

SHIRE TRANSPORT UPDATE

Too many cars, too little public transport Rail services in Shire need urgent upgrade

Your help needed in community campaign for improvement

by **MICHELLE ZEIBOTS**
President, EcoTransit Sydney

The Sutherland Shire's transport problems are the number one concern for most residents. Traffic congestion on our roads is rising, rail services are filled to capacity in peak hour and feeder bus services to stations are often unreliable. Our public transport system has been neglected and everyone is now paying the price.

OVER the last four years, patronage on the Illawarra rail line has grown by 27 per cent. Growth on the entire CityRail network for the same period was 17 per cent. *Our trains are now overcrowded* and more commuters are being forced to stand for the long trip into the city. The journey home is often just as uncomfortable, with passengers jammed into trains for trips of 30 and 40 minutes duration.

It is clear to everyone that our rail services need upgrading. There need to be more services from Cronulla and Waterfall during peak periods and more frequent trains in the off peak. This would benefit rail users and motorists. More people on trains mean less cars on the road and less congestion. Rail transport is more efficient than road transport and less costly.

In a bid to solve this growing problem, Shire residents are campaigning for upgrades on the Cronulla to Sutherland spur line and increased service frequency between Waterfall, Sutherland and the city.

Your support is needed to highlight this serious problem. Your voice will help convince the State Government and transport planning agencies that more resources need to be directed into public transport on Sydney's southern rail line!

What's wrong with the current rail system?

Our current rail system is in desperate need of upgrading. The signalling system is old and in need of replacement. Tracks need to be duplicated in some places and many stations still need improved platform access.

These problems mean that travel times are longer than they should be, services are sometimes unreliable, trains



run late, and the level of passenger comfort is low.

Increasing the frequency of services is the key element to a good public transport service. The mode that people choose to use is fundamentally determined by which mode is the quickest and the most convenient. If a person misses the train by just five minutes, for example, and the service is only running at a half hourly frequency, there is a wait of 25 minutes for the next train. This makes rail travel less attractive and is the reason many people use the car.

If services are running at 15 minute frequencies, and a person misses the train by five minutes, waiting time is just ten minutes.

In off peak periods rail use drops because frequencies are low and waiting times are high.

Both of these problems could be solved if more frequent services were run on our heavy rail lines.

An old and outdated signalling system

The existing outdated signal system only allows a small number of trains to be run on any given section of track—one train in every 'signal block'. These vary in length from several hundred metres to several kilometres. Modern signalling systems used on many networks in western Europe would overcome this problem.

given signal block. The train could be anywhere within that block. This is why only one train at a time can be allowed to enter each signal block. This means carrying capacities and service frequencies are lower than what they could be.

Not only is our old signalling system inefficient, it's also less safe than it could be. If signal operators know the exact location of trains, the risk of accidents is reduced.

Estimates for upgrading the signalling system on the entire Illawarra Line (that's the entire track from Bondi Junction to Bomaderry just north of Nowra) have been put at \$45m. This is real value for money as far as transport goes, having the potential to dramatically improve rail services for the entire southern sector of the Sydney Metropolitan Area—an area with a population in excess of half a million. To put

this cost in perspective, the Woronora Bridge—a small section of motorway—cost just under \$50m.

Bottleneck at Bondi Junction

All of the suburban services that run through our area have to be turned around at Bondi Junction. At present there is only enough capacity to turn around 12 to 14 trains per hour. If the Bondi terminus capacity is upgraded, this could be increased to 18 to 20 trains per hour. This would provide more scope for increasing the service frequencies at all sections along the Illawarra Line.

What Shire residents are doing

In December last year, residents called a public meeting at Stapleton Community Hall to discuss future transport developments for southern

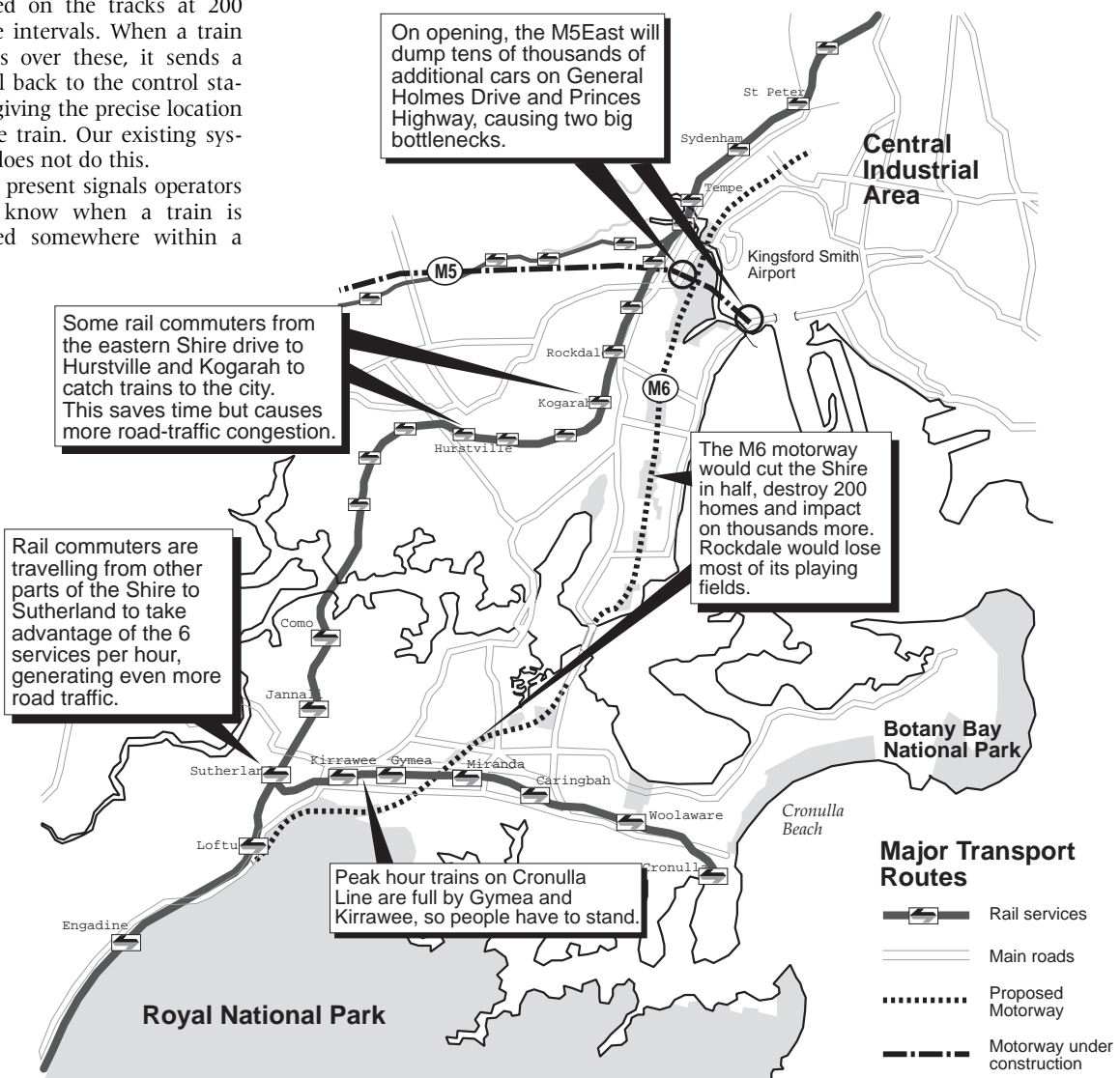
Sydney. Sutherland Shire Environment Centre facilitated the meeting with technical information provided by EcoTransit Sydney. As a result a local campaign group has been formed—CARTS—Citizens Advocating Responsible Transport for the Shire.

Many residents are concerned about the negative impacts motorway construction would have on the Shire and they feel that improving the public transport system is a more positive way to go. This is the primary goal of CARTS. Securing a commitment from State Government to upgrade the rail network is the first of many campaigns the organisation is intending to launch.

CARTS needs your help to make the region a better place to live. Please join the campaign by signing the form letter (over)

What's the difference between theirs and ours? Modern systems have sensors located on the tracks at 200 metre intervals. When a train passes over these, it sends a signal back to the control station giving the precise location of the train. Our existing system does not do this.

At present signals operators only know when a train is located somewhere within a



How to contact ...

CARTS
c/- Sutherland Shire
Environment Centre Inc.
PO Box 589, Sutherland 2232

EcoTransit Sydney Inc.
PO Box 630, Milsons Point 1565
www.ecotransit.org.au
9532 0799

What you can do to help the campaign ...

1. Sign the form letter overleaf and send to local group CARTS.
2. Volunteer to help with letterboxing and street stalls to spread the word.
3. Make a donation to Sutherland Shire Environment Centre Inc. (donations to the Centre are tax deductible).

PUBLIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS

Alternatives to the M6 motorway

The M6 is a proposed radial motorway that would run through the southern sector of Sydney. The northern head of the motorway would be located at Alexandria in the heart of the Central Industrial Area. Heading south it would cut a swathe of destruction through Rockdale and Sans Souci, then pass over the Captain Cook Bridge to Sutherland Shire and proceed through Miranda, Gymea and Kirrawee, finishing at the Audley turn-off in the Royal National Park.

If this motorway is ever built it will destroy around two hundred homes and impact severely on thousands more. Rockdale's playing fields would be covered in asphalt. It would cut the Shire in half, change its character for the worse, destroy valuable wetlands in Rockdale and Sylvania Waters, and cover a section of the Royal National Park in bitumen.

Rather than disappear, traffic on local streets would increase in most cases because motorists would use local streets to access the motorway. Through-traffic would also increase as the additional capacity would encourage motorists to drive longer distances and more often. Like other motorways, the M6 would be built as a tollway. Local streets would be used as alternative routes by motorists avoiding the toll.



◀ This is Perth's southern expressway. It is now filled with traffic in peak hour and there is talk of expanding it yet again. Even small cities like Perth have not been able to build their way out of traffic congestion. Sydney motorways like the M4 have followed the same pattern. With each addition, traffic quickly grows to fill the available road space so that congestion doesn't go away, it just gets bigger in scale.

Finding alternatives to the M6 motorway would not only preserve the Shire's environment but also hold out the prospect of genuine transport solutions. If more people are able to use public transport, the rationale for destructive motorways like the M6 is removed and the number of cars on the road is reduced.

Upgrading the heavy rail network is a part alternative to building the M6 motorway. If more capacity is brought on line, many longer distance trips along the southern Sydney axis could be undertaken by rail. This would not impose heavy impacts on residential areas in the same way that a motorway construction would. The Shire would remain intact and the many centres along the route of the rail line would see a revitalisation as more rail commuters would mean more pedestrians.

Other alternatives to the M6 motorway include especially the development of light rail (the modern tram). Community groups like the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre and EcoTransit Sydney have worked to develop the Bay Light Express Light Rail Plan for Southern Sydney. This proposal would provide a fast public transport alternative for short and medium distance trips throughout the region.

If you would like more details about this plan, then visit the EcoTransit Sydney website for maps and descriptions (www.ecotransit.org.au). ■

Improvements to bus feeder services

MAKING the most of our rail services doesn't stop at increasing the number of trains in peak hour. Good public transport that gets people to the station is just as important as the quality of the rail services from the stations. The two must be coordinated so that a comprehensive network is created and transfer times between bus and rail services are fast.

By increasing the frequency of rail services, an opportunity is created to also increase the frequency of bus services. If more people are attracted to rail, then more will also be attracted to higher quality feeder services.

If feeder routes to key stations like Sutherland and Miranda are improved so that they run at 15 minute frequencies, using buses becomes more viable for local trips as well as longer trips involving rail. **This has the potential to unclog the many centres throughout the Shire and relieve traffic congestion by giving people an alternative to using their cars.**

But what about parking stations? When the parking station at Sutherland was built, an additional 400 spaces were made available to com-

muters. In response there was a large swift increase in the number of people using rail services from Sutherland.

Council surveys later revealed that most of the people using the new car park previously accessed the rail network from stations like Engadine, Gymea and even as far away as Wollongong. The reason why people prefer to get on at Sutherland is its high service frequency—a guaranteed minimum of six every hour.

Because the service frequency is high, journeys are quicker from Sutherland. The only problem is that more car traffic is generated as people drive longer distances to get to the rail station. If service frequencies are increased for stations across the entire network, this will solve part of the problem.

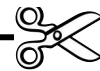
The other part of the solution is to **vastly improve the quality of bus feeder services.** Here again service frequencies need to be increased. Services also need to be coordinated with trains arriving and departing at key hubs along the line. There must be shelter at interchanges so that people don't get wet if it is raining. Information there

needs to be easy to understand and high quality maps need to be provided showing where services go.

Improved services on the rail network will create a domino effect and lead to improvements to bus services. This will bring lasting benefits to the Shire and the region generally. ■

Support the campaign. Sign the letter below and send it to CARTS!

CARTS will be collecting as many form letters as possible in support of upgrades to the rail network. These will be presented to the Minister for Transport Carl Scully, and an announcement will be made to let everyone know that many local residents support this initiative. Post the letter to CARTS at PO Box 589 Sutherland 2232. If posting a letter, then why not save on stamps and get your family and friends to sign one too. Simply photocopy the letter here, or phone 9545 3077 for details on how to get more letters delivered to you.



SHIRE-ILLAWARRA HEAVY RAIL CAMPAIGN

The Hon. Carl Scully MP
Minister for Transport
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Scully

Need to increase Cronulla and Waterfall services on the Illawarra Heavy Rail Line

I would like to indicate my support for more rail services on the Cronulla and Waterfall sections of the Illawarra Line. At present, there are only four services per hour from these lines to the City during peak hour and half hourly services during off peak periods. This level of frequency is too low. Peak period services must be increased and off peak services should run at 15 minute frequencies.

This would have these effects:

- 1. Reduce crowding in peak periods.** Trains from Cronulla have standing room only by the time they reach Gymea and Kirrawee in the morning peak. The same happens during the evening peak.
- 2. Reduce waiting times.** Low frequency services make travel times too long. If services ran at 15 minute frequencies, waiting times would be cut dramatically, attracting more people to public transport.
- 3. Provide a viable alternative to car use and costly motorway construction.** High levels of car use impose heavy impacts on residential areas and commercial centres throughout the region.
- 4. Increase the viability and frequency of bus feeder services to rail stations.** If service frequencies on the heavy rail trunk route are increased the number of people using the service will also increase, and improved network coverage and frequency of bus feeder services becomes more viable, further reducing car use within our region.
5.

So, please include the upgrading of Cronulla, Waterfall and Illawarra Line services in the State Government's transport plans for southern Sydney.

Signed: Date:

Name:

Address:

..... P/Code: