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Subject: On Exhibition

I write to comment on the proposed changes to transport infrastructure in Newcastle.

The proposal to cut the rail line at Wickham and build a new interchange there is based on a false premise that the existing heavy rail line cannot be opened up by additional crossings (both vehicular and pedestrian level crossings) for 'safety' reasons.

It is apparently acceptably 'safe' to allow people to cross Hunter Street protected only by their own common sense, without any fencing. Despite this, properly constructed level crossings are regarded as 'unsafe'. This is entirely illogical, and represents unreasonable obstructiveness by rail authorities. This needs to be challenged by the government, and additional crossings opened (e.g. for cars at Steel street, Worth Place, Darby Street, and pedestrians at other places). This would be considerably cheaper than the proposed reconfiguration, and preserve the rail access to Newcastle and the coast for Maitland and Lake Macquarie residents.

The heavy rail could reasonably be replaced by an alternative fast transit system using light rail, tram-trains, or become a busway, but this would only make sense as part of an integrated transport solution that would include links to the University, Kotara and Glendale, and ultimately include reconstructing former rail lines to the University, Wallsend, Toronto, West Wallsend, and extensions to Morisset and Maitland, as well as other areas.

Removal of the heavy rail spur line without developing an effective mass transport alternative is short-sighted, costly, and a retrograde step that will not advance the redevelopment of the city. The recent announcement of university campus expansion makes reconsideration of this proposal even more necessary.

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