12/3/2013

Stephen Moten
112 Fullerton St, Stockton NSW 2295

NSW Department of Planning
GPO Box 39, Sydney NSW 2001

To Whom It May Concern:

Subject: Submission to oppose truncation of inner city rail to Wickham

The Strategy for a new interchange at Wickham as outlined in Tim Owen's 'Newcastle News' letter drop and on the website 'www.planning.nsw.gov.au/proposals' leads me to voice my opposition to the decision due to the concerns outlined below.

The first concern is the decision to replace the trains with buses. Why not light rail? There are many examples worldwide of the growth of light rail, including Sydney. The tracks and even the wires are already in place. Pedestrian access is possible across the tracks and when intersecting with traffic, waiting times are the same as normal traffic lights. Light rail is a far more pleasant ride. It can transfer larger numbers quicker for big events such as those held on the Foreshore and can better cater for the disabled, the elderly and the luggage laden. Light rail can be a feature and a draw-card for the renewal of inner Newcastle where plans already exist for new legal and academic centers.

Secondly, I'm concerned about the location of the interchange at Wickham. Is there enough room for the interchange between heavy rail, local buses, inter-city buses and inter state buses? Will this site cater for the growth during this century and beyond? What of the crossing at Beaumont St? West of Beaumont St is Woodville junction. This area is ripe for redevelopment for an interchange. Land to the west is redundant fuel storage. Has this site been considered in a feasibility study?

Overall my concern is that if this is going to be done, then it should be done right with regard to the long term future. The decision to simply cut the rail and replace with buses lacks the depth of research and study into arriving at the appropriate answer to the future of inner-city Newcastle public transport.

Best Regards,

Stephen Moten