

Light Rail Route Options

Westmead to Macquarie Park

This submission focuses on future options for an extension of light rail to Macquarie Park, given planning for the Westmead to Carlingford line is already well advanced. There are **major drawbacks** with the route initially shortlisted by the Government to go via **Carlingford and Epping** to Macquarie Park when compared with the route originally proposed in Parramatta City Council's Feasibility Study 2013 that would go **via Eastwood**.

A Carlingford/Epping route

- A light rail route to Carlingford, has merit in that it will utilise the existing heavy rail corridor. However, in terms of eventual extension to Macquarie Park, it simply does not compare favourably on any of the key public transport measures with a route via **Eastwood**.
- A major drawback of a Carlingford/Epping to Macquarie Park option would be a **longer more circuitous route** than a route via Eastwood.
- Secondly, proper consideration needs to be given to the **eastern portion** of the route, from Carlingford to Epping and then on to Macquarie Park. This is problematic given the need for light rail to run at street level. The line itself would have to negotiate a steep gradient from Carlingford station, then cross Pennant Hills Rd and somehow traverse an already congested Carlingford Rd to reach the Epping town centre. The Epping CBD itself is already suffering from congestion and much higher density is planned. This will make this section of the route an **engineering nightmare and a prohibitively expensive**.
- Thirdly, there is the prospect of having to **change from light to heavy rail** at Epping station, as it's most likely the light rail line will terminate there. To date, the Government hasn't said what's planned – it's quite possible the route will actually terminate at Carlingford or even proceed to follow the heavy rail underground corridor from Carlingford to Epping, still involving an Epping change for passengers proceeding on to Macquarie Park. Either way, changing transport modes substantially comprises the whole purpose of the project, and indeed, you'd have to wonder how commuters will benefit.
- A light rail **duplicating** the existing heavy rail line from Epping to Macquarie Park might alleviate this problem, but then duplication of heavy and light rails - with the two lines basically running in parallel and involving extensive engineering works to cross the heavy rail line at Epping – **is not feasible**.

An Eastwood route

- A **route via Eastwood**, travelling through the heart of the Parramatta and Ryde local government areas, would be the **most direct connection** between Parramatta and Macquarie Park, especially benefiting residents in these two communities using the service. It would make use of the planned Carlingford

light rail line to Dundas and an already existing corridor, the County Road Reservation through Eastwood and Ryde.

- An **Eastwood route** would provide an **entirely new public transport corridor** across the region, and not duplicate heavy rail services as the Carlingford/Epping option might potentially do. It would also provide a major boost to the Eastwood town centre, now left to languish – largely a result of inaction by Ryde Council - while other nearby centres move ahead.
- While the link between the two major centres, Parramatta and Macquarie Park is a long term priority, **transport needs of residents** along the line are also important. Eastwood itself is served by heavy rail, but a light rail route via Eastwood would travel through many areas that are quite distant from Eastwood station (viz Kissing Point Rd & Stewart St, the County Rd reservation between 1st Avenue & Epping Rd). Light rail by itself would benefit these residents to the same extent as those living in the Carlingford area. An **'interchange' at Eastwood** (a major northern line station), would further benefit commuters making the light/heavy rail change.
- An **Eastwood route** would cross the lower end of Brush Park at Rutledge Street (west & east). This area, a gully, is very much underutilised by the community due to the terrain and limited accessibility. A two track viaduct would have minimal impact on the main upper end of the park (which is not heritage listed), any such impact being substantially outweighed by the wider environmental and other benefits of a new public transport system, which in any event being a shorter route, would have less overall environmental impact than a route via Carlingford and Epping. There are, moreover, studies have confirmed there are no significant geotechnical considerations impacting the construction of a viaduct.
- Finally, at its eastern end, an **Eastwood route** would meet up directly with the **Herring Rd urban activation precinct**, providing an effective transport solution for the targeted population growth in this area. This is precisely what good transport planning should do - service areas where there is a transport shortfall while putting the infrastructure in place to meet potential urban growth.
- A **two track light rail line is not a multi-lane highway** as envisaged when the County Rd reservation through Eastwood and Ryde was originally gazetted. Light rail is quite, efficient and unobtrusive to neighbouring communities.
- Importantly, an **Eastwood route** would still accommodate light rail to Carlingford as a spur line, but for the abovementioned reasons this line should not extend to Epping.
- Both route options would involve property resumptions, but a **Carlingford/Epping route** would involve **significantly more resumptions** than an Eastwood connection because the latter would utilise the existing County Rd reservation. It is essential the Department of Planning study this reservation more closely to better assess future route options.

On all these measures alone, it is abundantly clear that an **Eastwood light rail route would be far superior** to a route to Macquarie Park via Carlingford and Epping. The Government is urged to revisit the route options as part of its investigation into a future light rail extension to Epping and Macquarie Park.

Ryde-Eastwood Light Rail Development Group