

20 October, 2008

Review of CityRail fares from 2009 and regulatory framework

Concerning the above proposal to increase fares, I believe the fare hike to be unfair and unethical. The reasons for the fare hike do not follow the pricing structures undertaken by any other business that I know of. To increase the cost of a ticket because it appears that the average customer can afford to spend more is ludicrous. The customer has chosen to travel by train or is forced to simply because of the cost of running a car, the difficulty of parking, the customer not owning a car or any other means of transport and even the intercity commute being too tiring. There are many reasons why train patronage should be encouraged. A fare increase that is a standard, say 2% per annum, would be more acceptable and ethical than the proposed increase which is up to 26% over 4 years depending on the distance travelled. Although it appears that train tickets are affordable to the average household, when the more wealthy commuter's annual pay is factored in, the figures do not reflect the current social or economic climate. We should be focusing on encouraging train usage. This may seem to support the increase of fares, as it does if done in standard and affordable increments, the radically high increases proposed will actually turn customers away. This will force more people to drive, increasing air and sound pollution, further clog the main roads in and out of Sydney as well as quite possibly stagnating the revenue gained by CityRail.

The cost of Off peak tickets have been reduced to appear to 'compensate' for the increased cost of Peak tickets. This pricing structure is supposed to encourage peak time travelers to travel in off peak hours. This is by and large impossible for most travelers. Business hours worked are largely inflexible for Sydney workers. The times commuters travel are highly regular and the times tickets are bought reflect this. Holidays may stagger the days weekly tickets are bought but they will continue to follow the same Peak/Off Peak split. This means that those workers who find it necessary to travel by train in Peak hours are being unduly overcharged for the same trip simply because they have to get to work. One of my main issues with the pricing structure of tickets is that the service is charged at different rates according to the time of day. Different rates for postage is according to distance and weight. Why is the same distance for a train trip charged differently according to the time of day? If revenue needs to be gained, simply charge the same rate across the board according to the distanced travelled. This will surely increase the revenue gained by CityRail, allowing further rail works and restructuring to go ahead while turning away less commuters or making fewer commuters unsatisfied with the cost vs performance of CityRail. The majority of passengers on CityRail trains already pay an appropriate amount of money for the services provided. Increasing the cost of tickets does not impact upon those taxpayers who do not commute. Taxpayer funds are simply gained once the standard taxes are paid by everyone. Taxes have not been increased to fund CityRail alone or at least this has not been advised to the community.

Please look into alternate methods of gaining the revenue required than the proposed rate hikes. These rate rises will make many people even more cash strapped in these tumultuous times than they already are. The ability for someone on the minimum wage to afford a train ticket should be the benchmark, not the average income of commuters.

Some may well have driven their brand new four wheel drive to the station parking lot but others will have walked a kilometer or more to get there. I am a walker and find the increase to pose a threat to any spare cash I may have in the weekly budget and my spare cash is not spent wildly on clothes and parties but rather on food, bills and other necessities.

Kind Regards,

Rosalie Fitzpatrick