



western sydney
community forum

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Western Sydney Community Forum Submission

3rd October 2008

Re: IPART Bus Fare Review 2008-09

Western Sydney Community Forum welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Ministry of Transport Fare bus fare proposals for 2008-09. Western Sydney Community Forum is the Western Sydney regional peak organisation providing regional leadership, facilitates collaborative action and develops resources to enable community organisations to effectively address issues relating to social justice and social inclusion.

Executive Summary

We submit that any action undertaken, through pricing and service policies should encourage more people to use bus services and also encourage service providers to increase service patronage. We believe that there are several key issues in regards to buses in Western Sydney and seek to submit to the tribunal on the following terms of reference:

Recommendations

- 1. Recommend that integrated ticketing is resurrected and fast tracked into operation.*
- 2. That train and bus services tax payer subsidies are aligned. That incentivised funding is available to bus operators to innovate and improve bus services in Western Sydney.*
- 3. There needs to be equity in ticketing products and service levels between public transport passengers e.g. bus passengers have the inability to purchase return fares and there is a distinct lack of toilet facilities for bus users (e.g. Liverpool and Parramatta Transport Interchanges - Passengers must possess a ticket to enter CityRail toilets).*
- 4. Having seen the patronage increasing patronage levels on the Liverpool-Parramatta T-Way, we are happy that the ministry seeks to lower the price of the 10 trip ticket by 20%. The 3-5 trip fare should remain the same price.*



5. *Western Sydney residents should be able to purchase and board buses seamlessly as can currently be done with the Travelpass product in other parts of Sydney.*
6. *Recommend that Travel Passes to increase to CPI cost only.*
7. *Recommend that the increase in the single ticket fare 3-5 sections be increase by 10c, not 20c.*
8. *Recommend the introduction of simple paper based zone based ticketing system. Conductors should be trialed on the zone system, to educate the travelling passengers about the new system.*
9. *That NSW Government market positive environmental messages on buses in Western Sydney as they do on other buses in Sydney.*
10. *That Ministry of Transport in cooperation with NSW Department of Environment and Climate change develop a peak oil plan to determine future initiatives around the transition to a renewable energy powered bus system.*
11. *That the NSW Government invest in new bus stop funding programs for bus shelters in Western Sydney.*
12. *For NSW Government to develop and pilot initiatives to support community involvement in protecting and watching bus stops such as the "adopt a bus stop program".*

ii) **Relativities with the Government owned bus services, including in Terms of service, efficiency, cost and ticketing products;**

In the most recent IPART Rail Enquiry, it was submitted that CityRail is 70% subsidized by the tax payer and fare box recovery is around 30% (CityRail Enquiry into Train Services discussion paper). A 60% subsidy is paid for by NSW tax payers as stated by the Ministry of Transport.

Recommendation: That train and bus services tax payer subsidies are aligned. That and incentivised funding is available to bus operators to innovate and improve bus services in Western Sydney.

Only 1% of people in Western Sydney caught the bus to work¹. This data suggests that there are clear reasons people in Western Sydney are not using bus services, to get to work. Some of these services are infrequent, inflexible (as many parents drop their children to school or daycare) or do not go to where people want to get to work (either service frequency or service is not available as in shift work which a high proportion of workers work in the manufacturing sector), or are seen as expensive. So for those that are able to substitute using buses, they will use the car.

¹ 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics



Transport operators must understand that the price of and quality of the service should be equivalent across all transport modes. This is currently not the case with rail and bus services.

Recommendation: There needs to be equity in ticketing products and service levels between public transport passengers e.g. bus passengers have the inability to purchase return fares, there is a distinct lack of toilet facilities for bus users e.g. Liverpool and Parramatta Transport Interchanges (Passengers must possess a ticket to enter CityRail toilets).

Although Merrylands Train Bus/Station has self cleaning toilets which are accessible to all transport mode users - train, bus and people who cycle.

It is worthwhile to also compare the amount of tax-payer subsidy provided to roads and cars and also the externalities experienced such as the ever increasing level of congestion, road accidents, stress and anguish experienced by motorists on arterial roads in Western Sydney such as Parramatta Road, Great Western Highway, Victoria Rd, M5, M4, etc on a daily basis.

Recommendation: Having seen the increasing patronage levels on the Liverpool-Parramatta T-Way, we are happy that the ministry seeks to lower the price of the 10 trip ticket by 20%. But submit that the price of the 3-5 single ticket remains the same price.

iii) The protection of consumers from abuses of monopoly power in terms of prices, pricing policies and standards of services

For the large part of Western Sydney, ending largely around the Central West, private buses dominate the carriage of bus passengers. Western Sydney's geography, being larger than the area serviced by Sydney Buses, needs more buses more frequently to get people from point a to b, if we are to make a significant contribution to personal mobility and also counter the effect of transport generated carbon pollution.

In other parts of the world, notably Turkey and the European Union, mini buses can pick up from bus stops and are able to take groups of passengers down a route. This is not the case in NSW, due to limitations with the NSW *Passenger Transport Act 1990*. If this legislation was changed there may be more scope for competitors to provide more innovative and flexible transport solutions to service areas on the urban fringes (which people living there are currently transport disadvantaged and private enterprise is prohibited from running such services).

Standards of Service

Many people whom live in Western Sydney also work in Western Sydney. E.g. 30% of people who live in Liverpool and Fairfield work in their surrounding areas. From a sustainability point of view this is very encouraging, but from a bus usage point of view, the 2006 ABS data suggests that more people walked to work than caught a bus².

² 2006 Household Travel to Work Survey



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The most recent bus reform / network review processes were constricted with a lack of resources, confusion and unrealistic time frames. We believe it may be better to propose a no-disadvantage test, so that residents who have to walk further to catch a bus are not disadvantaged. We understand that for bus viability, there is a need to provide higher frequency bus services, but alternatives need to be put into place. This has happened in the planning in Region 13 where some residents were extremely agitated³.

We believe that it may be more productive to engage with the large number of community members at Westfields and other shopping centres, to gain more meaningful and frequent responses, rather than sending out network consultation reviews with direct marketing companies. We understand that there is a cost involved, but submit that more people will be able to comment upon the bus routes and services this way.

Case study - Transport in Villawood: Transport disadvantaged areas such as Villawood in South-Western Sydney suffer from infrequent bus services which provide people with limited access to local shopping centres which provide full services. E.g. residents need to catch buses to Chester Hill to be able to use banking services and medical centres. The train station is not accessible (i.e. has no lift or ramps) and the train services are infrequent. A high proportion of residents living in Villawood are transport disadvantaged as well as having a high proportion of public housing and low SEIFA index⁴ of 676. Low scores on the index occur when the area has many low income families and people with little training and in unskilled occupations. Nearly 50% of people living in Villawood are living on a combined household income of less than \$500 per week before tax, which makes this community particularly vulnerable to price in essential items, such as transport.

Pricing policies

Ticketing products across western Sydney range from the T-Way, which is a superb product, frequent, well maintained infrastructure and very reliable to the adjunct services provided by government subsidized private bus services, which are substandard. The buses are old, smelly and not air conditioned. The bus infrastructure is old and usually the picnic type style structure, which provides no protection from the elements.

The Travel passes are not able to be used in Western Sydney as the ministry has not extended the product to be used in Western Sydney. Stating that around 30% of people who live in Western Sydney, work in Western Sydney, but only 2% catch a bus to work, may indicate that buses are not meeting their needs.

³ <http://fairfield-advance.whereilive.com.au/news/story/still-waiting-for-bus-services/> and also in Campbelltown
<http://campbelltown.yourguide.com.au/news/local/news/general/buses-chaos-continues/1261518.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.id.com.au/Atlas/DefaultMap.aspx?id=101&pg=2010&c=3040&t=10039>



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Recommendation: We recommend the introduction of simple paper based zone based ticketing system. Conductors should be trialled on the system, and will educate the travelling passengers about the new system.

vi) The need to maintain ecologically sustainable development;

By more people catching buses and using public transport, is a way of reducing our carbon footprint. In particular, the Final Garnaut Report (2008) points to the need for significant cuts to carbon pollution, which public transport and in particular frequent bus services.

Western Sydney is most likely to be hardest hit by the impact of rising oil prices as well as climate change. This is particularly important as often there is little choice in transport mode, rendering people transport disadvantaged.

“Those who lived near Prospect Reservoir in the 1960’s would have noticed little difference in January temperatures compared with coastal Sydney, a mere 0.7 degree difference. Through the 1990’s and 2000’s this difference has more than tripled and is now 2.4 degrees. January temperatures in Western Sydney are beginning to resemble those of Kempsey, some 270 kilometres to the north⁵.”

At the 2008 Bus Association Victoria Sustainability Workshop, examples of international transport providers showcased environmental marketing initiatives to increase patronage by informing passengers of the consequences of their choice in using public transport⁶. This has been happening to some extent with Sydney buses, but has been non-existent in buses that frequent Western Sydney. More people may catch the bus if they believe it is saving the polar bears from extinction.

Recommendation: that Ministry of Transport market positive environmental message on buses in Western Sydney as they do on other buses in Sydney.

Current world leaders in these technologies include Sweden, running trolley bus systems, electricity generated, is powered by locally produced methane. This could assist with ecologically sustainable development, and provide a renewable resource.

Recommendation: that Ministry of Transport in cooperation with NSW Department of Environment and Climate change develop a peak oil plan to determine future initiatives around a transition to a renewable energy powered bus and public transport system.

vii) The social impact of the recommendations;

⁵ Greening Australia Report on Climate Change in Western Sydney 2007, <http://live.greeningaustralia.org.au/GA/NAT/WhatsNew/ccreportnsw.htm>

⁶ <http://www.busvic.asn.au/database/files/HAllen-TheBigPicture.pdf>

As stated by the ministry of transport, the Pensioner excursion tickets will not be affected by the price increases, but other people who are not eligible for the pensioner excursion ticket may be affected, albeit to a small degree.

For the benefit of the public record, people who live in the south-west of Sydney are most affected by mortgage stress. Areas around Bankstown, Liverpool and Fairfield are the most affected in Australia with the inability to repay their mortgages payments.

Compared to rail the cost is already quite high In regard to other ticketing products. Recently, the weekly commuter bus ticket was introduced at the beginning of October 2008. We believe this is a step in the right direction.

People living on the urban fringes of Western Sydney, mostly do not have access to rail. Obviously, some people have made this decision to live in these transport disadvantaged areas, but more importantly some have not (such as public/community housing tenants).

As there is no comparable product such as the CityRail returns ticket on the bus network, there is little equity between rail and bus modes.

Recommendation: We believe that there should be increased equity, by providing the same level of discount between the return trip ticket on CityRail services and also on bus services in Sydney.

viii) Standards of quality, reliability and safety of the services concerned (*whether those standards are specified by legislation, agreement or otherwise and any suggested or actual changes to those standards*);

Many bus stops in Western Sydney are substandard and ageing signage is needed to be replaced. The Ministry of transport and bus service providers has been performing well on providing new bus stop infrastructure on some strategic bus routes, and this is heartily welcomed.

The travelling public need new bus stops which provide protection from the wind and rain, and the elements. This is a basic requirement of personal comfort and an integral part of increasing the standards of quality.

Recommendation: That the NSW Government invest in new bus stop funding programs for bus shelters in Western Sydney.

Substandard bus stops (sometimes as simple as a weathered yellow sign on a power pole, mean two things to the travelling public. Firstly, they have difficulty in finding the bus stop. Secondly, the driver may miss the bus stop, causing the passenger to walk unnecessarily large distances through areas that are not paved, become frustrated, and decide that using the bus is just too hard and unreliable.

There is a general perception of bus services and public transport being unsafe particularly after hours. It is important that where these situations are more prevalent, that programs and associated infrastructure are developed

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with police and community groups to support the travelling public, particularly young people, who are most likely the recipients of crime.

Recommendation: For NSW Government to develop and pilot initiatives to support community involvement in protecting and watching bus stops such as the "adopt a bus stop program".

We hope that these submissions may inform you of our needs in regards to buses in Western Sydney,

Sincerely,

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