



Submission to CBD Mobility Forum

Executive Summary

In recent years a lot of work has been done to improve mobility for Sydney residents and public transport plays a vital role in this context. The Bus and Coach Association of New South Wales (BCA) considers more bus services represent the only solution to meeting the State Plan's modal shift targets (Priority S6) given the time frames outlined.

The BCA submission outlines the following key messages:

1. More bus services (increased frequency and additional buses) are the only way to meet modal shift targets in the State Plan.
2. Bus priority projects need to be fast-tracked, with more transparency of roll-out priority.
3. Adoption of a number of measures to improve traffic movement in the CBD.
4. Introduction of a new Authority to coordinate planning, transport connectivity, marketing, and branding of public transport in Sydney.
5. Development of a coach accessibility plan to cater for long distance, tourist and charter services.
6. Introduce pro-public transport policies with pricing and non-pricing strategies to better manage transport demand.
7. Promptly introduce an integrated electronic ticketing system.

The Bus and Coach Industry in NSW

Formed in 1942, the Bus & Coach Association of New South Wales (BCA) is the peak industry organisation for the bus and coach sector. The private bus industry is a major provider of public transport in New South Wales. Its 700 members carry approximately 650,000 school children to and from school each day, and more than 100 million passengers in Wollongong, Blue Mountains, Central Coast and the Greater Sydney Metropolitan each year.

The Association also represents the owners of the New South Wales coach fleet. The members of BCA (NSW) operate some 6,500 buses and have approximately 15,000 employees. In conjunction with our peak national body, the Bus Industry Confederation (BIC), BCA has been formulating policy and building relationships in an effort to increase public transport use and to deliver sustainable transport systems to the Australian public.

In a society which is facing the demand of meeting the needs of an ageing population, urban sprawl, poor land use planning, road congestion and environmental challenges, changing Australian culture to foster public transport is becoming increasingly important. The BCA is taking a lead role in the debate to determine what different policy makers should do to deliver real gains in this area.

BCA submission to CBD Mobility Forum

The BCA acknowledges the State Plan Initiatives, the NSW submission to Infrastructure Australia, and the recent introduction of new Bus Contracts, associated Strategic Corridors and Bus Priority. Although the mobility forum is “CBD centric”, the BCA considers a ‘whole of Sydney’ approach is warranted.

The BCA submission will address the following five areas:

1. Infrastructure Needs
2. Traffic Management
3. Public Transport Management
4. Non-price Demand Management
5. Price-based Demand Management

1. Infrastructure Needs

The NSW Government submission to Infrastructure Australia does not include provision of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems. The BCA considers this a serious omission since BRT systems can be introduced earlier than rail at significantly less cost and deliver significant outcomes. The south-east Brisbane busway is an excellent example of BRT benefiting an Australian city.

The two transitways currently in operation in Sydney are very successful in supporting the Government's State Plan. However, to meet the State Plan's target for mode shift, more buses and BRT systems are considered the only means of meeting the targets.

The BCA also considers that the NSW Government should further update its submission to Infrastructure Australia to include Federal Government funding for an additional 1000 buses for the Greater Sydney area, with the State Government funding the operating costs.

2. Traffic Management

Buses are a vital component of a city's transport network. Unlike heavy rail and light rail routes, bus routes are flexible and do not incur significant infrastructure set-up costs.

Ensuring buses move efficiently through traffic is a key task for the NSW Government. Further bus priority measures are required to improve bus travel times and reliability, and encourage greater use of public transport. These include:

- Dedicated 'red' bus lanes on approaches to congested intersections;
- Dedicated bus 'bypass' lanes (such as 'Left Turn Only, Buses Excepted' lanes);
- Bus pre-emption signals (PTIPS); and
- Conversion of unrestricted lanes to 'transit' and 'no stopping' lanes.

The BCA recommends that the Government fast-track bus priority work in the Sydney CBD and on strategic bus corridors across Sydney. This should include more extensive use of technology to improve operations.

The BCA supports the proposed Sydney-wide use of the RTA's Public Transport Information and Priority System (PTIPS) which uses satellite technology to identify late running buses and communicates with the RTA's traffic management system to direct traffic signal priority to late running buses. To date the BCA has not seen any information from the PTIPS system that demonstrates improvements to bus travel times and reliability on strategic corridors.

The BCA recommends that the Government consider the following suite of measures to get better traffic movement on the CBD streets:

- The introduction of standardised bus lane operating hours on all current CBD bus lanes from 6am to 10am and 3pm to 8pm;
- Enhanced bus stop facilities;
- A streamlined and more user friendly CBD bus network;
- Rationalisation of bus stops;
- Introduction of more bus only lanes and extended bus lane hours.

Government should identify congestion points in the CBD which slow the broader bus network down. The Government can then target traffic hot spots to ensure consistent travel times for motorists and bus passengers, particularly during peak hours. Projects may include:

- Lengthening turn lanes to facilitate traffic flow;
- Adding extra lanes on sections of roads;
- Widening intersections together with changing traffic light configurations;
- Replacing heavily-used roundabouts with traffic lights.

The BCA recommends that any planning for the M4 East, and the duplication of the M5 East, should include the consideration of bus lanes and infrastructure for the pick up and set down of bus passengers.

3. Public Transport Management

The BCA believes that the coordination of public transport services and the matching of supply and demand can be best achieved by a single Government authority. Most states of Australia have one transport authority which co-ordinates all modes of transport and plans for an integration between modes.

One of the more common complaints by consumers is the non-availability of a connecting bus, rail, ferry when they alight from another mode of transport. There is general agreement that single coordinating authorities such as Metlink in Victoria and Translink in Brisbane help to overcome this problem.

An Authority in Sydney would be responsible for passenger information and ensuring that there is a consistent approach to the provision of information across Sydney. There is a need to review the 131500 system and ensure that trip planning available on the website or via the call centre is user friendly and provides accurate information.

A Sydney Authority would oversee any timetable and route changes to evaluate the impacts on an integrated transport system, whilst harnessing each operator's expertise and local knowledge. This Authority would also look at how transport infrastructure is best used to maximise the use of public transport.

This involves:

- Better design of public transport interchanges to ensure transfer between transport types is smooth and easy.
- A code of practice for new developments to ensure they have suitable access to public transport services.
- Developing faster bus links between the CBD and regional centres via bus priority measures.

The BCA acknowledges that the NSW Government recently announced plans for mini-bus services to ease traffic congestion in Sydney. This involved privately owned mini-buses operating on a centralised booking system to allow people to move in and around the city without being restricted by timetables.

Whilst there is no detail on how the services would operate and how the operators would be regulated, the BCA recommends that Government carefully consider such a proposal. The BCA supports all bus travel but is concerned that such a service may duplicate resources (as community buses do in some cases) and take passengers away from existing scheduled services.

The BCA believes that increasing the frequency of existing scheduled services (especially off-peak and weekend services) would provide the Government with a more cost effective outcome. The per passenger cost of running on-demand mini-bus services has historically been much higher than scheduled bus services due to wage and fuel costs being similar and administration costs being much higher.

The BCA recommends that the Government include additional buses (as well as replacement buses) in its future infrastructure investment planning. Additional buses in the Sydney metropolitan area should be supported by further investment in services that provide fast, frequent, direct and convenient links to regional centres such as Parramatta, Bankstown and Chatswood.

The Sydney rail system has a major impact on the effectiveness of the bus network. Increasing the frequency of rail services and improving on-time running would assist with connections between bus and rail, and would enhance the overall passenger experience.

The amount of coach parking in the Sydney CBD has a major influence on Public Transport mobility and the BCA has consistently raised the issue of the depletion of Coach Parking in the CBD. This trend needs to be reversed. The BCA welcomes the King Street Wharf facility and supports future increases in coach parking capacity at appropriate locations that will allow operators to efficiently transport passengers to and from venues in the Sydney CBD.

The BCA recommends that Government upgrade the Eddy Ave Coach Terminal to a world class transport and interchange facility, or relocate to a more suitable location. This Terminal is often the first experience many tourists have after staying in Sydney, and the Terminal currently resembles more a Third World, than a quality modern facility. Sydney is in dire need of a state-of-the-art coach terminal, with a range of high quality coach service facilities including dedicated passenger lounges, baggage check-in areas and multimedia information display systems.

4. Non-price Demand Management

The BCA supports any measure that smoothes demand on bus services and allows a better utilisation of bus fleets. This may include reducing car parking within the CBD at certain times or Government providing incentives for employers to introduce staggered working hours.

CBD based employers should be encouraged to provide employees with access to public transport by including costs in remuneration packages. This would be further enhanced should the Federal Government provide Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT) concessions for public transport.

The BCA supports the introduction of prepaid bus services at certain times to reduce loading times and increase the speed of services to and from the Sydney CBD. This includes the prompt introduction of an integrated electronic ticketing system to:

- reduce on-board ticket purchases;
- improve travel times;
- improve convenience to passengers;
- provide passenger data to assist with planning;
- progress the development of real time passenger information.

5. Price-based Demand Management

The BCA supports price based management of passenger demand where buses have the capacity to cope with additional patronage. Increasing CBD parking costs for motorists in the off-peak would persuade people to consider using public transport at a time when there is spare capacity.

The Government should consider offering free or discounted travel at certain times (between 9am and 3pm) to transfer public transport demand from the peak to the off-peak. The recent announcement of a weekly ticket giving a 20% discount to private bus passengers is likely to place further demand on peak services and require additional buses.

The BCA supports a migration to full fares integration between transport modes which should be coordinated with service enhancements, appropriate vehicle capacity, marketing and communications initiatives. The current Sydney fares policy which in most cases requires a flag fall for each mode is not conducive to increasing public transport use.

The BCA calls upon the NSW Government to expand public debate on fares reform by initiating a review of metropolitan and outer-metropolitan fares policy. The review should include all stakeholders and be completed prior to any further development of the Sydney Integrated Ticketing Project.

I look forward to attending the Forum on the 18th September 2008.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Mellish', written in a cursive style.

Darryl J Mellish
Executive Director