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SUBMISSION TO URBAN GROWTH AND TRANSPORT FOR NSW REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS NEWCASTLE LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

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(NB: corrected version: typo fixed re light rail costing on page 15 & omitted appendix added as page 16)

INTRODUCTION

Save Our Rail NSW Inc (SOR) is comprised of unpaid volunteers who work on behalf of the community to retain services and advocate public transport use. SOR is totally opposed to privatisation of rail services or the sale of transport corridor land and has worked diligently through public meetings, workshops and forums to determine needs. *(Refer to appendix at the end of this document)*

Rallies, protest meetings and signed petitions have demonstrated overwhelming support for the maintenance and improvement of direct Newcastle rail services as essential to the life of the region. SOR has created this submission for UrbanGrowth NSW and Transport for NSW as a response to the Review of Environmental Factors of the Newcastle Light Rail project. This paper will discuss various aspects in Newcastle and the Hunter Region which could be affected by the installation of Light Rail in the proposed “hybrid” route: i.e. partially in the existing transport corridor then branching to Hunter and Scott Streets before terminating at Pacific Park.

TRANSPORT NEEDS FOR CITIES

A distinction needs to be made between the two types of transport which are important to the success of any city and which Newcastle will need if it is to achieve its full potential.

1. Intercity “Long Haul” Transport

This is a mode of transport that serves to bring people from outside areas to the city centre. This need in Newcastle had been fulfilled until Dec 2014 by a “heavy rail” system which had the capacity and capability of transporting large numbers of passengers direct from Sydney Central to Newcastle Station as well as two Hunter Lines from regional communities – Scone to Newcastle and Dungog to Newcastle Station. “The Great Northern Line” brought thousands from Sydney to Newcastle via an uninterrupted electric train service and was especially valuable to tourists. Hunter Line diesel trains provided valuable commuter services, student transport to various educational facilities and gave inland communities access the Newcastle beaches.

2. Internal City Commuter Service

This form of transport is best provided by “light rail” or bus. Light rail often as a “tram” has an important role for shorter trips required within a city area. It has limited distance capability and carries fewer passengers than trains due to smaller capacity. Trams come in different forms and it has not been made clear as to precisely which type is planned for Newcastle. It is indicated that it would run on fixed rails and serve only a 2.7 km section of rail from a proposed Wickham interchange to Pacific Park.

COMMENT: The Light Rail project is being promoted as a replacement for the heavy rail system, which provided uninterrupted service as described above – from Sydney, Scone and Dungog to Newcastle Station. This lost service cannot be replaced by light rail operating on a small section of the totality of the rail system. As explained they are two entirely different forms of rail transport with different purposes and they are not interchangeable, but can and should work to complement each other.

OBJECTIVES OF THE NEWCASTLE LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

Save Our Rail records a “Failure” for each of the objectives as stated in Newcastle Light Rail REF summary brochure as follows:

- **Connecting people, places and businesses to the CBD and waterfront.**

FAIL: Direct connection to businesses and CBD was removed with closure of the direct rail line. Businesses are struggling and closing as a result. Which waterfront? The beach link for inland towns was cut off. Young people are unable to board the shuttle buses with surfboards. Harbour access has always been available at various points and could have been increased. Tram accidents with pedestrians can be fatal therefore there will still be a need for safe crossing places.

- **Creating great places linked by new and improved transport solutions.**

FAIL: “Creating great places”? Newcastle does not need to be “created.” It has always been a great place of natural beauty. This is a tourist advantage. The places that were linked to Newcastle are now disconnected and a cute tram jamming up the streets for a short distance will do nothing to bring people back into the city. A “transport solution” this is not. Cutting off the so-called “heavy rail” was a planning decision to allow development on the rail land. A viable “transport solution” would be to integrate all forms of transport in a way that provide both heavy and light rail to Newcastle Station in the already available transport corridor (as in San Diego). Unlike Sydney this city HAS a transport corridor now sadly idle – it does not need to acquire land or cut down trees. Buses could be complementary to the rail system and include express buses as well as slower “all stops” services. (Suggested in SOR Westrans Proposal 2010)

- **Helping create employment opportunities and grow new jobs in the city centre.**

FAIL: Businesses in the CBD and Hunter Street Mall are putting off staff since the closure of the rail line, others are closing. Some workers from outer areas have had to give up their jobs because of loss of punctuality, students have had to discontinue courses which could equip them to join the work force. This light rail will not restore those jobs and there is no evidence being presented as to how new jobs would be created in what is becoming a ghost town.

- **Creating new public spaces and community assets.**

FAIL: Taking a public amenity for private use – removal of a public utility to allow private development on its land is hardly the way to achieve this objective. It is the opposite. The community is being done out of its public transport for a privately run light rail. Where is the ‘new public space’? A toy train running to nowhere is hardly a community asset.

- **Preserving and enhancing the city centre’s heritage and culture.**

FAIL: Newcastle, unlike newer cities has a stock of heritage buildings which are the reason for its unique character and are an asset for tourism. This light rail project is proposing to destroy some of the heritage items that are important in the history and culture of Newcastle. Newcastle Station, Civic Station and Wickham Station are vital components in a historic rail line which celebrated 150 years in 2008, with the Governor of NSW travelling in a special commemorative train between Newcastle and Maitland Stations. The presence of Marie Bashir that day indicated the State Significance of this rail line.

The removal of the heavy rail and installation of the light rail as envisaged would result in the exact opposite outcomes from the above objectives.

In contrast SOR seeks for the replacement of the heavy rail line, the prevention of planned corridor re-zoning for development, and retention of this dedicated transport corridor in public ownership for future direct transport to Newcastle station. The SOR objectives would not only improve transport life in the CBD, but also preserve the historical train stations and city heritage that the Newcastle area is known for.

TRAFFIC, TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

The Newcastle Urban Transformation and Transport Program (NUTTP) “aims to bring people back to the city centre and waterfront and [to deliver] better transport” (GHD, 2016, ii). The program claims the proposal will provide “an efficient and accessible form of transport for the Newcastle City Centre” (GHD, 2016, ii). The proposal further goes on to claim “the truncation of heavy rail at Wickham and the development of the new transport interchange at Stewart Avenue is an important precursor. This has already resulted in improved connectivity in the city with new pedestrian and cycle crossings across the heavy rail corridor improving access to the foreshore” (GHD, 2016, ii).

SOR disputes the claims stated above.

USE OF EXISTING RAIL CORRIDOR

When the announcement was made as to the route of the proposed light rail it coincided with statements in the media by then Newcastle Lord Mayor McCloy. It was assumed he had successfully lobbied then Planning Minister Hazzard to get his way, when at the time there were many criticisms of the idea of spending \$1/2 billion to build a rail line within 20 metres of an existing transport corridor. Transport Minister at the time, Gladys Berejiklian frequently alluded to the decision to cut the line and the route of the replacement light rail as “Planning decisions not transport decisions.” It was assumed the Planning Minister had outfoxed the Transport Minister.

This assumption seems to have been correct when a secret Cabinet Minute document was later uncovered, left behind in an office by the newly elected Member for Newcastle, Tim Crakanthorp. This document, (Document 71) raised many questions over the decision.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet New South Wales Cabinet Minute (Document 71) from the Standing Committee on Infrastructure expressed a very different opinion to the decision announced and to that now presented in the REF by Urban Growth NSW and Transport for NSW.

Document 71 stated in point 1.9 “the preferred light rail alignment has now been identified as the Railway Corridor and Scott Street, continuing to Newcastle Beach (Pacific Park) at Telford Street which supports the urban revitalization of Newcastle, minimizes road impacts as well as the cost and risk of delivery” (2013, 3).

It seems as though UrbanGrowth and Transport for NSW have not been aware of the recommendations of this paper, a case surely of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing. The current plan to develop light rail down Hunter and Scott Streets at a stated cost of almost \$100m more than using the corridor, presents many issues such as parking losses and transport connectivity.

The Cabinet paper further goes on to state:

“Hunter Street [is] not the preferred option [as] light rail would limit footpath space, impact on outdoor event spaces, entertainment and dining opportunities and street greening and cycle ways all of which are key urban renewal initiatives of interest to the Newcastle community” (2013, 3).

This statement is in clear contrast with statements in the Light Rail REF, which pursues the idea that light rail down Hunter Street and Scott Street will “bring people back to the city centre and waterfront” and deliver better transport (GHD, 2016, ii).

SOR strongly rejects the proposal to put light rail in Hunter and Scott Streets as a huge waste of public money for no advantage and in fact as stated in Document 71 creates many negative impacts. The most logical and cost effective solution which better meets the objective to bring people back into the city centre is to replace the heavy rail down the existing rail corridor. If it is desirable to have a section of light rail for movement within the city centre it should run in the dedicated transport corridor beside the heavy rail, as occurs in San Diego and many other cities.

ON-STREET PARKING IN THE CITY CENTRE

The current plan for the construction of light rail results in a significant loss of parking that will be crippling to the Newcastle community. Transport for NSW's Technical Paper 1 provides some statistics for the loss of parking that will result from the construction of the light rail down Hunter Street and Scott Street. The paper states 280 car spaces will be permanently removed and 83 car park spaces in King Street will be affected by a proposed peak period 'no stopping' zone (GHD, 2016, iv). The City of Newcastle calculates that that loss of parking will be much greater, they estimate "89 percent or 270 of the 302 on-street spaces will be lost east of Worth Place" (The City of Newcastle, 2016).

Furthermore, Revitalise Newcastle's plan to demolish the former David Jones car park , close the Throsby Wharf temporary parking on the Honeysuckle precinct, and the Civic Station parking area will result in an additional estimated loss of more than 1000 car spaces, making a total loss of approximately 1,500 car spaces.

A mitigation suggestion is to put parking stations on the rail corridor. This is like taking the rail out of the rail corridor and putting it in Hunter Street then taking the parking spaces out of Hunter Street and putting them in the rail corridor! How ridiculous is that!

TRAFFIC CONGESTION

In addition to the negative effects light rail will have on inner city parking, it will increase traffic congestion throughout the city. The effects of this congestion are already taking place in Beaumont Street due to the truncation of heavy rail and will continue to have detrimental effects when parking in the city becomes severely reduced as a result of the light rail down Hunter and Scott Streets.

As part of the revitalisation plans for Newcastle the old court house was closed and a new legal centre was built with only 13 car parking spaces. This is opposite the now closed Civic Station which was given as the reason for approval with so few car spaces. This is adding to traffic congestion.

Under construction is another large project, also opposite Civic Station, an inner city university campus. This will add massively to the existing parking shortage, with very few car parking spaces included and thousands of students anticipated in 2017. With the direct train option closed off there will obviously be a huge increase in traffic.

CONNECTIVITY OF TRANSPORT SERVICES

The word “connectivity” has been applied regarding the ability to cross from one side of the rail line to the other. However, it could have a broader meaning referring to the link between the parts of the city and its suburbs as well as to other communities.

The proposal for light rail in Newcastle merely extends an additional 200 metres from the previous final stopping point for the now truncated heavy rail between Wickham and Newcastle Stations. For the proposed light rail to be beneficial to the Newcastle community and therefore a worthwhile endeavour it would need to extend much further than an extra 200 meters to effectively cover a larger range within the Newcastle precinct. Save Our Rail has previously written a proposal for extension of light rail to run on an existing unused corridor to Glendale via University of Newcastle Callaghan Campus to Wallsend then on to Glendale, linking various educational facilities. (SOR WesTrans 2010)

In its proposed form light rail lacks the capacity and capability to provide effective and attractive transport options for the long haul trips between Newcastle and Sydney, Newcastle and Hunter Regional communities, and Newcastle and for future extension to other centres such as Tamworth and Taree. Because of these limitations the proposal of light rail again fails the objective to revitalise Newcastle and provide effective transport options.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The REF states that an overall vision for the revitalisation of Newcastle is to create an “activated city and waterfront that attracts people.”

As previously stated this program will not bring people into Newcastle. In fact, the closing of the direct intercity rail service as a preliminary step in the process, of which the light rail is intended to be a vital component, is already having the opposite effect. There are a number of significant socio-economic disadvantages that far outweigh the benefits as follows:

- The people most likely to need access to the Newcastle Court are in the lower range on the socio-economic spectrum. These are the people most in need of efficient public transport from outer areas to the court. This is currently not being provided; instead it is reported to be a disrupted late-running experience. This is forcing poor people into car ownership that is not affordable and is often in the form of a substandard vehicle. These cars are needed for attendance at educational institutions and for job interviews – and contribute to air pollution and increasing accident rates. The light rail proposal will eat up massive amounts of public funding which is needed for provision of improved intercity services designed to bring more people to Newcastle.
- Youth activities and access to beaches are provided in Newcastle, which has the status of the Major Regional Centre. Young people, who are not yet able to drive are reliant on public transport to reach cultural and social venues, as well as to the beach. There is a special need in the Hunter lines to provide return trains at night. They can get to the beach or to Queens Wharf but cannot get home because the last train leaves at 5. 45 p.m. If the money is wasted on a gimmick train that goes nowhere, on a very limited section of the transport system, this sort of improvement will not be available for those from the regional towns.
- Disabled people are not being considered in the provision of the light rail, based as it is on a forced interchange at Wickham. Many disabled people simply cannot physically change from one train to another during their trip. This is especially so for blind passengers, who manage well by knowing the number of steps needed to board the train, but simply cannot learn the pattern for changing to another vehicle en route.
- Tourism has become important to Newcastle since the closure of the BHP steel works. A great boost to this industry was that Newcastle was listed in the top 10 destinations, world-wide, in the 2011 Lonely Planet Guide (the backpacker “bible”.) This was in great part due to the ease of train transport from Sydney to the beach area of Newcastle. This has already suffered a downturn, with

a major hostel closing after the truncation of rail services. The provision of light rail as proposed will not add any incentive to draw visitors from elsewhere and the inconvenience of changing trains will drive the surfer backpackers to more easily accessed venues.

PROPERTY VALUES

Planners and valuation advisers claim that the presence of a direct rail connection not only increases a property's value but also creates advantages for the community. Direct rail links are also seen as valuable assets in fostering economic demand. In SORs 2008 submission to Revitalising Newcastle our organisation made reference to the example of Westfield shopping centres and the way in which the location of a number of these outlets reflects the importance of a direct rail link. For instance, the example was made of Westfield Parramatta installing information screens located in the food court providing customers with information equivalent to that of which they would see on a train platform.

In London the Westfield Group built new railway stations to service their huge new shopping centre. It is measures such as these which highlight how transport is valued in other cities and it is our belief transport in Newcastle should be taken just as seriously.

Many transport and sustainability experts have studied the relationship of heavy rail provision to property value. These have included world renowned experts. One quote only is needed to illustrate this fact. The statement below was in the context of a proposal to remove long distance rail into Toronto.

“It has become conventional wisdom to the effect that the presence of a railway line incurs an economic benefit in the form of an increase in property values and if it were to be removed there would be a decrease in property values. If an urban transit system (rail) never earned an operating profit, it would pay for itself a thousand times over through its beneficial impact of real estate values and increased assessments’.- The Toronto (Canada) Real Estate Board

The Review of Environmental Factors Technical Paper 6 states that “it is unlikely that the proposal would drive route-wide land value changes based on proximity to a light rail network”, (GHD, 2016, 24). It is statements such as these lead SOR to believe that the addition of a light rail system will not foster further economic growth in the way the direct rail link did and could continue to do. It is clear to SOR that the economic benefits of such developments would be tailored towards a small minority compared to the overarching benefits to property prices and the town's economy that a fixed direct rail line was able to achieve.

IMPACT ON BUSINESS

The Review of Environmental Factors Technical Paper 6 identifies a number of factors that would have a dramatic impact on local businesses. These range from, as mentioned earlier, a reduction in the amount of available parking spaces to a decrease in pedestrian traffic during the time in which construction is carried out. SOR firmly believes factors such as these will have a direct impact on business turnover and profits.

Many business owners are expressing dismay at the downturn they are experiencing since the rail truncation. As well there have been meetings, approaches to Newcastle MP, Tim Crakanthorp and media reporting of concern over the effect of the light rail in Hunter Street on business prospects. The owners cite the inability of car drivers to gain access, the lack of parking near premises, the likely noise of trams right outside their door and the loss of direct public transport to their shops.

Passmores College CEO Duncan Macfarlane has been quoted as saying he has “great concern for some of the businesses.” (Herald, 2015). McFarlane also made reference to the fact that he has noted a significant drop in pedestrian traffic since the truncation of the heavy rail line at Hamilton on December 26, 2014. Even the person most prominent in advocating for the light rail to run on the proposed route, in Hunter Street, former Lord Mayor McCloy, has now publicly stated that light rail in Hunter Street as proposed is a disaster. He is quoted as saying current plans (heavy rail cut, light rail in Hunter Street) are “killing Newcastle.” SOR has been warning of this impact for years. We have quoted from the Kellogg Brown Root study (2005) which stated: “Any removal of the heavy rail would mean that preservation of the CBD’s role as the regional centre would be compromised.”

Many such concerns stem from the fact that the current suggested route of this new system will significantly decrease the number of parking spaces available for customers, having the potential to diminish turnover. SOR understands that it is anticipated that as a starting point up to 280 car spaces will be permanently removed. (GHD, 2016, iv). SORs view is reinforced by long standing Hunter Business owner Colin Scott who has threatened to relocate his 37-year Hunter Street business as a result of the State Government's plans of removing “two traffic lanes on Hunter Street and parking for 267 cars and 17 motorbikes.” (Herald, 2016). SOR has serious concerns over the removal of two lanes on Hunter Street and the effects such a move will have on the already congested roads in the CBD.

In a previous Liberal Party Survey in Maitland almost half of the rail commuters indicated that they would most likely drive their cars if the truncation went ahead. (Maitland Mercury, 2008). Since the truncation occurred the number of vehicles in and around the CBD has increased. There are issues over the prospect of the light rail system taking up an additional two lanes on the main street of the city. As a result of such drastic planned cuts to parking and road space it is SORs belief that business turnover

within the city will be diminished both during construction of the light rail system as well as after the completion.

TOURISM

It is SOR stance that the need for a direct rail link still exists in Newcastle as it is a service is seen as an attractive commodity to prospective tourists. Newcastle should be seen as an attractive city for tourists who may wish to head north after landing in Sydney. The fact that our city no longer has a direct rail link to the beach would be a major disincentive to prospective tourists. Prior to the truncation of the rail line, the trip between Sydney's Central Station and Newcastle Station took approximately 2 hours and 37 minutes. In comparison to the current timetables, the trip now has a duration of 2 hours and 40 minute between Central and Hamilton as well as wait time for the subsequent bus ride to Newcastle station which estimates the trip to take a total of at least 3 hours. SOR argues that such a lengthy trip will result in deterring tourists from visiting Newcastle. This is a consequence that is in direct conflict with the objective of the light rail proposal. Furthermore, SOR firmly believe that the proposed interchange at Wickham will add further delays causing Tourists to look elsewhere.

To resolve these issues SOR proposes that a direct rail line, be it heavy or light, be re-established to the existing Newcastle Station on the **existing** rail corridor.

SOR believes a greater emphasis should be put into speeding up the existing trains between Newcastle and Sydney. By straightening the existing track at a number of locations 3 km could be shaved off the total distance of the trip. It is SOR's opinion that a trip between Newcastle and Sydney Central Station that is closer to 2 hours than 3 will do more to encourage tourists to visit our city than a transport interchange at Wickham and a dinky light rail has the potential to achieve. SOR also believes such a service could also provide residents of the Hunter with greater job prospects.

HERITAGE

The Newcastle area has been established since the early 1800s, inevitably meaning the area is significantly abundant in historic culture and prominent heritage sites listed on local and state listings. An objective listed underpinning The Revitalising Newcastle program is problematic to preserving the heritage embedded within Newcastle. The proposal claims to be driven by an objective for “Preserving and enhancing the city centre’s heritage and culture” (Revitalising Newcastle 2016, 1), however the rezoning of the corridor completely opposes this as in terms of heritage. It seems to be merely an establishment of infrastructure to inevitably destroy infrastructure. In a previous submission developed by SOR, it is stated that this was purely an attempt at disintegrating Newcastle City. In the submission SOR explains that the word ‘integration’ instead of ‘access’ (2008, 4) was used to justify the stopping of the rail line. The newest proposal is inadequate and unusable for transportation outside the city centre, the environment needed to build such a project would destroy significant heritage sites, not enhance it.

The following points, the removal of sites listed on heritage listings and significance of preservation, will explain why this objective has not and will not be met with the establishment of a light rail system.

a) The Removal of Sites Listed On Heritage Listing

If the development of the light rail commences, multiple sites within Newcastle on state and local heritage listings will be eliminated, completely the opposite of Revitalising Newcastle’s objective of preserving and enhancing the heritage within the city centre. These objectives are listed as advantages, but SOR insists that is untrue. They were also listed as disadvantages in the Department of Premier and Cabinet Document 71. The light rail proposal will mean the demolition of Wickham Railway Station and Civic Railway Station with the possibility of Newcastle Railway Station, all of which are listed on the local and state heritage lists. The proposal will plan to remove these listings however due to the irrelevance to the light rail. The objective is not met once again, as this is not preserving or enhancing Newcastle’s rich heritage.

Newcastle Station was established in 1878, the design of which is one of four in NSW. This could be used as a tourist destination. As it was explored in the Sydney Morning Herald, Newcastle has “an ornate heritage” (Farrelly 2014, 9). The revitalisation of Newcastle therefore is “As every study shows, urban vitality depends far more on quality than quantity. This development by contrast is so quantity obsessed it trashes every other consideration – equity, process, heritage, scale, topography, urban form and transport.” (Farrelly 2014), one of those explicitly being heritage. Although mentioned in the Revitalising Newcastle Technical Paper 3, Statement of Heritage Impact, those sites listed on state and local listings are grossly undervalued.

This lack of recognition is due to a mitigation emerging from the government. They prosecute that, as the train no longer travels upon the once named The Great Northern Railway, the significant heritage aspects no longer exist. This is incorrect. SOR says that the stopping of the rail line does not constitute the ignorance of any historical context, the history will always remain but the items of value will inevitably be destroyed with the current proposal of the light rail.

b) Preservation

As SOR has advocated previously, the most effective utilisation of the existing corridor land is transport. In relation to heritage SOR opposes the “development of large buildings” in the corridor and we are concerned over the future of valuable existing buildings. None of these historic buildings should be removed”. The train services along the corridor have been operational for many years and therefore Newcastle Station being a heritage building should be emphasised as an advantage. It inevitably deserves capitalisation not demolition, which would be grossly wasteful.

It is mentioned in Revitalising Newcastle Technical Paper 3, Statement of Heritage Impact (2016) that “the light rail vehicles and light rail stops are assessed to have minor visual impact on the identified heritage items.” This is untrue as many of the mentioned heritage sites will either be demolished or need significant means of adaptability or transformation. For example, it was expressed in The Department of Premier and Cabinet Document 71 that the demolition of Civic Station was proposed. SOR identify that this would be an unnecessary waste of an existing resource and suggest an alteration of the existing site. They advocate that moving the building west of its location and behind existing buildings inevitably establishing an economically superior decision for three reasons:

- The cost of the actual demolition, which would be considerable
- The cost of removal of the rubble, also considerable
- The building would be re-usable as a station for either light rail or a future of heavy rail services

Moving Civic Station can be achieved by putting it on rollers as has been demonstrated in various cities – including Chicago’s moving of Our Lady of Lourdes Cathedral. A 100 year old church was moved on hydraulic rollers in Iowa and even in Hornsby a brick signal station was moved.

This suggestion to locate the Civic Building would also be more acceptable for heritage reasons.

Preservation is also important for the entire Newcastle Railway Line, previously entitled The Great Northern Railway. This is an applicable example as the significance of this railway was illuminated by a nomination in 2006 from Engineering Heritage (Australia). The nomination was entitled 'Historical Engineering Marker' and therefore is a highly valued heritage site.

The preservation of this corridor is imperative for heritage reasons but also is significant for the future, if the need arises for direct connectivity. SOR advocate that the corridor should not be privatised. As explained in The Newcastle Herald, "this is public land and should remain public land" (2006).

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This submission presented by SOR displays crucial factors that will be affected by the installation of the light rail system in the Central Business District of Newcastle. The aspects of Traffic, Transport and Access, Socio-Economic and Heritage each illuminate how the light rail and deconstruction of the heavy rail will fail to revitalise the city of Newcastle, it will in reality make life for the community and commuters of the city much more difficult. SOR presents three recommendations that would ultimately keep transport in the inner city accessible and available. Reinstating the heavy rail in the current rail corridor and reviewing the cost of the light rail will assist in the saving of the Newcastle train system and the CBD community.

Heavy Rail Replaced in Current Rail Corridor

SOR believes the only logical course of action for Newcastle transport is to withdraw the current proposals for the development of light rail down Hunter Street and Scott Street and to rebuild the heavy rail along the existing rail corridor between Wickham and Newcastle Stations. The proposal of the light rail to be built down Hunter Street and Scott Street is an expensive and unnecessary change to the former transport within Newcastle City Centre. The current rail corridor is the most economic and logical solution to effective transport within Newcastle. Rebuilding the heavy rail down the existing rail corridor will effectively reverse the problems that are a consequence of the current proposal of light rail. It would preserve parking within the city, provide a quicker and more effective mode of transport within the city, as well as into the city and is the most attractive solution. Heavy rail down the existing rail corridor is the only option that will effectively meet the objective to revitalise Newcastle and provide better connectivity within the city and into the city.

An alternative to allow more access over the line would be to implement the SOR previous proposal for a section of raised rail line or viaduct, which would allow free movement as well as allowing for creative use of the space underneath.

An underground rail from Wickham to Newcastle Station would allow for light development on the rail corridor. The disadvantage would be the ongoing costs of continual lighting and probable need for continuous pumping out because of the water table level and the frequent tidal inundation of this site.

Review Replacement Cost For Removed Rail Line Compared To Light Rail Project

Based on the installation cost of a 5.3km innovative rail line in Sydney within the last 2 years, demonstrates the potential of an inexpensive re-installation of Newcastle's lost rail infrastructure. The establishment of this rail line within Sydney cost \$25 million, this included an entirely new installation, rails, stanchions and sleepers. The Newcastle Light Rail Project is proposed to be of significantly less distance than Sydney's rail line, with only 2.7km essentially half the length. The cost of this project however is almost \$½ billion. This seems to indicate a cost/benefit analysis, which has never been publicly produced. Inevitably, this requires significant attention urgently; an analysis needs to be undertaken as soon as possible. Save Our Rail calls for thoughtful re-thinking of wastage in placing this within a street when a rail corridor is available.

(NB: the \$1/2 billion figure corrects a typographical error in an earlier version of this submission)

APPENDIX – SAVE OUR RAIL WORKSHOPS

Save Our Rail conducted work-shops prior to writing major submissions on behalf of the community. The transport workshops collected the views of over 400 attendees.

Transport Needs Identified

The following needs were most frequently identified at the SOR transport workshops:

- Retain rail to Newcastle Station
Save Our Rail suggests that the need for direct transport still exists and as this was by far the most common need expressed at the workshops, the Planning Department needs to heed the suggestions in this submission for provision of direct intercity transport to Newcastle Station area and the beach.
- Reduce the trip time between Newcastle and Sydney
- Greater frequency of all public transport services
- Provide at least one night running train on both Hunter Lines.
(Last train to Dungog 5.30 p.m. Last train to Scone 5.45 p.m. This forces many to drive cars, otherwise they cannot get home from night lectures, meetings, entertainment etc.)
- Lack of consultation – transport not meeting needs, (e.g. Airport) system imposing decisions – e.g. timetable changes
- Bus provision – need some direct express services, some “meandering.”

There were many other expressed concerns, including needs of disabled, need for continued access to the beach from inland towns, some places have no public transport, concern re environment (excessive car use), transport not when & where needed, improve integration, Park and Ride facilities, freight by-pass, luggage & bike spaces on trains, promotion of public transport.

(NB: this appendix page was inadvertently omitted from an earlier version of this submission)