

IPART Submission: Public Transport Fares in Sydney and Surrounds

Some of the below ideas IPART may not think are relevant to this inquiry, but all affect how passengers use the Opal system. IPART must understand that the ease of use will affect the cost that Opal charges a customer if they make a simple mistake.

By making simple physical or software changes idiot proof will reduce passengers making mistakes encouraging more people to get an Opal card and use public transport.

Some points will reduce customers trying to cheat the system by using multiple cards for one trip or not actually catching a service to gain more expensive free trips at the end of the week instead of using the Opal card normally all week.

If IPART can see that certain points below will help the current Opal system, could IPART please put these forward to TfNSW to see if they can be changed immediately.

I would be happy to provide more information to IPART if required.

1. Default Fare for buses reduce over length of trip:

On buses the default fare would reduce as the trip gets closer to the terminus.

Due to the confusing writing on Opal readers 'Tap on / off Here' with an arrow pointing down. Many passengers tap on the LCD screen then slide card down to Opal symbol resulting in a bad read. As the passenger taps off the Opal reader and it not read, the passenger gets charged the full length of trip even though they travelled a few stops near the end terminus.

As passengers tap onto bus, a default fare is loaded onto the card:

- If tap on stop is more than 10km from the end terminus the default fare would be \$4.50
- If tap on stop is between 10-3km from the end terminus the default fare would be \$3.50
- If tap on stop is less than 3km from the end terminus the default fare would be \$2.10

Passengers cannot cheat the system but if they make a simple mistake will not be charged the full distance of the trip.

2. Ferry and 'Ferry Link Buses' have fares linked:

Ferry Link buses to and from wharfs would be free or at a reduced price

As long as a passenger taps on bus or ferry within 60 minutes of tapping off other service the bus trip would be free or a reduced price. This would encourage more people to catch the most direct route due to the high cost of ferries compared to buses.

3. Free travel within major CBD centres only with valid Opal card with sufficient funds:

Allow free travel on all modes of transport within certain CBD's as long as the Opal card has sufficient balance.

CBD's could include Sydney CBD, North Sydney CBD, Parramatta CBD.

This would encourage people to leave cars at home and use public transport.

This would also encourage residents of these CBD's to not purchase a vehicle & park on the road

This would also reduce workers within these CBD's during lunch break using multiple Opal cards of fellow workers to rack up cheap trips and start getting free journeys from mid week.

Could allow the removal of free loop buses in certain CBD's Parramatta or Wollongong saving money.

4. Free loop buses use Opal cards (Parramatta and Wollongong)

Current loop buses in CBD's like Parramatta and Wollongong would be free to all passengers with an Opal card that has sufficient funds available. All other passengers could be charged a small fee i.e. \$2.00 adult \$1 child.

5. Public holidays included in the Sunday \$2.50 fare:

Allow public holidays included in the \$2.50 all day fare.

This will encourage more people to take public transport on public holidays

Most public holiday's have very low patronage like Christmas Day

Currently a separate timetable exists for 'Sunday including Public Holidays', this means that now with Opal \$2.50 Sunday - on Sundays public transport is becoming overcrowded whereas on public holidays public transport is under-utilised.

6. Increase pensioner \$2.50 PET ticket price for all day travel:

IPART considers increasing the \$2.50 all day travel for pension tickets to maybe \$3.00. It has been more than 7 years since the PET ticket has been increased.

Currently 2 x concession MyBus1 single tickets \$2.40 cost 10 cents less than a PET ticket \$2.50

All other fares including normal concession fares have risen nearly every year but the \$2.50 pension ticket has stayed the same price.

7. Increase Sunday Opal prices

Consider increasing the Sunday \$2.50 all day travel to maybe \$3.00.

You can travel all day Sunday for 10 cents more than a single MyBus 1 ticket \$2.40

8. Opal Family Fare Deal

Monday - Saturday allow Family travel - 2 children pay all other kids travel free:

Old paper tickets allowed only 1 child of a family to need a valid ticket and all other children traveled free. Currently with Opal all children over the age of 3 must have an Opal card. This is making certain travel on Opal double the cost of paper tickets for families with multiple children.

Consider an Opal Family Fare Deal - first 2 children of a family must have an Opal and all other children travel free.

Sunday would not be included in this deal - all children on Sunday must have an Opal card similar to current paper tickets.

9. Allow families to link cards together to get discounts:

Allow families to link cards together via the Opal website or Transport shops and be able to get discounts whilst travelling together.

As family members tap on only 2 children will be charged a fare all other children tapping on would travel free or get a discount.

10. Yearly Cap :

Allow yearly cap similar to current daily, weekly caps

Cap yearly travel at maybe 48 weeks then rest of year travel for free allowing passengers to be able to travel free whilst on holidays.

Currently \$60 per week 52 weeks = \$3,120 per year
Proposed \$60 per week 48 weeks = \$2,880 per year

Old MyMulti Yearly ticket 52 weeks = \$2,444 per year

Saving \$240 for travellers who do not have a vehicle and rely wholly on public transport.
Discount is still \$436 more expensive than the old MyMulti 3 yearly ticket.

11. Consider Opal Readers on Trams

New trams have Opal readers on the tram allowing default fare to reduce along trip

Consider on the new tram lines to have the Opal readers on the tram instead of on the footpath. This will allow the default fare to reduce as the tram gets closer to the terminus.

This will allow passengers running for the tram the ability to get on the tram and then look for their Opal card instead of jumping on the tram and fare evade.

If the passenger forgets to tap off they will be charged the default fare the remaining distance when they tapped on.

If successful Opal readers could be installed on existing trams and readers on footpaths removed

This will align NSW with other states VIC and SA that have ticket readers on all trams

This will reduce fare evasion and also people trying to get free journeys without getting on a tram, walking between Pyrmont and Star City Casino stations and tapping on Opal readers.

12. Consider different methods of calculating free travel (8 paid journeys)

Consider looking at passengers overall weekly travel then deduct most expensive trips and allow free travel. Still cap at \$15 per day and \$60 per week but refund the most expensive trips at the end of the week back onto the Opal card.

Currently passengers are trying to make their first 8 journeys the cheapest \$2.10 to then get free travel on the most expensive journeys towards the end of the week. Passengers may also be delaying more expensed trips to the end of the week.

Passengers near frequent public transport can go out after-hours and travel 1 stop on the bus and rack up all 8 paid journeys in 1 or 2 days for \$16.80 per week. Other passengers in poorly serviced areas or factory workers in some western Sydney industrial parks that are serviced by 1 or 2 buses only during peak periods are left paying \$60 per week.

This will allow passengers to travel normally everyday of the week and give passengers who live not close to frequent public transport the same ability to get discounts as those who live close to frequent services. Most people who live in Western Sydney in new housing developments do not have the luxury whilst at home on Monday night to just jump on a bus for 1 stop to rack up a cheap paid journey.

13. Allow Opal integration for transport to major sporting events and concerts:

Allow free transport to and from major sporting events and concerts

As people book for major sporting events or concerts they can click a link that will access their Opal account and allow free travel

14. Have Opal readers at gates of major events allowing free travel

As people take public transport to major sporting events and concerts they would use their Opal card normally to catch public transport to the event. Normal charges would be added to the card along the journey.

As people enter through events gates they would tap Opal card on a reader and journey to the event would be refunded back onto the card. Reader would also load onto the card data allowing the person free journey home from the event. As person goes home they would use their Opal card normally and all travel would be free.

This would not need complex website links and would not need Opal system to download information to every Opal reader in the network. Opal card would operate normally until the card is tapped onto the Opal reader at the event.

15. Have themed Opal cards for football clubs with free travel on event days:

Have Opal cards with football club colours on them allowing free travel on match days to and from events as long as a person taps onto a reader at stadium gates.

16. Allow Opal integration to Royal Easter Show:

People going to the Royal Easter Show would use their Opal card normally and Opal card would charged normal fares.

As people enter through Royal Easter Show gates they would tap Opal card on a reader and journey to the event would be refunded back onto the card. Reader would also load onto the card data allowing the person free journey home from the event. As person goes home they would use their Opal card normally and all travel would be free.

This would not need complex website links and would not need Opal system to download information to every Opal reader in the network. Opal card would operate normally until the card is tapped onto the Opal reader at the event gates.

17. Allow integration to major tourist attractions Taronga Zoo via website

Visitors wanting to go to Taronga Zoo could go to TfNSW or Taronga Zoo website and be able to order single use Opal tickets to allow free travel on Opal enabled modes to and from the zoo. Taronga zoo could get Opal readers at entrance of zoo and visitors tap card to enter zoo.

People could click a link on sites to enter into their Opal account and be able to select Opal cards that they want to use for the zoo visit. Opal system would hold information on Opal readers until card is tapped. When person goes to the zoo and taps onto reader within zoo all travel to and from the zoo for that day would be free.

This will allow tracking of passengers habits and allow for future improvements to the transport network to make a day out at the zoo more enjoyable.

18. Allow minimum deposit for multiple cards like E-Tags in cars:

Allow families with multiple Opal cards the ability to have less money tied up on the Opal account.

If you have 2 adults \$40 x 2 and 4 children \$20 x 4 then total loaded on cards could be more than \$160

Consider if account has auto-top up have top up of \$20 adults and \$10 for children half current top up

Enough to allow person to travel all day.

19. Allow free Opal travel on bus routes that are not well patronised and feeder routes:

Identify bus routes with low passenger numbers and allow free trips with valid Opal cards with a sufficient balance. This will increase patronage and allow people to go to local shops.

20. Increase the distance of \$2.10 and \$3.50 fare bands for buses:

Consider increasing the fare bands to allow cheaper travel for short trips on buses. Before MyZone bus tickets introduced it was more expensive to travel long distances.

Consider Fare Band 1 to be 0 - 5km \$2.10, Fare Band 2 to be 5 - 10km \$3.50, Fare Band 3 to be 10+ km \$4.50

21. Small deposit on Opal Cards bought from outlets

Currently passengers are buying Opal cards from shops and trying to get as close to the minimum amount needed to travel on a particular mode and then travelling the maximum distance. The card goes into negative balance and the passenger discards card and purchases a new card. I observe some passengers have 3, 4 and even 5 cards in their wallet.

Consider having a small deposit of \$5 on all cards purchased from outlets encouraging passengers not to continuously get new cards each time the balance becomes negative. The deposit would then be used as passengers taps on with the minimum amount then goes into the deposit amount.

22. Immediately change wording on Opal reader LCD screens

Ask TfNSW to consider removing the word 'here' from the LCD screen of all Ferry, Train and Bus readers. New wording on LCD screen would be '**Tap On / Off** (with arrow below pointing down)'

Currently some passengers are not tapping on / off readers properly and thus are paying the default fare due to the confusing wording on all Opal readers with LCD screens.

I watch passengers follow the instructions on the Opal reader to the letter, they tap on the LCD screen then slide the card down to the Opal symbol.

Passengers currently:

- Tap on the LCD screen then slide the card down in the direction of the arrow to Opal symbol
- Tap halfway between the screen and Opal symbol
- Tap and move the card from side to side
- Seniors find it especially difficult due to Opal symbol is not raised showing location of reader

This simple change will greatly reduce the number of default fares, buses currently have 5% of fares charged as a default fare and half could be due to people not understanding how to tap correctly.