

Main issues with OPAL and fare charging in general:

SHORT TRIPS ARE TOO EXPENSIVE. This has several effects:

If people have a commute under 20k, they will just drive the whole way

Not all of us live in Sydney. We don't all have parking cost in the CBD and most of us need our cars when we are not commuting. So charging me double my fuel cost for my trip is just not going to work. My travel distance is 15 km and it's cheaper AND FASTER for me to drive and walk 15 minutes from free parking. And I travel in the peak both ways.

My door to door time on the train used to be 5 minutes faster than driving, before the rail line in Newcastle was cut – now the trip takes 5 minutes LONGER. When I explain this to friends at work, and tell them what the cost is – they all look at me like I'm crazy. The primary reason I am still catching the train is because this gives me 30 minutes of reading time each day that I just wouldn't have otherwise. However, the cost and the time are now making this a very marginal benefit. Eg If I work during January, I generally drive every day as free parking is more available then and so this makes my drive time faster again than the train.

Some years ago I conducted a survey of staff in my large workplace regarding their commuting methods. Not a single person who had a car available, and lived less than 10k from the CBD (probably half my workplace) used public transport to get to work, even though their transport availability is better than anywhere else, and their travel time and cost by public transport is quite low. People who live that close to their work just won't pay any premium on their fuel cost AND they won't sacrifice their independence from timetabling if there is nothing in it for them. So these people are driving right into the city every day, and using full day parking when they really don't need to be there.

I am in favour of reducing the fares for short journeys, if for no other reason than that people who live close to the CBD and have cars available just will not use public transport at the current cost. They might not even use it if the price was lower, but while ever the fares are the level they are at present, we will never know.

It is not economical to park and ride

Because of the low frequency of buses where I live in my Newcastle suburb (one bus an hour that takes almost an hour to travel 15 km, AND the service finishes at 6pm), if I drive closer to the CBD and park and then get the bus into the CBD it costs me MORE in bus fares to travel the last 3 km, than it does to drive the other 12!

If you want time poor commuters to drive all the way to the crowded CBD and clog up the roads and parking there, this is the perfect way to get them to do it.

LACK OF FARE INTEGRATION MAKES ME DRIVE THE WHOLE WAY

If I catch a bus 3k to the railway station, and then do my 12k rail journey, it costs a ridiculous daily amount. Therefore, if I can't get a good park at the railway station (so it doesn't take me 10 minutes to get to the platform etc) I am just going to drive all the way.

THE INFLEXIBILITY OF THE WEEKLY TRAVEL REWARD DOES NOT REWARD REGULAR COMMUTERS

Again – not all of us live in Sydney. Using buses for travelling across suburbs for leisure activities on the weekend in Newcastle is something no sane person with a car would ever do. It is marginal enough just using it for commuting, when you know what your start and finish times are going to be.

So given that commuters have cars available, there may be days when they choose to drive to work because they have tasks on the way to or from work on particular days. I have an after work activity each Wednesday evening. So I drive to work every Wednesday and NEVER receive the weekly travel reward, even though I am doing 32 trips a month or more. This gives me no incentive to catch the train on the 16 days I **can** use it. Eg If I am ready to go to work and I am ‘between’ trains (if I have just missed one, it’s 30 minutes till the next one) I’ll just drive all the way because I am not going to sit on the platform for 30 minutes for no reason. However, if I was going to get some type of reward each month I would MAKE SURE I didn’t miss that first train.

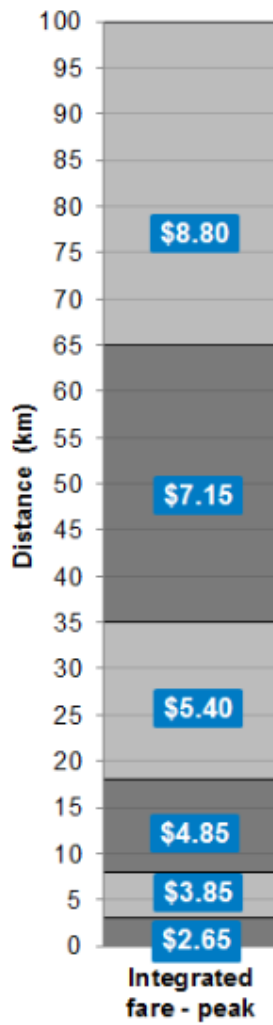
I have now taken to catching the bus the last couple of ks to the CBD on the day that I drive, so I can get the weekly travel reward on the Friday. I don’t need to do this but it is the only way I can get SOME reward. I have suggested previously that if you don’t receive the weekly travel reward during a particular month that every 8th trip should be free – so if you do 32 trips like I do, then 4 of these would be free – that is less than the 20% benefit that people who travel every day, receive. If the system needed to calculate this as a credit at the end of the month (because it doesn’t know ahead of time if you were going to get the weekly travel reward), that would be fine too.

It could work like this

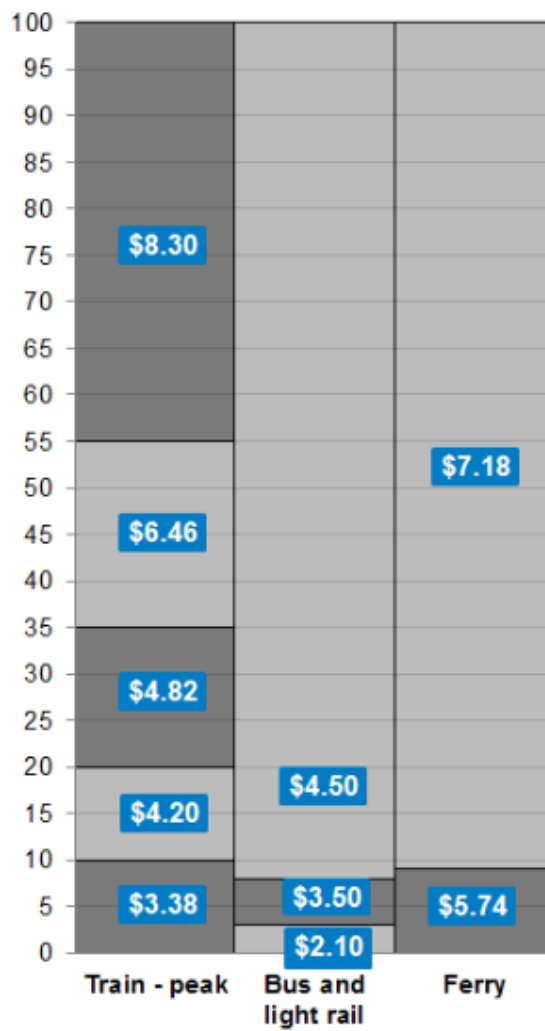
Number of trips per month	Number of trips subject to weekly travel reward	Monthly travel reward
16 -31	0	trip 15 and 16
16 -31	1-2	trip 16
16 -31	3 or more	0
32 or more	0	trip 15, 16, 31 and 32
32 or more	1-2	trip 16 and 32
32 or more	3 or more	0

This gives people who need to drive to work on some days, and people who work part time, SOME incentive to regularly use public transport.

Peak fares for trains buses and ferries



Current peak fares



work each

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