



Come Together Right Now... Over PT

The summary of the Parry Interim Report on Public Passenger Transport in NSW showed a couple of glimmers in a whole sea of dull and unsubstantiated claims that public transport COULDN'T POSSIBLY JUSTIFY THE EXPENSE.

One of the glimmers we refer to is an excellent notion that the 'costs' of road use be quantified and used to balance the real costs of private vehicle use to the public. Another is the consolidation of State Rail and the metropolitan arm of the Rail Infrastructure Corporation (RIC) into the new RailCorp from 1 January 2004.

Apart from this, every suggestion seemed to reflect the PPT Inquiry's emphasis on small s sustainability, otherwise known as economic 'viability'. No context seemed necessary to support the notion that there was a natural limit to the amount a society wants to spend on mass transit.

No recognition that it fulfils important expectations in the operations of cities and in the health of the populations that live in them. It seems to rely upon an assumed agreement that all PT does is provide a way to work or schools for those who can't afford cars. A service to keep the important 'peak' hours under control but not much more...Oh! Unless of course the World Cup Rugby is in town in which case regular customers should try to avoid using it at peak hour! That was MY classic World Cup Moment.

No hint of public transport's place in providing access to services which are becoming more and more "centralised". No admission that the lives of every person are improved by the sustainable decisions made by PT stalwarts - who stick it out, putting up with the erratic service and CityRail's pre-programmed apologies.

It would seem that the only thing standing between us and some pretty short-sighted transport planning is coherent and hard-hitting action across the PT spectrum. Time for the Bike People to talk to the Trains and Bus People, and also the Foot People who are very rarely considered by anybody except the member for Bligh! We don't all have to be saying the same thing, but it would be good if we could co-ordinate our diverse efforts in the near-future around the Final report's release and the string of consequences that follow.

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Compiled by Leah Mason

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Compiled by Roy Howarth

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Compiled by Allan Miles

Upcoming Events

Eco-Transit Meetings

11th March

8th April

Want to get more involved in the Mass Transit movement? Come along to our monthly meetings at The Green Iguana Café, 6 King Street, Newtown.

Meetings start at 6:30pm

Eco-Transit AGM

The AGM was held on 13th of November, and the new committee line-up is:

V-President: Leah Mason

Secretary: Roy Howarth

Treasurer: Rob Passey

Public Officer: Jim

Donovan. Other committee members are Peter Mills and Matt Doherty. The President's post is still vacant, and needs to be filled soon!

Deadline for Next Issue:

Wednesday 21st April

Send your contributions to lmason@smoothlooming.com.au

EcoTransit is transport that supports a sustainable economy and environment. The fewer resources used by the transport sector, the more efficient our economy is and the less damage is done to the environment. Public transport, walking and cycling fits these criteria!



Saving Newcastle Station

Thirty years since the idea was first floated in 1973 by then-NSW Liberal Transport Minister Milton Morris, the proposal to truncate the Newcastle branch line, including its historic railway terminus and bus interchange, to Hamilton or even Broadmeadow has reared its ugly head yet again. It is particularly unfortunate that it has been raised on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the electrification to Sydney's second city in 1984.

If Newcastle is to maintain its position as an attractive and accessible tourist destination and therefore maintain its post-BHP economy, it is imperative that the rail, bus & ferry hub at Newcastle be maintained for the convenience of the city as a whole. In an era when other major cities are turning towards innovative public transport solutions, it is inconceivable that a city the size of Newcastle would contemplate removing a public transport terminus that is conveniently located next to the CBD.

The local argument that removal of the railway line will "open up" the foreshore is groundless as the shoreline has been freely accessible to tourists for many years. In addition, the limited space in the Newcastle CBD will be unable to accommodate the increased number of cars and buses that will be required to match the capacity of the existing railway services. The noise and pollution that this extra congestion will generate will inevitably make Newcastle unattractive for future visitors.

The attractiveness or otherwise of the presence of the railway line, associated sidings and level crossings into Newcastle must also be considered subjective at best. Rather than turning its back on its industrial "steel city" past, Newcastle should embrace its industrial heritage for tourists, present and future generations. The Hamilton to Newcastle railway line, one of the state's oldest, plays a major part of the city's heritage. Without this link with Newcastle's industrial past, the former "steel city" will become just like any other glossy, sanitized tourist trap not unlike many similar towns and cities up and down the coast.

One of the alternatives PT options put forward in place of the existing railway line is light rail. The major issue with light rail as a replacement for the existing high-capacity CityRail services is that the direct link to and from Sydney, the Central Coast, Maitland and the rest of the Newcastle suburban area will be lost. Any loss of a direct transport link is another nail in the coffin for regional public transport in the Hunter and result in a further shift towards private cars. For this reason, light rail shouldn't be utilised as a replacement for existing CityRail services. Instead, it should serve as a quiet

and pollution-free alternative to private cars and buses elsewhere within the Newcastle CBD. This will greatly enhance pedestrian amenity, especially for tourism, and reduce the need for car parking spaces in the limited confines of Newcastle's CBD. Light rail can effectively revitalize the Hunter Street pedestrian mall in the middle of the Newcastle CBD. With light rail providing direct access between the inner suburbs and parts of the CBD currently inaccessible to buses, such a rejuvenation will be possible.

Light rail is much more accessible to the elderly and disabled than buses. The same is also the case for trains (or heavy rail), which can also carry passengers with surfboards and bicycles with minimum fuss. With the loss of a direct rail link, will these people be forced to abandon public transport altogether?

In an era when other major cities are looking to public transport solutions to address traffic congestion problems and pedestrian amenity, a city the size of Newcastle, which is reliant on tourism more than ever in this post-industrial era, can ill afford to make the city an inaccessible and unattractive place to visit.

By Roy Howarth



Newcastle Railway Station has the added benefit of being conveniently located near the CBD and a short walk from the State Transit bus and Stockton ferry terminals

SAVE OUR RAIL

*Advocates the retention and improvement of
the Newcastle Railway Line*

Contact them at
PO Box 176 Wickham NSW 2293 or
www.newcastlerail.org

Unsworth Report Paves The Way

The Interim Report into Bus Services released on 17 November 2003 proposes some welcome and long overdue changes in the bus passenger industry in NSW, according to Action for Public Transport.

APT spokesman Allan Miles said that the proposals, if properly implemented, would see bus services being run for the benefit of the public, a somewhat novel concept in some areas of the state. The new requirements for larger contract areas, high-level planning, bus priority and monitoring provisions should see buses going when and where people want them to go.

APT generally supports all the recommendations of the report, except for a few recommendations dealing with tickets and fares. While APT welcomed mandatory discounts for frequent bus users, the report's attack on alleged excessive discounts on State Transit tickets is unjustified. The discount calculations for TravelPasses are suspect. It is also debatable whether these discounts, and those on the TravelTen tickets, are excessive considering the benefits they bring to the operator. Like the Parry Report, the Unsworth report does not mention the word "pre-paid" once.

The proposal for a flat fare of \$2.50 for Pensioner Excursion Tickets was ill-considered, even if the coverage is extended to all transport in the metropolitan area. Smaller regional zones for a lower price would be more useful and popular.

More worrying is the proposal to limit the use of Pensioner Excursion Tickets until after 9am. This takes no account of the need for people to set out early for medical appointments, volunteer work or for long distance trips. The first train from Katoomba after 9am. doesn't arrive at Central until 11.23am. In the reverse direction, the first train from Central after 9am doesn't reach Katoomba until eleven o'clock.

Although it is only an interim document, there is the concern that the report makes no recommendations for a project plan to bring the proposals to reality. Its good intentions will disappear like the morning dew if there is no "ownership" of the project nor any instructions about who will do what, and by when. It is hoped that this omission will be corrected in the final report.

By Allan Miles

Dangers In New Ferry Corporation

Fares, TravelPasses, timetable co-ordination and maintenance could all be under threat if Sydney Ferries are cast off from State Transit into a new corporation, according to Action for Public Transport.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with such a split - the buses and ferries were separated from the trains many years ago. However, the public should be concerned about what might be next on the agenda.

At present, bus and ferry timetables are very well co-ordinated. Under separate managements, people could be waiting around on wharves for buses and ferries that don't connect.

TravelPasses might also be in danger, as State Transit and CityRail argue about who gets what share of TravelPass revenue. A three-cornered fight for the money could see, not just increased fares, but changes in the TravelPass zones. It is possible that Sydney Buses might not want to include Sydney Ferries in their TravelPass arrangements. This would be very inconvenient for passengers.

The current marketing promotions for public transport should also continue, as we would not want Sydney Ferries being marketed as something different. Maintenance is another concern, as all too often, the first thing that gets thrown overboard in any corporatisation is maintenance, because it is seen as too costly and not producing any revenue.

On the privatisation issue, it may not just be Sydney Ferries that is being tarted up for sale. Sydney Buses, or State Transit without the burden of the ferries, would also be a more attractive proposition for buyers.

The efficiency of the split is also questionable. The Parry Report, on page 46, says "merging the SRA with RIC (two rail corporations) offers some opportunity to reduce the 'head office' costs of operating the organisations separately. Some positions will become redundant when the organisations are merged".

It is a wonder as to why the same rationale is not applied to keeping the ferries and buses together. Separating them will only cost more in administration and newly created managerial positions.

By Allan Miles

Transport Snippets

F6 Murmurings...

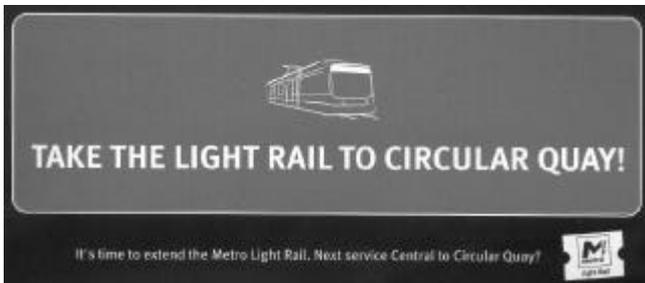
No sign of anything on this! Not a thing comes up on the Transport or RTA website...we're willing to be wrong...see if you can find out anything!

Institute for Sustainable Futures

Links to new stuff, and Chloe Mason and Michelle Zeibots' stuff can be found at www.isf.uts.edu.au

Metro Getting Restive While City Goes Berserk

The light rail group has come up with a postcard campaign to encourage more light rail development – Central to Circular Quay if you want to be specific.



If you want to help distribute this postcard around the place, you can pick them up from any of the trams, or call Metro Light Rail and get them to send you a stack. Tell them we sent you!

City Traffic Crisis On Its Way...An Opportunity?

The above mentioned campaign completely fails to dovetail with the Westfield proposal, currently before Sydney City Council, which plans for a redevelopment of Centrepoint, with two residential blocks and count 'em...11 stories of underground carpark! Could this be the inferno that Dante prophesied? A towering inferno, perhaps?

On the other hand, as it is guaranteed to cause maximal congestion, perhaps this is the key to ending the deadlock over the Pitt Street Mall. Apparently the construction will go on for three years and cars will exit onto Castlereagh Street! Anybody who thinks this is preferable to putting in some quiet and comparatively clean light rail will be rightly seen as completely bonkers.

Submissions on this development are due on the 19th of February and more info is available at www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/pdf/da/00108.pdf

M4 East

A recent strategy meeting could find no earthly reason to build this, given what it's going to cost the developers. The theories are flying thick and fast, and may end up implicating another loss-making road project – The Cross City Tunnel. We're still crunching the numbers...so stay tuned.

Beyond the figures, the project looks set to give us more tunnelling with the required stacks, widening of the roads that lead to this section of road and more traffic dumped onto Parramatta Road in the Burwood Croydon vicinity. No public transport options have been considered.

We will need some assistance with the first stage of our anti-M4 campaign in the next few weeks. Please advise Roy Howarth of your availability and contact details to rhowarth6010@yahoo.com.au

Web site Revamp Continues

New site coming in March. Forums and many other cool functions will be involved. Bear with us...

Waterfall Inquiry Report Released

The report into the tragic derailment involving Tangara set G7 was released on Thursday 15 January 2004. More on this report in an upcoming edition of HoW.

CD-Rom or hard copies of the report can be obtained at the inquiry office at Level 4, 16-20 Barrack Street Sydney. 9am-5pm, Mon-Fri. Their phone number is (02) 8251 8600. A soft copy can be obtained from the inquiry website: www.waterfallinquiry.com.au

CityRail Crisis

C'mon! Write those 'Letters to the Editor'! Mismanagement, perversity and low commitment to a future dominated by Mass Transit! Let 'em have it. If commuters show that they are willing to pay more for even crappier service, we are looking at a lot more work later and a very painful period while they figure it all out.

IMPORTANT!

**Your membership:
is now due!
will be due on**

Post your membership fees to:

Eco-Transit
PO Box 630, Milsons Point, NSW 1565

**Schedule of Membership Fees: Family \$15
Individual \$10 / \$5 Community Group \$25**