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29/03/2006

INDEPENDENT PRICING AND REGULATORY TRIBUNAL OF NEW SOUTH WALES

*Regarding: Review of fares for CityRail in NSW 2006*

First off, I would like to say begrudgingly that a fare increase would be acceptable, if only for the purposes of matching inflation. Otherwise, I don't see any particular reason for it, at least from a passenger standpoint. I am also a University Student studying Urban Planning and a very frequent user of public transport for education and non-education trips. I would like to raise the following issues regarding CityRail's fare proposal, its fare structure and the service in general.

1. **Under the new timetable off peak services have been reduced in frequency since the new timetable was implemented in September 2005.** I'm already not happy about the halving of services and frequency during inter peak periods. University students, part-time and casual workers bear the brunt of this 'improved timetable'. All lines should have a frequency of every 15 minutes. But, this is not the main issue for this fare determination. From this reduction of inter peak services, it's apparent that day to day operating costs have been cut. CityRail may argue that they've had to put on more staff to put on standby and keep the slower network running reliably. Trouble is that this should've been done from the start, well before the February 2004 crisis. All CityRail has done is now put on the amount of staff that is actually required to keep the network running reliably. This shouldn't be a pretext for a fare rise.
2. **Why are they reducing the off-peak discount?** While as a student, I am not affected by these changes, this does seem to contradict a finding in the Parry Report or during past IPART fare determinations. If I recall correctly, CityRail or some relevant party suggested increasing Peak fares to make up for the increased cost of running peak services and having to roster on extra staff for just for the peaks of day. Yet, they are suggesting a reduction in the off-peak discount. This to me appears to be an underhanded attempt to raise fare revenue. They're actually making the peak/off peak fare difference less equitable. We should be encouraging people to use the train during off peak (after 9am).
3. **Concession holders don't get off peak discounts.** Furthermore, to be more equitable, shouldn't children, students and other concession holders receive an off peak discount also? Currently, half-price concessions bought during off peak periods are based on peak-period fares, not off-peak.
4. **Return versus Single Fares.** Why do Return fares get the off-peak discount, but not Single fares?
5. **Should 'Off-Peak Discounts' be replaced with 'Peak Period Surcharge'?** This is merely a psychological/marketing experiment, but it may be a way to encourage travellers to travel during Off-Peak when CityRail's per passenger operating costs are lower. People may be more reluctant to pay a 'surcharge' then forgo a 'discount'.
6. **Longer periodic Travelpasses for concession holders.** Why can adults (full fare) take advantage of the convenience and discounts from monthly and yearly travelpasses, but not other concession card holders such as students? Any method to encourage potential transit users to prepay multi-modal periodical tickets should be pursued. Travelpasses not only cut queues at ticket booths and vending machines, but also bus boarding times.
7. **Daytrippers as a infrequent multi-modal fare.** Daytrippers are currently marketed towards tourists or very infrequent users of Public Transport. However, it could also be marketed towards commuters and other travellers that make multi modal trips on a regular basis. Daytrippers shouldn't just be used to allow people to go on a long tour all throughout Sydney. For example, it is only viable for me to buy a Weekly Travelpass (since I can't buy Monthly or Yearly) if I attend university at least 3 days per week. So during semesters where I attend 3 days of university per week, I am better off using Traveltens for the bus and return fares for the train. To make Daytrippers more equitable and cost effective for commuters and uni students such as myself, perhaps CityRail should apply the Travelpass zoning to Daytripper fares. Daytrippers encourage more people to use public transport as transfers are included in the cost and the total fare is discounted compared to if the traveller was to buy each fare independently.
8. **There is no Concession Daytripper.** Why are students and other concession card holders not entitled to a half-fare daytripper? Meanwhile pensioners, can go anywhere for the entire day on just \$2.50. Children pay \$7.50. The unemployed, welfare recipients, students still have to pay \$15. Is that equitable?

9. **Why do Pensioners get a 'Daytripper' for \$2.50, while the rest of us pay \$15?** This is linked to the previous argument. But is this equitable? Don't forget Pensioners also get free transfers onto Private Buses which cover over half of the Sydney Metro Area. Daytripper and Travelpass users don't.
10. **CityRail Traveltens?** Why hasn't CityRail ever offered prepaid multi-trip discounted fares? Sydney Buses seems to pull it off. Encourages people to use public transport more frequently to take advantage of the discount.
11. **Multiple Day Travel Passes?** Basically buying several days worth of Daytrippers. There's probably dozens of other fare combinations that CityRail/State Transit have never thought of implementing.

Unfortunately, I've had a limited time to comprehensively analyse CityRail's reasoning behind its fare increase. However, the following anomaly is glaringly obvious.

1. **CityRail's flawed International Fare Comparison.** On page 41 of their submission, CityRail claims its new fares are comparable to those in other cities. However, CityRail has failed to disclose is some of those cities have multi-modal fare systems, whereby any one fare allows travel by train, bus or ferry and allows free transfers. Perth and Brisbane apparently has cheaper fares than Sydney, while Melbourne's fares are apparently slightly dearer than Sydney's. While I was in Perth, I was able to travel from Beechboro to Fremantle (33km by road + rail) on one single concession '2 zone' fare of \$1.30, and this included a free transfer from bus to train at Bassendean Station. In Sydney, one must pay multiple fares (and flag falls) when changing from bus to train (or vice versa), to carry out a similar trip. The Transperth fare was also valid for 2 hours, which meant I was allowed to break my trip, say in Perth City, as long as I wasn't travelling through more than 2 zones and I reached Fremantle/my destination within 2 hours. CityRail's single and return fares do not allow this kind of flexibility.

While I don't completely agree to the cut inter peak services, nor the proposed fare increases, I admit that service reliability and punctuality has improved since the new timetable.

It would also be interesting in what kind of multi-trip discounts or multi-modal fare options would be available on the T-Card, as very little has been publicised regarding this.

I would be interested in attending the public hearing regarding these fare increases as would a colleague of mine.

Regards,  
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