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Parramatta Light Rail EIS Submission

This scope of this document relates to the Phase 1 of the Parramatta light rail network (Parramatta Light Rail Phase 1) and to expected subsequent phases of the network, including extensions to Epping, and to a Castle Hill line.

Disclosure

My family and another family own a dry cleaning business, Epic Dry Cleaning & Laundry, which is located at 24 Railway Parade, Westmead. This business is within 50m of the proposed Westmead Station LR Stop.

General observations

It makes sense to preface this feedback with general observations relating to the good design and operation of the entire Parramatta light rail network, whether this be in Phase 1 or in later phases.

Tight integration with other transport modes

Wherever practicable, the Parramatta Light Rail network should integrate tightly and seamlessly with existing transport modes, preferably at well-defined interchanges. Passengers should be able to transfer between modes conveniently, safely (e.g., well illuminated, monitored), with minimal walking, minimal crossing of streets, and well protected from the elements. Examples in Parramatta Light Rail Phase 1 include:

- The Westmead Station LR Stop and Westmead Railway Station. As far as practicable, provide a covered walkway between the Westmead Station LR stop and Westmead Railway Station.
- The Westmead Station LR Stop and T-way buses. As far as practicable, provide a bus stop adjacent to the Westmead Station LR stop, and/or provide a covered walkway between tram and bus stops.
- The Westmead Hospital LR Stop and T-Way buses. Allow T-Way buses to drive on the tram tracks at this point to enable pickup and drop-off at the same stop for both trams and buses.
- The Parramatta Square LR Stop, Parramatta Railway Station and buses in the vicinity. As the LR stop is some distance from the station, a clear and direct means of transferring between modes needs to be provided.

Facilities at stops

Each stop needs to be safe, comfortable and convenient. Shelters should provide:

- effective protection against sun, wind and rain;
- seating, especially for elderly and disabled passengers;
- locality information, including a map and signage indicating directions to points of interest and likely destinations; and
- route information, clearly showing the network and interchanges with other transport modes.

Facilities need to be resistant to vandalism and graffiti, and need to be maintained in a clean and tidy condition. Facilities could include decorative works associated with the local community, such as art from local schools.

Access to stops

Access to stops should always be safe. Where it is necessary to cross the road, consider pedestrian activated traffic signals. Conventional 3 phase (green, yellow, red) signals will impact traffic flow. Consider instead:

- "pelican" crossings (3 phase, with a flashing yellow light);
- 2 phase yellow and red signals. These would operate in the same way as left/right turn signals the which are becoming quite common, or like pedestrian activated lights at roundabouts;
- "wig-wag" pedestrian lights, as are common in Melbourne (but flashing only when pedestrian activated); or
- a single flashing yellow light (as can be found in Toronto).

Traffic impacts

Careful consideration needs to be given to traffic impacts, especially on busy narrow roads (or sections of roads). Traffic flow improvements should be implemented wherever possible – there is a vast catalogue of low hanging fruit which could be done quickly and cheaply. However, as long as population increases indefinitely – regardless of whether additional motorways are built or existing motorways extended – traffic will become more problematic.

To help ease congestion, consideration should be given to allowing certain buses to drive on tram tracks at certain locations.

Right turns

Right turns are problematic as these can result in cars blocking trams. Consider solutions such as:

- hook turns (as used in Melbourne), or variants thereof;
- detours (such as a left turn one block earlier); or
- right turn bays designed such that cars do not block trams.

These should all be accompanied by appropriate signage.

Visual impacts

Objections may be raised as to the visual impact of overhead cables used to supply power to trams. These may be mitigated by:

- supplying power from underground;
- minimising the volume or overhead wiring (e.g., by hanging cables from posts located between tracks; or
- in exchange for the impact of overhead cables for trams, move other cables (domestic electricity, phone and internet) below ground.

Kinks and sharp turns

Avoid kinks and sharp turns which could slow down services and result in unpleasant noise impacts wherever possible.

Regarding the 3.6.6.4 preferred design option

I would strongly support alignment along Noller Parade, which is identified as Option 1. However, Figure 3.21 seems to incorrectly show the Noller Parade alignment as Option 2. This might have resulted, and might continue to result, in some confusion.

I would support a route consistent with the Option 1 alignment, with the line heading eastbound from George St., cutting through a corner of Queen's Wharf Reserve, proceeding into Noller Pde., and then into Tramway Ave.

An old map (date unknown) showing the alignment of the steam tramway in this precinct is included for reference.

Extensions to the Parramatta Light Rail Phase 1 route

Phase 2 to Olympic Park

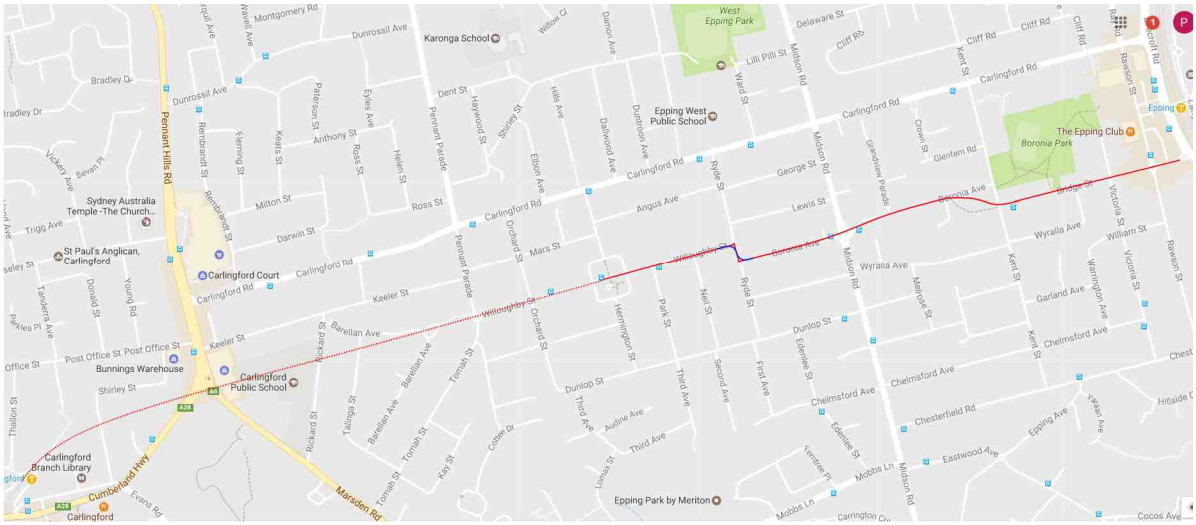
At Olympic Park, it will be important to integrate tightly with heavy rail and any future metro rail stations.

Possible Phase 3 to Epping

An extension to Epping Station is essential – without this, the Carlingford line is “orphaned”. The long mooted Epping – Parramatta rail link will thus also be realised.

A proposed routes is shown on the map below. This route:

- avoids a level crossing on Pennant Hills Rd. by means of a tunnel from Carlingford Station to Willoughby St.;
- avoids the heavily trafficked Carlingford Rd.; and
- provides a relatively direct route with a minimum of kinks and sharp turns.



The line could further proceed as a single track on the western kerbside lane of Beecroft Rd. right up to the pedestrian overpass. The two tracks on Bridge St. would merge into a single track, turning left from Bridge St. into Beecroft Rd., and proceeding north along the kerbside lane, terminating at the pedestrian overpass. This kerbside lane is currently only used for parking. Tight integration with Epping Station could thus be achieved. Pictures of this lane are shown below; the first shows the view looking south (towards Bridge St.), and the second looking north.

Proposed line to Castle Hill

A line to Castle Hill was proposed in 2014 by Parramatta City Council. Opportunities exist now to prepare in advance for this, but unless urgent action is taken, these opportunities may be lost forever, or avoidable costs will be incurred.

Route

The line should follow the route proposed in Part 2 of the Western Sydney Light Rail Network Feasibility Report published by Parramatta City Council in August 2013 (see p4). I would call attention to the fact that the proposed Castle Hill line proceeds from Windsor Rd. to Victoria Ave. (through the Castle Hill Trading Zone), then to Carrington Rd. (with an interchange at Showground Station), then up Showground Rd. and left onto Old Northern Rd.

The Castle Hill Trading Zone is a large commercial zone which is distant from Showground Station – much too far for most commuters and customers to walk. A light rail line passing through this zone would provide interchanges with the North West Metro at Showground Station and at Castle Hill Station. The line would also conveniently link Castle Towers (and the Castle Hill Town Centre) with Castle Hill Trading Zone. This is illustrated below.

The alternative which was discussed at the time was for the line to proceed along Old Northern Rd. (from the intersection with Windsor Rd.). This is not recommended, as:

- it would not service the Castle Hill Trading Zone;
- it would result in congestion along the relatively narrow (and already congested) Old Northern Rd.; and
- Castle Hill Town Centre (including Castle Towers) and the Castle Hill Trading Zone would remain unlinked.

Imminent lost opportunities – Showground Rd.

Significant road works are currently being undertaken to widen Showground Rd. This road could easily be designed to accommodate the proposed light rail line. If provision is made ***immediately*** to accommodate this, future costs can be avoided.

Imminent lost opportunities – Castle Towers expansion

It might be desirable to incorporate a tram stop within the extension to Castle Towers (somewhere near Pennant St.). The owner of the shopping mall might well be persuaded to contribute significantly to the cost of the line if this offer is made. However, as plans are already well underway, discussions should begin ***immediately***, otherwise, this opportunity will be forever lost.