

**Illawarra Commuter Association**  
29/03/2006

Please find the ICA Submission enclosed.

Regards,  
Kirk Bendall  
Illawarra Commuter Association

## **1 ILLAWARRA COMMUTER ASSOCIATION - SUBMISSION TO IPART 2006 RAIL FARES INQUIRY**

### **1.1 The Chairman IPART**

The Illawarra Commuter Association discussed this issue at our March meeting, and subsequently developed this Submission. We are referring to South Coast Line services where talk in geographic context.

Please find our objections, comments and suggestions below.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues at the public hearing.

Yours Sincerely,

President

The Illawarra Commuter Association.

---

### **Submission:**

Timetable issues

The 2006 timetable reduces service in a number of aspects:

- it's slower than 36 years ago!
- exacerbates the crawl from the Cooks River into the city
- Doesn't address extra South Coast patronage - peak and off-peak  
(Due to fuel prices and economic growth -NOT CityRail performance)

- Weekend trains are even slower and shifted, despite 8.58 am Sat train being Stationary for 7 mins at Thirroul already, with further standing time at Wollongong a little later.
- Journey times don't reflect eased permanent, and temporary, speed restrictions, and changes to reduce congestion, eg around Mortdale.
- Protracted runs mean less productive use of crew and trains.
- The current ISC t/t has ample padding - 5 minutes has been made up between Sutherland and Thirroul on limited stop train.
- The "Waterfall Wander" (circuitous and slow routing through multiple points for down trains), has to become a rare event if RailCorp's "customer focus" is to be credible.
- CityRail claim safety is a factor in the protracted journey times. What is the passenger Killed and Seriously Injured rate trend? And what is the estimated trend improvement CityRail is basing its decision on? To be consistent should not RailCorp be calling for next weekend's road crash vehicle types to be fitted with speed limiters adding 9% to travel times?
- Passenger safety and dwell times can be improved by having platforms level and close to train thresholds (especially at enclosed stations); and by minimising passenger walk distances to platform exits.
- Longer journey times exacerbate rolling stock and crew shortages.

## **1.2 Service issues**

The South Coast Line has a number service quality issues:

- signal failures (consecutive Mondays around Penshurst earlier this year),
- track equipment failures,
- 62.5 % "on-time" running in 2nd week of February, pm South Coast Line.
- standing to Helensburgh several times
- snap withdrawal of V-set carriages due to largely foreseeable galvanic/ wet area corrosion.

Unsuitable suburban carriages continue to be used

- "Off-peak" evening and weekend performance should be measured and reported as demonstrated by the cancelled 6.07pm down SCL train (9-3-06), having passengers

shunted onto the 6.37 service, meaning standing room only and ten minutes late arrival.

- IPART may wish to consider what are "peak" periods, and where - on the South Coast, the weekday peak is between 6-8 am.
- While new Outer Suburban Cars are pending, it is yet to be seen if, and how much, better they are than the G-sets.
- The Endeavour cars are getting tatty, and should have a half-life interior and mechanical refit (services should be maintained by redeploying Rail Motors from the Hunter).
- Are the number of complaints falling because people see no point complaining? Or has the changed phone menu put people off.
- Why are Mondays worse? - 55 mins total delay on one day is NOT because of the timetable!
- We believe RailCorp has previously announced initiatives outstanding, which should have substantial progress for Rail Corp to be rewarded with significant fare rise. This includes progress on a more direct track alignment between Thirroul and Waterfall to reduce journey times and remove the single-track Coalcliff tunnel bottleneck.
- What is CityRail doing to reduce train queuing back to Tempe from the Eastern Suburbs Railway entrance at Erskineville Junction?
- the uncomfortable suburban Tangaras are wholly unsuitable for long distance use.
- "Service" includes Frequency, journey time, Location, information, comfort and resilience elements - each multi-faceted. In our opinion current the On Time Running focus has become counter-productive.
- Service comparisons should also be made with recognised "good" systems - especially from non-English speaking countries.

### **1.3 Financial Issues**

- Increasing patronage will increase revenue .
- The Pensioner Excursion Ticket fare should also increase.
- Slashing the off- peak discount is NOT supported. Only minor change (eg one-off 5%) should be permitted. We note with Melbourne's "Sunday Saver Metcard, you can travel all day on Sundays across Zones 1, 2 and 3 for only \$2.50." (Metlink website) This is about 20% of the \$12.60 for an adult Daily 3 zone ticket – which is multimodal.

- Another comparator is Barcelona's 5-day unlimited ticket for €20, + €3 Postage when bought on-line. This is ~ AUD 38.26 (29-3-06).
- The South East Queensland, and Tweed in NSW, zonal and integrated fares in the TransLink system generated additional patronage and revenue. Will Tcard also be user-friendly enough to sell multi-operator cross-regional tickets onboard contract operated ferries?
- IPART should note the extra 90,000 weekly commuters CityRail's Media Release of 3 March refers to. On a 'back of envelope' guesstimation, if the \$32 Red TravelPass is representative, this represents \$2,880,000 per week, or about \$144,000,000 per annum -.

## **Comments on RailCorp's Submission to IPART**

- p5 table: how much difference in OTR is due to redefining "late"?
- p6 Why is RailCorp claiming "extended station dwell times" are an improvement? When we spend 3 and 4 hours a day travelling this is an imposition!
- p12 table: there should be a revenue line - not fares. I note the average fare is reported as four thousandths of the average wage. The Proportion of Household Expenditure spent on travel and transport may be a better indicator.
- p15 I note the Old World services have substantial "non-suburban" rail services ie CityRail/Countrylink vs French RATP/SNCF,
- p31 extended station dwell times can also reduce safety, with people getting off for a smoke and people running for trains, and travelling by other modes. On the South Coast we already have a well-padded timetable, so the extra quarter hour travel time, plus extra time away as forced catching earlier morning or later evening train for same time at destination, is unjustified.
- are p20, p15, p41~tables "cherry-picking" comparisons? Is a purchasing power parity technique used?
- p29 There is not much "Customer Focus" when both the ITSRR Mini-Survey and South Coast Line 2006 timetable consultation generated major unprompted issue as journey times. What is CityRail's strategy to reduce Journey times for internal and Interurban South Coast Line travellers?
- p29 when A search of both CityRail and RailCorp websites for produced zero results . Not much "Customer Focus" when not available.
- The "Customer Focus Strategic Plan" plan appears to omit, and ~should include IMHO,~ journey time standards (eg mean 60 kmh for limited stop Interurban trains), passenger comfort spatial and thermal comfort standards, and require platforms with fixed track to be level (in absolute and relative senses) and close to train thresholds.

- p33 the Safety Initiatives section lacks a reference to slower services. High Speed trains (TGV, AGV, Eurostar, KTX, Shinkansen, Acela, ICE etc) all have enviable safety records.
- p34 when and where will benchmarks be published?
- p41 off-peak fare discount is to encourage return travel, sell tickets from morning shift. Increasing patronage should be the major driver of revenue growth
- p43 "Master Fare" schedules should be used to determine price rises delivery and satisfy the 20 cent or \$1 minimum change thresholds, as IPART recommended for bus fares.

In summary, we prefer to be 10 mins late 10% of the time, not 10 mins later 100% of the time. Current performance and service downgrading don't justify the fare increases sought , both off-peak and peak.