

Action for Public Transport (NSW)

www.aptnsw.org.au

P.O. Box K606
Haymarket NSW 1240
actionforpublictransport@hotmail.com
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Mr James Cox
CEO, Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW
Level 8, 1 Market Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
PO Box Q290
QVB POST OFFICE NSW 1230
Telephone: (02) 9290 8400
Fax: (02) 9290 2061
ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Cox,

Review of CityRail Fares for 2013 Response to Draft Fare Determination

Introduction

In October 2012, IPART issued a Draft Determination covering the price of CityRail and Multi Modal tickets from January 2013. The draft paper is open for comment until 26th October 2012.

IPART's two main recommendations are that:

- (a) The maximum amount by which fares may increase in each of the next three years is 4.4%, which includes an estimate of inflation. This determination covers CityRail tickets and multi-modal tickets that can be used on CityRail services;
- (b) Unlike previous years where the maximum increase was applied to each ticket type, this determination applies the maximum of 4.4% to the average increase in the price of all ticket types. This gives the government the freedom to increase individual fares by more or less than the permitted maximum, or not at all. IPART will confirm that the mix of individual ticket prices chosen by the government does not exceed the average maximum increase.

Main Recommendations Accepted

Action for Public Transport (APT) accepts that the proposed increases are reasonable and necessary. We also welcome the proposal to allow the government more leeway in the setting of prices for individual tickets, but we are aware of the scope for political manipulation.

Political Interference in Transport Decisions

IPART is probably too polite to mention it, but public transport services are not immune from interference for political purposes. A current example is the route 311 bus through the seat of

Sydney, recently vacated by Clover Moore. The by-election is on Saturday 27th October. An improved service on the route 311 starts on Sunday 28th, something for which Ms Moore fought long and hard and, ultimately, unsuccessfully. Political? Or coincidence?

We could mention the former high-level CityRail manager, the wall of whose office was adorned with a map of Sydney showing the railway lines and the state electorates. Artistic cartography?

When CityRail delivers its list of proposed individual fares, IPART needs to examine whether any of the fares show signs of being politically motivated.

New Opal Smartcard Ticket

APT accepts IPART's rationale in giving the government freedom in how fares are transferred to the new Opal cards. However we, like IPART, are very much in the dark about what tickets and fares will be offered on the new card. As we have mentioned many times before, the Public Transport Ticketing Corporation (PTTC) or whoever is designing the system now, is behaving like a secret society. The last "news" on the web site is dated 25th October 2011 – twelve months ago, and the page was last updated on 2nd July 2012.

PTTC's last communication with APT was a meeting on 18th June 2009.

A look at the gocard pages on the Translink web site for Brisbane will reveal paragraphs on:

- Off peak discount
- Frequent user discount
- Caps on Senior and Pensioner Concession travel
- Free event travel
- The difference between a journey and a trip

Similarly, the myki pages on the PTV web site for Melbourne explain:

- Daily caps
- Weekend and public holiday daily caps
- Early bird discounts
- Myki Visitor Pack

None of this type of information has been revealed to the Sydney public, and the Opal card is supposed to be introduced on the ferries before Christmas.

Need for a Cheap, Inner-Zone, Multi-Mode Day Pass

We have had years of rhetoric about the importance of getting people out of their cars. "The State Plan: A New Direction for NSW", issued in November 2006, set this as a clear goal. The simpler MyZone system in April 2010 was a help, but it didn't go far enough, and nothing has been done since

One factor in a person's choice of transport is the availability of a fare payment system which is relatively cheap and simple to understand. Habitual motorists are often reluctant to use buses and trains because they perceive the total experience to be too complex. A low-priced MyMulti Day Pass would have the simplicity required to make occasional use of "the system" attractive to regular motorists. An uncomplicated ticket would also appeal to tourists.

This practical measure would help to transform the rhetoric into reality.

MyMulti Day Pass

From the beginning of the MyZone system in April 2010 there have been three MyMulti weekly (and periodical) tickets for the MyMulti1, MyMulti2 and MyMulti3 areas. However, there has only ever been one MyMulti Day Pass, and it covers the whole MyMulti3 area. The failure to have a Day Pass for the MyMulti1 area in particular, and also the MyMulti2 area, was brought to the attention of the Minister on the day that MyZone was announced in February 2010, but nothing was ever done.

The current prices for these tickets are:

MyMulti1 weekly – \$43
MyMulti2 weekly – \$51
MyMulti3 weekly – \$60
MyMulti Day Pass – \$21

A MyMulti1 Day Pass would be ideal for the person needing to visit a few places on the same day - say, from home at Ashfield to Bondi Jct on the train, return to Ashfield but stopping off at Town Hall on the way home. There are several ticketing options, all of them requiring the traveller to queue up at least twice. Remember that a break of journey is not allowed on a single or return ticket.

Return Ashfield to Bondi Jct (before 9 am)	\$8.40
Return Ashfield to Bondi Jct (after 9 am)	\$5.80
Single Ashfield to Bondi Jct (any time)	\$4.20
Return Ashfield to Town Hall	\$8.40
Return Town Hall to Bondi Jct	\$6.80
Single Bondi Jct to Town Hall	\$3.40
Single Town Hall to Ashfield	\$4.20

Our traveller, therefore, has a choice of several ticket options ranging between \$10.00 and \$12.60, if he or she is savvy enough to know them all. And this is without venturing onto a bus.

It should not be so expensive, or so complicated.

Melbourne's current MetCard offers all-day travel in Zone 1, which includes nearly all of the tram network (and buses and trains within that Zone) for \$7.60. MetCards will no longer be available from December 2012. The replacement myki card offers all day travel in Zone 1 for \$6.56 and in Zones 1 and 2 combined for \$11.08. Zone 2 extends to Frankston (44 km), Stony Point (64 km), Werribee (32 km), and Sunbury (38 km).

Sydney needs a new inner-zone Day Pass, and we need it by January. We do not want to hear the response that the new smartcard will solve all these problems. Maybe it will, but that has been the official response for over ten years, and we can't wait any longer.

Providing a new ticket is not a herculean task. In the past decade we have seen many miracles – fare harmonisation, ticket portability, multi-mode tickets, simpler fare structures, “cross-border” bus routes, and standard contracts. The impossible can be done again.

IPART has even paved the way for this miracle by giving the government the ability to create new ticket types. Section D.3.3 (Other fare changes) and Section D.4.1 (Adding and removing fares), both on page 104, specifically give the government the power to introduce new ticket types, under certain conditions.

We recommend that IPART offer this to the government as an “unsolicited proposal” so that it can be approved and implemented quickly.

Convenience

We note, with the help of a computer search, that neither the word “convenient” nor the word “convenience” are mentioned anywhere within the 106 pages of the Draft Report. This is a rather sad reflection on IPART’s priorities. The words “cost” or “costs” appear about 275 times.

A Fair Share of the Costs

Much of IPART’s report revolves around determining what share of the costs of providing the rail service should be borne by passengers and what share by the taxpayer. Some speakers at the Public Hearing on 17th October pointed out that no such analysis is made of how the costs of using public roads and infrastructure is borne by the private motorists and how much by the taxpayer.

All Modes Fare Reviews (or Multi Mode or Cross Mode)

In response to requests for IPART to determine a single multi-mode fare (instead of separate rail, bus and ferry fares), IPART says it is unable to do so because various Acts require the Tribunal to review the modal fares separately. We suggest that if the Tribunal is genuinely interested in reform of the fare structure, it should advocate or recommend that the relevant Acts be amended to allow such a change. A review of one of the Acts, the Passenger Transport Act, is being conducted now.

Conclusion

We would be happy to provide the Tribunal with further information if required.

We have no objection to this submission being made public.

Yours faithfully,

Allan Miles
Secretary
Action for Public Transport (NSW)