

# Moving On

The RTBU's Public Transport Blueprint for Sydney



SUMMARY PAPER



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# FOREWORD



This Public Transport Blueprint comes at a time of heightened public interest in debates about the ways and means to secure prosperity and sustainable ways of living.

If there is one thing we have all learned over the last few months, it is that the long cherished assumptions of policy makers and public authorities can be overturned by a reality check, almost overnight.

Until now, transport policies for cities such as Sydney have been dominated by a number of assumptions, all of which have now been brought into question. These assumptions include the idea that we can continue to rely on an unending stream of cheap and easily accessed oil to fuel our transport needs, that our quality of life can be measured by a simple reading of raw Gross Domestic Product numbers and that the consequences for both the natural and human environment of public and private consumption choices may be safely ignored.



Each of these assumptions has been called into question. The UK Government's *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change* has enabled broad public debate on carbon emissions to occur, where before, the matters dealt with in the Review were easily sidelined by conventional thinking and assumptions. The recent spike in oil prices has reminded everybody that it would be foolish to take the past abundance and relatively low price of oil as a 'given' for the future. People are increasingly calling into question the notion that increased consumption is an adequate proxy for the measurement of overall social health and well being. All of these things should be understood as a 'reality check' on the underlying assumptions and priorities of transport planners to date.

However public debate requires something more substantial than simply disquiet about newspaper reports, if it is to change policy decisions. Democratic public debate requires substantial information, new ways of thinking about old issues, and the ability to participate in campaigns to bring about the changes people want and need.

The RTBU is proud of the collaboration between the workers who deliver public transport services for the people of Sydney, and the University of Technology, Sydney's Institute for Sustainable Futures, which has produced an alternative framework for thinking and acting on a sustainable approach to Sydney's transport needs. I look forward to the work we have done here stimulating vigorous debate and public campaigning for securing Sydney's future, on an environmentally and socially sustainable basis.

### **Nick Lewocki**

*Branch Secretary,  
Rail Tram and Bus Industry Union, NSW Branch*

**Transport policies for cities such as Sydney have been dominated by a number of assumptions, all of which have now been brought into question.**



# A 10

# point plan for a sustainable transport future

**While urban transport planning was once viewed as a solely technical activity to be executed by ‘value-free’ experts, it is now acknowledged that it is an inherently political activity because it influences the distribution of costs and benefits within societies.**

*(Kenworthy et al, 2005) <sup>1</sup>*

This document summarises the Rail Tram and Bus Union's (RTBU) Transport Blueprint. The Blueprint recommends ten key policy changes that would help to deliver a sustainable transport future for Sydney. The full Blueprint (*Moving On: The RTBU's Public Transport Blueprint for Sydney*) is described in a longer policy paper available online (at: [www.rtbu-nsw.asn.au](http://www.rtbu-nsw.asn.au) and [www.isf.uts.edu.au](http://www.isf.uts.edu.au)).

Most of the recommendations outline fundamental structural changes needed to develop a sustainable public transport system, rather than identifying specific transport initiatives. Current State and Federal Government planning and decision-making frameworks for transport in NSW hinder the transition to a sustainable public transport system. Frameworks focus on short-term planning governed by election cycles, without guiding principles or sufficient investment to permit long-term commitments. The recommendations in the Blueprint provide a framework to identify sustainable public transport policy initiatives consistent with the expectations of New South Wales taxpayers and transport users for public transport that is safe, accessible, efficient and effective.

The RTBU urges all political parties to consider and to adopt these policy recommendations in advance of the NSW election in 2007. Without significant change, New South Wales' and Sydney's continued economic growth will be threatened and the negative impact on our community and the environment will be exacerbated by the growth of transport modes that are neither fuel-efficient nor socially equitable. Only long-term thinking supported by immediate action can deliver a public transport system that reflects Sydney's status as a world city.

**Growth will be threatened and the negative impact on our community and the environment will be exacerbated by the growth of transport modes that are neither fuel-efficient nor socially equitable.**





**Public transport must be appropriately priced, fast, efficient, close, reliable, frequent and safe.**



# 1 **Commit to a long-term legislated plan for a world-class public transport system in Sydney that provides a real alternative to car use.**

The history of transport planning in Sydney indicates a lack of long-term political commitment to the development of a public transport system which is capable of challenging increased car use as the only solution to transport challenges. To be attractive, public transport must be appropriately priced, fast, efficient, close, reliable, frequent and safe.

## **THE RTBU CALLS FOR**

- A legislated plan for the development of a world-class public transport system for Sydney incorporating clear and enshrined targets to reduce private vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) and increase public transport usage
- A clear VKT reduction plan to accompany the VKT target
- Firm targets for increased public transport accessibility, frequency and quality.

# 2 **Commit continuous, annual and substantial State and Commonwealth funding to the development of a world-class transport system in Sydney.**

The development of a world class public transport system requires changes to both funding sources and funding priorities. Efficiency of funding allocation should be improved but additional resources also need to be found and applied to the reduction of reliance on private motor vehicles and increased support for public transport.

## **THE RTBU CALLS FOR**

- Commonwealth Government to allocate a proportion of fuel excise to support the development of public transport in major cities
- NSW Government to adopt an integrated resource planning approach to identify the most efficient allocation of resources
- NSW Government to identify and commit to additional funding mechanisms and to enshrine the chosen mechanisms in legislation.

# 3 **Establish an independent NSW Transport Coordination Authority to oversee the development of a sustainable, world-class transport system for Sydney.**

Responsibility for transport planning is spread across numerous government departments and authorities and too much power rests with the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA). Greater coordination is needed.



## THE RTBU CALLS FOR

- An independent NSW Transport Coordination Authority, which is:
- Modelled on the successful example of the Olympic Roads and Traffic Authority
- A statutory body, reporting to Parliament, with responsibility for transport planning and allocation of funds across all modes of transport
- Charged with the task of developing and implementing the plan to achieve a world-class sustainable public transport system.

## 4 Adopt principles for sustainable transport to provide a framework for the development of Sydney's transport system.

Sydney's existing transport system is not sustainable. It is characterised by poor access and poor service quality, health impacts, lack of integrated planning, inefficient land use, greenhouse gas emissions, reliance on fossil fuels and low economic efficiency. These characteristics arise from the ad hoc and haphazard approach adopted by governments of all persuasions in dealing with the challenge of high quality public transport provision across Sydney.

**THE RTBU CALLS FOR** a transport system that complies with principles for sustainable transport. See Box 1 (p. 12) for sustainable transport principles.


## 5 Give high priority to initiatives that will improve transport equity in Sydney.

Sydney's public transport system is marked by geographical and social inequity. People living in older and wealthier parts of the city have a range of public transport options that include various combinations of heavy rail, light rail, ferries and buses.

People living in the outer urban rings of Sydney and new developments in the south western and north western corridors have few options other than to use private vehicles.

## THE RTBU CALLS FOR

- The extension of public transport options, particularly to western and south western Sydney
- Improved planning for the provision of public bus and light rail services as 'feeds' to the heavy rail network
- A review of the provision of public and community-based transport services with a view to improved integration of services to the transport disadvantaged with a specific focus on people with disabilities and people with mobility issues as a result of ageing
- Acceleration of the Metropolitan Rail Expansion Project
- A more equitable distribution of road tolls accompanied by incentives for public transport usage especially targeted at areas where toll roads dominate transport options.



Sydney's existing transport system is not sustainable.

Sydney's public transport system is marked by geographical and social inequity.



Government needs to make better use of community transport assets that it funds to ensure these resources are not sitting idle and are providing the most effective services for the capital outlaid.



## 6 Establish citizen-driven transport planning processes at multiple levels to identify preferred targets and initiatives.

There have been few effective opportunities for citizens to participate in Sydney transport planning in a way that has a real influence on how public transport is provided.

### THE RTBU CALLS FOR

- The Transport Coordination Authority to establish authentic, participatory processes to guide transport planning at the metropolitan, regional and local levels.

## 7 Develop 'fit for purpose' public transport infrastructure with a heavy rail base at the metropolitan level, buses and light rail operating on a regional scale and more active use of Government provided transport assets at the local level.

Transport requirements change with spatial scale and transport responds to and influences land uses. This needs to be recognised in transport planning and mode selection. Further, the Government needs to make better use of community transport assets that it funds to ensure these resources are not sitting idle and are providing the most effective services for the capital outlaid. Local government is an active provider of local transport for special needs groups. These transport assets may be able to be managed to provide additional transport options for local areas.

### THE RTBU CALLS FOR

- Investment in heavy rail as the skeleton of the network (accelerate MREP, identify missing links in the network and put in place heavy rail to complete the metropolitan coverage)
- Investment in bus services and light rail to provide a finer network
- Investment in active transport options and the improved use of community transport assets at the local level.

## 8 Pursue and fund specific high-priority initiatives in the short-term while establishing the long-term plan.

There is a risk that the development of a long-term plan for the transport system will be used as an excuse to delay initiatives that are needed in the short-term.

### THE RTBU CALLS FOR

- Resumed planning of the Epping-Parramatta heavy rail link
- Electrification of the Southern Highlands rail line and the Kiama-Bomaderry rail line

- Overhaul of fare structures to take into account multi-modal trips and ensure that multi-modal tickets can be purchased across all existing and new public transport modes. There is no reason why existing computerised ticket sales systems should not be used as point of sale for multi-modal trips across NSW
- A comprehensive examination of new and existing light rail and bus proposals with a view to rapidly implementing several of the proposals with the highest merit
- A local trial of demand-responsive bus services integrated with community transport resources in an appropriate location.

## 9 Use appropriate planning and accountability measures to support the development and integration of new transport infrastructure.

In addition to infrastructure development, there is a need to develop planning and accountability measures to support the transition to a sustainable transport system.

### THE RTBU CALLS FOR

- Investigation of the application of emissions trading to transport in NSW
- Better public transport information services, for example the integration of public and private timetabling into the 131 500 service.

## 10 Use targeted programs to support the move from 'car preference travelling' to supporting a 'public transport culture'.

Initiatives to move people to public transport must be supported by innovative programs and incentives to move people towards using public transport.

### THE RTBU CALLS FOR

- Social marketing and education programs to promote public transport
- A public transport service that is fast, reliable, safe, comfortable and frequent – something that is both possible and desirable, as the 2000 Sydney Olympics demonstrated
- Programs with major trip generators – such as universities, hospitals and businesses – that can support sustainable transport options by combining cultural and infrastructure changes
- Development of incentives to encourage people to use public transport, for example, offering tax deductions or higher rebates for those who purchase six or twelve-monthly travel passes.



There is a need to develop planning and accountability measures to support the transition to a sustainable transport system.

# Ten Principles for Sustainable Transport

**Principle 1** People have a right of access to other people, places, goods, services and opportunities.

**Principle 2** Transport services that enable access should meet the community's expectation of a high standard of reliability and quality.

**Principle 3** Governments and transport planners and developers should be bound by a framework that ensures the equitable distribution of basic transportation resources to meet the needs of all people including men and women, young and old, the poor, the disabled and those living in outer suburban or rural areas.

**Principle 4** Transportation systems should be designed and operated in a way that protects and promotes the health (physical, mental and social well-being) and safety of all people, and enhances the quality of life in communities.

**Principle 5** Transport decision-makers have a responsibility to ensure that the transportation systems allow the opportunity for individuals to act to reduce their impacts on the natural environment.

**Principle 6** Transportation decision-makers have a responsibility to pursue more integrated approaches to planning, delivery and use of public transport.

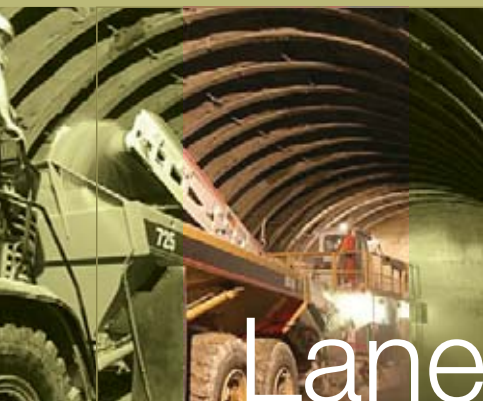
**Principle 7** Transport decision-making processes should support, encourage and provide resources for public participation.

**Principle 8** Transportation needs must be met within a framework which minimises the use of natural resources and land and reduces emissions that threaten public health and essential ecological processes.

**Principle 9** Transportation systems must maximise the use of, and return on, transport assets and resources through better planning and accountability measures, while maintaining their long-term sustainability.

**Principle 10** Transportation systems should be cost effective, now and in the future, and transportation decision-makers must move as expeditiously as possible towards fuller cost accounting, reflecting the true social, economic and environmental costs, in order to ensure that users pay an equitable share of costs.

BOX 1



## Lane Cove Tunnel

Scheduled for completion in 2007, the Lane Cove Tunnel is a key link in Sydney's Orbital Network, connecting the Gore Hill Freeway with the M2 at North Ryde. However, the lack of transparency in many of the operations of the Project, including the altered ventilation system and new surface road changes, has meant the Project has received wide community criticism.

Firstly, the community was not briefed about alterations to the tunnel's ventilation system, undermining public confidence in the Project. A planned 1.6km ventilation tunnel was scrapped during the construction process and replaced by jet fans, forcing pollution up to the tunnel's ventilation stacks. As a consequence, the tunnel will have no filters to limit the release of carbon particles into the atmosphere.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, there was a lack of information provided to the community regarding new surface road modifications designed to filter traffic into the tunnel and to increase revenue for Connector Motorways. In response to community opposition to surface road changes, the narrowing of Epping Road from six lanes to two general lanes and two bus lanes, has been delayed, possibly to avoid a Cross-City Tunnel-style controversy before the March 2007 election.<sup>18</sup>

The lack of public disclosure in the Lane Cove Tunnel Project is in contrast to active public participation in other transport projects, including the Bexley Road Upgrade in Kogarah and the Entrance Road Upgrade in Terrigal. As part of the Bexley Road Upgrade for example, a concept design, which went on public display for comment in May 2005, was modified in response to over 200 community submissions. A democratic process of community consultation also led to the identification of traffic safety concerns. The final design for the Upgrade incorporated these changes and other improvements in direct response to community feedback and consultation<sup>19</sup>. To ensure the long-term viability of transport projects, the State Government should adopt a participatory approach to transport decision-making, consulting citizens at every stage of the planning process.

BOX 2

# THE PROBLEM

Sydney's transport system is in crisis. Unlike other sustainability challenges, there is no dam at 40% capacity and dropping, there is no electricity grid with only 1% spare generation capacity in the peak. The transport crisis is like an iceberg: what we see is only the tip of the problem.





**The final costs of some key projects have doubled or tripled from original estimates.**

What we see are the direct effects of service cuts to rail and bus networks, budget blowouts on major infrastructure and delayed implementation of long-awaited improvements. The final costs of some key projects have doubled or tripled from original estimates, preventing robust up-front, cost-benefit assessment and affecting decisions on other projects (see Box 3 p.14).

We see traffic congestion continuing to increase, despite the flurry of activity to increase road capacity at massive cost. We see commuters stuck in traffic on the M5 losing time and money and slow, unreliable trips for passengers on trains from the Central Coast and Campbelltown. Sydney residents are painfully aware of these impacts. In a May 2006 survey, they rated the management of transport in NSW at four out of ten, the lowest of the six essential services considered.<sup>2</sup>

The hidden costs of the transport crisis – the mass of the iceberg below the surface – are the indirect effects: air-pollution, obesity from lack of exercise, road accidents, greenhouse gas emissions that are contributing to a warming planet and an inequitable transport system built on cheap oil and yet in steady decline.

Awaiting the collapse is not an option. Our economic prosperity depends on efficiently moving goods to markets and collecting people together in vibrant centres. Our quality of life depends on doing this in ways that support rather than corrode ecological processes and social harmony. What we see in Sydney is a transport system failing to meet these requirements. What we see is not sustainable.

A sustainable transport system would provide appropriate levels of access for the range of activities people undertake, but Sydney's current system consistently fails residents, businesses and visitors. The system has no

### Project budget increases<sup>20</sup>

	Original cost estimate	Final cost estimate
	1999 \$m	2002/03 \$m
Cross City Tunnel	200	680
Lane Cove Tunnel	550	1100

BOX 3

## EQUITY: Low income earners, high car-dependence and rising fuel costs

A clear pattern exists of higher Vehicle Kilometres Travelled (VKT) levels per capita the further people are located from the Sydney CBD. Areas with lower concentrations of population relative to geographical area, such as Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains and Wollondilly as well as those located further away from employment centres, such as Gosford, generate higher VKT per capita. These areas also have high concentrations of low-income households<sup>21</sup>.

Therefore, for many low-income households, transport costs

are significant and consume a comparatively large proportion of household expenditure. Car related expenses are high, consuming a greater proportion of weekly expenditure for low-income households.

There are predictions that fuel costs could rise to \$3 per litre within the next 3 or 4 years, particularly if no new significant oil discoveries occur or there is no 'technological fix'<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, some low-income households that rely on private motor vehicles will be devoting an even larger proportion of household expenditure to car related costs. If fuel costs rise significantly, private motor vehicle transport will prove increasingly non-viable for many low-income households. Within Sydney, outer suburban areas with low socio-economic status populations and suburbs that have high levels of car dependence, will be the most affected by increases in fuel costs.<sup>23 24</sup>

BOX 4

separate inter-city express rail lines, despite promises such as a designated Sydney to Newcastle line by 2010. This means that the system has little capacity to offer express services to long-distance commuters and is not competitive with car travel for inter-city business trips. Local commuters have experienced years of network delays. The Rail Clearways project, designed to reduce delays caused by interactions between lines is a long-awaited important step and is a major undertaking. It represents an overdue 'fix' to the heavy rail network.

Whilst the Government plays 'investment catch-up' for decades of under-investment, passengers are forced to endure cuts in service frequency as transport operators attempt to maintain running times. At the core of the system, historical under-investment in public transport means that major stations like Town Hall now operate at absolute capacity and surface streets are full of buses crawling through the CBD.

Land use change can work together with transport systems to improve access gradually. Sydney has the advantage of having developed along the rail/tram network, resulting in the ideal positioning of many major centres (CBD, Strathfield, Chatswood, Parramatta and Bondi Junction). However, in other parts of the Greater Sydney Region, even this opportunity has been missed, as 'out of centre development' has proceeded, with unrestricted parking unjustifiably increasing the cost of the transport task in areas such as Castle Hill, Norwest Business Park and Rouse Hill. Controlling parking in centres and ensuring that large-scale business parks do not develop off the transport system with excessive car parking provision is essential.

The cost of the system has stretched resources, which means that across the city, public transport service levels vary dramatically and dependence on private motor vehicle transport contributes to inequity (*see Box 4 p.14*). The combination of low average incomes and high car dependency means suburbs like Camden and Wollondilly are particularly at risk as oil and petrol prices fluctuate. Opportunistic private sector financing of toll roads and ad hoc toll refunds means that access to the road network is inequitable. Sydney residents commuting similar distances to the same workplace from areas served by toll roads often have much higher weekly transport costs than others served by public roads.

A sustainable transport system would prioritise safety. Every year in NSW, more than 500 people are killed on State roads and more than 25,000 are injured<sup>3</sup>. The physical health of citizens is also at risk with over 40% of people in urban NSW overweight or obese<sup>4</sup>. This can be attributed partly to decreases in physical activity as more people drive cars on a daily basis rather than walking to and from public transport or using bicycles. Sometimes they make this choice out of fear – almost a third of people fear for their safety and personal security on trains<sup>5</sup>. Instead of responding by improving amenity and safety on trains, the Government axed night-time rail services, thereby reinforcing a dangerously self-fulfilling perception.

Elections can be lost and won on perception. Protests over major projects such as the Cross City Tunnel and Lane Cove Tunnel (*see Box 2 p.12*) demonstrate the NSW Government's poor record of public consultation on transport decisions. In other cities in Australia such as Perth, citizens are working closely with government and preparing sustainable transport plans together. The NSW Government in contrast, continues to follow a more traditional process of only providing information in annual reports. Unfortunately, these reports show ozone and particulate pollution in Sydney

**Sydney has the advantage of having developed along the rail/tram network, resulting in the ideal positioning of many major centres**





**Transport corridors are a major land use in all cities and they serve many important purposes, but not all corridors are equal.**

continually exceed national standards and that we are failing to progress towards the NSW target of vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) stabilisation.

People have a right of access to other people, places, goods, services and opportunities. Sustainable access is fundamental for sustainable cities and this requires a hierarchy of transport modes operating reliably together. Despite founding major centres on rail lines, the city has been allowed to develop away from its core. Now in many areas, residents are car dependent. For them, fluctuating oil prices and tolls set at the whim of private operators bite into household budgets. Financial costs are coupled with accidents, soaring obesity rates and continued environmental pollution despite technological gains. A disgruntled community rightly expects and deserves a more sustainable system.

## The economics of good transport planning

Congestion currently costs Sydney around \$6 billion per annum<sup>6</sup>. It drives business away and as congestion increases, more money has to be spent just to maintain existing levels of service on public transport. The NSW Government's favoured policy of road building to reduce congestion does not work. More roads result in more traffic.

The road-building approach is misguided. Australian cities investing predominantly in roads spend about 17% of their wealth on transport compared to cities focussed on public transport provision, which spend only 4–5% of their wealth on transport<sup>7</sup>. Cities with higher public transport usage are more economically efficient.

The full capacity of our transport system is only required about 15–20% of the time, specifically in the AM peak two-hours and in the PM peak. The rest of the time, the road network operates well under capacity, often mostly empty. Economically, this low usage rate is inefficient but, because most road system costs are not paid directly, motorists are not influenced to change their travel patterns.

Transport corridors are a major land use in all cities and they serve many important purposes, but not all corridors are equal. A lane dedicated for buses or light rail can carry up to 5 times, and a heavy rail line up to 10 times as many people as a freeway lane<sup>8</sup>. The use of land for both roads and parking spaces, to provide services for multiple vehicles with very low occupancy, is economically inefficient. The failed management of the transport system contributes to the expense of land in Sydney and hence record housing prices.

Public transport requires less energy than private vehicles. Cars in Sydney are the most energy intensive form of transit; buses are roughly three times more efficient and trains are even more efficient. The energy intensiveness of Sydney's transport system is becoming critical as cheap, easily accessible oil supplies diminish and as we face a carbon-constrained future. The bad economics of road investment will only get worse.

Sydney's transport system should support rather than undermine its economic vitality. There have been some welcome public transport commitments in recent Budgets, the *State Infrastructure Strategy* and the *State Plan* (see Box 5 p.17). We encourage such commitments but urge that they be made within the framework of a coherent long-term strategy to produce a world-class public transport system and a radical shift to a public transport culture. Much more remains to be done and the Government's continued road-investment fixation at the expense of public transport is corroding Sydney's wealth. It is time for a more sensible and a visionary approach.



# Recent State Government Investment Announcements

In 2005 and 2006, the NSW Government announced significant spending commitments for public transport. This was accompanied, however, by continued significant commitment to spending on roads, particularly road construction. Further, as the evidence to date shows, announcements are not always followed through with implementation (*see Box 6 p.18*). Analysis of the announcements also reveals deficiencies.

In 2005 the NSW Government committed to several initiatives to meet expected future demand for transport in Sydney:

- ➔ \$3.6 billion investment in the arterial roads network including the Cross City Tunnel, the Lane Cove Tunnel, the M7 and the Windsor Road upgrade
- ➔ Public transport network and service improvements including:
  - \$1 billion for the Rail Clearways project
  - \$1.5 billion for new trains
  - \$1 million for the transport interchange at Parramatta.<sup>25 26</sup>

In the NSW Government's 2006–2007 Budget speech in June 2006, the Treasurer announced the following:

Increased spending in the transport portfolio of \$435 million, including:

- ➔ \$3.4 billion funding for railways and public transport, including capital expenditure of \$1.6 billion:
  - \$129 million to purchase corridors for the metropolitan rail expansion
  - \$207.8 million to continue the Rail Clearways program
  - \$327 million for work on the Epping-Chatswood Rail Line
  - \$275 million to purchase new rolling stock and upgrade the existing fleet
  - \$45 million for Bus Priority Measures
  - \$36 million for the first stage of a \$254 million program to purchase 505 new 'clean-diesel' and natural gas powered buses.
- ➔ \$3.3 billion for roads - the biggest-ever roads program for NSW – of which, a total of \$1.59 billion has been allocated towards road construction.

This is in addition to major projects worth more than \$15 billion over the next 15 years.<sup>27</sup>

About one-third (just over \$530 million) of the capital spending 'announced' in 2006 is for continued spending on two current initiatives: the Rail Clearways and the Epping-Chatswood Rail Line. While these are important initiatives, the announced spending is certainly not a new investment commitment.

Construction of the South West Rail Link (SWRL) is scheduled to commence in 2009, but the Budget papers indicate only \$34 million is for this project, despite land acquisition cost estimates of more than \$70 million for one-third of the corridor (\$75 to \$85 million for the section between Edmondson Park and Leppington).<sup>28</sup>

Investment in rail rolling stock represents a key step forward. The level budgeted (\$275 million) is close to what experts estimated was needed (\$200 to \$280 million<sup>29</sup>) each year to maintain and grow the fleet.

The \$36 million set aside for bus purchases in this Budget will give the STA 86 new buses for use on the Sydney and Newcastle networks. The budgeted purchase seems disproportionately small when cities such as Brisbane, with bus fleets less than half the size of the STA's, will purchase 71 new buses in the 2006–2007 financial year<sup>30</sup>. It also appears low in light of the NSW Government's own commitment to purchase more than 1,000 new clean diesel and natural gas buses over the next seven years<sup>31</sup>.

The *State Infrastructure Strategy* (SIS) is a very important commitment by the Government to long-term investment and some \$15 billion of projects are foreshadowed. Detailed funding allocations in the plan indicate where about one-third of this will be spent. Of the \$5 billion detailed in the SIS, more than half is for Rail Clearways and the Parramatta Chatswood Rail Link. It would be a disappointing ten years to come if we can expect only two major projects and two new rail corridors (NWRL and SWRL). The Clearways Projects is especially important because it is network development that should have been implemented progressively. However, this infrastructure catch-up game cannot be an acceptable reason for avoiding network development and growth over the next ten years.

## November 2006 announcement

In November 2006, the NSW Government announced it would spend \$660 million fixing some of Sydney's worst roads and improving train and bus services. Although this amount includes provision for bus lanes, there is provision for further road investment including duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge<sup>32</sup>. While all contributions to public transport are welcomed, expenditure needs to be framed within a long-term, coherent, strategic plan with meaningful goals and targets, not piecemeal, ad hoc announcements in the run-up to an election.

# Where are we now?

## Objectives

Released in 1998, *Action for Air 2010* is a key policy document detailing the NSW Government's 25-year air quality management plan for the Greater Sydney Metropolitan Region. It sets the following targets for reducing the impact of transport on air quality:

1. To halt the growth in per capita VKT by 2011
2. To halt the growth in total VKT by 2021

To meet these targets, there will have to be a major shift of passenger journeys to work from cars to public transport.<sup>33</sup>

The complementary document *Action for Transport 2010*, responds to the air quality targets set out in *Action for Air* by providing for a package of infrastructure development, service improvements and demand management strategies.<sup>34</sup>

## Outcomes

*Action for Transport* committed \$4 billion to 2010 to investment in transport infrastructure with a mix of projects that reflected transport priorities at the time. Whilst some key transport projects have been completed, a number of projects have been brought forward, others deferred and new ones have emerged.

## Completed projects

Some public transport projects have been successfully completed or are on target for completion as planned. These include the Parramatta-Rouse Hill and Blacktown-Castle Hill Rapid Bus Transit Ways, as well as the heavy rail line from Epping to Chatswood, which are due to be operational by 2007. As promised, the light rail network was successfully extended westward to Lilyfield in 2001.

## Deferred projects

Overall, however, more road projects have been implemented than were planned and most major rail projects in *Action for Transport* have not proceeded as planned. Examples of delayed projects include:

- Parramatta-Strathfield Rapid Bus Transitway originally scheduled for completion by 2002
- Parramatta-Blacktown Rapid Bus Transitway by 2004
- North West Rail Link by 2010
- Sydney-Newcastle High Speed Rail by 2010
- Sydney-Wollongong High Speed Rail by 2010<sup>35</sup>

## Problems with monitoring progress

There are significant problems with the monitoring, review and scope of *Action for Air* and *Action for Transport 2010*. For example, *Action for Transport* has not been reviewed since its release, despite changes in transport priorities and directions since 1998.<sup>36</sup>

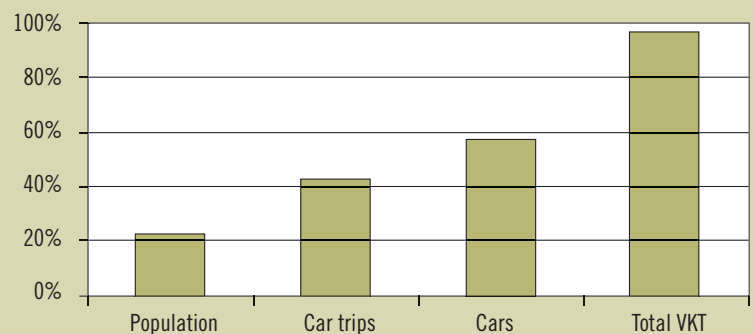
## VKT is on the increase<sup>37a</sup>

Both per capita and total VKT have increased since 1999.

	1991	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Per capita VKT	17.9	20.1	20.3	20.0	20.4	20.4	20.3
Total VKT ('000)	64,038	79,497	81,238	81,365	83,867	84,245	84,535

Between 1999 and 2004, VKT grew at an average annual growth rate of 1.2%, exceeding population growth by an average of 0.2% per year. This reflects the broad trend of the past two decades, where car use has grown four times faster than population growth.

## Growth in population and travel (1981-2001)<sup>37b</sup>



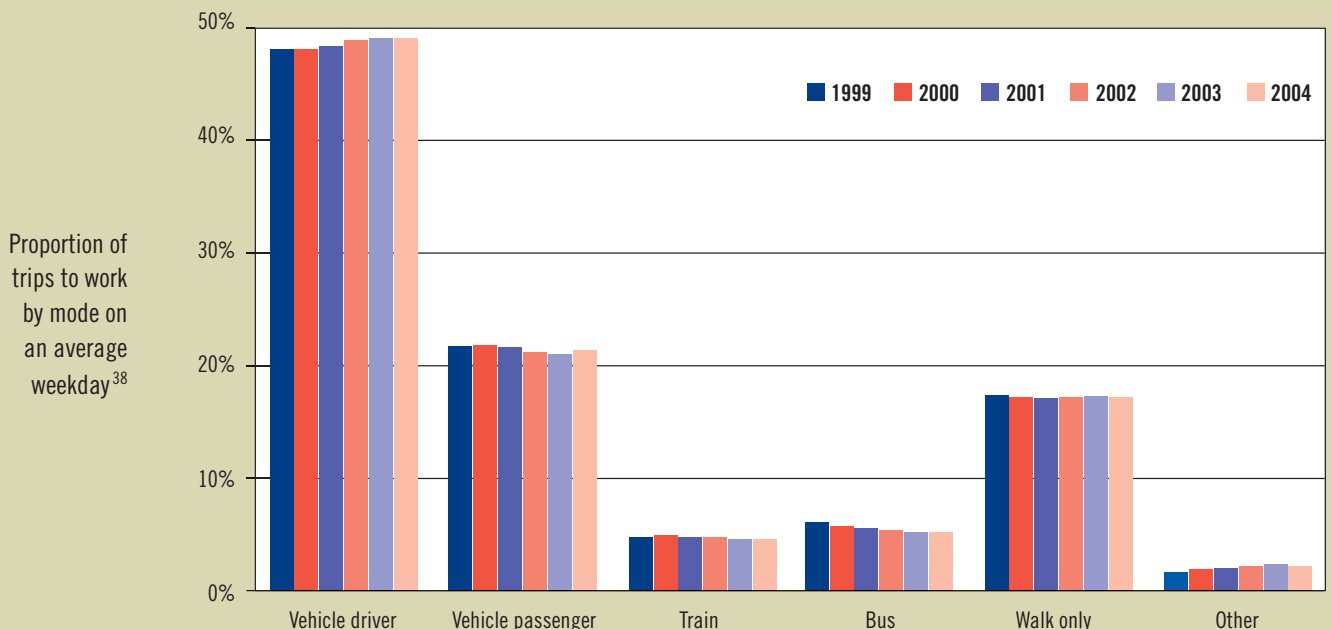
## A fall in public transport use

Between 1999 and 2004, the proportion of passenger journeys to work by public transport decreased.

In 2004, only 20% of passenger journeys to work were made by public transport, compared to 73% made by car, falling short of the 30% target in *Action for Air*.

## In 2004, the top 3 reasons for using a car to travel to work included:

1. Shorter travel time (47%)
2. Bus/train unavailable or inaccessible (33%)
3. Problems with public transport (28%)



# THE SOLUTION

## TEN-POINT PLAN

I'd go so far as to say for every optimist who makes a transport plan for Sydney, there are a dozen pessimists who shout it down.

*~ Genia McCaffery, speech to Sydney Transport Summit, 4 August 2006 <sup>9</sup>*



The community is eager for change. What is missing is the one major component required to make it happen – leadership.



Identifying the initiatives, engagement processes and funding sources is not enough to secure sustainable transport in Sydney. Fundamental structural change is needed to bring these three elements together and to manage implementation; otherwise, election commitments will remain long-awaited promises.

We have identified ten key policy changes that would help to create a sustainable transport future for Sydney.

A funded commitment with an independent overseeing body is the first step (Points 1 to 3). Engaging citizens in a framework focussed on sustainability, equity and fit-for-purpose projects is the second phase (Points 4 to 7).

Finally, while the long-term strategy is developed, there is a need to press ahead with ‘no regrets’ short-term projects across the full range of infrastructure, behaviour change and enabling policy measures (Points 8 to 10).

We recognise that the Sydney transport task is not an easy one, but the plans have been written and the solutions are available and feasible. The community is eager for change. What is missing is the one major component required to make it happen – leadership. The coming NSW State election is a pivotal opportunity for all political parties to consider the kind of leadership for sustainable transport that they offer to the people of NSW. The time for empty promises and unfulfilled commitments is past. This paper is a call to action.



# 1 Commit to a long-term legislated plan for a world-class public transport system in Sydney that provides a real alternative to car use.

The development of Sydney's transport system has been haphazard, piecemeal and heavily influenced by the electoral cycle. To develop a world-class transport system, we need firm commitments and funding over a period much longer than an electoral cycle. This commitment will require bipartisan political will and the vision to see beyond the next election. That is, it will require political courage and leadership. The key objectives and the plan to achieve them, including a timetable for major infrastructure enhancements and initiatives, should be enshrined in legislation to provide greater certainty and to reduce the influence of electoral cycles.

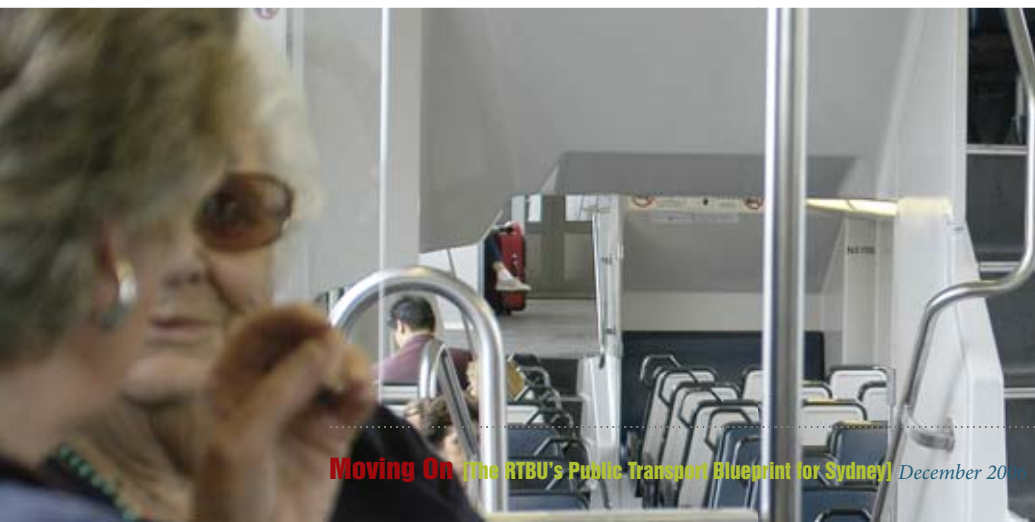
As part of the plan, the NSW Government needs to commit to reducing car dependency and to increasing public transport usage in Sydney, in recognition of the many negative impacts of car use. In 1998, the NSW Government established a target to stabilise vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT). Since then, data shows that between 1999 and 2004 VKT has continued to grow faster than population (*see Box 6 p.18*). The stabilisation target is not being achieved because there is no funded plan to manage VKT.

Current public transport patronage targets are inadequate. *The NSW State Plan* includes a target to increase the share of total journeys to work by public transport by only 3–5 % over the next 10 years<sup>10</sup>. Targets like this are essential in transparent governance as they provide important feedback to the community about progress; however, isolated from an implementation plan they achieve little. Existing targets for VKT stabilisation need to be revisited, strengthened and supported with a clear VKT management plan and further, more ambitious public transport usage targets need to be set.

The major component of the plan must be a commitment to the development of a world-class public transport system that provides an attractive alternative to the private car. For a world city like Sydney, public transport needs to be understood as an essential service. It is the only way to deliver equitable, efficient access to the many economic and social exchanges that characterise a major city.

The NSW Government must support its commitment to public transport with firm targets for increased public transport patronage and similar targets for improved accessibility, frequency and quality. Public transport must be appropriately priced, fast, efficient, close, reliable, frequent and safe. These targets, and the VKT reduction targets, should be included in the legislation to reflect the strength of the commitment.

Current public transport patronage targets are inadequate. *The NSW State Plan* includes a target to increase the share of total journeys to work by public transport by only 3–5 % over the next 10 years.



# Historical State Government Investment in Transport

## Difficulty in accessing data

The picture that emerges from research is that the public has limited access to data that compares the NSW Government's investment in State roads with the investment in public transport system, over time.

Neither *Action for Air* nor *Action for Transport* provides a historical time series of State investment in roads compared to rail or other forms of public transport. Surprisingly, neither the NSW Audit Office nor the Ministry for Transport provide access to 'big picture' comparative investment patterns. Gathering such data requires analysis of the Annual Reports of RailCorp and the RTA for example, which is awkward and time-consuming.

The difficulty in accessing data can be seen as an example of the lack of transparency in Government transport operations. The impact of limiting access to such information is that the average citizen cannot ascertain whether or not taxpayer dollars are being well spent or how they are being spent, thus undermining the democratic accountability

of the Government.

Further, whilst policy documents such as *Action for Air* and *Action for Transport* commit to increasing investment in the public transport system, without access to information regarding actual investment patterns, it is difficult to judge the extent to which Government commitments have been met.

Below we have provided some analysis of historical Government spending patterns that effectively illustrate the historical prioritisation of roads over public transport.

## Reported average annual investment figures

Whilst the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) has on average an annual budget allocation of more than \$2 billion for the road system alone<sup>39</sup>, the NSW Government spends only \$1.9 billion annually on public transport, across all modes (including heavy rail, light rail, buses, ferries etc)<sup>40</sup>

## Government investment (RTA vs. RailCorp)

One way of calculating Government investment in roads is through the amount of State Government funding to the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) each year. In the same way, Government investment in rail can be calculated through the amount State Government funding to RailCorp each year. RailCorp, which was formed in 2004 by a merger of the State Railway Authority of NSW (SRA) and the Railway Infrastructure Corporation (RIC), provides passenger rail transport throughout NSW via its CityRail and CountryLink services. Therefore, there is no data on RailCorp as an entity available before 2004.

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05
<b>NSW Government funding to the RTA (millions)</b>	\$2,039 million (capital and operating) <sup>41</sup>	\$2,474 million (capital and operating) <sup>42</sup>	\$2,333 million (capital and operating) <sup>43</sup>	\$2,258 million (capital and operating) <sup>44</sup>
<b>NSW Government funding to RailCorp (millions)</b>			\$253 million (\$172 million capital grants; \$81 million operating subsidies) <sup>45</sup>	\$598 million (\$422 million capital grants; \$176 million operating subsidies) <sup>46</sup>

The following data is also available:

## Total road-related expenditure 2000-01 to 2003-04 NSW<sup>47</sup>

The following data includes Australian government grant money and is therefore not NSW Government expenditure alone. It also includes contributions to state and local government from private developers.

2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
\$3,100.1 million	\$3,458.8 million	\$3,214.0 million	\$3,272.0 million



# 2

## Commit continuous, annual and substantial State and Commonwealth funding to the development of a world-class transport system in Sydney.

The development of a world-class transport system is not possible without a genuine commitment of continuous long-term funding. An unreliable, run-down transport system threatens Sydney's position as financial capital of Australia and gateway to Asia. Economic activity (GDP) generated in the City of Sydney alone in 2003–2004 was approximately 8% of the total Australian economy<sup>11</sup>.

Successive Governments (State and Federal) have failed to recognise this. Investment has been incremental and opportunistic (*see Box 7 p.22*). Whilst trying to rectify a historical lack of investment, the NSW government has capitalised on some relatively 'easy wins' to new development sites and what initially seemed like lucrative offers from private financiers. The challenge now lies in established suburbs like Bankstown and Carlingford, where simple charges cannot be levied across an entire new sub-division. A more sophisticated approach is needed.

Estimates of how much transport funding is needed Australia-wide vary. However, widespread agreement exists that current levels of investment are insufficient and a major injection of funds is needed. Based on estimates provided by State Rail Authority (SRA) and State Transit Authority (STA), the Parry Inquiry found that the total cost to **maintain** existing CityRail, Sydney Buses, Newcastle Buses and Ferries, and Sydney Ferries services would be nearly \$2.7 billion per year to 2010. Therefore, the expenditure required to operate public transport services in NSW in a 'steady state' is expected to increase substantially to 2010. Clearly, much more will be needed to fund improvements.

It is appropriate for both the Commonwealth and NSW Governments to have a role in providing this funding. The Commonwealth Government collects fuel excise and it is appropriate to return a proportion of this money to develop the public transport system in major cities. Further, the Commonwealth Government is responsible for Australia's economic performance and the efficiency of the transport system in Australia's largest city is a significant influence on economic performance. The Sustainable Cities Inquiry Report recommended that, "The Australian Government significantly boost its funding commitment for public transport systems, particularly light and heavy rail, in the major cities"<sup>12</sup>.

Historical spending on the transport system has been inefficient. A focus on building motorways to reduce congestion has clearly failed due to induced traffic growth, leading only to greater congestion. At the same time, spending on public transport often has been targeted poorly or based on public-private funding models that have not worked (for example, the Sydney Airport Link). More effective use of existing transport funds could go a long way to providing the funds required for a world-class transport system. The NSW Government should pursue an integrated resource planning approach to identify the most efficient allocation of resources to improve Sydney's transport system.

Even with improved spending efficiency and a contribution from the Commonwealth Government, a funding shortfall is likely. The NSW Government can choose from a suite of possible funding options to meet



Whilst trying to rectify a historical lack of investment, the NSW government has capitalised on some relatively 'easy wins' to new development sites and what initially seemed like lucrative offers from private financiers.

It is difficult to see how Sydney could successfully develop a world-class public transport system without establishing a new body to oversee the process and to allocate funds.



this shortfall, some of which appear more feasible in the NSW context. For example, parking levies are already in place and could be expanded. While this would no doubt be unpopular, the existing levies are now accepted. Extending developer charges, and value capture along public transport corridors should also be pursued.

New mechanisms that could have a role in Sydney, include congestion charging or a CBD cordon toll. These mechanisms should be investigated in detail. Any measures to increase funding for public transport would need to be assessed thoroughly, with a particular focus on their equity impacts. Where a funding mechanism has the potential to reduce equity, it should be supported by other measures that reduce these impacts.

Whatever funding mechanisms are chosen should be incorporated in legislation to ensure that funds are protected from being siphoned off for other uses.

### 3 **Establish an independent NSW Transport Coordination Authority (TCA) to oversee the development of a sustainable, world-class transport system for Sydney.**

One of the biggest challenges to developing a sustainable transport system is coordination of transport planning, decision-making and funding. At present, responsibility for transport planning is spread across numerous government departments and authorities and too much power rests with the RTA.

To achieve the degree of coordination required to develop a world-class transport system, the NSW Government should establish an independent Transport Coordination Authority (TCA). The TCA would draw on the successful example of the Olympic Roads and Traffic Authority (ORTA) and would be a statutory body, ideally reporting directly to Parliament. Leading up to and during the Olympics, ORTA dictated the forms of infrastructure required to meet the Olympic transport task (including frequencies and standards of delivery) and initiated and delivered a transport education and information programme. Similarly, the TCA would be responsible for transport planning and allocation of transport funding across all modes. It would be charged with developing and implementing a plan to achieve a world-class public transport system. The TCA would provide a means to coordinate decision-making across modes and across levels of government.

The TCA could comprise a relatively small, experienced group of transport and government experts, which would seek input from government departments but would make final decisions itself on allocation of funds. It would have a particular focus on financing, fare structures, providing better public transport information, safety, community consultation and reporting against the targets discussed above.

It would take substantial political courage to establish an independent Transport Coordination Authority, as it would challenge the existing power structures that continue to prioritise motorway construction. However, it is difficult to see how Sydney could successfully develop a world-class public transport system without establishing a new body to oversee the process and to allocate funds.



# 4

## Adopt principles for sustainable transport to provide a framework for the development of Sydney's transport system.

The TCA should be established with the objective of moving towards a transport system compliant with the 10 principles for sustainable transport identified in Box 1 (p.12).

Transport is not something that people demand in its own right. Rather, people demand the access to other people, places, goods, services and opportunities that a transport system provides. Sydney's transport system is currently failing to deliver the access that its citizens deserve and that is expected of a world city. Although access to public transport in Sydney is constrained in different ways in different locations, solutions are available.

High quality service is also important. Poor quality transport contributes to social and health problems and potentially to economic problems, through lost time. Conversely, a world-class public transport system conceivably could provide an enjoyable travel experience. If a public transport service is to be attractive, passengers seek a frequent service that arrives on time, is clean and comfortable, provides a fast and convenient trip and is affordable. As citizens of a world city, this is the experience Sydney-siders deserve, and it should be a transport planning objective.

Transport can be bad for human health in many ways. Car accidents kill or injure people directly and air and noise pollution from motor vehicles contribute to health problems. Congestion can increase stress levels and road rage incidents. Reliance on passive transport options contributes to higher rates of obesity and related diseases. Public transport can expose passengers to assault risks. All of these issues need to be addressed in a sustainable transport system.

It is widely recognised that effective transportation planning needs to be integrated with broader urban planning. Transport networks help to shape patterns of urban development and changes in urban form affect the viability of different transport options. The NSW Government's *Sydney Metropolitan Strategy* is a step in the right direction, as it defines major centres and developing centres within the city and seeks to develop improved transport links between these centres. It also seeks to define planned land uses to capitalise on the strengths of the existing transport system. When judging specific transport initiatives, it is critical to consider their impact on land use and their role within the *Sydney Metropolitan Strategy*.

A sustainable transport system must not generate outputs that threaten long-term ecological or human health. Sydney's existing transport system fails to achieve this objective in many ways – airborne pollutants, greenhouse gas emissions and impacts on ecological processes and water quality. As the threat of climate change becomes clearer, the need to shift towards transport modes with lower greenhouse gas emissions is becoming urgent. Because of its high capacity, public transport has significant advantages over private vehicle transport in terms of energy and greenhouse intensity. A shift to public transport is part of the solution. It will also be necessary to reduce the greenhouse intensity of all transport modes by improving efficiency and shifting to renewable fuel sources.

The NSW Government's *Sydney Metropolitan Strategy* is a step in the right direction, as it defines major centres and developing centres within the city and seeks to develop improved transport links between these centres.





A sustainable transport system would avoid direct impacts on land that supports important habitats or has high ecological value.

The transport network occupies a significant proportion of land in Sydney. Construction of the transport network converts land from other uses and can have direct impacts on habitats and biodiversity. A sustainable transport system would avoid direct impacts on land that supports important habitats or has high ecological value. Up to 40% of Australia's urban areas are occupied by infrastructure for cars, including roads, car parking, service stations and manufacturing facilities<sup>13</sup>. Much of this is parking space that is frequently empty. Transport modes with higher capacity, such as heavy rail, light rail and bus transport, make more efficient use of space.

Economic efficiency should be a core objective of transport policy. Economic efficiency involves reducing key costs such as travel time, whether caused by congestion, inadequate service provision or unreliability, and reducing and accounting for environmental and social externalities (that is, costs associated with transport use that are not paid for by transport users, and are instead imposed on the rest of society, such as health costs associated with air pollution). Submissions to the Sustainable Cities Inquiry stated that strong rail cities are 45% wealthier than weak rail cities. Strong rail cities spend less on road transport and are more cost effective in their transit operations. Proper use of rail saves money and time<sup>14</sup>.

Peak oil constitutes another significant threat to the sustainability of the transport system. The NSW Government should be seeking to 'future-proof' the economy and to improve its resilience by diversifying transport modes and shifting away from fossil fuels.

All the sustainable transport principles are important and all need to be addressed when planning Sydney's transport future.

## 5 Give high priority to initiatives that will improve transport equity in Sydney.

Sydney has a particular problem with transport equity. In general, poorer people in Sydney have poorer transport. In western Sydney, limited access to public transport combined with rising fuel and housing prices limits access to economic and social opportunities (*see Box 4 p.14*). A pressing need exists to extend the reach of the public transport system to make access more equitable across Sydney.

The necessity to 'catch up' on years of under-investment across the transport system cannot be used as an excuse to fail the residents of Sydney's western suburbs, who have never had viable public transport options. Residents of Campbelltown and Blacktown pay dearly. Transport costs them time away from their families. They sit in traffic instead of coaching children's sport after school. They pour dollars out of the weekly household budget into a petrol tank because there isn't a decent public transport system. Fuel discount vouchers have become important to help manage tight budgets but are not a solution.

The NSW Government should give high priority to those initiatives that will improve transport equity in Sydney. Improvements in bus services, consistent with the recommendations of the Unsworth Inquiry, should be a strong priority in the short-term. In this context, the development of the Liverpool-

Parramatta T-Way and North West T-Way is a positive step for transport equity in western Sydney.

In the medium term, the Metropolitan Rail Expansion Project, including planned extensions of the heavy rail network to growth areas in the north-west and south-west, is vital. The south-west has been announced for completion by 2011/12 and the north-west for completion by 2014/15. (*see Box 8 p.29*). Strong grounds exist for accelerating the development of these heavy rail links, given the population already living in the north-west and the rapidly expanding population in the south-west. Public bus and light rail services will also need to be planned to provide 'feeder services' to major rail stations.

A review of the provision of public and community-based transport services is clearly needed. Improved integration of services to transport disadvantaged people will make a major contribution to providing more equitable access in Sydney. Specifically, focus is required on people with disabilities and people with mobility issues as a result of ageing. This group is increasing as a proportion of the population and meeting their access needs will accordingly become increasingly important.

There is a strong case for implementing a more equitable system of road tolls in Sydney, which does not penalise unfairly the residents of particular areas. Whatever actions the NSW Government takes to improve the transport system, it is vital to consider the impact of its actions on equity.

## **6 Establish citizen-driven transport planning processes at multiple levels to identify preferred targets and initiatives.**

Historically, opportunities for the public to participate in Sydney transport planning have come too late in the process, few people have been involved and there is little evidence that citizens' views have had a significant influence on outcomes. Examples abound, both in Australia and overseas, of citizen-driven planning processes which involve citizens in all stages of transport planning from establishing system objectives to decisions on specific initiatives.

One of the responsibilities of the TCA should be to establish authentic, democratic processes to guide transport planning at the metropolitan, sub-regional and local level. At the metropolitan level, citizens from across Sydney should have the opportunity to deliberate on the objectives of a sustainable transport system and to identify targets for measuring achievement of objectives. At the sub-regional level, citizens from a region should have the opportunity to deliberate on modal mixes and the desirability of particular proposals. At the local level, citizens should be able to guide the development of active transport infrastructure and initiatives.

At each level, processes should be participatory, deliberative and have a real influence on outcomes.

**Citizens should be able to guide the development of active transport infrastructure and initiatives.**





**Bus services can provide an interim measure and additional bus priority measures are recommended where buses provide major metropolitan-scale links.**

# 7

## **Develop ‘fit for purpose’ public transport infrastructure with a heavy rail base at the metropolitan level, buses and light rail operating on a regional scale and more active use of Government provided transport assets at the local level.**

Some important initiatives are already underway. The Rail Clearways project, a \$1.5 billion initiative of the NSW Government to improve capacity and reliability on CityRail’s Sydney suburban network, is important. It is due for completion in 2010 and rail commuters have supported the long-term nature of this project, meanwhile relying on the existing system, despite lower service levels (see Box 9 p.29). Although the Rail Clearways plan will improve the reliability, frequency, comfort and capacity of existing train services, it does not expand the CityRail system to areas not served currently by the heavy rail system, such as Sydney’s northwest<sup>15</sup>.

The commitments to new infrastructure are welcomed as well; however, the community has heard promises of new infrastructure in the past. Long project lead times as well as delays and budget overruns are common. Current commitments need clearer management and rapid, transparent progress.

The transport system needs to be developed in a way that is ‘fit for purpose’ and transport requirements change with spatial scale.

At the metropolitan scale, the need is for high-speed transport between major centres within Sydney. The orbital motorway network and heavy rail network are best placed to meet this need; however, significant investment in heavy rail is required for it to provide an attractive alternative to private vehicles for most trips. The heavy rail network provides the skeleton of a world-class public transport system and a foundation for urban development. Existing plans to extend the heavy rail network to the northwest and southwest growth centres are critical and both rail links should be accelerated so that residents in the growth areas have viable public transport options as soon as possible.

There remain concerns about the capacity of the heavy rail network to cope with increasing patronage under a policy of urban consolidation. Further investigation of options for augmenting the capacity of the existing heavy rail network, building on the recommendations of the Christie Report, is recommended. It is clear that gaps in the heavy rail network remain, such as the Epping–Parramatta link. Filling these gaps is a high priority. Bus services can provide an interim measure and additional bus priority measures are recommended where buses provide major metropolitan-scale links. We support the Government’s commitment to implement bus priority measures on the 43 strategic bus corridors across Sydney<sup>16</sup>.

In regions across Sydney, the need is for access to major centres and adjacent regions. A combination of bus services and light rail is appropriate to meet this need. These modes provide a finer network than heavy rail and can offer superior access and destination choice. As discussed above, planning processes should be conducted at the appropriate scale to determine which specific initiatives and modes best meet the needs of each region.



## North West Rail Link (NWRL)

Announced in the State Government's *Action for Transport 2010* in 1998, the North West Rail Link (NWRL) is an essential component of Sydney's \$8 billion new rail network. The NWRL was originally due for completion by 2010. The completion date was put back to 2017 and in November 2006, the Government announced it would be brought forward to 2014–2015<sup>48</sup>. Starting on the main Northern Line and extending to Rouse Hill via Castle Hill, the NWRL will be the main public transport line linking residents of Sydney's North West with Epping, Chatswood, North Sydney and Sydney's CBD.

Due to relatively low-density development in the catchment of the NWRL, the proposed Rail Link will be highly integrated with other public transport projects. It will complement the North West Transitway Network, consisting of two interconnected rapid bus transitway links, including the Parramatta–Rouse Hill and Blacktown–Castle Hill links to be operational by 2007. The T-Way corridor will in turn create opportunities for integration with new and existing bus services in the region, bridging the gap between heavy rail and local bus services. This integrated model represents an ideal scenario where combinations of complementary transport modes will serve a variety of trip types and areas for the growing population in Sydney's northwest. For example, whilst heavy rail offers the best solution for the long-distance trips to the rest of the CityRail network, rapid bus transitways are most



effective for the shorter cross-regional trips to Parramatta and Blacktown.

The next step to be undertaken in the planning process is reservation of the land corridor for the NWRL, which is a time-consuming process. However, despite repeated calls from officials for sites to be bought as early as 1998, the State Government has failed to acquire land. As a consequence, acquiring land to build the future Rail Link will be more costly, with land prices having tripled in less than three years. Therefore, to ensure the necessary land is available for the construction of the NWRL, immediate action should be taken.

BOX 8

## City Rail Performance Summary<sup>49, 50</sup>

	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05
City Rail passenger journeys (millions)	278.7	302.6	276.4	273.4	273.3	270.3
Suburban trains on time (%)	85.4	89.7	92.6	90.9	71.6	61.5
Intercity trains on time (%)	90.3	91.0	92.6	91.1	77.6	72.4

The *NSW State Plan* released in November 2006 reports that City Rail on time running is currently 91.2%<sup>51</sup>

BOX 9



Fleet management and planning experience may be a necessary supporting measure government could provide.

At the local level, the need is for access to local services and to the wider transport network. Measures to promote active transport and small-scale buses and demand responsive services are recommended at this level. Many government resources already exist at this scale but better use could be made of these. Resources sitting idle, such as community transport vehicles used for only a few services each week, could be shared or used for other kinds of service. Effective services, meeting the needs of target communities, are very important in terms of a return on the capital resources outlaid. Local government is an active provider of local transport for some special needs groups. These transport assets may be able to be managed more collaboratively to provide additional transport options for local areas. Fleet management and planning experience may be a necessary supporting measure government could provide.

## 8

### Pursue and fund specific high-priority initiatives in the short-term while establishing the long-term plan.

Most of our recommendations focus on the structural changes required to oversee a transition to a sustainable, world-class transport system. However, the NSW

Government should **not delay** implementing specific, high-priority initiatives while these other recommendations are implemented. Several specific initiatives across multiple spatial scales have clear merit and should be pursued.

At the metropolitan level, we recommend:

- Resumed planning of the Epping–Parramatta heavy rail link
- Electrification of the Southern Highlands rail line and the Kiama–Bomaderry rail line.

At the sub-regional level, we recommend:

- Overhaul of fare structures to take into account multi-modal trips and ensure that multi-modal tickets can be purchased across all existing and new public transport modes. There is no reason why existing computerised ticket sales systems should not be used as a point-of-sale for multi-modal trips across NSW.
- A comprehensive examination of new and existing light rail and bus proposals with a view to rapidly implementing several of the proposals with the highest merit.

At the local level, we recommend:

- A local trial of demand-responsive bus services integrated with community transport resources in an appropriate location.

# 9

## Use appropriate planning and accountability measures to support the development and integration of new transport infrastructure.

Several planning and support measures should be implemented to enable the transition to a sustainable transport system and to provide improved integration across modes. First, there is little doubt that an emissions trading scheme applied to the transport sector would provide a strong incentive over time to shift away from greenhouse-intensive transport modes. The emissions trading scheme currently proposed by the National Emissions Trading Taskforce does not apply to the transport sector. We recommend that investigations be undertaken into the impacts of an emissions trading scheme applied to transport. Clearly, such a scheme would increase the price of petrol and public transport tickets, which would be politically unpopular. However, the price increases could be offset by concessions or rebates so that there was no negative impact on equity. Major structural change in the transport system will be greatly facilitated if there is a price on carbon.

Second, a need for better public transport information services exists, particularly for buses. While useful services are available online, little in the way of real-time information for bus services is available and bus maps are difficult to decipher. The Warren Centre has suggested the development of a colour-coded bus service map similar to the map for the London Underground. Public and private timetabling could be integrated in the 131 500 service. This kind of integrated information greatly simplifies the task of identifying a transport option, particularly in unfamiliar areas.

Third, modal integration needs to be a continuing focus. After numerous delays, Sydney's integrated transport ticketing system (Tcard) is undergoing trials with school students and some commuters. When Tcard is introduced, there will be an opportunity to review and simplify fare structures and to introduce fares based on the trip, rather than the number of modes used. We recommend a review of public transport fare structures as part of the introduction of Tcard, with the objective of achieving seamless integration across modes. This is included as a high priority initiative in point 8 above. Ongoing attention to the design of modal interchanges is also important.

**Major structural change in the transport system will be greatly facilitated if there is a price on carbon.**





# 10

## Use targeted programs to support the move from “car preference travelling” to supporting a “public transport culture”.

It is not enough to plan new infrastructure and implement planning and accountability mechanisms

without implementing targeted programs and incentives to support the transition to a public transport culture. Social marketing and education programs to promote public transport should be an important part of the plan to develop a world-class public transport system.

Of course, marketing can only go so far if no quality product exists. A strong focus is required on making the use of public transport an enjoyable experience. This means developing a service that is fast, reliable, safe, comfortable and frequent. The transport services available during the 2000 Sydney Olympics are often cited as an example of what is possible.

When the product is high quality, it is important to reward frequent users. Pre-purchased tickets offer significant benefits to efficient transport operations by reducing the dwell time at stops. These operational benefits should be sought actively through incentives such as rebates or tax deductions for passengers purchasing six or twelve month tickets. Similar incentives will need to be incorporated into electronic ticketing strategies.

Some significant experience of individual travel behaviour change exists in Australia but more attention should be focussed on the cost-effectiveness and benefits of major programs with trip generators (universities, hospitals and large businesses for example). Such programs incorporate negotiating cultural change within workplaces (for example, flexible starting times) and implementing localised infrastructure (for example, lighting between public transport stops/stations and major workplaces) where required. This kind of intervention recognises that transport choices are influenced by many factors and that some (but not all) are beyond the control of the individual.

**Social marketing and education programs to promote public transport should be an important part of the plan.**



# THE OUTCOME

A sustainable transport system is possible in Sydney. Volumes of reports and studies tell us how this can be achieved. There can be no argument that this is needed urgently, for the sake of the community, the health and well being of residents, the environment and the economic base of this great city.

Transport shapes a city, and is the single largest influence on the city's amenity for its residents. A more sustainable transport system would transform Sydney in many ways. Fast, reliable and safe public transport options would reduce reliance on motor vehicles and the damage they inflict. It would reduce the isolation and dependence of the many transport-disadvantaged in our community. It would result in a fitter, healthier community in more liveable streets and neighbourhoods. Fewer accidents, reduced noise and air pollution and a reduction of our contribution to global climate change would be amongst the benefits. Governments would benefit from the increased trust of citizens as they become involved in the decision-making process and see decisions being made on the basis of sound and transparent planning, adequate funding and good monitoring. The economy would benefit as the massive costs of our current mis-allocation of funds are removed and congestion and travel times are reduced.

All of this is possible. It is not a lack of solutions or of technology that prevents it. It is merely a lack of vision and the lack of will to take the steps that are needed. The community will get behind the government that has the courage to take these steps.

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