

Newcastle Rail Improvement for the Hunter Community

Prepared by
Save Our Rail NSW Inc.

<http://saveourrail.org.au/>

Holding the line

Save Our Rail, on behalf of the community, welcomes the announcement by The Premier, The Hon Morris Iemma, to retain rail services into Newcastle and to spend \$20 million to start implementing the findings of the Hunter Transport Taskforce.

Improving the line

Save Our Rail now identifies the prime issue, to maximise the improvements resulting from Premier lemma's funding, enhancing Newcastle's rail system and attracting even more patrons.

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Holding the line

Newcastle current rail system has the benefits of two main lines, Hunter and Newcastle, with direct access into the centre of the city.

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Improving the line

Save Our Rail's survey results indicate this direct access is of prime importance to the community. More than 1700 people returned support cards for the rail through SOR. Among responses which mentioned destinations, 86% said that access to the CBD was crucial.

They were regular commuters for work or education, people going to town for medical or professional appointments, specialist shopping, cultural or social activities and just going to the beach.

To keep this community access, both direct lines are essential.

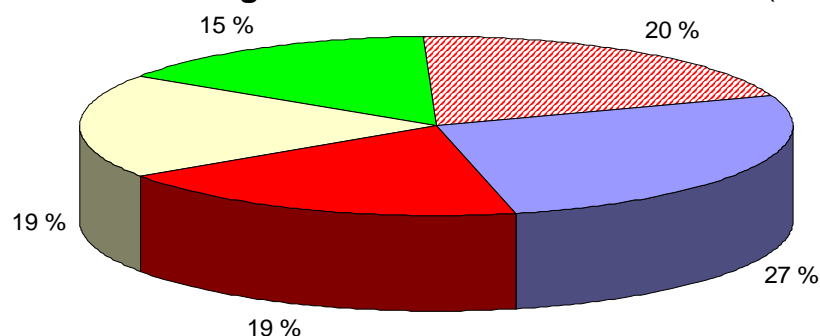
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Reason for using train

Reasons for using train to access Newcastle CBD (n=1154)



- Commuters
- Medical and professional appointments and specialist shopping
- Social and Cultural
- Beach and Harbour
- No reason given

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Holding the line

The forward thinkers, some 13% of respondents, identified the importance of the current rail system for tourism.

Newcastle currently has a direct line from Sydney, Australia's international "gateway", making access for tourists, particularly the growing backpacker market, easy.

Changing this direct link would damage Newcastle's tourism prospects.

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Holding the line

Community responses also showed that people chose to travel by train in Newcastle because of its convenience.

Of almost 1000 responses talking about choice of transport mode, 42% simply said that the train was "convenient."

Others elaborated, mentioning mobility issues, no access to a car, juggling prams and bikes, traffic and parking problems, and some even spoke of the rising cost of petrol.

To keep this community convenience, both direct lines are essential

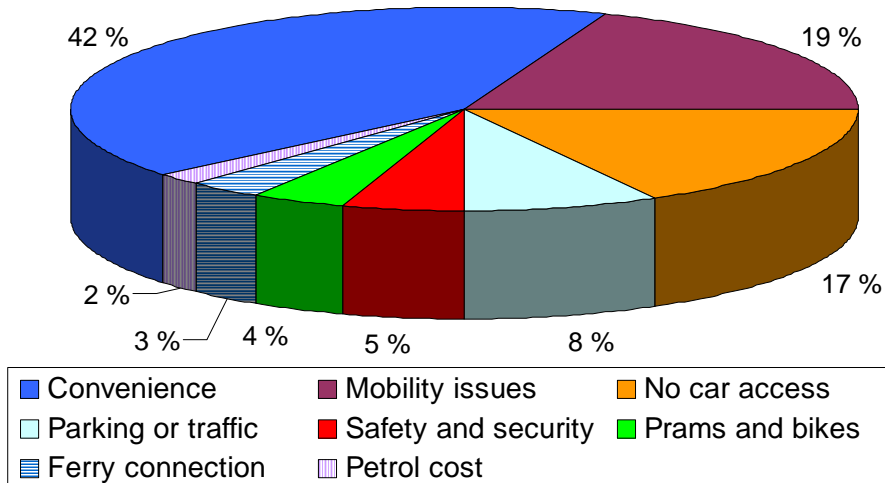
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Reasons for travelling by train

Reasons for choosing to travel by train, rather than an alternative mode of transport (n=985)



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We say community responses, as around 90% of people who forwarded support cards through Save Our Rail, lived in the Hunter Valley. As expected, most lived near the rail system, including many in the city centre.

Unexpectedly a significant minority accessed the rail system from suburbs distant from the two lines, while others used the rail-ferry link.

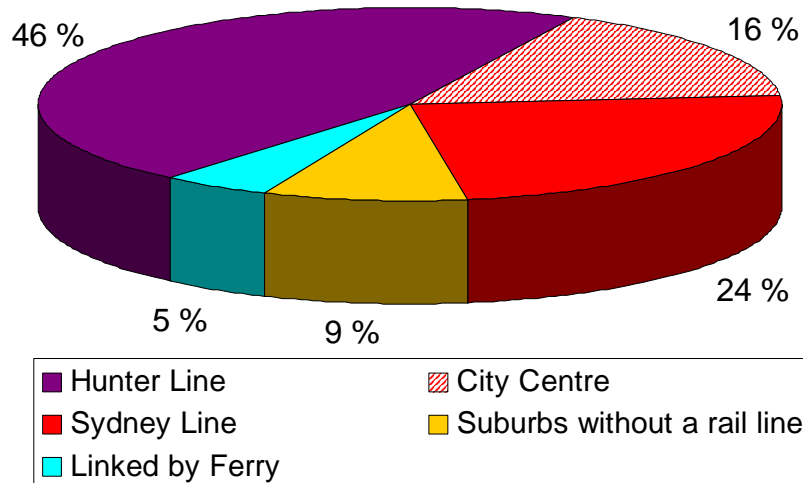
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Where did respondents live?

Where did the respondents live? (n=1585)



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We are concerned that any proposals which impact on the current direct access to the CBD will undermine the viability of the whole rail system, as outlined in Professor Currie's Review.

If the rail system into the centre of Newcastle is reduced, there is also a broader concern that it may compromise growth and development in the CBD. The Kellog Brown Root Report highlighted this undesirable probability.

This would be counter to the Lower Hunter Draft Regional Strategy which emphasises the need to retain Newcastle as the region's business and cultural centre.

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Holding the line

Proposals to change the terminus for electric trains on the Newcastle line would not be in the interests of passengers.

Being forced to change lines to reach Newcastle, and slower train speeds on the inner city section of the system, would add at least 25 minutes to the trip to town. Already crowded Hunter line trains will not be able to accommodate the transferring passengers.

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Holding the line

Proposals to change the terminus would also swallow up the money allocated to improving the system overcoming the many technical obstacles including the need to re-build overpasses and the cost of electrification to Warabrook and modifying the station platform.

Overcoming the technical difficulties would involve massive disruption to ARTC's freight lines – the critical coal lines to the harbour.

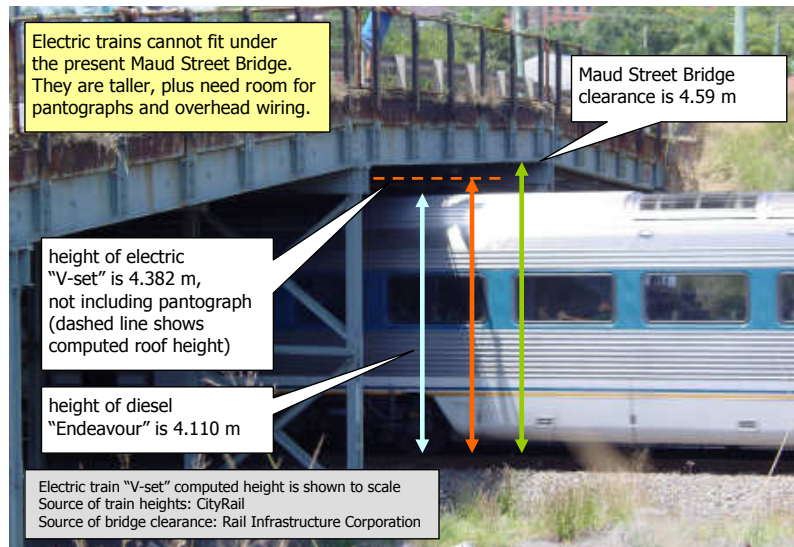
There are also safety concerns with alterations proposed for Waratah station.

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Maud St Bridge picture



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Improving the line

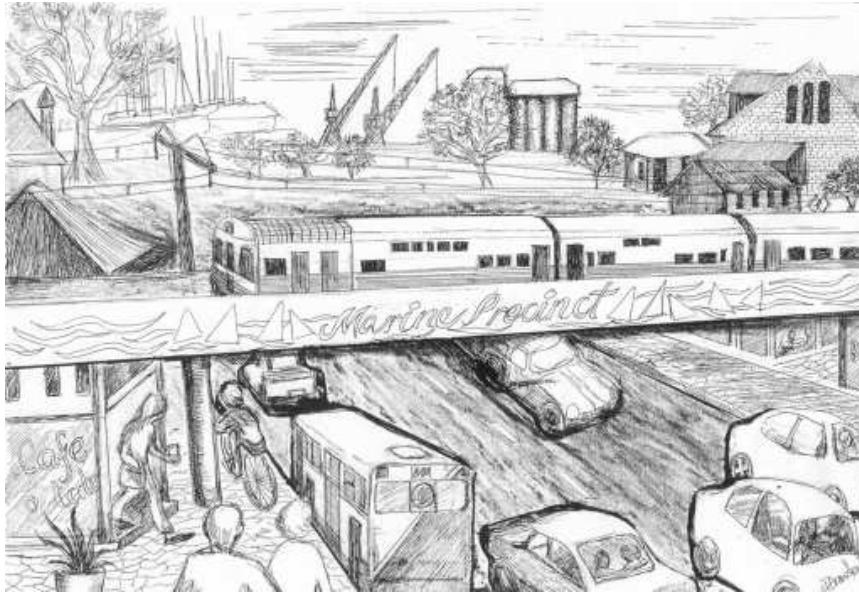
- Replace the outdated signal system, reducing delays at level crossings
- Improve city-harbour access with additional pedestrian and vehicle crossings
- All crossings upgraded to "urban" standard, with security gate systems
- Introduce integrated ticketing for all tickets
- Replace the busy Stewart Avenue level crossing with a rail overpass

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Stewart Avenue rail overpass



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Improving the line

- Introduce “Park and Ride”
- Secure bicycle lockers and “white bike depots”
- Relocate NSW government services to Newcastle station building
- Explore commercial opportunities at stations
- Explore additional outlets for public transport tickets
- Improve efficiency of passenger ticket checking

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Improving the line

- Beautification program for Newcastle station opening up harbour views
 - Replace “dingo fence” with more harmonious fencing
 - Landscaping program for platforms and line surrounds
 - Replace gantries with slim poles
- Improve passenger access to Newcastle station
 - Open west end of Newcastle station for ferry wharf access
 - Reopen Bolton St entry

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Rail corridor landscaping



Landscaped Railway Corridor - proposed in the winning design from the 1981 Newcastle Harbour Foreshore Competition
Prepared by the Parks and Playgrounds Movement for Save Our Rail

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Wahroonga Station wiring



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Improving the line

- Beautification of Civic station
 - Create landscaped concourse, open to parklands and heritage features, at Civic station enhancing Newcastle's cultural precinct
 - Concourse will allow level pedestrian access to the station

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Proposed Civic concourse



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Pictures of Civic concourse



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Improving the line

- Actively promote Newcastle rail for tourism
- Promote rail system for commuters in collaboration with local businesses
- Explore future light rail linking Newcastle airport, Stockton ferry and Newcastle station

Conclusion

- Newcastle has a valuable asset in its heavy rail service, being currently directly connected to the largest city in Australia.
- Suggesting that these two cities should be connected only by a two car diesel train, away from the current quality transport provision of the CBD, it must be considered that the Hunter Business Chamber does not have the best interests of the city in mind.

Conclusion

- With “Peak Oil” already here and car use becoming a luxury, it seems important to provide sustainable public transport.
- Global warming and the environment – NSW Government support for Kyoto Protocol principles.
- The Actions For Air initiative calls for measures to reduce “VKT” (Vehicle Kilometres Travelled) – Any proposal that causes passengers to be sufficiently inconvenienced to take the car option must not be considered.

Conclusion

- There will be additional people living in this region, many elderly, emphasizing the need for the continued provision of suitable public transport, especially rail, which has the “convenience” factor.
- Save Our Rail therefore requests that you implement some affordable improvements to the Newcastle Line, while ensuring that the direct rail transport enjoyed and valued by members of the community should be protected from any form of reduction, and maintained at a high standard.