

Response of the Committee for Sydney to the **CBD & South East** **Light Rail EIS**

December 2013



The Committee for Sydney

The Committee for Sydney is an independent think tank and champion for the whole of Sydney. We take a leading role in shaping public policy and promoting initiatives to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for the whole of Sydney, beyond the electoral cycle. Our aim is the enhancement of the economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions that make Sydney a competitive and creative global city. Our members represent a cross section of Sydney's community including global enterprises, not for profit organisations, SMEs, strategically minded local authorities and the main arts and sporting organisations. The City of Sydney is a member, as are a number of transport operators serving the CBD. Our focus is on improving the prosperity and liveability of Sydney for all - now and in the future.

Whilst our spatial focus is pan-Sydney the continued success and productivity of the CBD are core concerns of the Committee as is ensuring Sydney flourishes in its key role as Australia's global gateway. The CBD is home to the majority of Australia's most productive and globally competitive sectors, and securing its continued vitality is of critical importance to the state and indeed the nation. Ensuring the CBD has the right policy framework and investment in infrastructure is a matter of the highest importance.

As the national resources boom moderates, the importance of a flourishing Sydney CBD can only increase. Adding to its significance is recent evidence from international studies of the increasing importance of agglomeration of key high labour-productivity sectors in global city CBDs and more local evidence that most of the net job creation in knowledge economy jobs in Sydney in the last 5 years has been in and around Sydney's CBD.

A large proportion of our member organisations are located in the CBD and /or their operations depend on accessing the CBD. We also have in membership the Australian Turf Club, Australian Rugby Union, National Rugby League and the Sydney Swans all of whom are keen supporters of the light rail because of the improved accessibility to Moore Park and Randwick for both major events and everyday uses.

Finally our approach is informed also by members that have global reputations as transport consultants and operators working on the design and procurement of light rail projects internationally. All members are keen to share best practice so as to help maximize the benefits of light rail and to mitigate the impact of the construction phase.

1. Introduction

A potential game-changing project which CfS evidence shows Sydney needs

A survey of our members in December confirmed that Sydney had a new momentum but that investing in public transport services and access to the CBD remain top priorities.

This was reinforced by other recent CfS research on global talent undertaken in collaboration with the NSW Government. The need for improvements to public transport in Sydney emerged as a key finding supported by the over 3000 international respondents who took part in the survey (see below).

Such improvements not only make Sydney more attractive to vital global talent and indeed enable higher density development of the kind the city needs. They make the city more liveable and productive for those who live here already. For the Committee, continued improvement in Sydney's transport capacity and networks lies at the heart of the competitiveness and success of the city. The light rail is a potential game-changer in this context. Properly managed – an important caveat – the light rail can bring economic and environmental gains for businesses, commuters and the wider community, including tourists and business visitors.

The 'ease of getting around' (including public transit, roads, parking, cycling and pedestrian friendly streets) was identified as the second most important factor influencing locational decisions, with 94.6% of respondents ranking the issues as 'very important' or 'important'.

Top 10 most important factors influencing locational decisions

Factor	Per cent*	Category
Opportunities to work on interesting and challenging projects	97.5%	Work
Ease of getting around (public transit, roads, parking, cycling, pedestrian friendly streets)	94.6%	Lifestyle
Safety and security	94.3%	Lifestyle
Ability to work with other highly-skilled people	94.0%	Work
Remuneration or earnings after tax	93.3%	Personal
A workplace that supports a good work-life balance	93.3%	Work
Pleasant and sustainable natural and built environment (climate, air quality, open space, parks, beaches, quality architecture and sustainable design)	92.7%	Lifestyle
Cost of living	91.9%	Personal
Guaranteed job offer prior to arrival	91.1%	Work
Local work ethic and professionalism	90.5%	Work

Source: CIS GTH Survey 2013, n=2567

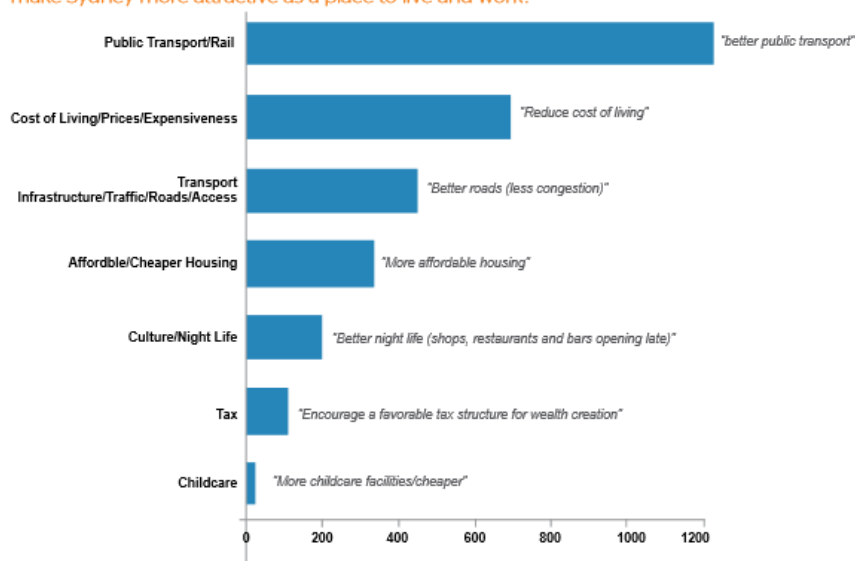
* Respondents were presented 40 factors to rate. The percent indicates the proportion that marked a factor very important or important.

Source: Committee for Sydney, 2013.

Survey participants were also asked 'what two things would you change to make Sydney a more attractive place to live and work'. The responses clearly indicated that improving public transport, particularly rail services, was the top priority to make Sydney a more attractive place to live and work.'

SURVEY RESULTS: What are 2 things you would change to make Sydney more attractive as a place to live and work?

Figure 12: Survey results: 'What are 2 things you would change to make Sydney more attractive as a place to live and work?'



Source: CIS GTH survey 2013

Source: Committee for Sydney, 2013.

It is the results of this survey and the extensive evidence which links good public transport accessibility to agglomeration and productivity that provides the context for our submission and support for improved public transport in Sydney and particularly the CBD & South East Light Rail (CSELR) project. With careful planning and engagement with business and the community, the kinds of positive economic and public benefits we have seen light rail projects achieve in other global cities can be realized in Sydney: and be a catalyst for further light rail innovation in for example Western Sydney.

Light rail can transform the quality of the environment and travelling experience and therefore the economy of the places it travels through. With the right approach to design, construction, traffic management and consultation light rail can provide new opportunities for businesses along the route and provide benefits for Sydneysiders wanting to access the CBD and nationally significant health, education and sporting precincts on route including Moore Park, Royal Randwick, Prince of Wales Hospital and UNSW.

Importantly, given recent concerns with security in the CBD, the anticipated increased frequency of passenger flows in and out of the CBD enabled by light rail outside the peak particularly in the evenings, has the potential to support 'spreading the peak' for journeys in and out of the CBD and therefore supporting a healthier and indeed safer night-time economy. The increased accessibility together with the opportunity to develop a greater range of outdoor eating and entertainment opportunities in pedestrianised sections of the route will support the diversification of Sydney's evening offer and increased activity and therefore surveillance and community safety.

We are pleased that the key findings of the business case have reinforced the Committee's position, demonstrating that the project will have a positive impact on the economy and is value for money.

However, the significant challenges of temporary disruption and congestion caused during the construction of light rail need to be honestly and rigorously identified and dealt with. There will need to be best in class approaches to deal with these challenges and to engage imaginatively and collaboratively with all stakeholders. Clearly there will be significant 'pain' which needs to be need to be proactively managed if the 'gains' are to be fully realised.

In this context it is essential that Sydneysiders fully understand the risk of inaction and the threat to Sydney's CBD of not improving public transport access in the manner suggested. The needs for and benefits of the project need to be clearly and repeatedly articulated and championed by key players in government – across government at the highest level - business and the wider community.

City Centre Access Strategy (CCAS)

The CESLR is obviously not a stand-alone project and we commend the preparation of the draft City Centre Access Strategy (CCAS) as an essential basis for success of light rail and to 'keep Sydney moving'. The Committee's response to the EIS should be considered in conjunction with our views on the CCAS as it reviews many of the strategies and initiatives in the CCAS that will help manage the impact both during construction of light rail and whilst the service is operational. The Committee suggests additional initiatives such as Freight Quality Partnerships (a UK model of supporting collaboration between stakeholders and innovation in the freight industry) to improve the efficiency and reduce the impact of deliveries.

As we have reflected on the challenges of delivering light rail, particularly in the CBD, the Committee wants to stress explicitly the need for the CCAS to have a 'two phase' approach: the first phase during the construction of the light rail and the second phase after its completion. Whilst many of the challenges will be the same across both phases, a different and dedicated focus will be required to manage congestion and disruption during the construction period. The CCAS will be tested by how it responds to the different congestion challenges in both phases.

Importance of partnership

The Committee acknowledges the strong partnerships formed between Transport for NSW, the City of Sydney, the Department of Planning & Infrastructure, Urban Growth and other important cultural and educational institutions. We applaud all stakeholders for their collaborative efforts thus far.

This partnership together with the strongest collaboration with business and organisations such as the Committee for Sydney will be essential in planning for and managing the impact of the construction phase and in maintaining public support during construction.

A note on communication and engagement

The biggest threat to the project is that community and business affected by disruption and construction lose sympathy and support drops because of poor communication and engagement: Moreover that engagement needs to be deep and real and involve both the community and business, not just in 'consultation', but in problem-solving and innovation. This engagement must continue through design and delivery to maximise the opportunity and community outcomes. The approach to construction and congestion management needs to view the community and business as a resource to help shape improved outcomes, collaboratively.

Finally, the implementation will be disruptive and we will expect strong community engagement to help manage this disruption.

The case for the benefits of the project – and the costs of inaction – will need to be continually made and the promoters and deliverers of the light rail project will need to prioritise

communication and engagement if success is to be achieved. This project is high profile and challenging and will require the skills and approaches which reflect this.

Short term pain, long term gain – the need to keep Sydney moving

Construction of the CSELR sends a clear message that Sydney is *on the move*. We do recognise that there will be considerable pain during the construction, but we also acknowledge the massive long-term benefits of light rail for Sydney. The headline numbers in the business case are compelling:

- A significant number of car users (17 per cent) expected to be lured away from their private vehicles and onto public transport: with all the environmental benefits of this modal shift
- Every dollar invested in the project will bring \$2.50 worth of benefits over 30 years
- \$308 million in environmental benefits
- 10,000 jobs to be created

Sydney is a modern, global city but needs a world class transport system to remain competitive internationally. Light rail has the capacity to improve the quality of the environment and the economic prosperity of the areas it travels through providing passengers with a reliable high quality public transport option.

Beyond 'business as usual'

The CfS survey results and work by others indicates the important of quality public transport to the competitiveness and attractiveness of a global city.

The existing CBD bus network is confusing and has limited capacity to grow to meet increased demand for journeys into and through the CBD. If Sydney were to continue *business as usual* without the intervention of major infrastructure project such as the CSELR, commuters, visitors and tourists would continue to face unreliable journey times, extensive delays and severe congestion whether they use public transport or private vehicles.

Already the 'walls' of buses in the city particularly along George Street have a considerable impact on the quality of the environment for pedestrians and restrict the types of uses attracted to the precinct, particularly high value retail and outdoor dining. As bus numbers increase this will become worse and continue to have an impact on both the environment and economy of Sydney.

Collectively this will have a serious impact on the liveability and competitiveness of Sydney as a place to invest, do business, live or visit. Interestingly, there is emerging evidence of increased interest from high quality retail investors along George Street in anticipation of the benefits of light rail in the medium term despite the short term concerns.

2. Key issues for further consideration

Light Rail is an important game changing project for Sydney but that there are some serious risks associated with both the construction and operational stages that need to be managed carefully.

There will obviously be considerable pain in the short term to realise the gains associated with light rail, particularly during the construction phase. This is exacerbated when combined with numerous construction projects in and around the CBD programed for the next 5 years. It will be essential to take the community on the journey.

As previously stated, the Committee for Sydney welcomes the proposal to create a City Centre Transport Taskforce. Managing the impact on congestion levels during the construction of light rail together with the numerous other construction projects will be one of the top priorities for the Taskforce suggested in the CCAS. It is essential that this is well- resourced and well-led and given real power to fight congestion. The draft program of initiatives 'to keep Sydney moving' should be made available ASAP to reassure stakeholders and provide them with an opportunity to contribute to the program. Private sector representation and a public transport user group/ social media network would be a welcome addition to the taskforce

While best in class communication and engagement will help mitigate many of the short term adverse impacts TfNSW needs to be transparent – and steadfast - that there will need to be some pain to realise the significant gains associated with the project. Sydneysiders will respond to ambitious, determined and collaborative leadership if the challenges are honestly identified and they will make their contribution to ensuring the success of a project which can deliver a step-change in benefits to the economic performance and congestion management of their city.

The following issues are divided into construction and operational issues which require further discussion and possibly investigation.

Issues during construction

- The City Centre Transport Taskforce will need to work with partners and stakeholders to **develop a plan to 'keep Sydney moving' during the construction phase** based on global best practice in the management of street works and other major infrastructure projects
- This **congestion management plan** should include initiatives to spread the peak, education programs, freight and delivery initiatives, dedicated resource for road space management etc.
- **Best practice should be absorbed and incorporated from previous projects** across Australia and abroad on **minimising disruption**, particularly minimising the period of time roads are left open, phasing of construction and how congestion is managed. The various bidders should be incentivised to include innovation through the procurement process.
- The construction program needs to ensure that the **impact on business and users of the City is minimised**. There may be opportunities to include contractual controls to ensure that contractors minimise disruption and limits on period that road space and precincts are disrupted.

- There is a the need for an **exemplar communication strategy**, use of social media etc to share information, get feedback and monitor the impacts and solicit ideas to mitigate the impacts
- There is a need to develop **innovative campaigns to support and promote businesses** during construction

What CfS can do to help during the construction period

- Be a conduit for communication with our members and their employees
- Pilot a survey of members' staff to get a better understanding of how and why commuters are making travel decisions
- Promote apps and other information services with members
- Be a sounding board for proposed initiatives
- Provide constructive feedback on the impacts and how they are being managed

Issues for the design and operation of the project

- More work is required to ensure we deliver **quality interchanges** with other modes particularly in the CBD – these should be simple to navigate and include good information and way-finding, integrated ticketing between modes, where possible without penalising passengers for changing modes.
- Need for sufficient **prioritisation for light rail vehicles at intersections** to deliver journey time savings and maximise the benefits of the investment in the system. With greater priority it may be possible to achieve more than a 17% transfer from cars to light rail and potentially an even greater reduction in congestion. The current scheme should be benchmarked against other global best practice. Only 2% of journey time on the Gold Coast light rail will be spent stopped at lights.
- **Reduce the number of buses in the CBD** - We need to better understand the interfaces with the bus plans/strategies and also the City Centre Access Strategy. The end goal should be to reduce the wall of buses entering into and travelling through the CBD and the adverse environmental and economic impacts this causes. It will be important for the light rail project to be just the first of a series of schemes to reduce the dependence on buses for access to the CBD.
- **Actively exploit the light rail to improve passenger flows in and out of the CBD in the evenings as part of a broader strategy to animate the city and diversify the night time economy while improving community safety**
- **Increase focus on improving Circular Quay** - the replacement of large volumes of buses and numerous bus routes with an easy to navigate light rail system will be invaluable at Circular Quay which is used by a large number of first time or infrequent users. However, the planning of this precinct requires special policy and planning attention together with improved bus circulation and layover and other major development projects which will change the character of the area. The focus should be on de-cluttering and minimising the impact of the terminating vehicles and the potential barrier they will create when laying over. The Committee is already a focus of public-private discussions involving key interests and agencies in Circular Quay and will continue to be available to facilitate such discussions with key players in the precinct.

- It is essential that a design solution for terminating services is carefully planned to maintain pedestrian access to and views through to Circular Quay. There is also potential to better connect and enhance the quality of the pedestrian environment on streets leading to Circular Quay.
- **Moore Park stop location** - It is anticipated that the provision of light rail to Moore Park will dramatically improve access to games and other attractions in the precinct and reduce the dependence on private cars to access the site. However, for this to happen, light rail has to be more convenient than driving. The Committee is concerned about the possible relocation of the proposed stop (included in the EIS) further south so as not to encroach on a training ground. The current location is in a more central location and as such seems to be preferable. It is hoped that the various parties can come to the table to establish a solution which fits everyone's needs but does not compromise the potential accessibility improvement to the site.
- **Anzac Road pedestrian bridge** - whilst not part of the EIS, in the Committee view, this is an important part of the project and the location of the Moore park stop impacts on the design and success of the structure. An innovative approach should be developed to the proposed pedestrian crossing at the Moore Park stop. The crossing should provide a landmark entrance to the precinct, generate revenue and create an innovative 'green link' between the two areas of open space on either side of Anzac parade. A precedent for this approach is the 'Greenbridge' in Mile End, London (below). This creates a green link and cycle path across the road between the two parklands.



<http://www.bridges.mottmac.com/bridgeprojects/specialistprojects/thegreenbridge/>

....This approach, as opposed to a standard pedestrian bridge, also provides an attractive opportunity to integrate the crossing directly with the light rail station, potentially without the need for steps. There is also an opportunity to include revenue generating space for example for retail, cafes or sports-related facilities. (See below again at Mile End)

http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgs/451-500/461_parks/mile_end_park/green_bridge.aspx



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mile_End_Park

Note this approach would utilise the spoil from the cut and cover tunnel and create an opportunity to provide facilities and viewing areas for people watching activities on the practice ovals or parkland. The current location for the light rail stop is better option to enable such connectivity, integration and a central landmark entrance.

Overall CCAS

- The final version of the CCAS should be phased to include initiatives to address the impacts in the CBD firstly during construction and secondly when the scheme is operational.
- It is understood at this stage that the government's approach is to focus on improving public transport services to incentivise a shift to public transport but in the context of the implementation of light rail and the delivery of WestConnex, it will be important to start the conversation about managing demand and the impact of existing road pricing mechanisms. Consideration should also be given to the impact of current and future policies on availability and price of off street car parking, particularly in the peak periods

Land use

- Urban renewal and growth along the corridor are key outputs for the project which should be incentivised to maximise the benefits created by government investment in the project. TfNSW should continue to work with DP&I, local authorities and UrbanGrowth to identify opportunities for UAPs along the route and ensure that a whole of government approach is taken to maximising the value of existing government assets along the route for jobs, housing and other community infrastructure to support growth.
- Stabling facilities should be designed to be 'future proof', to allow development above the stabling facilities, if this is considered appropriate at a later stage.