

SYDNEY'S TRANSPORT – A POSITION

Revised by the Sydney Division Transport Panel May 2006

1. There are many failings of the Sydney transport system, as a glance at any day's newspaper will confirm. By and large these are not a failing of engineers – who must take credit for a lot of things which happen right, but which do not hit the headlines. In the infrastructure debate, the voice of the engineer is just one professional voice clamouring to be heard, along with bankers, lawyers, economists etc, but without the contribution of engineers there would be significant failings of the transport system.
2. The Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney, documented in the “City of Cities” report released by State Government in December 2005, and the AusLink process being followed by Federal Government, should be supported. Both are “works in progress” rather than finished products, and Engineers Australia has suggested many areas in which further progress can be made on transport issues.
3. Peak Oil issues may or may not be almost upon us and, irrespective of the true position, this is a major risk calling for appropriate management. All levels of government should apply risk management principles for this.
4. The Metropolitan Strategy envisages spending \$8 billion in the expansion of the rail network into the SW and NW growth areas and enlargement of the network in the CBD. This seems incompatible with the development of the “City of Cities” that the Metro Strategy is trying to encourage, although it would be beneficial to the concentration of activities in the CBD and Eastern Sydney that give Sydney the status of a global city. The provision of alternatives to future car use in outer areas of Sydney, far from this concentration, for more local travel is however also essential.
5. The public evaluation procedures for public-private partnerships - like the Cross-City Tunnel - should be more focussed on securing economic, environmental and social outcomes and less on securing the financial viability of the project.
6. There is a clear need for a public campaign of education about transport issues. At present the pressure from motorists' lobby groups to lower fuel excise to mitigate the effects of rising oil prices is growing, although the Transport Panel does not believe this would be in the long-term interests of motorists or anybody else in Sydney.
7. Whilst there is a need for investment in new infrastructure, we believe that the existing transport infrastructure could be better used, resulting in some short-term improvements. The obstacles lie mainly in inefficient institutional or industrial practices. Further, if the price of one mode of transport is altered, the usage of that mode will change. There are a large number of deficiencies in current pricing, especially the relativities between the different modes. A more appropriate pricing system should be implemented to encourage efficient usage of the system.
8. Past substantial engineering initiatives include the Transport Taskforce on Sustainable Energy (IEAust 1999), and “Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities” (Warren Centre for Advanced Engineering, Sydney University, 2003).