

Railway Technical Society of Australasia
Engineers Australia
11 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600

10 June 2004

Dr Anna Dacre,
Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600 Environment.Reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Dr Dacre

RE INQUIRY INTO SUSTAINABLE CITIES

Thank you for the arrangements to appear before the Committee on 8 June in Sydney, Please accept this letter as a further supplementary submission to the Committee from the Railway Technical Society of Australasia (RTSA).

1. Summary of our submissions

Cities can only be deemed sustainable when their transport is environmentally sustainable. This is not currently the case in Australia's major cities. For example, between 1991 and 2002 Sydney's population grew about ten per cent, the numbers of households increased by about 15 per cent, car numbers about 20 per cent, whilst road use in terms of vehicle kilometers travelled rose by about 25 per cent. A further such increase in vehicle use would cause major problems. Instead, people need to be encouraged to walk, cycle or use public transport to a much greater extent than they currently do.

Although Sydney's passenger train use increased during the 1990s, its share of passenger kilometers stands at only 5%. As well, in 2002, the Sydney City Rail System was given a C- rating. The Sydney Greater Metropolitan Region as a whole needs billions of rail "catch up" works over the next decade.

Better rail infrastructure and improved road pricing are two measures that would encourage more use of public transport in our major cities. The congestion costs of road usage

in Australian capital cities now exceeds \$12 billion per year. As well, the cost of adverse health impacts due to air pollution from motor vehicle use in Australian capital cities now could be \$3.3 billion a year (BTRE "The economic consequences of the health effects of transport emissions in Australian capital cities" ATRF, 2003).

Although the Federal Government's AusLink initiative is a positive development, it fails to adequately address funding for urban public transport. Government also needs to address congestion pricing for cars in our major cities and mass distance pricing for heavy trucks. Discussion on addressing excessive "automobile dependence" in the Sydney Greater Metropolitan Region which is now home to about 25% of Australia's population was also limited in the White Paper. Recent Federal Budgets could have done much more to encourage sustainable transport, but instead the New Tax System led to cheaper cars, cheaper petrol, cheaper diesel and more expensive public transport. Mainline track straightening, upgrading for faster and heavier freight trains, and the issue of fast passenger trains warrant the attention of Government at all levels.

A supplementary submission from the RTSA addresses the rising international price of oil. The Federal Government is yet to give full attention to warnings of permanent world decline in cheap oil production within the next decade. Signing the Kyoto agreements would help reduce oil dependence, as would reviewing the measures in 2000-01 that lowered the cost of cars, petrol and diesel fuel. Here, if carbon dioxide was charged at \$40 per tonne, Australia's use of now over 17 billion litres of petrol and 7 billion litres of diesel would cost an extra \$2.6 billion per year.

Our supplementary submission includes a ten point plan on road pricing. The missing ninth point is the provision of more and better data to help lift the level of debate as follows.

9. Improved land transport data, with consideration of a National Bureau of Transportation Statistics to publish accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date information on all modes of transport, with details of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

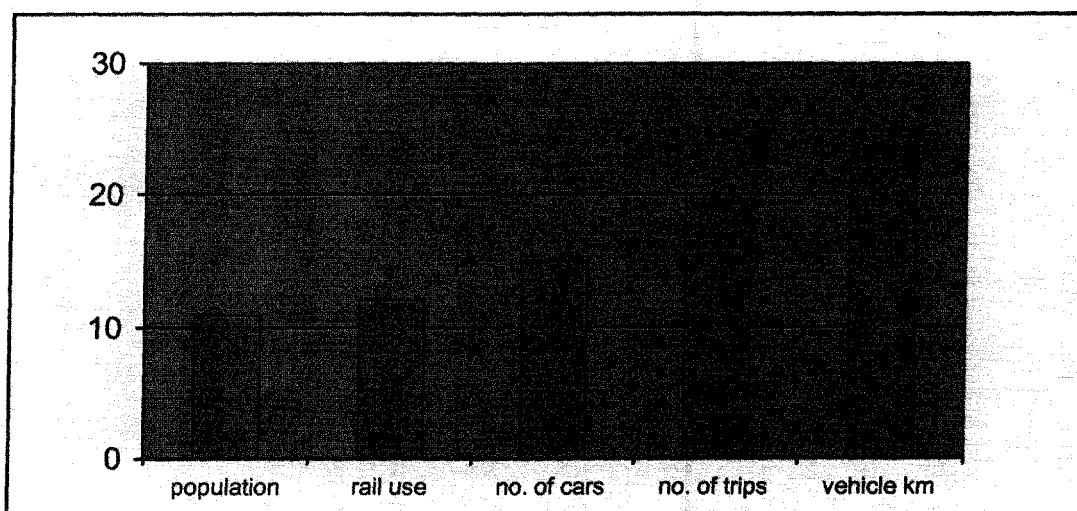
The other points include congestion charges, fuel excise indexation, heavy vehicle road user charges and increased annual registration fees for heavier passenger vehicles, along with

increased rail fares. Increased attention to road pricing and rail fares are needed to generate more funding for service quality improvements and long-overdue infrastructure upgrades..

As recognised by the Industry Commission in their 1994 report on Urban Transport - some ten years ago - there are no quick fixes. The Government needs to start now with a staged approach to stave off future crisis.

2. Sydney's growth

The graph below shows Sydney's 1991-2001 Population Growth and Car Ownership, with data mainly from the NSW Transport Data Centre.



3. A state comparator

At the hearing of the Committee on 8 June in Sydney, questions were raised on comparative performance of urban rail systems. Re rail safety, rail has always been recognised as a safe mode of transport. Sir Harold Clapp was able to claim (in a 1937 address to the Chartered Institute of Transport in Sydney) that for the Victorian Railways "in the last ten years we have carried 1450 million passengers without one instance of loss of life." More recently, in 2003 Queensland Rail CEO Bob Scheuber has noted with Queensland Rail "There has not been a passenger death, as a result of train operations, for a decade". As well,

Adelaide urban rail operations have not had a passenger death as a result of rail operations since 1949.

In formulating a rail track infrastructure report card, the RTSA (Rail in the next decade: where to and how, 2002) used the ratings in the 2001 Infrastructure Report prepared by GHD for the Institution of Engineers, Australia (IE Aust) and its Alliance Partners as follows:

A	Very Good	Fit for its current and anticipated purpose
B	Good	Minor changes required
C	Adequate	Major changes required
D	Poor	Critical changes required
F	Inadequate	Inadequate for current and future needs

This 2001 report gave rail an overall rating of D-. In determining this rating, it was noted that the rail sector varies from world best practice with the Pilbara iron ore trains (A+) down to Melbourne - Sydney - Brisbane mainline track with poor track co-ordination, steam age alignments and inadequate signalling and communication systems (F).

Major Urban Rail Systems

- * Perth – A- (past and committed expansion will deliver a world class system).
- * Sydney: C- (although it performed well during the 2000 Olympics, track upgrades have not kept pace with rail passenger growth whilst signal upgrades (now under way) are needed).
- * Adelaide – D (without electrification, this system risks obsolescence).

Note that a NSW 2003 Infrastructure Report prepared by GHD for Engineers Australia gave NSW rail an overall rating of D.

4. Sydney's airport line

At the hearing of the Committee on 8 June in Sydney, questions were raised by Mr Stewart Macarthur MP re the airport line. Some comment, including that from a RTSA submission to IPART (NSW) follows.

Problems

1. Poor connections at Wolli Creek to Illawarra Line Services.

- It is the junction for both the Airport and East Hills / Macarthur Lines but many Illawarra (Suburban Line) trains do not stop.- South Coast trains also do not stop, ie. from Wollongong

to the Airport stations requires a change of trains twice with delays of up to ten minutes or more each time.

2. Green Square should be a major source of traffic.

- The planning process for this major redevelopment has been extraordinarily slow with final plans for the town centre only recently approved.

- Most of the residential redevelopment that has occurred has been away (often around one kilometer) from the station.

3. Poorly thought out fare structure.

- There were no introductory fares to encourage patronage to build up.

- Many potential passengers do not know that the surcharge for Mascot and Green Square stations is much less than that for the airport stations.

Positives

1. Redevelopment of Green Square will happen.

2. Traffic congestion on Southern Cross Drive and other rides between the city and the airport is increasing rapidly, partly because of the local redevelopment, partly because of the M5 East freeway. This obviously improves the competitiveness of railway.

3. The airport line is a rail bypass voiding the Illawarra line between Sydenham and Redfern.

More comment

Appreciably higher Sydney urban fares are now under trial with rail travel involving the use of any of the two airport stations and two nearby stations (Mascot and Green Square). The higher fares, coupled with other factors, have resulted in patronage being well below expectations. Having an associated private company in receivership and under what appears to be the 'dead hand' of receivers and managers, does not help the situation.

RTSA suggests that factors worth examination to improve the situation include:

a) Provide purpose built 'user friendly' rolling stock to operate between the two airport and nearby stations, and, central and city loop stations.

By user friendly rolling stock is meant single decker carriages with luggage platforms near doors.

The use of such trains, together with the option of using regular East Hills/Macarthur trains (albeit packed with people at peak hours) would assist in building patronage. The cost of two or three such four car sets would be small compared with the costs of the new stations.

b) Provide better signage at both airports. This could be changed to indicate more clearly that there is a train option, how good it is, and where it is. How good it is would include guaranteed maximum waiting time (eg. trains every ten minutes or in the case of the new Brisbane line, every 15 minutes). Better still, give real time information in the airport. After all, if Queensland Rail can provide a real time indicator for their CityTrain services at a shopping mall near their Central Station, why not at the airport.

c) The limited and small signage at Central and City Loop stations; with lack of active indicator boards at each station, could be improved.

Re Wynyard station: Although all trains for the airport may leave Platform 6, not all trains leaving Platform 6 at Wynyard go on the Airport Line.

d) Re platform confusion at Central, it is suggested that Platform 23 be a dedicated "air train" platform, with special signage and murals. All other suburban platforms including Platform 22 could have signage indicating a change is needed here for the air train.

e) Re connection with Sutherland Shire and the South Coast, there is NO encouragement for people from the South Coast and Cronulla lines to use the train to the airport, because trains from these lines do not stop at Wolli Creek.

Yet, if you are a passenger going between Brisbane's airport and your home or office at the Gold Coast, for about \$25 you can go by train between the Brisbane's airport and a Gold Coast station, and then get a transfer to your home or office.

Pending introduction of measures such as above, and boosting of patronage to the new stations, it is recommended that the fares to the special stations be lowered by at least one dollar, and a publicity campaign be launched to induce:

A) people who have not tried the new service to try it; and,

B) people who have already tried the present airport line service and been "turned off" to try it again.

The RTSA again thanks the Committee for its interest in Sustainable Cities, and looks forward to the Committee's report in due course.

Yours sincerely,

P G Laird