



**Western Sydney Regional
Organisation of Councils Ltd**

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To whom it may concern

Re: WSROC Response to High Speed Rail Study Phase 2 Report

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Phase 2 study of the High Speed Rail (HSR) project currently under consideration by the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure and Transport.

The Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils represents ten local government areas in the Sydney Metropolitan area, including Auburn, Bankstown, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Holroyd, Liverpool, Parramatta, and Penrith. Our councils represent over 1.6 million residents, and the population of our region is expected to grow by over 1 million over the next 20 years. By 2021, half the population of Sydney will be living in Greater Western Sydney.

WSROC is strong supporter of HSR as a fast, efficient, environmental and practical solution to meeting increasing demand for interstate travel, especially the high volume of air traffic currently operating between Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane.

However, we have serious concerns about the viability of the current proposal to route the Sydney metropolitan stretch from Hornsby to Holsworthy via the CBD.

We note that the Phase 1 report considered four options for the route, one of which included diverting it through Parramatta. WSROC supports the submission made by Parramatta Council advocating this option and continues to do so.

The Phase 2 study indicates that HSR services would be introduced from 2030 to 2058 in stages. Sydney to Canberra is the first stage of Line 1 and expected to open in 2030. The estimated cost is \$23billion including \$11.5billion for tunnelling in Sydney.

This only covers the southern half of the project. The Northern half – from the CBD to Newcastle via Hornsby will cost another \$18.9 billion, of which a significant amount is the cost of tunnelling. In total 67 kilometres of the route will be tunnelled through the Sydney Metropolitan area.

Auburn Bankstown Blacktown Blue Mountains Fairfield Hawkesbury Holroyd Liverpool Parramatta Penrith

WSROC is concerned that the Phase 2 HSR study recommends one central Sydney HSR station at Central, with additional stations at Hornsby and Holsworthy in Sydney's South West.

In our opinion this does not give due consideration to the numerous additional benefits that would be achieved by redirecting the route through a central station at Parramatta.

Western Sydney is not directly served by the current HSR proposal and the majority of passengers would have to access the HSR at Central. Sydney's CBD may be the highest concentration of jobs in Sydney but it is not the geographical centre of the residential population which is in Ermington, some 5 km from Parramatta.

Given that only 36% of projected passenger trips will be business-related there is no major imperative for the train to terminate in the CBD. Furthermore, given the first stage of the project will not be completed until 2035, it is expected that by then there will have been a significant shift of jobs and services to the western Sydney region, further reducing the demand for a CBD terminal.

The cost of tunnelling through to the CBD and back out again is substantial and comprises the two highest cost per kilometre stretches at \$81 million p/km between Sydney and Canberra and \$141 million p/km between Sydney and Newcastle. This is a direct reflection of the cost of tunnelling under the Sydney metro region, with the northern branch also requiring a separate designated harbour crossing. These costs could be significantly reduced by diverting the route directly through to Liverpool via Parramatta. A separate dedicated HSR spur line could be built to connect Parramatta with the CBD for a fraction of the cost. This proposal also removes the need to create a second storey, 10 platform terminal at Central.

The significant reduction in construction costs that would be achieved by this alternate proposal changes all the current cost-benefit estimations and requires lower patronage in order to make the project economically viable.

It is a significant flaw in the Phase 2 study that the projected usage for a project which will not be fully operational for more than 50 years makes all its assessments and projections on current patterns of travel, without reference to future planning strategies.

By the time the first stage of HSR is completed from Sydney to Canberra in 2035, the population of Western Sydney and Eastern Sydney will be approximately the same at 2.5 million. It appears that the study has ignored Sydney's future population growth pattern, and failed to take into account that impact on future demand. By 2056, when the HSR service is predicted to be fully open, the population of Western Sydney will outnumber the east by 1 million. At an estimated cost of \$114 billion and a 50 year construction span, HSR is a long term investment in Australia's future and must be designed to meet the needs of the future, not just the present, and that means access to and from the West.

Furthermore, the study estimates that 12 million of the 46 million annual passengers in 2065 will transfer at Central between HSR Line 1 (Melbourne) and Line 2 (Brisbane). This creates massive inefficiencies in terms of HSR operations and increased journey times that could be reduced if there were a station at Parramatta where a direct service from Melbourne to Brisbane avoiding Central could be provided. This would generate significant additional benefits and further

increase the cost-benefits of the scheme and allow passengers to travel through from the south to the north without changing.

The Phase 2 study appears to have lightly considered a HSR station in Parramatta. Parramatta was only considered as an alternative to a Sydney CBD station rather than in addition to a Sydney CBD station.

The Parramatta station study limited site investigations to one site whereas four sites were considered for both Homebush and Sydney CBD. There are numerous other sites within Parramatta that could have been considered including south of the Parramatta CBD (Auto Alley) and Rosehill/Camellia.

In addition the study cites that there is limited land available to build car parking. A HSR Parramatta station in Parramatta would not require a significant amount of parking as it is located in the heart of urban Sydney (and a CBD) with a good level of regional public transport. Parramatta CBD also has access to the regional road network both east-west as well as north-south.

A HSR station at Parramatta has several clear advantages over the current CBD option under consideration.

It provides a central point of connectivity for all Sydney residents.

It supports jobs growth and economic development through the Western Sydney region.

It will have potentially increased patronage from a HSR station at Parramatta as more people will be able to access it with ease.

There is increased potential for land value capture as part of a possible funding model.

HSR would offer regional cities development opportunities due to the significant reduction in journey times to capital cities. Regional cities have cheaper and a more abundant supply of land for development. It would also offer residents and businesses an alternative lifestyle while still providing good access to the capital cities.

The HSR station at Holsworthy is also questionable as to its ability to serve Sydney as it is located on defence land, away from established town centres with no public transport options. The nearest CityRail station is Glenfield which is about 10 minutes drive away. The current proposal gives no thought to shuttle services, car parking or other means of accessing the Holsworthy station.

WSROC believes the station should be located in the town centre of Liverpool, which has been designated a regional city under the NSW Government's Metropolitan Strategy and which already has good road and public transport access as well as opportunities for supporting development.

The proposed station at Hornsby does at least have direct connections with the CityRail network but under this proposal can only be serviced by trains heading north. If a direct service were available via Parramatta passengers could travel in either direction without having to change at Central.

In conclusion, WSROC believes this is an important long term planning project which is worthy of consideration – but it must be designed for the future, not the present.

Given the growing population and economic importance of Western Sydney it makes sense to locate the Sydney terminal in the centre of the city – which in 50 years time will be Parramatta. In addition, the construction costs would be significantly reduced by removing the need to tunnel into and out of the CBD, create a separate harbour crossing and build a new railway station at Central.

We urge the Department to reconsider the designated route and see the many advantages and benefits that would be gained by directing the service through Parramatta.

Yours sincerely,

Clr Tony Hadchiti
WSROC President