

Minutes

Tackling Transport Public Forum

22 November, 2007 - 6pm, Committee Room, Woollahra Council Chambers

Present:

Councillors

Mayor Clr Geoff Rundle
Deputy Mayor Isabelle Shapiro
Clr David Shoebridge
Clr John Comino

Staff

Susan Turner, Manager – Community Development
Lorna Oliver, Traffic and Transport Planner
Armodee Reece, Traffic and Public Infrastructure Administration Officer

Proceedings:

6.05pm Welcome by Cr Geoff Rundle – Mayor

6.06pm **Angela Adams – Ministry of Transport**
Bus reform – NSW Government Initiative under Urban Transport & Metro Strategy.

- 6 areas of bus reform
- Before bus reform details (*ppt*)
- Since bus reform details (*ppt*)
- New service design (*ppt*)
- Information used sourced from (*ppt*)
- Service planning guidelines (*ppt*)
- Bus Priority (*ppt*)
- Strategic Corridors eg. Oxford Street (*ppt*)
- Community Involvement
- The use of 131500. Encourage public feedback, slides to represent

6.20pm **Christine McDavert & Eric Graham – STA / Sydney Buses**

- Region 9 is a complex & diverse region
- Responsible for organising buses for special events
- Responsible for bus replacement on rail line (Bondi Junction)
- Region 9 has highest average passenger per km
- Part of integrated transport plan is to get lines on the map
- Collection of data from passengers

- Bondi Junction and Edgecliff have rail links to the bus interchange and service bus links to the UNSW, Eastgardens and other various areas throughout Region 9
- Have the potential to match the provision of demand with that service.
- Limitations for bus routes e.g. buses in small streets / height restrictions
- Seeking to collect information by attending forums
- Reliability of service is paramount
- Plan goes out for public consultation in February 08
- The achievement of where resident demand is met with bus routes

6.26pm

Dennis Mole – Manager of Operations - Sydney Ferries

- Ferries don't fit same pattern as bus and rail services
- Sydney Ferries only 31 vessels in fleet – small in comparison to bus & rail service
- 50% users are for leisure purposes
- Iconic value to ferries found from various customer surveys and community feedback
- Until about 3 years ago Sydney Ferries was a small division of the Bus organisation and state rail authority
- Not well planned / managed (31 ferries of 7 different types & 14 different variants).
- Under resourced / huge drain on buses
- Experience in boats didn't translate to mgmt / planning to understand needs
- Main focus past 12-18 mths has been on safety
- 2 accidents this year has called for Govt enquiry into ferries
- 1 recommendation is possible – privatisation
- Thorough planning is underway over 12 – 18 months
- Enquiry has tested and validated this plan

What does the plan hold?

- Changes to routes – cancel jet cat service to Manly
- Cut costs and free up resources
- Stop service to Parramatta (only to Rydalmere) not a viable commuter service at such a slow speed.
- Did not recommend cuts to within the Eastern suburbs.
- 29 daily services to Eastern Suburbs
- Request for better ferries – will provide a better service to cater to larger passenger capacity and also faster.
- An acknowledgement request is always for more ferry services to Double Bay, Rose Bay.
- Need more vessels to meet ferry services
- Commuter service to Watsons Bay – again hampered by vessel numbers.
- Commuters believe this is viable service.
- Council has continued to request for this service.
- Central hub is Circular Quay – Looking at other hubs to send boats from eg Eastern suburbs to Northern Suburbs without going via Circular Quay.
- Plans are dependant on Government making a decision.

6.40pm – **Question Time**

Ticketing

Representative - Action for Public Transport – Eastern Suburbs previously had a combined bus / rail ticket – asked if, in view of integrated transport plan it would be good timing to bring this facility back and supply it through newsagents.

Sydney Buses – Agree it is a good idea, this was also raised at Waverley Transport Forum. Something that needs to be reviewed, noted it was also good to prepay tickets.

Ferry Services

Representative - Rose Bay Neighbourhood Watch - Would like services starting earlier – currently ferry leaves at 6.55am – start earlier. Also like one finishing later as last one goes at 7pm. Also Watsons Bay groups request regular ferry service as it is a much quicker way of travelling to the city instead of the bus service.

Sydney Ferries – Will look into possibility of extra shift early & night service / extend operating hours. As noted previously, Watsons Bay commuter service is dependant on increase to Sydney Ferries fleet.

Representative – Darling Point Society – Ferry service good – ferries would be good from Rushcutters Bay, Elizabeth Bay and more Rose bay services.

Sydney Ferries

Trying for more services need for ferries. No where for ferries at Rose Bay, Rushcutters Bay, Elizabeth Bay etc. Sydney Maritime has taken over.

Representative – Vaucluse Progress Association - Want a ferry commuter service to Watsons Bay, but also need more buses to Watsons Bay as no parking available and to service Watsons Bay ferries. Many changes have been made to ferry run (stopping at Garden Island etc) without advising patrons. Asked if comfort of passengers who have to wait for the ferry or the bus at Watsons Bay has been considered?

Sydney Ferries – Ferry stops at extra stops outside of peak times. The issue of number of express services dependent on number of ferry stops needs to be considered. Sydney Maritime has plan to make wharves uniform (seating services etc) agree all wharves need to be standardised.

Resident – Wharves if upgraded need to ensure they are accessible, disability friendly.

Representative - Rose Bay Residents Assoc – Later ferries for Thursday shopping / Friday & Saturday night.

Cr Shoebridge – Ferries to get back to us on extending hours.

Public Transport Interchange (Bus/Rail at Bondi Junction and Edgecliff)

Resident of Vaucluse – Noted some information from performance report from internet regarding interchanges within eastern area. Recommendations included promoting increase use of public transport, need for Ministry of Transport to plan major interchanges more effectively so as to make better use of our public transport network. Noted limited local signage at interchanges especially Bondi Junction – possibility of this being addressed? Highlighted lack of protection once getting off buses at both Bondi Junction and Edgecliff interchanges. No place to pickup or drop off in New South Head Road outside Edgecliff Station.

Ministry of Transport – Group has been formed to address signage / universal consistencies, uniformity. Bondi Junction interchange plans are underway (rolled out over next few months). Plans include weather protection and intend to make this uniform as well.

Sydney Buses – Since Better Bus East – added about 62 bus services. At Edgecliff Interchange, Cityrail removed the roof because it was old & dangerous. Need to work with the Ministry to have replaced.

Ministry of Transport – Will look into issue of roof and advise Council.

Representative - Darling Point Society – Upgrade to Edgecliff interchange for rail/bus access for elderly – need escalators or lifts (or both).

Ministry of Transport – Accessibility is a priority – Edgecliff will happen as part of a rollout – timetable unavailable at this time.

Cr Shoebridge – Can we have a timeframe for the installation of an escalator at the Edgecliff interchange?

Ministry – No, do not have that information. As far as the interchange is concerned, need to clarify who has responsibility (eg Cityrail?) for interchange.

Council representative / Clover Moore representative – Many requests for both lift and escalators via many community groups and individuals.

Cr Shoebridge – Ministry to provide comments to Council to put on website.

Clover Moore representative – Also recommend using 13100 good for feedback – recommended.

Bus Services

Representative - Rose Bay Residents Assoc – Bus 359 services stopped 20 years ago – service ran from Rose Bay to Pagewood via St Vincents Hospital. Asked if this service could be reinstated – service accessed Elanora St / Iluka Rd / Manion Ave at Rose Bay where many elderly and young mothers are. Felt that this service needed to be reintroduced. Also 321 service was replaced by 386, which doesn't pass Elanora St. Suggested 359 service should go to Vaucluse but now 386 goes there.

Cr Shoebridge – Clarified question - lack of North/South links going to St Vincents Hospital, UNSW, Bondi Beach etc.

Sydney Buses – Remembers most of those routes outlined. Unfortunately low patronage meant services were discontinued or altered – they are adjusted based on need and passenger volume. Noted that would be good to move routes out of Bondi Junction interchange to Rose Bay – this may help to encourage community to use services.

Representative - Rose Bay Residents Assoc – Possibility of Route 200 bus on weekends?

Ministry of Transport – These are the type of requests they like to investigate with involvement of community groups – asked representative to stay in contact as community stakeholder / provide contact details to invite to meetings.

Representative - Darling Point Society – Asked if there was an option for smaller / half size buses for services on less in demand routes?

Ministry of Transport – Request for smaller buses comes up often. Cost still is still the equivalent of running normal/larger buses eg cost of driver, petrol, etc is still equivalent.

Sydney Buses – STA also prefer to keep one style of bus in use to maintain services / be able to interchange bus on routes. Smaller buses restricts how buses can be operated on different routes throughout the day.

Representative of Waverley Council - Oxford St pollution of buses - old buses not friendly to environment. Is upgrade of fleet to natural gas buses a possibility?

Sydney Buses - NSW Govt has pledged millions of dollars to upgrade the bus fleet. Can only retire older buses only once we have new buses. Roll out is coming, but it was noted that diesel buses still use less than 60 cars of passengers.

Cr Shoebridge – Is there an indicative timeframe?

Ministry of Transport – Rollout timeframe – unfortunately these upgrades don't happen in one hit. Old buses are replaced with new ones as the old ones reach the end of their operating life, there is a requirement on the bus service contract the buses have to not exceed a certain age.

Cr Shoebridge – Is there a decision to be made with natural gas with diesel?

Sydney Buses – All new buses are accessibility friendly (wheel chair access, buses “kneel” at kerb).

Representative – Vacluse Progress Association - Anecdote – Catching a bus to the meeting this evening from Edgecliff Station - 3 buses that should have arrived between 5.45 – 6.06 didn't come. On walking down to Council only one bus went by. Practical realities – buses turning up on time or at all, bus shelters etc. Simple things we should be able to meet. Don't let buses leave early. Meet timetables in the peak time between 6.00 & 6.30pm out of Edgecliff Centre. Also need to match bus running times to rail times.

Comments received applause.

Ministry of Transport – You have identified what we have found through feedback and community groups – as part of bus reform, that’s why we are putting in bus priority lanes etc.

Sydney Buses – On this occasion cannot understand why timetables were not met at Edgecliff Station.

Cr Shoebridge – Issue is lack of regularity of trunk route for City / William St / NSH Rd.

Sydney Buses – We have to balance number of buses running on a route with other route needs – work with Council & RTA to try & address. Most people own cars and want to park in business centres that impedes bus services. Need enforcement of bus lanes. Buses get caught in Traffic the same as everyone else. Confirmed they will look into NSH trunk route. 90% of buses leave the terminus on time – delays occur en route, and because of traffic impacts, that is difficult to manage.

Representative - Action for Public Transport – Related this back to his combined bus / rail ticket.

Representative – Darling Point Society – Is it possible to increase number of runs for Route 327?

Sydney Buses – Any bus route that is reduced in services is because of less numbers of passengers. Routes have been reduced in frequency in accordance with demand.

Resident of Rose Bay – Problem should be approached from the other way around – more buses would run smoother timetable with more buses servicing limited stops - gave example of buses coming together and not stopping as they overtake each other (buses were not going to same destination despite having same route number).

Sydney Buses – Valid point. Route 381 was brought in because of this problem with Route 380. Also large number of bus routes / numbers becomes confusing for passengers.

Resident – Why can’t route details be listed on back as well as on front and side of each bus?

Sydney Buses – Newer buses do have facilities and drivers need to program on the bus.

Representative – Darling Point Society – Cited three different routes (327, 326, 311). Requested that these services be increased. Buses not just for profit but are meant to be a service to passengers.

Sydney Buses – Take on board Route 326 comments. An ongoing problem with 311 includes issues with access via certain streets because of developments, parking etc.

Representative – Vaucluse Progress Association

Many changes made to bus routes without advising patrons eg L82 stops more often than previously, making a longer trip from Watsons Bay to City. Sydney buses have changed the L82 and extended the 380 service without advising. Notification was made 3 months after changes commences. Also need to consider requirements of passengers who cannot move easily between modes (bus /ferry). Introduction of integrated ticketing has been promised for 20 years and works well overseas. Many night time buses were cancelled following Better Buses program.

How does an organisation like the Vaucluse Progress Association get involved in the regional bus planning as a community representative? Asked if comfort of passengers who have to wait for the ferry or the bus at Watsons Bay has been considered? The Watsons Bay bus terminus is the terminus for 3 bus routes and the Sydney Explorer has 2 seats which accommodates 6, that's the terminus used for pickup for 3 services of one of the most heavily visited areas in the eastern suburbs. The 2 seats don't have a roof over them.

Ministry of Transport – How to be involved in regional forums? We will take your details to be included in mail-outs and invite lists for future forums. On the issue of interchanges / seating, this applies to all public transport. There are many agencies & stakeholders who make those decisions currently, therefore nothing has been uniform and Ministry is trying to have that changed. Currently private companies & Local Councils purchase shelters so there is no general idea what an interchange should look like. That is something we are definitely going to document to put in place.

Sydney Buses – Longer travel time for Route L82 - Timetable built to marry services and based in demand.

Representative – Vaucluse Progress Association – Clarify also had issue of more Route 380 going out of city needed.

Sydney Buses – Route 380 issue is noted. On issue of bus shelters, these belong to local Government. Request for bus shelters are referred to Council / LTC

Council representative – Pointed out Council is upgrading a number of bus shelters at the moment.

Representative – Woollahra Senior Citizens Centre – Bus route that went past Goodwin Village altered. Senior citizen centres not being serviced, particularly along Ocean Street. Route 327 was re-programmed to wander through Bellevue Hill then to Bondi Junction. Route 200 service not always reliable and senior citizens are disadvantaged. Could the service be re-instituted through Ocean Street, Queen Street then Edgecliff Road and run on the half hour, with the Route 200 to Chatswood running on the hour will give them an alternative. Request for seating at the Queen St, Edgecliff shelter.

Council representative – noted that Council own this bus stop and this will be reviewed.

Cr Shoebridge – Need for buses to service senior citizens – Do buses take this into consideration.

Sydney Buses – All of these depend on patron numbers.

Cr Shoebridge – But real need should be considered.

Ministry of Transport – This is where planning has to consider this Woollahra Senior Citizens centre.

Resident – Commuters travelling by bus and rail inconvenienced by arrival/departure times not coinciding, inconsistent timing of bus departure. Also need closer liaison with Cityrail.

Ministry of Transport – Cityrail always included in planning, even though they were not in attendance tonight.

Sydney Buses – Do try to match bus services with that of the rail network.

Cr Shoebridge – Clarified - Integrated timetable for bus & rail services needed.

Ministry – Review group is looking for real – time information boards at transport interchanges.

Manager for Transport - Holdsworth Community Centre

Also support need for lift access at Edgecliff interchange. This issue is not on the agenda, but need bus drop off at Edgecliff Centre. Holdsworth Community Centre is arranging shuttle bus between areas and hospitals servicing Woollahra areas.

Cr Shoebridge – Council will advertise community of shuttle services.

Cr Comino – 2 issues: Trunk route from Bondi Junction – City instead of bunching up buses running ½ hour service. Large proportion of elderly.

Sydney Buses – Buses bunch up in peak hour – inspectors advise services leave on time – need to monitor.

Cr Comino – Discussion between community groups has raised possibility of circular pickup to Watsons Bay ferry or same for Rose Bay circular in peak hour transport - need to make public transport more attractive to encourage using services.

Ministry of Transport – Service of ferry need to / will be part of review

Resident – Introduction of light rail?

Ministry of Transport – Planning issue, but trying to get transport options already in place working before considering other forms of transport.

Sydney Buses – Light rail will result in loss of 2 lanes of traffic on roads. Buses more flexible as they can alter their routes in event of problems on the road (traffic hold-ups, accidents etc) and buses can service schools during the day, community groups, special events. Dedicated bus lanes can help service more people / improve frequency. Recommend lobbying for this instead of light rail.

Resident of Rose Bay – Light rail is cleaner etc.

Ministry of Transport – Trying to fix things / don't rule any options out.

Cr Shapiro – Close meeting 8.10pm.