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Wednesday, 17 December 2014

Coles Supermarkets Australia Pty Limited
6 Giffnock Avenue
MACQUARIE PARK NSW 2113

Attention: Alicia Long, Regional Leasing Manager

Re: World Square Light Rail Stop

Dear Alicia,

We refer to the recent decision of the State Government to remove the previously proposed Light Rail Station within World Square and note your request to provide preliminary 'high level' advice in relation to this decision. While we understand that the decision will have significant implications for Coles, it also has implications for World Square more generally as well as the community that is served by the current tenants more widely. The following observations are made:

- i. Within the CBD generally, the proposed light rail stations are at regular intervals that interface with transport hubs and major destinations, with 10 stations proposed between Circular Quay and Central Station over a distance of about 3 kilometres. This is an average spacing of 375 metres which represents a maximum walking distance of (say) 200 metres for customers/shoppers. This will serve a large proportion of the CBD Catchment, including direct access to World Square. The proposed deletion of the World Square Station will result in a separating distance of about 600 metres (between Town Hall Station and Chinatown Station). This will involve walking distances of up to 300 metres and will significantly reduce the amenity for the local catchment between these two stations, but particularly World Square.
- ii. While there may be significant engineering challenges relating to the delivery of the World Square Station, the provision of more regularly spaced stations will ultimately be the single most important factor that underpins the success of the light rail. The importance of this will be further underscored by future projected development and associated population increases within the CBD. To this extent, the loss of a station with increased interval distances and increased walking distances is considered counter intuitive to sound transport planning and therefore is a lost opportunity, irrespective of the specific commercial factors that affect Coles.
- iii. The Coles supermarket is itself a full line supermarket which, by definition, provides a wide range of goods on offer and this is associated with relatively large (i.e. bulky) average size 'shops', with a reasonably wide catchment area. At the present time, most customers walk to Coles from within the immediate locality, particularly for smaller 'shops' and convenience items. For larger shops, most customers rely on the public parking within World Square, noting however that Coles has no dedicated parking for its customers.



- iv. Current State Government policy is to promote alternate (non-car) travel modes. The opportunity is now available to enable direct access to World Square (which is a destination in itself) by a much wider catchment, being the catchment generally within the CBD that is served by the light rail. This would enable many more shoppers to make use of Coles, with an expanded catchment that will also support patronage on the light rail generally. For example, it will enable more of the existing customers who are undertaking a large 'shop' and who presently drive to use the light rail, as well as encouraging new customers who would not presently consider shopping at Coles due to the excessive walking distances.
- v. Conversely, the deletion of the light rail station to the World Square complex will require continued and possible increased reliance on cars within the CBD, particularly for customers undertaking large 'shops'. Again, this is a lost opportunity.
- vi. We are not aware of the nature of the specific engineering challenges that evidently form the basis of the decision to remove World Square Station. In our view, these would need to be virtually insurmountable given the importance of achieving safe and convenient access to the expected CBD catchment. In this regard, it may be that more weight needs to be given to the broader, longer term vision for the CBD as it continues to grow as an international city, which may require investment and application of resources beyond what may be suggested by the current land use mix, population levels, building footprints etc.
- vii. In terms of the more localised issues that the deletion of the station creates, we note that the walking distance to/from the light rail station for World Square tenants and customers will increase from about 200 metres to 300 metres. At an average walking speed of 1.2m/s as adopted by RMS for pedestrian facility design purposes, this will increase the walking time from about 166 seconds to 250 seconds, which is a 50% increase. This is a particular issue for those customers of Coles who are undertaking large 'shops' and is expected to result in a reduction in trade that would otherwise occur. These shoppers are more likely to use a car as an alternate travel mode.

In summary, the loss of the World Square station serving what is a major destination (probably more significant than the QVB) that includes not only Coles but also a hotel, extensive retail and residential uses is considered to reflect a sub-optimal approach to planning for the CBD, which will obviously come under increased pressure for continued development. A commitment to regularly spaced stations is required and should not be readily deflected by engineering considerations, unless all available options have been thoroughly investigated. Retro-fitting a station later in response to a demonstrated demand will be too late and the resulting separating distance of 600 metres between Town Hall Station and Chinatown Station is at best a lost opportunity and at worst lacks the vision and commitment that is required to maximise non-car travel modes and underpin the financial success of the light rail project.

Please contact the undersigned should you have any queries or require any further information regarding the above.

Yours faithfully,

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Graham Pindar
Director