

IPART SUBMISSION

As a regular user of public transport I will be impacted by any changes to the current fare system.

So, it is important to me that I ensure the voice of users is heard.

I would hope that the whole working group of IPART are all regular users of public transport in Sydney. If they are not then they should not be on the IPART working group panel.

I don't believe you can review a system you do not have any experience with. This should be self-evident.

Here are three things that must be addressed:

1. Pricing must be simple – it should be single journey distance based not mode of transport based. It should allow changes of mode of transport across one journey. The reason for this is that we live in a changing world. As I write this I note that my main daily journey to the CBD each day will change from a single mode of transport (bus) to multiple modes during the building phase of Light Rail on George St. It will change again following the building of the Light Rail. This is something that will happen more than once over the foreseeable future as the network expands and changes to meet demand.
2. Pricing should encourage regular usage of public transport. A loyalty based scheme that rewards for regular weekly usage should be maintained with the reward in travel focussed on the normal usage. So free travel after the 8th trip each week should be encouraged. I note that the current Opal system does not allow a person who has registered their card on-line and then reports a lost or stolen card to access their previous journeys during that week. So the value in 'loyalty' is lost during that week and apparently the whole record of past journeys is also lost. This must be addressed as it is arguably part of the 'Balance' of the card. I would assume that this information is not actually lost as it would be a requirement to keep this metadata. So, this balance and travel history must be attached to the replacement Opal card and the 'loyalty' accrued as normal for that period. For most users I would suggest that a fee travel component for weekend would be less attractive than free travel after 8 trips on their regular daily trips to their place of employment.
3. Pricing should incentivise usage outside Peak hour travel. As a regular traveller during peak times I note that all modes of transport are already overused during peak travel – roughly for journeys commencing from 7:00am through to 9:00 am each week day morning and from 4:30pm to 6:30pm each week day afternoon. During this period buses, trains and ferries in the Sydney basin are mostly full to standing capacity. So a system that incentivises travel outside these times either through lower cost travel or increased loyalty travel (say two days free after 6 journeys out of Peak hour journeys). I note that any pricing strategies to encourage out of peak usage would have to be backed up with changes to timetables to either extend express services timings or increase the number of services in the shoulder period of 30 to 45 minutes either side of each daily peak time.

Of course the objective of sound pricing policy should be to increase usage of public transport and in doing so to reduce vehicular traffic providing a benefit to tax payers in lower road maintenance costs and road building costs.

Lastly, any financial benefit derived from an expanding pool of funds placed on the Opal Card should be used to benefit public transport users through either lower fares or less than CPI increases in fares. The income derived from this pool should never be brought back to consolidated revenue. It would be important to Opal card 'owners' –essentially shareholders in the Opal Card system – that this fund income is used to their benefit. A benefit that essentially benefits the whole community.

Regards,

Phillip Deer