interchanges with the Northern Line, including Central Coast and Newcastle Intercity services, so there is no advantage in taking the longer route to Epping, which will also most likely include having to change to complete a journey between Parramatta and Macquarie Park. The route via Eastwood could potentially run from Parramatta along the Victoria Road corridor between North Parramatta, Rydalmere and Ermington.

Although it's proposed that Epping should be classified as a Strategic Centre (notwithstanding it doesn't even meet the basic criteria), Eastwood is a much larger retail/commercial centre and hasn't yet been afforded the advantage of upgraded planning controls to promote urban renewal. It has a lot more redevelopment potential than Epping, despite the latter being a major rail interchange.

Victoria Road Corridor Mass Transit Link

The Victoria Road Corridor should also be investigated for a potential longer - term Mass Transit link. It's a major arterial road corridor not currently serviced by rail and while a rapid bus transit service may serve it in the short to medium term, it's inevitably going to require a Mass Transit link.

This could follow the route of the previously proposed North - West Metro from White Bay (branching from the West Metro) to Epping via Gladesville, Top Ryde and Eastwood.

Northern Beaches Mass Transit Link

A Mass Transit Link will also be needed to the Northern Beaches. Although the locals may not like it, they will have to share the burden of the increasing population like the rest of Sydney. This should be apolitical.

Sydney Trains Network

There is little evidence of a willingness to invest in significant infrastructure upgrades and extensions to the existing suburban rail network operated by Sydney Trains. Apart from a possible extension of the South – West Rail Link to Badgerys Creek Airport, the focus appears to be on expanding the metro system at the current network's expense. This is not sustainable in the longer term in my view.

The existing rail network will still need major track amplifications and extensions, particularly in the inner city to cater for outer suburban, intercity and regional express services, to minimise or preferably eliminate mixed stopping patterns. This can't always be provided by a new metro line.

I don't support any further conversions of the existing network to metro because of the disruption and operational compromises to existing services. It's a waste of scarce resources and some supposed benefits are questionable, when there are other less expensive options to improve service frequencies and transit times. It remains to be seen how alternative transport arrangements will work in practice with the pending shutdowns of the Epping to Chatswood Rail Link and Bankstown Line. The money slated for metro conversion would be better spent on new segregated metro lines servicing inner city regions not currently served by rail.

Longer distance outer suburban regions are not suited for a metro style service with limited seating. This territory belongs to the existing double deck network which will continue to need meaningful infrastructure upgrading. The one size fits all metro option is a flawed policy.

One simple way of reducing the operational costs of Sydney Trains is to eliminate guards. Driver Only Operation is common practice in many other similar jurisdictions, including in Australia, so there's no reason to balk at the idea other than an unwillingness to negotiate with the unions. There are other cost reductions which could also be undertaken if the Government had the political will to identify and implement them, instead of taking the easy option and just throwing money at the metro expansion, but at what cost? It's false economy in my opinion.

A frequent criticism I hear about the existing train services is the slowness of the timetable, but that seems to have fallen on deaf ears in the bureaucracy and government. With the investment in infrastructure upgrading and modern rolling stock over the past few decades, there's no longer any excuse to persist with the slower running times that were implemented a decade ago to improve On Time statistics. Although it's important, it should no longer be the overriding criteria for operational performance. Sydney commuters deserve better.

The newer rolling stock, such as the Waratahs, Millenniums and Oscars are capable of much higher performance levels in terms of speed, acceleration and deceleration, but these specifications are not being utilised to their fullest extent. Even the older stainless-steel rolling stock is capable of better performance.

At the very least, the pre-2005 timetable with faster running times should be re-introduced with appropriate updates, if not preferably improved upon.

There's a lot of slack in the current timetable which is no longer warranted. One would hope that there's not a deliberate policy of maintaining the slower timetable to enhance the allegedly faster performance of the new metro trains.

Some suggested track infrastructure upgrades are as follows –

- Divert the Airport Line from the City Circle at Central to the unused centre platforms at St James as the terminus, allowing cross platform transfers to and from the remainder of the City Circle. It would have been preferable if the unused underground platforms 26 and 27 at Central could have been utilised for this purpose, but that now appears to have been thwarted by its proposed use for plant equipment for the new metro.
- Construct an express tunnel from Granville to a terminus at the Barangaroo Metro Station. Intermediate stations should be at Strathfield, Redfern, Central, Haymarket, Town Hall West and Wynyard. The CBD corridor should basically follow the previously proposed City Relief Line. This would add capacity to the congested Inner Western Line corridor for express services from the Western, Richmond, South and Northern Lines. The current Inner West Local Line (T2) could then become a turn up and go single all stations operating pattern with up to 20tph feeding into the City Circle (more with ATO). It's questionable if the proposed West Metro will add any relief to this corridor for longer distance services.
- Complete quadruplication of the Northern Line between Strathfield and Epping as part of Stage 2 of the Northern Sydney Freight Corridor Program, including grade separation of the Northern Main Down Line at Strathfield Junction.
- Complete sextuplication of the Illawarra Line from Wollie Creek Junction to Erskineville to separate South – West (T8) services from Illawarra Line (T4) services.

It is regrettable that the Bankstown Line Metro uses the existing platforms 1 and 2 at Sydenham, when they could have potentially been used for the sextup. The metro platforms should have been underground. From Erskineville, the additional tracks could be slewed to the current Illawarra Local to the City Circle. In turn the existing Illawarra Local tracks should be slewed to the Illawarra Main tracks beyond the turnout to the Eastern Suburbs Railway. In the medium term, assuming the Airport Line is diverted from the City Circle, the currently little used Illawarra Main tracks through Redfern to Central should be reinstated at the flying junctions. In the longer term, there should be a diversion of the Illawarra Main from the City Circle to a new terminus in the CBD to be determined. Either of the Illawarra Main or Airport line diversions could even potentially be linked via an outer City Circle to the Western Line tunnel at Barangaroo. This would then for the first time allow for the separation of all incoming suburban lines into and through the CBD without merging, providing greater sectorisation and reliability.

- There would need to be a rearrangement of the junction of the Illawarra Dive and Illawarra Main and Local tracks at Eveleigh, preferably with grade separation, to allow for unimpeded access without crossing conflicts for South Coast and Southern Highlands Intercity and Regional express services to Sydney Terminal.

Strategic Road Network

Initiatives for Investigation (20+ Years) –

A future M1 motorway link between the Gore Hill Freeway at Artarmon and the existing Pacific Motorway at Wahroonga, bypassing the Pacific Highway, should be investigated. The NorthConnex project does not provide an adequate alternative

route to the current Pacific Highway through Chatswood, as it's too indirect. There needs to be a more direct route from the North to the Sydney CBD, Port Botany and Sydney Airport. It would complement the proposed Western Harbour Tunnel linking to the F6/M1 extension to the Illawarra.

Strategic Arterial Road Corridors –

Although not specifically mentioned, these road links form an important part of the road hierarchy. The A3 and A6 corridors, in particular, are major ring roads which are incomplete.

A3 Corridor

The A3 still requires road widening to 6 lanes between Terrey Hills and Mona Vale and between Beverly Hills and South Hurstville. Grade separated intersections are also needed at Arthur Street, Homebush West, Canterbury Road, Wiley Park and Forest Road, Penshurst.

A6 Corridor

The A28/A6 corridor, in the short term, should be widened to 6 lanes from the M2 Motorway to Marsden Road, Carlingford continuing onto Marsden Road and Stewart Street, Dundas. Further road widening to 6 lanes should be undertaken on Silverwater Road between Kissing Point Road, Dundas and Holker Street, Silverwater, including the Silverwater Bridge and Stacey Street, Bankstown. Grade separated intersections should be considered at Marsden Road/Stewart Street, Dundas, Kissing Point Road/Silverwater Road, Dundas, Silverwater Road/Parramatta Road, Auburn and Hume Highway/Stacey Street, Bankstown.

Eastwood County Road

A major strategic arterial road corridor that is missing in this transport planning strategy is a direct link between Macquarie Park and Parramatta, the Eastwood County Road. This is a 66 year old reserved road corridor which now appears to be in jeopardy because of a proposal by the Greater Sydney Commission to include part of it in the Priority Green Grid. Whether this involves the complete abandonment of the road reservation or is proposed as a shared corridor hasn't been indicated. If it is the former, then it would be very short sighted, as up until now the policy has been to preserve existing transport corridors.

It not only provides a direct strategic arterial route from Macquarie Park to Parramatta, but also to Bankstown via Silverwater Road. It also completes a broader missing link between Northern and Western Sydney by providing a more direct road link between North Sydney and Parramatta via the M1/M2 and Epping Road on the north side of the harbour; the A38 link from Chatswood/Roseville via Delhi Road, North Ryde and the A3 link from the Epping Road intersection. The existing arterial routes from Macquarie Park to Parramatta/Bankstown, via Epping and Top Ryde are too indirect and already heavily congested.

Even now, the most direct route through Eastwood along inadequate mostly single lane roads has become a de facto arterial road which is unsuited for that purpose and heavily congested through Eastwood in peak hours. It needs to be upgraded by building the Eastwood County Road, which was originally planned for this purpose, sooner rather than later.

There has been some environmental concerns expressed about the crossing of Brush Farm Park, but I suggest this is a complete furphy promulgated by a vociferous minority who are unrepresentative of the broader community.

Following previous community consultation on the project, the then RTA proposed an arch bridge across the gully which would have minimal impact on the park floor below. In any event, the extension of Rutledge Street across the park has always been a public, albeit, unmade road which skirts the southern boundary of the park. It's even clearly shown in Gregory's first street directory published in 1934. It's a bit late in the day to now complain when it potentially forms an important part of Sydney's strategic road network.

It could also incorporate the proposed light rail link from Parramatta to Macquarie Park, branching from the Carlingford Line route at Dundas along Kissing Point Road, which was the recommended first stage in Parramatta Council's original feasibility study. For some inexplicable reason it didn't even make the short list of options.

Arterial Road Upgrades

There are also other arterial roads within the Inner Sydney Region which still require road widening or completion of missing links. Most of these incremental road upgrades have been planned for decades, but seem to have been put on the backburner. Some examples are –

- Barrenjoey Road from Newport to Avalon;
- Delhi Road, North Ryde with a new link from Fullers Bridge to Boundary Street, Roseville and widening of Boundary Street;
- Windsor Road from North Parramatta to Baulkham Hills;
- Frederick Street and Milton Street, Ashfield.

[Name removed as requested]