MACROC Submission to the South West Rail Link Extension Public Transport Corridor Protection

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the paper prepared by Transport for NSW on the South West Rail Link Extension Public Transport Corridor Protection.

MACROC is the regional organisation of councils for the Macarthur area of South West Sydney. Formed in 1985, it represents the local government areas of Camden, Campbelltown and Wollondilly. MACROC’s role is to identify issues of regional importance and advocate for positive regional outcomes. Regional issues for the Macarthur region include transport infrastructure planning, managing population growth, employment generation, economic development and land use planning. As the Government is aware South West Sydney is the area targeted to accommodate the major proportion of Sydney’s projected growth over the coming years and transport continues to be a considerable challenge in supporting a future population.

With the announcement on 15 April 2014 the Federal Cabinet supported the establishment of a second airport in the Sydney Basin, to be located at Badgery’s Creek. In the short term access to Badgery’s Creek Airport is to be supported by new roads and road upgrades, park and ride facilities and new bus services. In the longer term access to the Airport will be supplemented by rail links.

The Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan was announced on 1 April with $3.5 Billion allocated over 10 years for roads which will be a joint Federal and State responsibility. Projects include Bringelly Road, the Northern Road and the Elizabeth Drive extension and upgrade. On 28 April the South West Rail Link Extension Public Transport Corridor Protection was announced by the NSW Government and community consultation commenced.

MACROC understands that Transport for NSW is striving to plan for the strong population growth that will occur in Western Sydney and to ensure that critical integrated public transport services will be delivered in line with growing community needs.

MACROC is pleased to see in this document a strong emphasis on cross-regional connectivity, an issue that MACROC has addressed in previous submissions to Government. In the Minister’s Message at the beginning of the document she states that “This extension of the South West Rail Link in the longer term will serve the South West
Growth Centre and Broader Western Sydney Employment Area. The corridor will connect communities, businesses, jobs and services and provide transformative cross-regional connectivity across Sydney’s west."

In terms of preserving the future public transport corridors for Western Sydney MACROC acknowledges the ‘roads before runways’, ‘rail after runways’ approach and as we noted in our submission to the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan “there needs to be active management of public transport growth concurrent with population growth”.

Population growth needs to be accompanied by growth in local employment opportunities to redress the growing jobs deficit in Macarthur and reduce travel times and pressure on road transport.

Initially it is understood that this project is part of the general improvement of public transport in Greater Western Sydney but the longer term goal of the project is to build on the completion of the South West Rail Link. The first stage is to identify a route and core station sites for an extension of the rail link from Leppington to Bringelly and then north to the western rail line near St Marys and south to Narellan. At this stage the project nominates the core railway stations to be at Rossmore, Bringelly, North Bringelly and Badgery’s Creek, Oran Park and Narellan to serve the town centres land residential catchment. Bus interchange and park and ride facilities will also be located here.

Extending the South West Rail Link makes good planning sense. It will connect future populations in the Macarthur region and connect employment hubs in Western Sydney. However, to optimise sustainable economic and community outcomes for the Macarthur region and in accordance with the Minister’s Message discussed above, MACROC recommends that serious consideration needs to be given to an extension of the South West Rail Link from Narellan to Campbelltown Macarthur.

This would connect future populations in the Macarthur region and connect the employment hubs in Western Sydney with each other and with centres of future population growth. This issue is discussed in more detail later in this submission.

MACROC has identified a number of issues of concern for the Macarthur region.

Establishment of a Regional Coordination Group

To ensure the success of this large scale infrastructure project there needs to be true collaboration and coordination between Federal and State Governments, relevant State Government agencies and Local Government. It is essential that Local Government is involved in such a significant infrastructure program and MACROC would suggest that a regional coordination group be established that includes the Councils affected, key State Government authorities such as RMS, Transport for NSW, Department of Planning and Environment, as well as the Federal Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development.

Impact on Planning in South West Growth Centre

In the Macarthur region Camden LGA will be the most directly affected in terms of public corridor protection. Corridor protection will have a significant impact on Camden Council’s
objectives of road, bus and pedestrian networks; and the construction of heavy rail will impact on regional and local based networks.

Planning for the South West Rail Link needs to take into account the emerging centres of Oran Park and Narellan. It is important that the future rail stations are integrated within the town centre areas.

Precinct Planning with the South West Growth Centre will also be affected, so the issue of the timing in delivery of the South West Rail Link Extension is critical to the impact on development, particularly for pre-empting re-zonings. As part of a concept plan for delivery of the Extension a strategy will be required to determine how the orderly rate of development can be managed to minimise any adverse urban planning outcomes.

A key issue for Camden is the need for Transport for NSW and the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to re-visit the South West Growth Centre Structure Plan, with a revised focus on integrated land use planning and transit oriented development.

**Rail Connection between Narellan and Campbelltown**

The map of the planned corridors for the South West Rail Link Extension ends at Narellan and the planned corridors draw the population of the South West away from Campbelltown/Macarthur to the north and north east (St Marys, Penrith, Liverpool and Parramatta).

This is a serious planning oversight considering the significant public and private investment in key regional facilities being made in Campbelltown/Macarthur that will service the population of the South West Growth Centre. These key regional facilities include Campbelltown Public and Private Hospitals, the University of Western Sydney, The South West Sydney Institute of TAFE, a significantly expanded Macarthur Square Regional Shopping Centre and the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan.

Campbelltown/Macarthur is developing naturally into a regional city centre for the South West, with potential to be the emerging hub of investment in economic development and higher order employment. To ignore a rail link between Narellan and Campbelltown would be a missed opportunity to achieve a fully integrated rail network and to stimulate significant economic and employment development in the Macarthur region.

The functional east/west connections between the centres of Camden/Narellan and Campbelltown/Macarthur continue to be a pressing infrastructure issue in the Macarthur region. The NSW Government has committed to upgrading Narellan Road, however investigation into the broader regional transport network, for example Spring Farm Park Way, remain a challenge. The opportunity of connecting the South West Rail Link Extension to the Main South Line must be incorporated into current infrastructure planning. Existing rail infrastructure at Glenlee may provide an opportunity to facilitate connection, although other options for a corridor route need to be examined in consultation with Camden and Campbelltown City Councils. This extension to Campbelltown/Macarthur would also facilitate potential for the establishment of a new station (s) to service the Australian Garden at Mount Annan, providing for an important link to the new airport for the benefit of tourists.

Campbelltown and Wollondilly’s residents are entitled to a rail connection to Badgery’s Creek as well as the Broader Western Sydney Employment Area (the latter a point raised in previous MACROC submissions to Government). This includes existing and future populations.
There is also significant population growth proposed for South Campbelltown, Appin and Wilton Junction (more than 35,000 dwellings or 100,000 people). This could be considered a third Metropolitan Growth Centre and transport planning needs to acknowledge this now at this critical point in planning for the future.

The proximity to the employment opportunities offered by the airport and the Broader Western Sydney Employment Area will also mean that there will be significant changes in the travel to work patterns in Wollondilly Shire which will impact on local infrastructure in Wollondilly, particularly Silverdale Road, Werombi Road and Cobbitty Road.

**Outer Sydney Orbital (M9)**

Planning for the Outer Sydney Orbital has been announced and a Steering Committee, of which MACROC and WSROC are members, has been established. However the South West Rail Link Extension does not factor in the considerable impact that this major piece of infrastructure will have on the Macarthur region and the interaction it will have on link roads. Transport for NSW needs to consider how the rail extension will relate to a multi-modal corridor for the outer Sydney Orbital and investigate options for interim use of the South West Rail Link Extension corridor.

**Key Stakeholder Consultation and Community Engagement**

Transport for NSW is currently engaged in consultation around the South West Rail Link Extension Corridor Protection project. MACROC understands that this is stage one of a two stage process and that the second stage will occur later in 2014. Given the significance and wide ranging implications of the project MACROC would suggest that advanced consultation with key stakeholders such as Councils would be a more rational approach before engaging in general community consultation. This would mean that key stakeholders would have a comprehensive response in advance of the release of the preferred rail corridor alignment options. Such an approach would enable Councils to prepare for meaningful and better informed engagement with their communities.

In their individual submissions the MACROC Councils have identified in detail the particular issues in the South West Rail Link Extension Public Transport Corridor Protection document that concern their LGA. This regional submission should be read in conjunction with the more comprehensive comments made by our Member Councils.

Prepared by
Christine Winning
Executive Officer
27 June 2014