

Blue Mountains Commuter & Transport Users Assoc.Inc
Ref Senate Inquiry into Passenger Services Date 25th Feb.09

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

I thank the Committee for this opportunity to submit the following submission for consideration on behalf of the Association that I represent as Hon Secretary and Treasurer. The Association is a lobby group seeking improvements in public transport including rail, bus, ferry and taxi services both within and without the Blue Mountains. We seek to promote public transport for the benefit of the Community. Our comments are as follows.

A. An audit of the state of public passenger transport in Australia.

Rolling Stock

Rolling stock used on the Mountains is over 20 years old and at present RailCorp has not decided what action will be taken to either Replace, Fully Refurbish, or minor refurbishment approach. This is a major concern as the Community wants assurance the present standard of rolling stock is retained i.e. seating, riding comfort etc will be continued, also there is a demand for more luggage and bicycle space as has developed as tourists and the community are travelling with more luggage for destinations in Australia and Overseas. These trains are known as Intercity Cars or colloquially as V sets. The Association therefore seeks a review/audit of the Outer suburban network of CityRail to establish the criteria for the replacement of the existing rolling stock in use on the longer distance journeys i.e. Kiama, Newcastle, Lithgow locations.

Capacity of the Network

The Association has been aware the Rail Network in the CBD has reached capacity; this was recognised by RailCorp with the changes to rail timetable in 2003 whereby Intercity Service stopping patterns were altered to supply accommodation to commuters. Namely Penrith, Emu Plains, and at present West Ryde, Epping are being considered on the Northern Line and Hurstville on the Illawarra Line. This approach stems from the lack of capacity of the system rolling stock and track paths in the Inner City Area.

The Association has been aware of RailCorp's Standard of service for the operation of the system i.e. **Three Minute Separation** between Services that equates to **20 services per hour**. Coupled with this standard there has been an increase in dwell times and recovery times encased within the timetable parameter. Also we witness at Town Hall & Wynyard Stations a situation where the number of passengers seeking to use these stations is more than what the stations are capable of.

This is a concern as the opening of the Epping Chatswood Line indicates more than an increase in patronage entering the Sydney CBD by Rail.

The request of the Inquiry to address this important issue by conducting an audit of the Rail Services that are provided by City Rail detailed information that is required is:

The number of services that are provided in the Sydney CBD District from Central- North Sydney in both directions on a twenty-four hour basis. **Over 2**

(2)

Capacity of the Network contd

The number of services that are provided on the Central – Circular Quay-Central in both directions on a twenty-four hour basis

The Association also request for an audit of services that are using the six tracks between Strathfield – Central area to establish what extra services can be introduced on this corridor to meet the rising demand for rail services. (Railcorp figures approx 6%)

Intercity Services are now providing the fast services to Strathfield- Parramatta – Blacktown – Penrith an in the new 2009 timetable Strathfield – West Ryde –Epping – Hornsby Line We cannot see any immediate relief with this situation

An audit of the Sydenham – Redfern,Wolli Creek- Central Airport Link that has pressure from South West, Campbelltown East Hills growth areas.

The Association seeks support from the Inquiry a direction to RailCorp to table a full report on the capacity of the system both Track Paths and Rolling Stock Requirements.

We are seeking improvement in duration time of journey between Melbourne – Sydney– Brisbane as the tracks are improved for freight services under ARTC Programmes

Country Link provides as the name implies a Link between Suburban and Country there is confusion to a certain extent whereby City Rail includes Scone – Dungog – Bathurst –Nowra in the City Rail Network in parallel with Country Link the approach by RailCorp should be a unified approach in providing rail services within NSW. One aspect is custom of delaying Country Link services at outer areas by scheduling slower suburban services in front of Country Link Services.

Audit of the Infrastructure of the Rail Network

One of the most criticised aspect is the Upgrading Programme that has been part of the RailCorp's for some years cancelling services for a whole weekend or throughout the January or Easter Holiday Periods on the premise that a reduction in services is justified for lower demands There should be an inquiry into the track renewal programme that seeks improved engineering practices and procedures

The concentration on the A.M and P.M peak became to be the main reason for providing rail services in the Sydney area forgetting the community has the need for a twenty four hour seven day week service

Yes, we are aware that maintenance is an important perhaps it is the methodology is in question. Engineering excellence, quality of work reducing the need for rework etc

We request an independent audit of the following.

1. The remaining sections of the rail infrastructure that requires renewal of Signalling Stanchions, Overhead Wiring, Signalling Sleeper renewal Rail and point renewal?
2. What proportion of the System has been renewed.
- 3 Has the renewal reduced the down time on the rail services for maintenance?

and what steps will be taken to reduce down time with improved engineering practices?

Over 3

I

(3)

It is quite evident that when Close Downs occur the numbers of travellers using the system in greatly reduced.

The Association members are interested in Auditing programmes on all aspects of the Rail System to ensure system meets Quality Standards that meet the Australian Design Standards 2009 series and the system is independently audited accordingly. This should apply to both engineering and operational areas. CityRail was obliged to submit to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) on their operational activities and responsibilities but the provision of the Infrastructure being basis of the operation does not have to report to IPART.

Current and historical levels of investment. (Rail Component)

This aspect can be illustrated by the following comparison

In the 1930s the rail system consisted of the following.

- Two tracks Central – North Sydney – Hornsby .
- Two tracks Central- Wynyard and two tracks Central St James now connected.
- Six tracks Redfern-Strathfield
- Two tracks Strathfield- Hornsby
- Four Tracks Strathfield – Lidcombe
- The Western Area was virtually two tracks past Granville to the West and Liverpool Lines.
- In 60s and 70s, we saw four tracks between Granville to St Marys but there has been no change between Granville and Central.
- The electrification of the Western Line and Richmond Line over the last 50 years was a substantial investment.

At present the Association is seeking the expansion of the two tracks to four tracks Penrith to St Marys to reduce the delays caused by conflicting movements between freight services, slow passenger and fast passenger services Keeping a 45 wagon freight train on hold for a considerable period is not good economics because of lack of capacity in this area

Penrith is a Regional Centre; there will be a need to increase both bus and rail services to meet the demands that will stem from the increase in population and the services that will be provided as a Regional Centre e.g. Medical, Educational. Retail and Commercial Entertainment etc.

The Association has been fully aware the inability of RailCorp to increase the number of services to the Sydney CBD it would prudent to consider providing Interregional Rail Services e.g Penrith-Granville-Olympic Park services that would supplement Sydney CBD services, This can be done in the very short term as other infrastructure considerations such as Underground services are at least 8 – 10 years if at all.

The Road Investment since the 1960s

- Parramatta Road was four lanes in 1930's

- Great Western Highway two lanes from Parramatta – Katoomba
- Great Western Highway expanded to four lanes.60 and 70 s

Over 4

(4)

- M4 constructed Strathfield – Penrith expanded to six lanes Parramatta - Penrith
- Great Western Highway expansion to four lanes Lower Mountains in 80s with connection to M4
- The Great Western Highway expansion to four lanes is still progressing across the Mountains.

The preference for car rather than rail is illustrated by the percentage of population using public transport is quoted as 20%.

An assessment of the benefits of public passenger transport, including integration with bicycle and pedestrian initiatives

The Association submission to the Inquiry held by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal pointed out the difficulties in quantifying the external benefits of CityRail services, pointing out the difficulties of in placing the a value of a family outing, visiting a friend in hospital and use of the system for health, education and entertainment. We also argued the economic benefit of the rail service to the community illustrating the income received from the Commuters who live in the area (IPART. Discussion paper June 2008 page 56

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Inquiry into RailCorp during 2008 was very thorough in it review, reporting and findings. On page 58 Discussion Paper determining revenue requirement and how it should be funded the inquiry established the external benefits of City Rail as 1002.3 Million dollars e.g.

Road congestion	740.5 million
Air pollution	71 “
Greenhouse gas emission	52.1 “
Noise pollution	20.4 “
Road Accidents	114.6 “
Road Damage	3.7 “
Total; 1002.3 Million	

A major development that has increased the benefits of public transport has been the Easy Access programme for many wheel chair bound citizens with lifts and ramps etc what was not fully considered at the time was the benefit to the families with babies who are now able to take their babies and young infants in their prams allowing them to be transported with safety and comfort

I have witnessed six mothers with prams having a day out together with babies and not confined to the house This is a social benefit that cannot be costed but a joy to see.

Other benefits that are seen as part of the journey Reading, Sleeping, Lap top Usage Mobile Phone Communication that is work related , social contact and other usages music etc etc not all are able to be carried out driving the car. A commuter can arrive at home in most cases relaxed and ready for other facets of life Prams and wheel chair occupants have great difficulty in peak hour periods finding space in overcrowded (This applies to luggage & bicycles)

Companionships take place, relationships develop that last for many years even the younger generation joining the trains to work are continuing the practice that has been the custom for many years. Yes there are those who remain in their own cell but there are those who are joiners.

Over 5

(5)

Bicycles and luggage

The days of service by Rail Management to provide separate luggage service long gone this places the luggage on seats, corridors etc

Bicycle accommodation on Blue Mountains Services is in the vestibule within four hooks this should be increased to 8 per 4-car train, 16 on eight.

In the Blue Mountains, we have a singular example of the use of bicycles. Bicycle Tourists join the train at Glenbrook alight at Woodford, traverse the Woodford – Glenbrook Fire Trail, and rejoin their cars at Glenbrook.

The Blue Mountains City Council release a Bike Plan a review in twelve months should indicate how many will be enticed to use the bicycle for journey to work and other use will be worthy of investigation.

Bicycle cabinets are installed at railway stations but at extra cost that is a consideration when you consider Commuter Car parking is provided free there is a reluctance to use the bicycle t

The Blue Mountains Bus company does supply services to outer suburbs on the Blue Mountains Line from Blaxland, Springwood, and Katoomba. Member for family did not support Leura, Blackheath but cease after virtually after 6.00 P.M the service would not be viable even attempts to have connecting services in two areas because of extra fare and time preference for the pick up

Measures by which the Commonwealth Government could facilitate improvement in public transport services and infrastructure.

- **Financial support to complete the Upgrading programme of the Intercity Rail Network with due urgency in order to ensure the increase in power requirements form the new PPP Suburban Railway Trains.**
- **Financial Support to complete Easy Access Programmes.**
- **There is an urgent need to create a Bus Terminals in the Sydney CBD as the increase in Bus lengths with Bendibuses both Transit Authority and Private Bus companies requires longer bus stops. This is *“Demonstrated by alighting at Bridge street for Circular Quay”*.**
- **The ferries are in need of overhaul of fleet and fleet replacement that will allow expansion of services on the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers.**
- **The Intercity Cars are in urgent need of either Refurbishment or replacement This should be addressed now**
- **The Tangara Trains are due for refurbishment especially the windows that as the Audit Office indicated in 1996 on page 38 On the Tangara Contract**

Finalisation the windows will have permanent fogging and may make them opaque This is an issue of consequence that needs addressing.

T

The NSW State Government has to produce a Transport Plan that is progressed in an orderly fashion that is not altered at the wishes or aspirations of individual Ministers and Premiers We have seen many plans e.g North West Sector, Parramatta – Chatswood nothing of consequence on the Northern Suburbs and nothing between Granville and Sydney Air port link issues have not bode well for improvement in rail transport.

Over 6

(6).

The role of Commonwealth Government legislation, taxation, subsidies, policies and other mechanisms that either discourage or encourage public passenger transport.

Policy

The Association supports the work that the ARTC is doing to improve rail freight transport in Australia and we are hopeful various States will use these improvements to increase passenger rail services throughout Australia We seek a policy from the Federal Government that supports a programme that ensures further development of passenger transport this to ensure transport between and within the States of Australia. .

Taxation Benefits

The Association has a firm belief there is a distinct advantage in using the car for transport rather than using public transport for business. The Ernst and Young August publication 2006 indicates on page 7

The bias exists within the tax system specifically within the FBT regime, which favours private over public transport

Taxation Benefits

This "FBT" bias may encourage commuters to drive rather than use public transport

Rather than quote the whole document I will demonstrate by the following encouragement to use the car.

The taxable value of the car benefit is based on the cost of the car in question multiplied by a "statutory fraction" These fractions reduces on the kms travelled Less than 15,000 kms 0.28 reducing to more than 40,000 KMs to 0.07

The rail traveller does not receive a similar reduction in fares on the number of kms travelled in the twelve month period.

Paper presented an illustration the take home pay for a Salary Package car versus private.

Private Car	Salary packaged car	
Total Package	\$50.000	\$50.000
Less pre tax costs	\$0	\$5.570
Taxable Income	\$50.000	\$44.430
Less tax Medicare	\$11..000	\$9.345
Less after tax costs	\$12, 528	\$6.488
Take home cash	\$26, 372	\$28, 569

As the FBT figures illustrate the person, using the car is better off than the commuter. The paper further states that the direct result of the FBT bias encourages the person to drive more in order to reduce that taxable value of the car.

Rather than quote all of the document i.e. NSW Ministry of Transport Tax Incentivizes for Public Transport Ernst & Young August 2006 I urge the Senate to Review Tax Incentivizes and introduce an FBT equivalent for transport connected with their employment and business. The Government will be nervous in that their income may be reduced but the Government should take the following considerations **Over 7**

(7)

- Reduction of road congestion.
- Reduction in pollution etc.
- The carbon foot print using public transport is less than a car used as a single conveyance to work
- A means of implementing a carbon credit scheme

I note the Federal Government must introduce a carbon credit and foot print debits if we are serious about climate change

Subsidies

The Association has had a subsidy under the Small Business Equipment the Association suggest a similar system should be established where by Non Government Organisations, Community Transport, and other groups are able to submit to the Government assistance for projects connected with public transport Some may be successful other may not come up to expectations but they may trigger other ideas or projects that will be able to be expanded. There is no opportunity at present to trial innovations or explore ideas etc The Major Parties with due respect do not appear to have innovation on their lists

Best practice international examples of public passenger transport services and infrastructure.

- High Speed Rail between Melbourne – Sydney – Brisbane. The Channel Rail services that service many Countries is an example of forward thinking
- A national ticketing systems that is used in all states just as we have a mobile system that is used throughout Australia (there is a development overseas in the use of the mobile phone system to pay for travel.
- Thinking outside the square should be paramount to Government thinking.
- The European experience is seeing the introduction of rail services through many Countries and States The Federal Government is well placed to ensure National Standards are developed to ensure the free flow of both passenger and rail freights have to the same standards to provide the necessary services Civil Aviation has virtual the same standards to ensure safety in air travel.

Finally, I suggest the Federal Government establish the State and Interstate Travel patterns of the Australian Community in order to establish what transport system is most appropriate to suit these need whether they be Bus Rail Aircraft or Ferry. Ticketing systems and Interconnection with the different methods of transport to be part of the investigation. Not all systems are appropriate for Australian conditions.