

# HUNTER TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Department of Planning  
Received  
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Scanning Room



Dear Sir

This Association wishes to submit comments concerning the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy.

First Hunter Transport Improvement Association has, until the political decision to truncate the railway line at Wickham was made, advocated for rail retention as many millions of dollars have been spent in recent years to improve the track, stations and signalling. Rail also provides a more convenient method of transportation for commuters travelling into the city. The building of the new Law Courts and the approved City Campus of the University of Newcastle are located adjacent to Civic Station for this reason. Retention of the rail service will better suit city revitalisation as a transport mode than will a bus alternative.

However, the political decision having been made and barring unexpected events a bus service is to replace a train service. This Association recalls that the suspension of train services between Fassifern and Toronto were replaced with a dedicated "seamless" bus alternative. That service now carries less than a third of the number of passengers carried by the trains. Commuters prefer train travel to bus travel and vote with their cars. We predict a similar outcome in the Wickham to Newcastle corridor.

Public statements seem to indicate that a dedicated train replacement bus service is being considered (similar to Perth's Central Area Transit Service?) which would be "stand alone" to the bus network. This Association considers that to be a poor alternative to the opportunity available to transport planners to improve public transport services following rail truncation.

In 2007 the five Lower Hunter councils (Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Cessnock, Maitland, and Port Stephens) developed the Lower Hunter Integrated Transport Strategy in conjunction with the Hunter Business Chamber and some community transport groups. The strategy provides for an integrated public transport network, with bus services as the backbone, across the Lower Hunter metropolitan area. The five Outer Metropolitan Bus Contract Areas should be integrated as a single transport system and the network adjusted accordingly as a result of rail truncation. Such action may have the chance of retaining public transport usage by providing improved service frequencies, more direct route services, across area Metro bus routes, and

metropolitan area trip headways. Current route services are circuitous, most with hourly trip headways, both of which detract from commuter usage (as statistics of declining patronage attest).

If such action is not taken the State government has no hope of meeting its targets for public transport usage in the Lower Hunter as stated in the State Plan 2020.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Graham Boyd".

Graham Boyd  
President