

# ***BRING BACK THE NEWCASTLE FLYER***

## **Newcastle Deserves Better**

### **We need a faster train service**

**General Manager  
Hunter & Central Coast  
PO Box 1226  
Newcastle NSW 2300**

Dear Mr or Ms

**RE: Submission to the Draft Hunter Regional Plan  
Hunter Community needs a faster train service to Sydney**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Hunter Regional Plan.

We congratulate you on this initiative however we are disappointed that your plan does not address the importance of transport links between Newcastle and Sydney – and in particular the poor rail service between the two biggest cities in NSW.

**There is no mention of the goal of improving the train service between Newcastle and Central so that an express service of 2 hours duration in peak periods is normal. I understand that the Government did have such a goal till recently.**

We are also very disappointed that the new timetable introduced in 2013 did not improve travel times between the two biggest cities in NSW as had been promised.

This issue is of great concern to Novocastrians and the travelling public. I refer you to our petition on the following website:

**[www.newcastle deserves better](http://www.newcastle.deserves.better) – petition for express 2 hour train between Newcastle and Sydney**

Recently the Newcastle Herald published an article on the matter – “*Faster speeds essential to improve rail service*” –written by Philip Laird - see copy attached.

As the article states, the fastest semi-express trains between Newcastle and Sydney take 2 hours and 37 minutes which gives an average speed of 64kph. Compare this to the old Newcastle Flyer which in the 1940s was hauled by a steam engine and regularly did the trip in 2 hours and 18 minutes.



The article goes on to state that during the 1980s some weekday morning trains did the Newcastle to Sydney trip in 2 hours 17 minutes using the V-set electric trains which are still in use today.

And the article goes on to state that a definitive report by Infrastructure NSW set a goal for the Sydney to Newcastle transit time of 2 hours.

**Unfortunately we lost our fast Newcastle Flyer express service after the line was electrified and with it the fast express trains.**

In this day and age it is simply unacceptable that the train service has gone backwards in terms of travel times. It is interesting to note that trains on the Perth to Mandurah line travel at 85kph while some Victorian regional services regularly travel at 100kph. Trains overseas in Europe and the UK have even faster speeds and travel times.

We understand that there are many factors which determine travel times but we would like to suggest some relatively easy measures which could be adopted to create at least some genuine express services to and from Sydney.

### **Firstly - eliminate un-necessary stops on semi-express services**

Given that the line into Newcastle will be truncated shortly we assume you will issue an amended timetable for the Newcastle to Sydney trains in the near future. If so could we suggest that you review the two morning services being the 6:18 and the 7:18 services from Newcastle to Sydney. In both cases the existing stops at Civic and Wickham will be eliminated as you are truncating the line. Further we suggest you consider dropping either the Wyong stop or the Tuggerah stop. Why do all Newcastle trains – even the semi-expresses – always stop at both Wyong and Tuggerah? And finally we recommend you eliminate the Woy Woy stop as well leaving these two services to be genuine Newcastle express services which will then, at least, have a travel time equivalent to the old Flyer.

For the return trip we recommend the following changes to the timetable:  
That the 16:45 service from Central **not stop** at Eastwood, Woy Woy and of course Wickham and Civic. The 17:15 service timetable should be amended to eliminate the Woy Woy stop as well as either Wyong or Tuggerah.

Finally we strongly recommend that all stops at Eastwood on Newcastle services be eliminated. Eastwood is already well served by rail services and of course is only one stop from Epping. **Eastwood is simply not a necessary stop for Newcastle trains in either direction – so why do our Newcastle trains always stop at Eastwood?.**

### **Secondly – plan to improve the track alignment**

We note that your government plans to improve rail services in Sydney and we commend you for that. As the newspaper article attached suggests – the deviations built into the Newcastle to Sydney line about 100 years ago which increase travel times – should be eliminated. These include the deviations made from the original Whitton track alignment, such as the Awaba to Fassifern section, Morisset to Dora Creek and Dora Creek to Awaba. These would be relatively small projects which will improve running times by returning the trains to the original track alignment.

I assume your department is interested in all aspects of development in the Hunter. If so the state of the poor rail service between Newcastle and Sydney should be addressed in the Hunter Regional Plan.

In the last 40 years or so the roads linking Newcastle and Sydney have been improved dramatically to the extent that one can drive from one city to the other in 2 hours or less compared to the time it took 40 years ago. Unfortunately there has been little improvement in the rail service in that time and in fact the fastest train trip is now marginally slower than it was years ago.

This situation is most unsatisfactory and should be a matter of concern and addressed in the Hunter Regional Plan.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Attachments – Newcastle Herald article dated 19.6.14

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Philip Laird - Honorary Principal Fellow at University of Wollongong

March 2015

“Before the Newcastle station was shut down, it took no less than two hours and 37 minutes to get from there to Sydney’s Central station. Yet back in the late 1940s, the Newcastle Flyer hauled by a steam locomotive could make that same trip 19 minutes faster.

**In 2012, Infrastructure NSW set a goal of cutting the Sydney to Newcastle train travel time to two hours.**

The current track is too long and too many tight curves. Track straightening at a few locations has the potential to shave three kilometres off the current distance, but more importantly speed up the trains.

Investment in faster trains from Newcastle to Sydney would do far more for revitalising Newcastle than cutting the track at Wickham and building new light rail. The faster trains would give Hunter Valley people better access to Sydney jobs, and attract more tourists from Sydney to Newcastle.



## THEIR SAY

# Faster speeds essential to improve rail service

Current journey times lag behind what steam trains achieved in the 1940s, writes Philip Laird.

NEWCASTLE is home to the nation's sixth largest population centre, which makes it larger than Canberra. Maintaining heavy rail access to the Newcastle CBD will ensure ongoing access to environmentally friendly and sustainable transport.

The increasing likelihood of higher world oil prices, which peaked in mid 2008, and are expected within a decade to return to higher levels, is a further factor in retaining this electrified line.

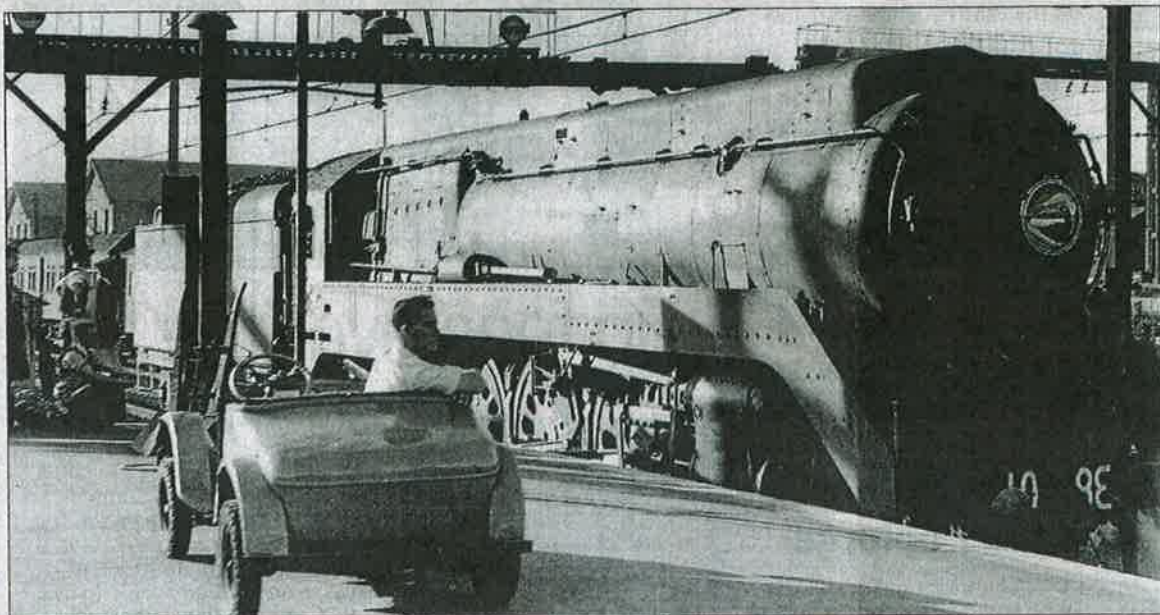
In 2004, when the line was under great concern was expressed about the process followed by the NSW government by each of the Newcastle sections of Engineers Australia and of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport in Australia.

In 2006, the then premier Morrisemma reversed plans of the Carr government to close the rail line through the centre of Newcastle.

Since 2006, the Newcastle Museum has opened close to Civic Station. Civic Station also serves the Town Hall, the Newcastle Conservatorium of Music and the Crowne Plaza Hotel. If the line must be truncated, it would make more sense to do so at Civic rather than Wickham. But then it makes much more sense to continue to use the four platforms at Newcastle Station for starting and stopping trains.

If you wish to travel by express train from Newcastle to Sydney's central station on a weekday morning, you are looking at a journey time of two hours and 37 minutes. This gives an average speed of about 40km/h for the 168 kilometre trip.

Although this express time is better than trains from Newcastle that stop at more stations and take nearly three hours to reach Sydney, the express time is not as good as the fastest train in the late 1940s



NEWCASTLE FLYER: The 38 Class Locomotive in 1943.

Picture: Ernest Bowen

that took two hours and 18 minutes. This was the Newcastle Flyer hauled by a steam locomotive.

In the late 1980s, some weekday morning trains took two hours 17 minutes from Newcastle to Sydney. This was with the V-Set electric trains that continue in use today.

The current best average speed of 64km/h compares poorly with driving by car. What is needed is an average speed of 85km/h that is provided by Perth to Mandurah train services in Western Australia.

Or better still, Sydney Newcastle train speeds should aim to match those of fastest express trains between either Ballarat and Bendigo to Melbourne's Southern Cross Station. Their average speed is just over 100km/h. These examples of faster trains are in Australia. Still faster may be found in many overseas countries.

In 2012, a definitive report by Infrastructure NSW gave a goal for the Sydney - Newcastle transit times of two hours using "... operational improvements supported by targeted capital works to reduce journey times."

After better timetabling, there are several ways of speeding up Sydney to Newcastle trains to an average of 84km/h for a two-hour journey. One of these ways is better track alignment.

The original Newcastle-Sydney line was laid down under John Whitton's leadership in sections. The final link was the Hawkesbury River Bridge and this was opened in May 1889. The length then was about 165 kilometres. About 1903, a number of deviations were built to ease gradients for steam trains at the expense of extra length and tight radius curves.

While the easier grades were useful in the steam age, the worst change, from the point of view of electric train operations, was a 1903 deviation from Awaba to Fassifern that was nearly two kilometres longer than the Whitton track.

Other deviations about that time included Morisset to Dora Creek and Dora Creek to Awaba. In both cases, the then new track with tight radius curves prevented fast running of trains.

It would be a small job, when

compared with other Australian track upgrades, to facilitate faster trains, to revert to the Whitton alignment but with easier grades. Indeed, a start was made many decades ago when supplying filling from a cutting near Fassifern for the Broadmeadow marshalling yard.

Other ways of speeding up Newcastle Sydney trains include higher speed turnouts at various locations, easing of tight radius curves, and the use of new, higher-powered trains. To achieve the two hours transit time, work will be needed on several fronts.

In any event, investment in faster trains from Newcastle to Sydney would do much more for Newcastle than cutting the track at Wickham. The faster trains would give Hunter Valley people better access to Sydney jobs, and make it easier from tourists coming from Sydney.

**Philip Laird, an honorary principal Fellow at the University of Wollongong, is a Companion of Engineers Australia and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport**

# Newcastle Deserves Better

## We need a faster train service to Sydney & Tram Trains linking Maitland & The Upper Hunter to Newcastle Beach

**General Manager**  
**Hunter & Central Coast**  
PO Box 1226  
Newcastle NSW 2300

Dear Mr or Ms

**RE: Submission to the Draft Growing Hunter City Plan**  
**Hunter Community needs a faster train service to Sydney**  
**Hunter Community needs Tram Trains linking Upper Hunter with Newcastle Beach**

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Growing Hunter City Plan.

I note that the Lower Hunter area with a population of 430,000, is the nation's seventh largest city and is likely to grow to 750,000 over the next 40 to 50 years.

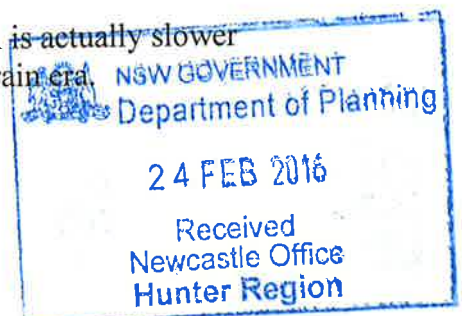
Transport particularly inter-city and regional transport should be an essential component of any city plan like Newcastle. In particular the train service between the two biggest cities in the state – Newcastle and Sydney.

Given this situation is disappointing that your plan fails to address the poor state of the local rail service which connects Newcastle to Sydney & fails to address the opportunity afforded to the city and the region by the introduction of Tram Trains.

Further, it is disappointing that the Government seems determined to build only a short 2km light rail line linking Wickham Terminal with Pacific Park with no commitment to extend the light rail westwards to the University of Newcastle Callaghan campus.

### 1) Newcastle needs a fast 2 hour train service to Sydney

The existing rail service between Newcastle and Central is actually slower than it was when the Newcastle Flyer ran in the steam train era.





When the railway was electrified we lost the famous Newcastle Flyer service which did the trip – Central – Gosford – Newcastle - in less time than the fastest peak hour rail services of today.

This is an extraordinary indictment on the current and past Governments who have preferred to spend money on upgrading the road system – in particular the M1 - while allowing the rail system to struggle on with little, if any, improvements.

Up until recently I understand that Infrastructure NSW had a goal to implement a 2 hour train service between Sydney and Newcastle but as far as I can see that goal has been quietly dropped.

Why do we not have a goal to achieve a 2 hour train service linking the two biggest cities in NSW?

Your draft plan refers to the need to “enhance city-wide transport” which is a laudable aim – who would argue with that? But what about enhancing the Inter-City rail service? – the rail service between the two biggest cities in NSW?

Such a goal should be front and centre in the Draft Growing Hunter City Plan.

## **2) The Hunter needs Tram Trains linking the Upper Hunter to Newcastle Beach – the win-win solution**

The Governments proposed 2km light rail line linking the Wickham terminal to Pacific Park will be virtually useless unless it is part of a wider network going west from the new Wickham Terminal.

Recently the Newcastle Herald published an article by me on Tram Trains – how they are the win-win solution for Newcastle – see copy attached.

As I explain in my article a Tram Train vehicle is one that can operate as a train when required then operate as a tram when required – both operations by one vehicle. Use of such a vehicle will eliminate the need for passengers from Maitland (and Dungog) to Newcastle to change from the train to the light rail.

As you can see from the attached information the first Tram Train was developed in Germany in 1992 and operates between Karlsruhe and Bretten which is very similar to the distance between Newcastle and Maitland. Karlsruhe has a similar population to Newcastle while Bretten has a similar population to Maitland.

I note that the UK is about to introduce its first tram train in Sheffield and Paris has ordered new tram trains – see information below

Any proposal to build a light rail line linking Wickham terminal to Newcastle beach should include a commitment to extend the light rail westwards to the

UoN Callaghan campus - which should include Tram Trains which will eliminate the need for passengers from Maitland and the Upper Hunter to change mode at the Wickham Terminal. The State Government has talked about 'investigating' the options for the light rail to go westwards but there is no commitment to do so. Failure to commit to extending the system westwards to the UoN Callaghan campus will result in a 'toy' system like the failed Sydney Monorail – which would be a disaster.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Growing Hunter City Plan.

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## **Could a tram train work in the Hunter Valley?**

**Maitland to Newcastle – comparison – with**

**Karlsruhe to Bretten in Germany – location of the first tram train in 1992**

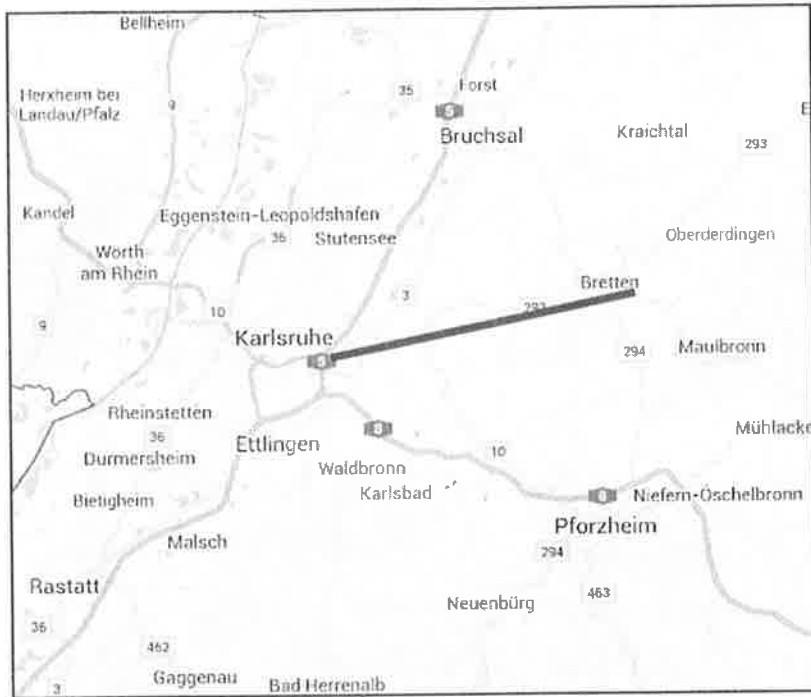
**The distance between Karlsruhe to Bretten in Germany is 27kms**

**The distance between Maitland and Newcastle is 34 kms**

**The population of Karlsruhe is 300,000 while the population of Bretten is 30,000**

**The population of Newcastle is 550,000 while Maitland is 60,000**

**If a tram train can operate successfully between Karlsruhe and Bretten then it is likely to be successful between Newcastle and Maitland.**



Karlsruhe to Bretten in Germany – about 30kms



Maitland to Newcastle - about 30 kms



## **Latest news on Tram Trains from Europe**

### **From the BBC**

## **Sheffield to Rotherham tram-train arrives in England**

- 28 November 2015
- From the section Sheffield & South Yorkshire

The tram-trains are being built in Valencia, Spain

The UK's first tram-train has arrived in England on its way to Yorkshire.

The first of seven tram-trains that will use local tram routes and Network Rail lines, arrived in Southampton earlier as part of the scheme, which is a year behind schedule.

Three of the 37m (121ft) vehicles will run an hour, linking Sheffield, Meadowhall and Rotherham from 2017.

The Department for Transport hopes the two-year pilot scheme will be rolled out to other places in the country.

The tram-train, constructed in Valencia, Spain, will be transported up the M1 motorway before arriving in Sheffield on Tuesday.

### **'Complex operation'**

Operators said three of the vehicles will be introduced on Sheffield's Supertram network in 2016 to provide more tram services for passengers during peak times.

Steve Edwards, from the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, described it as a "first for the UK".

He said: "The design and planning to make Tram Trains run is a complex operation and we're delighted this important milestone brings us one step closer to making the scheme a reality."

The £58m project, aiming to cut journey times and improve access to the city, has been delayed by building work on the link between the tram and rail networks.

## News from Railway Gazette

# More tram-trains ordered for Paris

05 Jan 2016



FRANCE: On behalf of Paris regional transport authority STIF, SNCF has ordered a further 15 Citadis Dualis tram-train vehicles from Alstom. The order announced on January 5 is worth €75m and forms the second option on a framework contract signed in 2007.

The vehicles are to be delivered from October 2017, with entry into revenue service planned for 2019 on the extension of route T4 from Gargan to Montfermeil.

The tram-trains are to be manufactured at Alstom's Valenciennes site, where the supplier is currently building 15 Citadis Dualis vehicles for STIF. They will feature traction motors supplied by the Alstom plant at Ornans, bogies from Le Creusot, other traction equipment from Tarbes and passenger information systems from Villeurbanne.

When some foolish motorists decided they were going to take on the unknown and drive into raging torrents, they followed

They will be out in force again on Thursday, checking their work and double checking forecasts to make sure we are safe.

elements, so is the knowledge that these fearless people will again have our collective backs.  
Thank you.

## WEB WORDS

### HOSPITAL DOWNGRADE FEARS

The chairman of the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund seems to be a powerless figurehead, with everything being done behind his back out of Macquarie Street. \$45 million in "planning" money, indeed.

-Norm.

Whats next the light rail, all the promises to Newcastle and the money will end up in sydney and we will get nothing from the port sale.

-Rolly

### TRAIN PATRONAGE HEADS SOUTH

Wow that's amazing!! Cut the train off all the way to Newcastle and less people will catch. Can't wait for the taxpayer funded study into why this is and the new data collection system to account for this drop in numbers.

-Ian Glover

Of course it's changing its a great hassle to catch public transport to Newcastle it's even getting too hard to get to and stay at Stockton.

-Annette McGrath

I am disappointed the line into Newcastle closed. It is more disappointing to have people cook the numbers to justify it now.

-Alan Newbury

Are you seriously saying the opal card transactions do not provide a date, time, starting location and end location for each card when it is used? How on earth are CityRail going to provide the evidence around usage?

-Darnian MacTavish

It doesn't take a degree in economics to understand that if you make public transport more difficult to access, customers will abandon it. Sit on Hunter St and watch the empty shuttle buses travel from the old Newcastle station to Hamilton Station. Its very sad for some of us locals to watch how Macquarie St is dismantling our services as they pour money into Sydney.

-RobatNewy

My wife and daughters have to go to Sydney on the weekend. At \$17 each return its cheaper to drive the car to Sydney, park out on the outskirts and train it in.

-Phil Latham

The only data I am confident in is the 100% decline in usage by myself since my local station at Civic was closed.

-Rob Ward

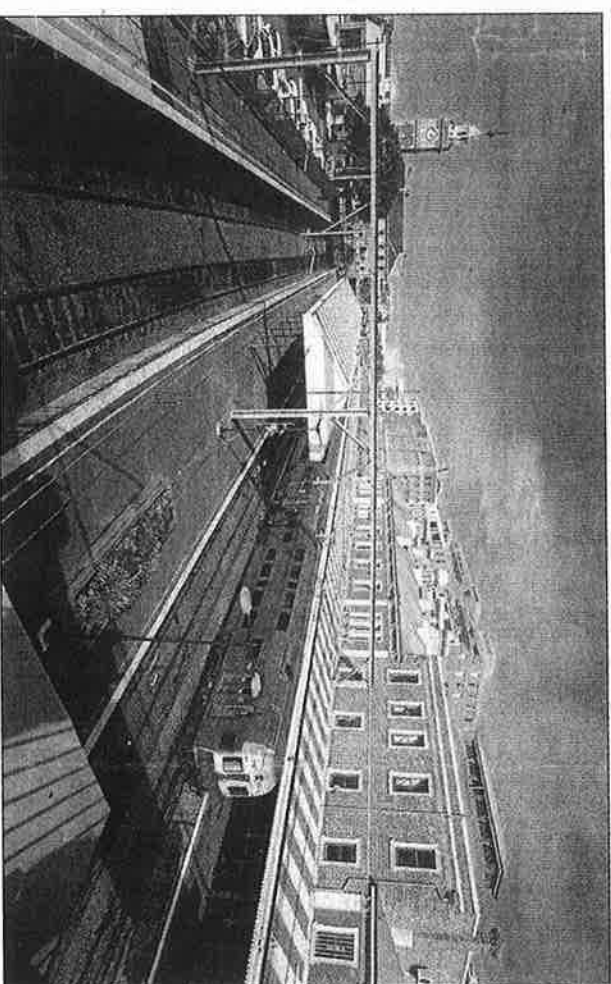
# Tram trains are the win- win solution for Newcastle

**W**E NEED an innovative solution to our intractable rail problem - and we have one under our very noses - but our decision makers cannot see through the maze.

The promised Newcastle light rail should evolve into a 'tram train' like they have in Europe.

As described by Associate Professor Garry Glazebrook of the UTS, a tram train is a light rail vehicle which can operate at high speed on the heavy rail network and also operate on the street like a normal tram. They were first introduced in Karlsruhe in Germany in the early 1990s and now operate in the Netherlands, France and elsewhere.

Tram trains are particularly suited to medium-sized cities like Newcastle. The tram allows good access and urban amenity benefits in the city centre while the train aspect provides high speed, comfort and capacity for commuters. In 1992 rail vehicles ran on the world's first dual-mode tram train line between Karlsruhe and Bretten. Before 1992 commuters had to transfer from tram to regional rail and in Bretten a transfer from rail to bus was required. These forced transfers were awkward and time consuming and deterred many potential users. Since then, commuters can travel between the two centres without having to transfer, saving 15 minutes each time. In Bretten, new development and businesses opened near the new rail stops. These stops were not a detriment to travel time as the new vehicles were capable of higher speeds. Patronage in the



**IDEA:** Tram trains provide an exciting opportunity for the Hunter to build a truly viable public transport system with benefits for both the CBD and the region.

line increased by 400 per cent and currently patronage is six times what it was before the introduction of the tram trains.

The greater Newcastle area is well-suited to tram trains as they would allow the Newcastle CBD to benefit from the introduction of light rail while allowing commuters from the Upper Hunter and Maitland direct access to Newcastle Beach without the need for transfer. Commuters to and from Sydney would transfer to the tram train at the Wickham terminal. In the future, new tram trains could operate direct to Newcastle Beach, from the Central Coast and West Lakes as well. Ideally the tram train would operate along the existing rail corridor from Wickham to Newcastle allowing direct pedestrian access across the line, like any tram line in the world. It could provide a direct connection between the UoN Callaghan campus and the new City campus without having to build new track.

There are no unresolved technical issues with tram trains. They are usually electrically powered sometimes dual voltage (750V DC

for town centres and 25 KV AC for main electrified lines) and diesel-electric powered hybrid tram trains are also available which allows operation on non-electrified lines such as the Maitland and Dungog lines. Clearly track sharing issues have to be resolved but they have managed this in Europe, so I am sure, with political will, they can do this here as well.

There are several builders of tram trains and the latest models include high energy efficiency through regenerative braking and on-board energy storage.

Tram trains provide an exciting opportunity for the Hunter as a whole, to build a truly viable public transport system with benefits for both the CBD and the region.

Our Prime Minister wants us to be innovative (as do we all) and we have the opportunity to do just that, to resolve our debilitating transport debate once and for all, but the state government does not seem interested - why?

**Tony Proust is a certified practicing planner and registered surveyor with 30+ years experience**

Newcastle Herald 8.11.11



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