



Inquiry into commuter car parking in NSW

Submission by BusNSW - 4 August 2017

To Committee on Transport and Infrastructure,

BusNSW is the peak body for the NSW private bus and coach industry whose members provide essential services on a daily basis and provide a key interface with the travelling public. The BusNSW mission is to foster the efficient and sustainable growth of public transport in NSW, and to promote the benefits of bus travel.

Buses play a vital role in delivering public transport in NSW. In conjunction with other public transport modes and the point to point transport industry, bus and coach transport is an important part of an integrated mobility solution for the community.

BusNSW understands the main focus of the inquiry is parking for commuters at train stations, to ensure the rail system remains accessible and convenient to use. Whilst there are opportunities for park and ride facilities on bus routes (including what is proposed for the Northern Beaches B-line service), this submission is based on commuter parking facilities at train stations.

BusNSW members provide bus services under Transport for NSW contracts in Sydney metropolitan and outer-metropolitan areas, and in NSW rural and regional areas. A large proportion of the regular passenger services provided are feeder services to the rail system. The Transport for NSW contracts include on time running key performance indicators and meeting targets can be impacted by commuter car parking at train stations.

Commuter parking at train stations is in most cases considered to be detrimental to the utilisation of bus services. Commuter car parking promotes the use of the motor car over bus services, and often impacts on the reliability of bus services due to traffic congestion caused around the bus and rail interchange. This congestion is normally amplified where there is also a local shopping precinct adjacent to or in close proximity to the train station.

Following are BusNSW comments on the terms of reference:

a. The effectiveness of current state government policies and programs covering commuter car parking

BusNSW understands that the TfNSW Transport Access Program is an initiative designed to provide a better experience for public transport customers by delivering accessible, modern, secure and integrated transport infrastructure. The program

promotes benefits including “modern interchanges that support an integrated network and allow seamless transfers between all modes for all customers”.

BusNSW has the view that commuter car parking increases traffic congestion on local roads around train stations and in some cases adversely impacts other public transport modes. BusNSW encourages a review of policy to ensure that public and active transport services feeding the rail system are given priority over the private motor car.

b. Processes for selecting the location of commuter car parks

BusNSW considers that factors included in a. and c. along with other externalities should be carefully considered before deciding to build a commuter car park. When selecting a location, the impacts on other Public Transport modes should be considered as a priority, with the objective of promoting an integrated public and/or active transport solution. Where commuter car parks are to be built at train stations, the access by private motor cars should not impact on buses accessing the interchange.

c. The potential for restricted access or user pays commuter car parks

BusNSW strongly supports a model whereby commuters are encouraged to use public and active transport for their end to end journey. The current access to free parking at train stations provides an incentive for commuters to use their private motor car for short journeys between their residence and the train station.

A number of NSW Government initiatives including integrated ticketing and fares via the Opal system can facilitate a seamless experience for commuters connecting between buses and trains. By reducing the number of cars accessing commuter car parks and causing traffic congestion on the surrounding road network, the travel times and reliability for buses servicing the train stations can usually be improved.

In some parts of Greater Sydney and in some NSW Regional areas the frequency of local bus services operating on fixed routes can be a deterrent for commuters wishing to connect with the rail system. There is a need for the NSW Government to provide suitable frequency for bus feeder services to be considered a convenient option.

BusNSW would encourage the NSW Government to consider the costs and benefits of increasing the frequency of local bus services, before building car parks at train stations. Alternatively, the introduction of restricted access policies and/or parking fees could be used to incentivise commuters to use bus services or active transport when connecting with the rail system.

There are a number of existing commuter car parks at train stations that are at capacity and the use of parking fees could be considered to regulate demand. Commuters should be required to pay an amount for parking a private motor car at a

train station which far exceeds the cost of using public transport between their home and the train station.

BusNSW encourages the committee to further explore multi-mode fare discounts that encourage commuters to use bus feeder services to access the rail system, especially where there is capacity on existing bus services.

d. Consideration of alternative modes of first mile/last mile travel, including point to point transport, active transport and on demand buses

There are opportunities to introduce on-demand bus services to support first mile/last mile travel to train stations, subject to population density and road infrastructure.

The conversion of fixed route bus services to partially on-demand services could be considered. Existing Transport for NSW contracted buses could be utilised to provide on-demand and other flexible transport options, based on an appropriate funding arrangement.

In terms of the potential delivery models, bus operators could deliver on-demand services including:

- Standard route services with the capacity to divert within designated areas on request; or
- Services operating on a fixed route from, for example, a train station to a designated point, after which they provide a flexible 'roaming' service across a designated zone.

A review of bus types currently available to contracted operators via the Transport for NSW bus procurement panel should be considered. BusNSW supports the future procurement of some multi-purpose vehicles that could be utilised for on-demand bus services, in addition to school services and regular passenger services.

The NSW Passenger Transport Regulations and Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport also need to be considered when planning on-demand bus services. The Opal system could be used for on demand bus services. A payment system that accepts credit and debit cards, or a mobile device linked to one of these accounts could also be considered.

If you would like to discuss these comments in more detail please call me on (02) 8839 9500.

Regards,

Matt Threlkeld
Executive Director, BusNSW
mthrelkeld@busnsw.com.au