

Dear Sir / Madam

My wife and my self are both regular travellers on buses in Sydney and would like to comment on the proposed increases in bus fares. I have numerous suggestions as to how to improve the public bus system, but I will limit my comments here to how the proposed fare increases could improve the service.

Fiscal reality says that bus fares will rise, especially given the dramatic increases in oil prices, and I don't have a problem with that.

My main concern, however, is that the increases are across the board rather than attempting to improve the efficiencies of the bus services. By this, I mean that both single fares and Travel Ten prices are being increased at about the same rate.

I've only been catching buses on a regular basis since December 2005. I am continually astounded by the delays incurred by cash paying passengers versus those who utilise pre-paid Travel Ten passes. The frustrating thing is that you start identifying the same people at the same stops purchasing one off tickets on a regular basis. Recently at one stop all passengers (five or six) purchased via cash - none via prepaid - during peak hour. The time to process these passengers is significant, given that most fumble around through their pockets or purses trying to find the appropriate fare.

Whilst an extra 10 - 15 seconds per passenger may not seem much, in peak hour this is dramatic. The congestion along George Street between Circular Quay and Town Hall where buses effectively have to run line astern (just like trains running on tracks) in peak hours prevents all the buses from moving until the various slow loading cash based passengers are processed.

Whilst TravelTens already have a modest discount factor built in, obviously there is not a high enough incentive for some regular commuters to use them and these cash paying commuters cost all commuters time.

I would prefer to see the price rises skewed in order that cash fares are increased at a more dramatic rate than those for prepaid tickets, whilst retaining the same total overall revenue increase. Without knowing the mix of cash vs prepaid customers, I cannot provide definitive suggestions as to the of how this would be achieved. But as an example for travel for 5 sections, if we assumed an 80/20 split between prepaid and cash, then the existing fare might be \$2.80 for cash and the existing fare for a Travel Ten is \$22.40 (\$2.24 per trip). In this case it might be more appropriate for the base trip to be \$3 (rather than the proposed \$2.90) with the Travel Tens at \$23.10 (\$2.31 trip) (rather than the proposed \$23.30). These increases would keep approx the same total revenue increase assuming an 80/20 split.

This subtle change would see a cash fare become less attractive compared to prepaid fares and would hopefully encourage greater take up of prepaid options - in the above example the cash fare goes from 25% more expensive than prepaid to just under 30% more expensive. Hopefully this would encourage more recalcitrant cash paying commuters to prepaid, and if not, then at least they are paying for the time they are wasting by partially subsidising the prepaid customers.

Hopefully IPART will take this into consideration in trying to improve the overall public transport service.

Regards

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