



A submission on the

**Northern Sydney Freight Corridor Program
Epping to Thornleigh Third Track**

Prepared by EcoTransit Sydney

4 November 2012

Authorised by the Executive Committee of EcoTransit Sydney

The submission consists of 4 pages.

Contact person for this submission:

Mr John Bignucolo
Secretary, EcoTransit Sydney
E: contact@ecotransit.org.au

Contact details for EcoTransit Sydney

PO Box 630

Milsons Point

NSW 1565

E: contact@ecotransit.org.au

W: www.ecotransit.org.au

EcoTransit Sydney

PO Box 630 Milsons Point
NSW 1565
ecotransit.org.au



Director – Infrastructure Projects
Epping to Thornleigh Third Track Project – SSI 5132
NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

4 November 2012

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find enclosed the submission from EcoTransit Sydney on the Epping to Thornleigh Third Track project — Part of the Northern Sydney Freight Corridor Program.

EcoTransit Sydney¹ is a long standing, community-based, non-party political, public transport and active transport advocacy group. We are independent and do not represent — nor receive any assistance from — any private interests.

Yours sincerely,

John Bignucolo
Secretary
EcoTransit Sydney

¹ www.ecotransit.org.au

Submission

The need to amplify the main northern line from Strathfield to Hornsby has for many years been known to RailCorp, its predecessors and Governments of New South Wales. The work to quadruple this section of the main northern line commenced in the 1940s, with the work on a new four-track bridge over the Parramatta River being started and relief roads between West Ryde and Epping being implemented.

Work ceased on this important project when funds were scarce in the early 1950s, the work on the new bridge was stopped in 1952. It took another 24 years before work on the new bridge commenced again, in 1976 and another 4 years before it was opened to traffic in 1980. However, the Government of the day saw fit to complete the bridge for 2 tracks only, even though the piers were built to take 4 tracks!

The need to quadruple the line lessened during the period from the mid 1950s to the 1980s, with the introduction of double deck suburban and interurban trains. This resulted in higher capacity being achieved with the same number of train movements. The freight capacity of the line also increased with the introduction of electric locomotives and longer trains.

The point has again been reached when the line is at capacity during the peak periods, the same period during which the private freight operators want pathways for their trains. This was not a problem when freight was run by the Government's rail operating authority, but now during the time of "open access" and the need to compete with alternative transport modes, freight and passenger movements come into conflict.

The majority of northbound long-distance freight movement on the Main Northern Line originates in Melbourne and is destined for Brisbane. Approximately 80% of the long distance freight on this route is in this category.

The long-term solution to ease the conflict between freight and passenger movements between Strathfield and Hornsby is to construct the Inland Freight Line from Melbourne to Brisbane. However, in the short-term, the current proposal to build a down relief line from Epping to Thornleigh and to build a grade separated junction at North Strathfield, is essential for the efficiency of the private freight operators and the productivity of the Nation.

EcoTransit Sydney supports the current proposal to construct the 7 kilometre north bound third track, from Epping to Thornleigh and the grade separation at North Strathfield. This is not the ideal solution to amplify the capacity of this line; the full quadruplication of the line from Strathfield to Hornsby would be preferable. This would allow more pathways for suburban, interurban and freight trains, now and into the future.

EcoTransit also appreciates that the residents of Beecroft and other suburbs along the line have legitimate concerns regarding increase noise levels and increased levels of pollution from heavy freight trains that will use the new line.

Initially, the overall impact of noise and pollution on the residents will not increase, as the number of train movements will remain the same. In fact, the noise impact will probably diminish with scheduled freight movements that are now forced to run after the peak period are able to be re-scheduled to run through the area, during the afternoon.

This will not diminish the impact of pollution from the current aging diesel locomotive fleet that the private operators use to haul their trains. The alternative if the third track is not built, will be a continuous shift of freight from rail to road transport, which would result in higher levels of pollution. There would be 100 more “B-Double” trucks on the roads through the area, for every freight train that ceased to run.

To lessen the impact of the third track on the residents of the affected area, EcoTransit Sydney recommends that the Government improve the project by:

- Continuing the line past Thornleigh to at least Asquith, allowing freight trains to continue up the grade without stopping. This would eliminate potential noise from trains that may have to re-start on the steep grade.
- Introduce more stringent emission standards on the diesel locomotive fleet, in line with the latest US² and European³ standards, to reduce particulate and noise pollution. Rail freight operators must not be permitted to avoid pricing the pollution externalities from their locomotives.
- Introduce the latest track lubrication technology on the third track; to reduce “wheel squeal” noise pollution and to reduce maintenance costs for the private freight operators on their wagon fleet.
- Introduce a law that will require the private rail freight operators to maintain their wagon and locomotive fleets to a minimum standard, to reduce “wheel squeal” noise pollution.

EcoTransit commends both the Federal and State Governments for proceeding with Northern Sydney Freight Line project. Even though it does not go far enough in enhancing the capacity of the main northern line from Strathfield to Hornsby, it will provide significant benefits by improving efficiency and productivity for both the Rail freight industry and the movement of commuters.

2 Tier 4 US Standards - <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/standards/nonroad/locomotives.htm>

3 Stage IV EU Standards <http://www.dieselnet.com/standards/eu/nonroad.php>