

urbanrenewal - Submission - Lower Hunter Councils Transport Group - Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy

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Subject: Submission - Lower Hunter Councils Transport Group - Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy
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The Lower Hunter Councils Transport Group comprises officers and Councillors from the five Lower Hunter councils of Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle and Port Stephens. Its primary aim is to facilitate increased mode share to sustainable transport modes.

The Lower Hunter Councils Transport Group appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy (NURS). Brief comments only are provided as it is understood that separate submissions have been, or will be made by the respective Lower Hunter councils.

The Lower Hunter Councils Transport Group supports retention of rail to the city centre and maintains the position that decisions on major infrastructure, such as the future of the inner city rail corridor, should be made in the context of detailed regional planning. Such planning has been lacking for the Lower Hunter, but is foreshadowed in the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan, which indicates imminent development of a transport plan for the Hunter, and the current review of the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy. These two processes, ideally involving detailed analysis of current and projected employment, population and development scenarios and the associated transport task, should determine the regional transport system. Locations for park and ride should also be determined through these processes, based on analysis of activity centres, transport flows and public transport networks.

A key aim of the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan is to effect significant changes in travel behaviour to increase mode share to walking, cycling and public transport. In the Lower Hunter, where the overwhelming majority of trips are made by private vehicles, substantial improvements to public transport are required to make it an attractive alternative to the car. Attempting to influence mode share through parking restraint and price measures are difficult to justify in the absence of viable alternatives to car use. Clear commitment and resourcing by the State Government, which has primary responsibility for public transport planning and provision, is required. Correct timing and coordination of actions in the NURS will be critical to its success.

Previous work undertaken by the Lower Hunter Councils Transport Group has highlighted the potential decrease of public transport patronage due to forced interchange. Should termination proceed, measures should be undertaken to ensure a seamless interchange with minimum time penalty.

Transport and public domain investigations to inform the NURS were undertaken prior to the decision by the State Government to cut the rail line west of Wickham Station. The exhibited documents therefore lack detail of transport systems for the city centre, which detracts from the many positives of the NURS. Further detailed analysis is required to determine:

- impacts of changes to the extent and spatial distribution of development on traffic flows
- transport capacity and demand on Hunter Street
- the adequacy of bus services and network in light of the decision to close the rail, and changes required to ensure seamless interchange
- impact of increased bus movements in the study area arising from the above
- impact of proposed road allocation changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully

Natalie McCabe

LOWER HUNTER COUNCILS TRANSPORT GROUP