



# Penrith City Council Submission

## South West Rail Link Extension – Public transport corridor protection



## Introduction

Penrith City Council welcomes the State Government's announcement to protect a future corridor to extend the South West Rail Link. Council strongly supports the proposed Corridor as part of a broader plan for Western Sydney that will connect the Growth Centres and the Broader Western Sydney Employment Area (BWSEA) to Western Sydney's regional cities and major centres. In particular, the proposed Corridor will play a vitally important role in providing north-south cross regional connections, which are essential to the continued development of Penrith as the Regional City for the West and to improve access to jobs, education and services. The proposed Corridor will also help to address much needed public transport infrastructure and services for existing urban areas, as well as for future planned growth, irrespective of the construction of Sydney's second airport at Badgerys Creek. Together with the proposed road upgrades announced as part of the *Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan*, the proposed Corridor will contribute to a more balanced approach between road and rail, and between private and public transport modes within the region.

As a member of the National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA), Council is concerned that our communities have equitable access to jobs, education and a range of services. A gap exists between Australians living in inner-metro established suburbs and those in outer-metro growth areas, with the former enjoying better public transport, allowing cheaper and easier access to work, study and services not available locally. The NGAA's *An Action Plan for Addressing Skills and Employment Gaps in Outer Metropolitan Growth Areas* (November 2012) acknowledges that government investment in transport infrastructure is an important corollary to job catalysts. It can extend the impact of catalysts such as a new hospital or university campus. The liveability of a place is inherently influenced by its accessibility by public transport. The liveability, and therefore the employment circumstances of outer Western Sydney, is affected by the absence of intra-regional transport networks between the north-west and south-west. The State Government's commitment to address this absence of north-south intra-regional networks is a significant advancement welcomed by Council.

## Background

### Submission on NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan

In October 2012, Council submitted a detailed response to Transport for NSW in relation to the draft *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan*. In that response, Council stated the effective delivery of transport infrastructure and services for the region is vital for the City of Penrith and its communities as it will provide appropriate transport "self sufficiency" in terms of cross regional journeys, public/private transport options and support for localised employment opportunities. Council also argued that such localised infrastructure and services will provide a very important and cost effective offset to the demand for capacity on an otherwise radial and Sydney CBD centric transport model.

In particular, Council's response identified a number of key rail transport priorities and initiatives for Penrith, including:

- Delivery of a new Penrith – Sydney CBD Express Rail Service, with additional seating capacity and the quadruplication of the main Western Rail Line from St Marys to Penrith;
- Reservation of Strategic Transport Corridors to connect the North West and South West Rail Links through the BWSEA and also to connect regional centres, the Growth Centres and Penrith to facilitate the future provision of fast mass transit facilities; and

- Delivery of frequent public transport, development of real time signage at all interchanges identifying when the next trains/buses are departing and provision of appropriate community parking and associated facilities.

Council's response also stated that freight transport is vital to the continued viability and prosperity of the Penrith region and Western Sydney. It recommended that the Transport Master Plan include a range of initiatives aimed at maximising the reduction of road freight movements on metropolitan roads through the development of intermodal facilities, dedicated freight lines and resolution of the second Sydney airport issue. In particular, it recommended that the Transport Master Plan include measures to promote investment in, and development of, intermodal freight facilities within the BWSEA, which would also act as a driver for economic growth and employment.

## Other Submissions to State Government

In recent years, Council has also made a number of other submissions to State Government on key policy documents affecting the City of Penrith and Western Sydney, which are relevant to the proposed Corridor. These include the *Draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney 2031* and the *Draft Broader Western Sydney Employment Area Structure Plan*.

Council's submission on the *Draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney 2031* emphasised that strong cross-regional linkages are essential to the continued development of Penrith as the Regional City for the West and to improve access to jobs in the adjoining subregions. It stated that the Metropolitan Strategy should include the 'connection' priorities identified in Council's submission to the Transport Master Plan, including extending the North West Rail Line through the BWSEA to link with the South West Rail Line at Leppington. Further, the submission recommended a number of priorities for the Metropolitan Strategy including development of a freight connection for the BWSEA, improved public transport connectivity between and within subregions and greater investment in public transport.

In relation to the *Draft Broader Western Sydney Employment Area Structure Plan*, Council's submission also highlighted the need for intra-regional, multi-modal transport links to facilitate access to and from the BWSEA. It highlighted the need to reserve key corridors of land to provide for future development of the Outer Sydney Orbital (M9), the north-south rail link and freight. Specifically, Council's submission recommended:

- The Structure Plan reserve adequate land for the Outer Sydney Orbital (M9) in a dedicated access corridor, with the access corridor providing sufficient land for all modes of transport including motorway, passenger rail and freight rail transport;
- The State Government commit to the delivery of both intermodal facilities including the second intermodal facility on the western side of BWSEA to service freight rail from Port Kembla and Newcastle associated with the Outer Sydney Orbital; and
- The Structure Plan provide a link from BWSEA back into Penrith railway station via a dedicated transit way.

# Proposed Corridor for the South West Rail Link Extension

Council strongly supports the proposed Corridor for the South West Rail Link Extension as it will play a vital role in providing north-south cross regional connections in the Penrith region and in Western Sydney generally. These connections are essential to the continued development of Penrith as the Regional City for the West and to improve access to jobs, education and services across the region. Council also strongly supports the proposed Corridor as it will help to address much needed public transport infrastructure and services for existing and future urban development, irrespective of the delivery of Sydney's second airport at Badgerys Creek.

## Principles

Council has identified a number of key principles to guide the form and location of a Corridor that would effectively connect the communities of Penrith and Western Sydney to economic, employment and learning centres across the region. These principles include:

### Maximise opportunities for economic growth and employment

The final alignment of the Corridor must maximise development opportunities for economic growth and employment.

Sydney Science Park will be located within the BWSEA and has the potential to be a significant catalyst for job creation. It will be a research and development centre specialising in the food, health and energy sectors. The vision for the site is to deliver higher order employment uses in the form of a fully integrated science park including education, research and development, commercial/office space, centre based residential, student housing, retail and town centre uses. The proposal will potentially provide 12,200 jobs and 3,500 dwellings. Sydney Science Park is identified as a centre in the draft BWSEA Structure Plan and the associated Planning Proposal is currently with NSW Planning and Environment (NSWPE) seeking a Gateway Determination.

The PHEP is a specialised precinct for health education, research and related industries. It is located around the University of Western Sydney (Penrith Campus), the University of Sydney's Medical School (Nepean), TAFE NSW - Western Sydney Institute (Kingswood Campus) and the public and private Nepean Hospitals. It will potentially provide 13,000 jobs, 4,500 dwellings and facilities for an additional 15,000 students. The PHEP is part of Council's comprehensive local environmental plan (LEP), which is currently with NSWPE for Ministerial approval.

The Corridor must connect the significant employment generating and region shaping potential of Sydney Science Park and the Penrith Health and Education Precinct (PHEP).

### Support the growth of Penrith as a Regional City

The intersection of the Corridor with the Western Rail Line must support the growth of Penrith as a Regional City - a regional hub for office, retail, recreation and culture and the provision of higher density housing and employment.

As part of the Penrith Economic Corridor, Penrith City Centre has the potential to provide 11,000 jobs and 4,000 dwellings. There are also significant projects within close proximity of the City Centre including an \$850 million integrated entertainment, leisure and lifestyle development of the Panthers site; a range of employment, civic and

educational land uses in the Riverlink Precinct; Parkview, a large scale residential and commercial development opposite CUA Stadium; North Penrith Urban Area, a 1,000 homes estate; and a proposal to redevelop CUA Stadium to a 40,000 seat Tier 2 Stadium. In addition, there is a unique opportunity at Penrith Lakes to build on the legacy of the 2000 Olympics and create a major destination for recreation and employment. Activating these projects as a precinct and supporting it with appropriate public transport infrastructure and services is paramount to the development of Penrith as the Regional City for the West. The provision of a 'Y Link' where the Corridor intersects with the Western Line to enable a direct connection to the Penrith Regional City Centre and surrounds would help reinforce this role.

### **Accelerate delivery of the Corridor to the north of Bringelly**

Accelerating the delivery of the proposed Corridor to the north of Bringelly will help to stimulate economic growth and employment, particularly within the BWSEA, including Sydney Science Park, and the PHEP.

Council particularly requests that the State Government consider bringing forward the planning and construction of the proposed rail line (not just the Corridor protection) so as to facilitate the development of the BWSEA, whether the airport proceeds or not.

### **Effectively service the BWSEA by providing a station at the identified 'Town Centre' and a spur line**

Council strongly supports a station at the location of the 'Town Centre' in the draft BWSEA Structure Plan; i.e. at Sydney Science Park, given its potential to be a significant catalyst for job creation.

This station, as well as other new stations servicing major centres in the region, should be constructed underground or within cut to ensure these centres are not polarised by a barrier that results in poor pedestrian, traffic and design outcomes.

Council also recommends Transport for NSW consider identifying and protecting a corridor for a spur line to service the remainder of the BWSEA.

### **Extend the Corridor to the North West Rail Link and the Main South Rail Line**

Extending the proposed Corridor to the North West Rail Link to connect the North West and South West Growth Centres to Penrith and the BWSEA is strongly supported.

Council also urges Transport for NSW to consider extending the proposed Corridor south of Narellan to connect to the Main South Rail Line.

These extensions will complete important north-south connections linking Western Sydney communities to jobs, education and services across the region, including to other key centres such as Sydney Business Park and the UWS (Campbelltown Campus).

### **Optimise performance on the Western Rail Line**

Following discussions with Transport for NSW, it is understood that passengers will be required to transfer from the North West and South West Rail Lines to the Western Line due to different train types on the system. It is also understood that to achieve a more seamless transport system in this regard, Transport for NSW will rely on initiatives such as the synchronisation of services and electronic ticketing.

Optimising the performance of the Western Rail Line will be critical to providing an effective and efficient public transport system for the communities of Penrith and Western Sydney. In particular, accelerating the frequency and speed of services and

synchronising services with those on the North West and South West Rail Lines will be necessary.

### **Promote St Marys station as a key interchange**

The *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan* identifies a corridor linking the North West Growth Centre (Marsden Park) to Mount Druitt. Council believes that St Marys station should be the key interchange between the Western Rail Line and the North West and South West Rail Lines given its central location relative to the Growth Centres and BWSEA.

### **Co-locate freight rail transport with the Outer Sydney Orbital and support a separate public transport corridor**

Council has previously recommended that an adequate corridor should be reserved for the Outer Sydney Orbital, which also provides sufficient land for passenger rail and freight rail transport. Following discussions with Transport for NSW, Council acknowledges the need for a corridor to co-locate freight rail transport and the Outer Sydney Orbital with a separate corridor for passenger rail transport given their different requirements and impacts.

While not directly relevant to the proposed public transport Corridor, Council wishes to reiterate its previous comments that the provision of freight transport is vital to the continued viability and prosperity of the Penrith region and Western Sydney. Further, the corridor for freight rail transport and the Outer Sydney Orbital must reserve sufficient land to enable a second intermodal facility to be developed on the western side of BWSEA to service freight rail from Port Kembla and Newcastle.

### **Minimise any potential adverse environmental, economic and social impacts**

The final alignment of the Corridor must minimise any potential adverse environmental, economic and social impacts, including any impacts on threatened species, populations or ecological communities on the Cumberland Plain.

In regard to the latter, Council has had a long standing position of protecting the significant biodiversity values of the Orchard Hills Defence site. This site comprises the least disturbed and largest remaining remnant of Cumberland Plain Woodland (CPW). CPW is listed as a critically endangered ecological community under both State and Commonwealth legislation. The site contains mature trees reaching a height of 50 metres, some of which are the most outstanding examples of Forest Red gum trees remaining in Western Sydney. The size of the remnant provides a comparatively large area of continuous habitat for species likely to be excluded from small, isolated remnants, particularly the CPW bird community. The site also contains Sydney Coastal River Flat Forest, which is listed as an endangered ecological community at the State level.

These significant biodiversity values are recognised with the majority of the Orchard Hills Defence site being:

- listed on the *Register of the National Estate*;
- identified as priority conservation lands in the *Cumberland Plain Recovery Plan*; and
- zoned as E2 Environmental Conservation in *Penrith Local Environmental Plan 2010*.

### **Design the Corridor for future needs**

The proposed Corridor must be designed for future needs, including ensuring it is sufficiently wide to accommodate additional stations and has sufficient capacity built into its intersection with the Western Rail Line to enable connection to the North West Rail Link.

### **Adopt a coordinated approach to governance and decision making**

To deliver appropriate transport infrastructure and services for Penrith and Western Sydney communities, it will be necessary to adopt a coordinated approach to governance and decision making across all levels of government in relation to all modes of transport across the region.

## **Location of the Proposed Corridor and Additional Stations**

Taking into account the above principles, Council considers that the preferred location for the proposed Corridor through the City of Penrith is through the BWSEA connecting to the PHEP and then to the North West Rail Link and Growth Centre, as broadly shown in Figure 1. As such, the proposed Corridor would need to make provision for the following:

- A station at the location of the 'Town Centre' in the draft BWSEA Structure Plan; i.e. at Sydney Science Park;
- A spur line to service the remainder of the BWSEA;
- A station within the PHEP;
- A 'Y Link' where the Corridor intersects with the Western Line to enable a direct connection to Penrith City Centre and surrounding developments; and
- An upgrade to St Marys station to recognise its role as a key interchange between the Western Rail Line and the North West and South West Rail Lines.

In the medium term, it is anticipated that provision will need to be made for another station in the BWSEA. Council therefore recommends that the proposed Corridor be designed and protected to accommodate this additional station.

Figure 1: Recommended Location of Corridor and Stations





## Conclusion

Penrith City Council strongly supports the proposed Corridor as part of a broader plan for Western Sydney that will connect the Growth Centres and the BWSEA to Western Sydney's regional cities and major centres. The provision of north-south cross regional connections is essential to the continued development of both the region, and Penrith as a Regional City and to improve access to jobs, education and services.

Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Corridor proposal and urges Transport for NSW to take into consideration the key principles and comments raised in our submission.

Council also looks forward to further engagement with the State Government in the next stages of planning for the Corridor.