

**[REDACTED] Fw: Urban Strategy submission to Government 17th April 2013 pm Hunter Transport for Business Development**

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**From:** "Alan Squire" <alansquire@bigpond.com>  
**To:** <urbanrenewal@planning.nsw.gov.au>  
**Date:** 4/17/2013 4:03 PM  
**Subject:** Fw: Urban Strategy submission to Government 17th April 2013 pm Hunter Transport for Business Development  
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**From:** [Alan Squire](#)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 02, 2013 1:38 PM  
**To:** [Alan Squire](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: Urban Strategy submission to Government Modified after Easter

## **BACKGROUND**

I am Convenor for Hunter Transport for Business Development, a not for profit organisation of professionals, concerned to do what we can to ensure Newcastle and the Hunter have the most effective public transport system for the next 50 years. We do not stand to gain financially whether the rail service goes or stays. We are very enthusiastic about urban renewal and the vital role which rail will play in achieving that. Our members include an urban planner and registered surveyor and a professional economist whose Ph D is in transport and development economics.

## **RAIL TRUNCATION AND BUSES THREAT TO SUCCESS OF NEWCASTLE URBAN STRATEGY**

The Newcastle Urban Strategy[" the Strategy"] has many commendable features and is very promising for the future of Newcastle. However the likely success of the Strategy is threatened by the decision announced by the government, to truncate the rail service at West of Wickham and transfer rail passengers to buses.

If implemented, that decision will be very detrimental to the effectiveness of the Strategy and could bring it undone. In particular, the recent announcement that the City Campus will proceed virtually opposite Civic Station, with 3000 students and 200 staff and be completed by 2017, makes it abundantly clear that rail services continuing to Newcastle station will be vital for the success of the Strategy.

It would seem to be good planning to take advantage of a rail service delivering 3000 students and 200 staff to Civic Station, which is virtually directly opposite the proposed Campus, the centrepiece of the Strategy.. This could be achieved without capital expenditure.

Instead the government's current proposal is to spend up to \$505 million, plus the cost of additional buses, to truncate rail services at Wickham and transfer passengers into buses.

There does not appear to be any benefit to public transport or urban renewal in doing that, only very serious detriments, including road traffic gridlock and reduction of accessibility to the city and developments in it, which will militate significantly against the success of the Strategy.

### **VITAL TO TAKE IMPACT OF RAIL TRUNCATION INTO ACCOUNT WHEN EVALUATING THE STRATEGY**

By stipulating that it does not want the community to comment on the rail truncation decision, the government would be denying itself the opportunity to get feedback on the impact of the rail truncation on the success of the Urban Strategy.

We appeal to the government, not to regard the decision to truncate rail at Wickham and transfer passengers into buses as irreversible and to regard seriously what people have to say about rail, because the choice of rail configuration will have significant impact on the success of the Strategy.

If the wrong rail decision is made and so far it has been, then the success of the Urban renewal strategy is at serious risk.

There can not be any meaningful discussion on the Strategy without considering the very detrimental impact on the Strategy of the proposal for rail truncation at West of Wickham .

The Strategy itself states" that it was prepared prior to the government's decision on transport services and was therefore written to enable successful implementation of all possible transport arrangements." This means that any transport configuration could succeed, including the existing rail services to Newcastle Station . However the Strategy has clearly not taken into account the very adverse effects of the decision by the government, taken subsequent to the preparation of the Strategy, to truncate the rail west of Wickham and transfer passengers into buses.

The text of the appendix to the Strategy" Economic Assessment," assumes the existence of the railway in its analysis, as does the appendix" City Centre Connectivity and Accessibility Study"

It is clear that the success of the Strategy , is in no way dependent on truncation of the rail line at Wickham and transfer of passengers into buses. There is nothing in the Strategy or the supporting Appendices to support that decision. Accordingly there is nothing to compel the government to choose that transport configuration .

The government, then has a choice to settle on the transport configuration most likely to ensure the success of the Urban Strategy.

### **ANALYSIS OF IMPACT ON URBAN STRATEGY OF TRUNCATING RAIL AT WICKHAM**

The only plausible reason put forward for truncating rail is to improve connectivity. To date the discussion by the government on connectivity has been in the context of ability to move easily from north to south between the inner city and the foreshore. This is a commendable objective. However this approach is missing out on the vital aspect for the success of cities and the developments in them, which is the accessibility provided by public transport. That is the ability of travelers from Maitland, Lake Macquarie and the Central Coast and Sydney to access Newcastle City Centre from west to east.

The government's present decision on rail truncation undermines transport access from Maitland, Lake Macquarie, and the Central Coast into the Newcastle City Centre. This is so because the proposal would add considerably to journey time for those passengers and would add significantly to road traffic gridlock already predicted by 2016, (Newcastle Council's Bizios report 2010] which would be exacerbated by the additional buses required on Hunter Street.

The Bizios Report is a very critical factor; apparently overlooked by the government. Given the transfer on to a morning bus that faces gridlock at Stewart Avenue and Hunter Street, we are gravely concerned that large numbers of commuters will not accept the relatively long increase in journey time ; by being forced to transfer into buses and will attempt to drive or not come to Newcastle at all, either of which would be detrimental for development. Gridlock is already predicted by 2016 on the assumption that development proceeds at only half the historical rate, let alone the very significant developments proposed under the Strategy.

The West Wickham rail truncation also undermines the strategy that is set forward in the Accessibility Study in the Strategy. Both buses and motorists suffer from the growing congestion at Stewart Avenue intersecting Hunter Street. Adding the majority of current rail commuters to those motorists will make that congestion worse.

The severity of Stewart Avenue gridlock will also be increased as a result of a West Wickham terminal Station. This will be located directly west of Stewart Avenue, where station traffic will become entangled with morning and evening commuter traffic.

The government proposes to impose these costs on motorists ,bus commuters and rail commuters, without knowing the impact on either urban revitalisation or on transport access because the studies performed on those topics assumed the continued existence of the railway service.

All of this seriously militates against the success of an otherwise promising Urban Strategy.

#### **PROFESSOR GARY GLAZEBROOK----- PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS THE GREAT ENABLER OF CITIES AND PROVIDES ACCESSIBILITY WHICH MAKES CITIES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THEM WORK**

Professor Gary Glazebrook[UTS] said in a recent forum in Sydney, that public transport is the great enabler of cities and the developments in them. Public Transport provides the accessibility to cities and the developments in them, that enables those cities and developments to work. Professor Glazebrook said it is unfortunate that many councils, government departments, developers and the professionals advising all of them, do not appreciate this. UTS is running courses to improve understanding of this vital planning principle.

Rail is the best people mover by far and will enhance the success of all developments but particularly the City Campus and Court Precinct by transporting thousands of students and court attendees to Civic Station.

#### **SUCCESS OF URBAN STRATEGY DEPENDS ON IMPROVED CONNECTIVITY AN ACCESSIBILITY TO CITY AND DEVELOPMENTS IN CITY**

The problem is, that so far the government has chosen buses for the transport task east from

Wickham and this is the very transport configuration that will lead to the failure of the Strategy, when other possible configurations will enhance the Urban Strategy.

The only plausible reason put forward for truncating rail is to improve connectivity. To date the discussion of connectivity by the government has been in the context of ability to move easily from north to south between the inner city and the foreshore. This is a commendable objective. However this approach misses out on the vital aspect for the success of cities and developments in those cities. This is the accessibility to cities and developments in them provided by public transport.

The success of Newcastle Urban Renewal depends on improving accessibility to the developments in Newcastle, for people from Maitland, Upper Hunter, Lake Macquarie, Central Coast and Sydney.

Many commuters from these areas already access Newcastle by rail which is the best people mover by far. Patronage is increasing significantly and will continue to do so with economic growth. Ticket sales over the last 3 years at stations between Fassifern and Maitland have increased by an average of 8% per annum compounded for the last 3 years.

The addition of 3000 students and 200 staff as potential passengers is very significant as it can be readily accommodated if rail is retained but transfer to buses at Wickham would be problematic and it does not appear sensible to have to spend up to \$505 million to create problems with congestion and gridlock, with no apparent benefit to either urban renewal or public transport, when existing rail services will cope with growth without large capital expenditure.

Rail transport copes best with growth because additional passengers can be added simply by increasing the frequency of trains and adding rail cars. There is no adverse effect on road traffic if rail is utilised.

Replacing the present rail service between Wickham and Newcastle stations with buses would lead to traffic congestion and parking congestion that would make it not feasible to sustain a property boom as envisaged by the Strategy.

In particular, serious study of the traffic and parking options reveals that a West Wickham Terminal station would increase gridlock at Stewart Avenue intersections, not least because of station traffic itself.

#### **BEST SYSTEM FOR TRANSPORT ACCESS TO CIVIC AND OTHER PRECINCTS EAST TO UPGRADE AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EXISTING RAIL SERVICE**

For best transport access to Civic and other precincts east, a transport plan would upgrade and build upon the existing rail service. This would mitigate cross corridor access with additional crossings for mixed traffic, to ease the Stewart Avenue gridlock and for pedestrian access further east and could include elevated pedestrian promenades for additional cross corridor access. The Strategy envisages eight crossings. All of these could be achieved with rail services continuing to Newcastle Station.

If the decision is made to place a priority on ground level access across the rail corridor in the Civic and Newcastle East precincts, then the new transport system should be compatible with high capacity and frequent transport to these precincts, in order to be more compatible with more property development across the precinct than the West Wickham Terminal option.

## **AECOM TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY PLAN[TMAP]**

TMAP projects that closure of the rail corridor at Wickham will result in a loss of 0.8% public transport use.

Without closure of the rail line the TMAP plan would achieve 16.5% public transport use, a gain of 1.4% rather the gain of 0.6% with closure of the line.

Over half the benefit of the TMAP Plan would be lost due to the closure of the rail corridor at Wickham.

## **CRITICAL ISSUE**

How much public transport mode share is required in order to sustain substantial ongoing property development in Newcastle City Centre?

If substantial ongoing property development can be sustained, there are substantial opportunities to leverage the Railcorp property into substantial development opportunities.

## **BIZIOS TRAFFIC AND PARKING STUDY[ BIZIOS 2010]**

This study substantially clarifies the interaction between public transport capacity and opportunities for property development in the Newcastle City Centre.

To support the optimistic City Centre Plan property development targets, by 2031 , public transport, walking and cycling would need to increase from the current 19% of peak traffic to 54%.

Under the more modest scenario, in which City Centre Growth tracks the current trend of growth in the Lower Hunter, by 2031 public transport, walking and, cycling would need to increase to 39%

Given these requirements for traffic, other than private motor vehicle traffic, public transport must increase its share to from 20% of peak traffic to 35% of peak hour traffic.

## **CONCLUSION FROM BIZIOS AND TMAP REPORTS**

Bizios 2010 concludes and the AECOM Study indirectly confirms that increasing the share of public transport to 35%, cannot be achieved without a priority public transport corridor through Newcastle West and in particular which by passes traffic in the area of Hannell Street/Stewart Avenue.

We submit that the proposal to truncate rail West of Wickham and transfer passengers into buses will not be able to achieve this. Retention of rail services to Newcastle Station would provide the best opportunity to meet the target of 35% share of peak hour traffic by public transport

The rail corridor site for the proposed West Wickham Terminus would require substantial property acquisition to gain sufficient space for stabling at the platform and so the West Wickham proposal is to perform stabling and associated operations in the area between the West Hamilton and Woodville Junctions, west of Beaumont Street. The increased rail traffic required over Beaumont Street, both for trains in service and for moving trains to and from stabling, drove the requirement to close Beaumont Street level crossing.

The West Wickham terminus will also require closure of Railway Street level crossing.

With the West Wickham Terminal proposal requiring Beaumont and Railway Street crossings to be closed the road traffic formerly using those crossings will have to find other routes thus

exacerbating gridlock.

### **TRAFFIC CONGESTION IMPACT OF TRUNCATING RAIL AT WEST WICKHAM**

The recent studies of the growing parking and traffic congestion in the Newcastle CBD found that locating a terminal rail station in West Wickham would increase the severity of gridlock on Stewart Avenue at the King and Hunter Street intersections, accounting for three of the four main lines of access for motorists into the CBD.

This was independent of the impact of closure of the Railway Street and Beaumont Street level crossings required by the West Wickham terminal, which were outside of the traffic planning area of the study. It was also independent of impact on motorists of priority bus signaling if intercity coaches are to access the West Wickham Terminal.

Therefore the gain in traffic flow from opening up access from Industrial Drive to Hunter Street via Honeysuckle Drive and Steel Street would be partly offset by the congestion from station traffic, combined with the impact of channeling current Railway Street traffic onto Stewart Avenue.

### **ADDITIONAL BUSES FOR WICKHAM TRUNCATION PROPOSAL**

To be able to meet each train in the morning and afternoon peaks will require a substantial number of additional buses as the frequency of trains in the peaks is about 3 minutes and the journey to Newcastle station takes at least 8 minutes plus loading and unloading time and competition with road traffic.

Those passengers previously spread between Wickham, Civic and Newcastle would be required to all get off at Wickham. The same buses will not be able to get to Newcastle and back to Wickham to meet the next train so more buses will be required as well as more drivers. Adding 3000 students and 200 staff will significantly increase the number of buses required. That number of people will not be able to drive without exacerbating gridlock. Many of these buses will be idle during off peak times and provision also needs to be made for housing these buses. The expense will be significant as the present fleet is fully engaged in the peaks and existing passengers will have to be catered for as well as those leaving and joining the trains at Wickham.

These additional buses will also join existing traffic in the peaks which is close to capacity now and is predicted to be in gridlock by 2016

### **CONCLUSION**

The success of the Strategy in achieving urban renewal would be enhanced significantly by retaining rail services to Newcastle Station and seriously disadvantaged by the West Wickham Terminal rail truncation and buses proposal.

### **HISTORY OF RAIL REMOVAL**

44 cities in the USA removed rail and then had to acquire land, demolish buildings, pay compensation and retrofit a rail system because the economic value of rail to those cities was so compelling that it justified the massive expenditure to restore rail. NSW must not repeat this mistake.

### **ADVANTAGES OF RETAINING RAIL SERVICES INTO NEWCASTLE STATION**

- Lower Hunter can expect 160000, additional residents over the next 20 years. Direct rail access to Newcastle Station from the regions will be a significant ongoing benefit to the

regions. Civic Station will be an even more significant destination with the 3000 students and 200 staff. Newcastle Station is a significant destination for major events in Foreshore Park , tourist drawcards like Nobby's lighthouse, Fort Scratchley, and Newcastle and Nobby's beaches. What is to be gained by forcing potential customers to these destinations to break journey at Wickham and transfer into buses?

- Cities best able to handle growth are those with well developed public transport.[Robert Schwartz, Economist] To accommodate extra passengers over time it is simple to add carriages and increase frequency of trains. This avoids gridlock and parking issues that would occur if rail services are removed.
- Trains running on fixed tracks are more reliable than buses which are subject to traffic interference.
- Trains on fixed tracks are not subject to route changes, like buses and provide greater certainty for passengers, commuters and developers who are able to promote access to public transport with certainty .
- it is already faster for Maitland passengers in the peaks to travel by train to Newcastle rather than drive. This keeps cars off the road. If rail passengers forced to change into buses at Wickham up to 60 % may refuse to accept the change and try to drive cars [Professor Currie Monash] which will exacerbate gridlock and parking problems predicted by 2016
- "It is an incontrovertible truth that property values always go up when rail is added and down when rail is taken away.[Toronto Canada Real Estate Board]
- The wealthiest cities are those with rail to the CBD[Professor Peter Newman[Curtin]
- Marchetti principle dictates that people will generally limit their daily commute to one hour . If it takes longer they will change their arrangements to minimise journey time. Maitland commuters journey time will be extended beyond the one hour Marchetti limit if required to change from cars to buses at Wickham.
- Newcastle is a regional city with high car ownership. With road traffic gridlock already predicted by 2016 a high capacity ,high frequency. rail service is vital. Without it , new developments such as the City Campus will increase parking and congestion problems and force existing small business out of the CBD /Foreshore area. If existing small business is going to benefit from the renewal projects and the 3000 university students are going to get in and out of the city, the traffic congestion relief and parking relief provided by the rail services must remain.
- Bizios recommends that the existing rail system, or light rail would be essential to by pass

the likely congestion in the city west precinct and particularly near the Hannell Street/Stewart Avenue corridor

- TMAP shows that if Transit Oriented Development were to be introduced at rail stations like Newcastle and Civic, which are well served by public transport, patronage of rail would increase by 10% thus contributing to the State target of 20% of morning peak journeys to be by public transport.
- Urban renewal is substantially enhanced by rail services not hindered.
- Scoping Study[Aecom] finds that to truncate rail service at Wickham will require closure of Beaumont and Railway Streets, which will add to congestion and gridlock expenditure of \$150 million on land, between \$26 million and \$125 million on decontamination and total expenditure of up to \$505 million. All this can be avoided if rail is retained to Newcastle station.
- The closure of Railway Street, which is presently used as a relief valve for traffic from Hannell Street and Stewart Avenue will add to the traffic congestion and gridlock already being experienced in that busiest part of the city.
- The closure of Beaumont Street will cause traffic problems in Maitland Road and will not please Hamilton business owners in Beaumont Street.
- As Professor Newman has said, if you make it harder to get into a city people will not come. Rail truncation and buses from Wickham will make it harder to get into the city. Revitalisation needs people.
- Cutting rail services at Wickham and putting rail passengers into buses which will themselves become part of the traffic will not assist urban renewal.

## **CONCLUSION ON ADVANTAGES OF RETAINING RAIL**

Retention of rail services in some form be it heavy rail or light rail vehicles running on the existing track will enhance urban renewal, relieve road traffic gridlock and parking problems and improve public transport for the region as a whole.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**RETENTION OF RAIL SERVICES TO NEWCASTLE STATION IN SOME FORM IS VITAL FOR A SUCCESSFUL URBAN RENEWAL STRATEGY.**

We should be grateful if you would advise Alan Squire that this Submission has been received, read and that it will be taken into account in decision making  
We will be pleased to come to Sydney to explain the Submission and answer any questions.



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