

## **Appendix: Background to the “missing railways”**

The Government's long-term vision for Sydney's rail system development has obvious gaps. For example, the “need” for a second Harbour crossing – first raised by Ron Christie in 2000-01 – was assumed. The elephant in the room was the possibility of removing unnecessary services from the CBD/Harbour networks. They are alternatives. No-one would do both. In addition, the Epping to Parramatta line disappeared in that timeframe.

Why and how could such black holes develop?

### **HISTORICAL UNDERPINNINGS**

Great cities reappraise their railway and related systems every once in a while, usually in a systemic manner in which “needs” are analysed and addressed. London did this in the early 2000s through an “east-west needs study” by Sir Rod Eddington's team; and Melbourne, the same topic and man, about 4 years later. No presumption was made of which mode/s should be focussed on, trains or trams or freeways – that answer was an outcome, not an input.

Sydney did this too, a long time ago: in the early 1900s the “improvement generation” pushed Sydney to the forefront of world practice through a planning royal commission (the world's first), which led to a “planning consensus”, then legislation which led to the “improvement” package of the Harbour Bridge, Underground Railway (“metro”) and suburban electrification – a total of £27 million of which the Bridge was £10 million (effectively three Bridges). Their intent was clear: to move working families out of the slums and into healthy suburban estates, with cheap and clean transport to and fro. The projects were outcomes of this “vision” and the need to politically inspire a Greater Sydney.

Since about 1995, as the dispersal of population and jobs made the gaps in the railways very obvious and the growth of centres overloaded specific rail lines, the opposite approach was taken – planning reviews were conducted so as to build a railway, or a road, or a tramway, to the extent that only pet projects were put before the public and with decreasing qualities and quantities of information. Between \$5 and \$7 billion was committed to the CBD Metro on the basis of a press release. That approach continues to this day.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE OPTIONS**

A succession of “plans” after the Second World War revealed different thinking. The Cumberland Planning Scheme of 1948 had no relevant rail schemes and focussed on a “green belt”; and its successor, the Sydney Region Outline Plan (1976) focussed on existing corridors. The Sydney Area Transportation Study (1974) recommended a number of new lines (such as the Eastern Suburbs Railway (ESR) and a Parramatta Express line through the innerwest) but none were cross-regional. (This contained some scenario-testing and outcome-measurement numbers. In the following, an asterisk (\*) indicates the named report did not contain such indicators.)

The incoming Wran Government confirmed and completed the ESR and extended the East Hills line to Glenfield. Its only cross-regional element was the Merrylands-Harris Park “Y” to allow SW trains to run through to Parramatta.

The transport and general unions greeted the Greiner Government with a critique of past approaches, a proposed new methodology, and a set of rail projects which were assessed as reducing the railways' deficit and producing positive urban outcomes. This was Jacana Consulting's “A Rail Strategy for the Sydney Region” (1990) and the projects were Merrylands-Parramatta-Epping, and Bankstown/Punchbowl/Hurstville. Each would permit cross-regional running (somewhat indirectly) to Parramatta; with other smaller works. They were estimated to cost \$640 million or less than 2 years' of the railway capital budget; and increase patronage by 15.3 – 21.6 million trips p.a. or 6 to 9%; with a 2% increase in track kilometres.

The Fahey Government released the "Integrated Transport Strategy"\* in 1995 and this included Parramatta/Epping/Chatswood, at least in part in response to Jacana.

The Total Environment Centre commissioned Jacana to deliver "Public Transport Corridor Study for Metropolitan Sydney" in 1998 (the NRMA provided the funding). This included some measurement of air quality, social and heritage effects as well as economic and system integration benefits. It proposed spending \$940 m a year for 5 years to complete Hurstville/Strathfield (rather than Bankstown) and Parramatta/Chatswood as well as 4 other cross-regional routes and bus-rail interchanges. The Hurstville/Strathfield indicators included:

- 60,000 daily home-to-work trips, with the same back, with over 20% coming from further west
- capital cost (construction, vehicles etc) of \$660 m

Then Carr's Transport Minister Carl Scully released "Action for Public Transport 2000"\* in 1998 and this included Hurstville to Strathfield, and Chatswood to Castle Hill, to be completed before 2010; with other works such as Chatswood to Dee Why, and ESR to Maroubra, after that date. Scully included the words, Hurstville/Strathfield "will connect five existing rail lines and open up new employment opportunities along this corridor". Jacana had pointed out to him that at least 1 train path per hour would be "added" to the Illawarra line at modest cost – indeed, Hurstville/Strathfield was the lowest cost of all rail projects being considered,

In 2000-01 Ron Christie delivered the "Long Term Strategic Plan for Rail"\* which included many extension and strengthening projects but not Hurstville/Strathfield. He was asked why, in 2009, and he explained that was an oversight. He did include the second Harbour crossing and a River Metro (which became the ANZAC Metro in 2007). (That report was not released for several years.)

At about the same time, the St George councils engaged Jacana to appraise some 16 rail and many other bus and ferry options in terms of supporting and strengthening land use strategies as well as reducing congestion, improving equity of access, and improving the cost effectiveness of the network. It found Hurstville/Strathfield would carry around double the patronage of Chatswood to Epping. This was a landmark analytical exercise which produced an implementation report by a separate consultancy which the MOT did not release.

The sad saga of post-Olympics rail system duress and recycled project promises will not be raked over here, suffice it to say that the O'Farrell incoming Government found that the Chatswood to Epping line was in operation, the SW extension from Glenfield was proceeding slowly, and the NW was barely on the books. The NW path has been complicated by a NW Metro which the former Treasurer Costa debunked through the UK expert Jim Steer; and Treasury evaluations which revealed an extremely low number of NW commuters expected to work in the CBD.

## **O'FARRELL**

The Government announced its "Sydney's Rail Future"\* on 20 June 2012, containing the strengthening of the existing structure of the railways through capacity augmentation on the Chatswood to Redfern corridor including new Harbour crossing; and improved operational practices including more frequent services and single deck trains with lower seated/standing ratio. The NW rail was to now connect at Chatswood as a stand-alone shuttle service.

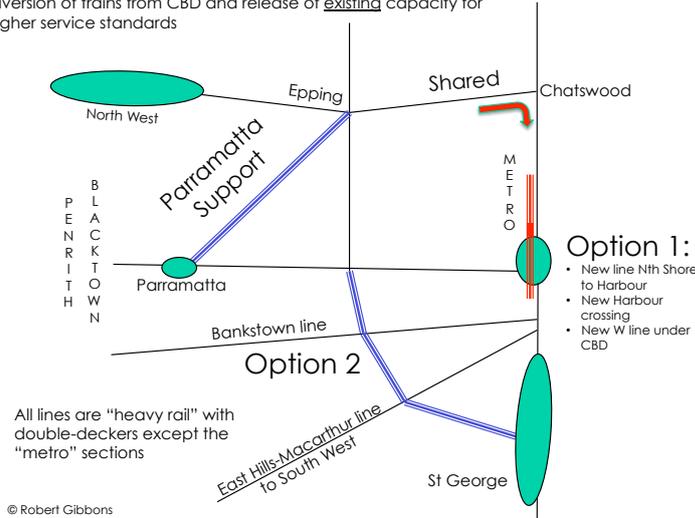
There were immediate responses from the community about inconvenience and the overloading of trains on the target services (on the North Shore Line); while the chairman of Infrastructure NSW suggested the substantive system be improved before extensions were added (with time to consider the latter). There were no analyses of options and scenarios, and no analysis of costs, benefits and things like phasing elements.

## **THE "ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM"**

There is a valid alternative to the second Harbour crossing which would represent the first major adaptation of Sydney's legacy rail structure to meet urban change which looks like this:

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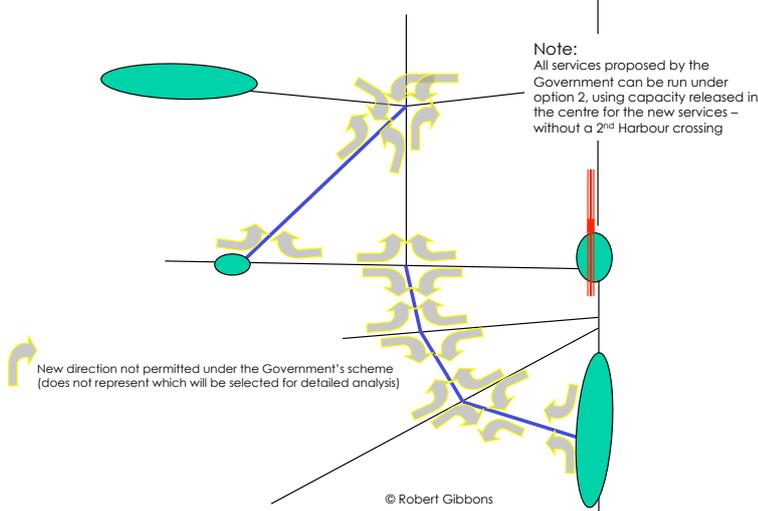
- Two "rail structure" options to be assessed:
1. new Harbour crossing for higher service standards, or
  2. Diversion of trains from CBD and release of existing capacity for higher service standards



The red lines indicate the Government's decision to take the flows from the NW Rail into the CBD via the new central strengthening projects, initially with a forced change of trains from the shuttle to the mainline at Chatswood. Eventually the single-deckers will run more widely.

The blue lines show Hurstville/Strathfield which connects with the Main North line. There would also be an easterly connection to allow trains to deliver SW patrons to Norwest etc. The Parramatta to Epping line would complete Chatswood to Parramatta, giving Central Coast commuters and other access to the 2<sup>nd</sup> CBD, and allowing operational efficiencies.

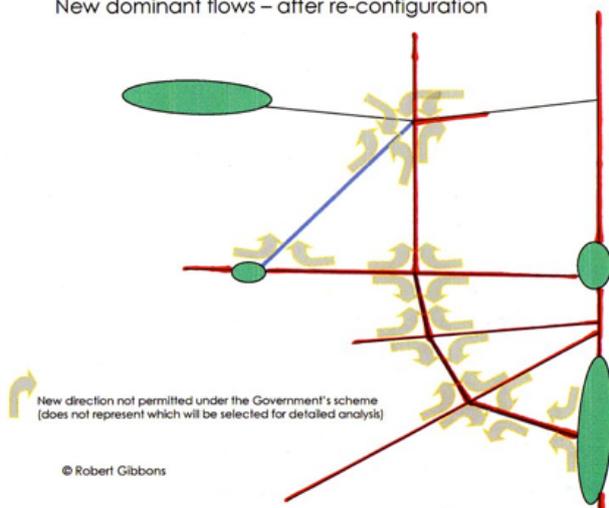
### Re-configuring the legacy rail structure towards "Zurich"



The H/S alternative would allow trains on the Illawarra, East Hills, Bankstown and Main West line to be diverted away from the CBD, City Circle and Harbour Bridge as relevant; by sending them to Parramatta, the Global Arc employment zones around Norwest and Ryde etc, and the NW. The same applies in reverse.

If the diversions are proportionate to the JTW projections (over 60% of SW workers going to the NW generally), sufficient capacity would be released in the centre to defer or obviate a second crossing and allow higher levels of service from the NW and North at much lower cost.

### New dominant flows – after re-configuration



The result would be a new look for an old system. It would begin to look like Zurich's system of integrated rail and road based routes and modes (below) instead of almost wholly centralised (which reflects the urban structure of Sydney a century ago):



An Eddington-style analysis would look at all options in a “north – south needs study”, identifying route and modal choices, conducting scenario-testing of main alternative sets of projects and technologies, analysing staging and related analyses, and allowing the community, operators and Government to understand comprehensive benefit and cost matrices – as he did in London and Melbourne. The Hurstville/Strathfield alternative might not cost more than the Government's expensive schema, while the former would have distinctive benefits in:

- reduced travel times and costs for many SW and NW residents and others across the metropolitan area
- reduced congestion on roads through the SE, inner and outer west, and northern suburbs
- greater revenue potential through land banking, incremental betterment levies, making this a prospect for a successful PPP (augmentation of the North Shore Line has little such potential)
- coal and container services could use the network, depending on configuration (Hurstville/Strathfield is envisaged to be a full main line)
- special event and emergency operations would be facilitated by the great flexibility provided by the new line, if sufficient inter-line junctions are provided.

In the overall timeframe, the population of the central City of Sydney had fallen as a proportion of Sydney's metropolitan population from 18% in 1911; 12% in 1921; 7% in 1933; and 2% in 1986. The compulsion to pump more infrastructure into the centre is psychological and political, not rational or equitable.

#### **THE FORGOTTEN CHILD**

The Parramatta/Epping line was omitted from the Government's scheme even though it was added by the Fahey Government and its minister Bruce Baird.

Parramatta as the second CBD and government centre has a rail line passing through it but none radiating from it to (say) the north-east, north-west, south-west or south-east. (Even the Carlingford line is orientated to eastern access and can't support direct services to Parramatta.) Not for want of trying - as early as 1976 the Commonwealth-funded Parramatta Region Public Transport Study argued strongly for a much higher level of public transport service including the corridors to the north-west (Windsor Road - high-capacity 'til light rail in 1985) and south-west (Hoxton Park - a higher standard bus service). Sydney's CBD is much bigger but even when it had a similar size, society's commitment to it was much greater.

If Parramatta is to be the second metropolitan CBD it needs to be regarded as worthy of the transport and other investment necessary to ensure this. A proper integrated planning process would better identify the most effective approach - but for “visionary” purposes, one might argue strongly for rail extensions in the Hoxton Park/Baulkham Hills transit corridor and the Parramatta/Epping line to connect at Epping with the NW and Chatswood (the latter is the node point for two rapid bus corridors into the Manly-Warringah peninsula).

What would the Improvement of Sydney Commission recommend if they were around now? They would be visionary - put themselves in the position of current generations and work out how to change the current situation, with appropriate intergenerational contributions, to pass on a better place. They would regard Parramatta as a key environment, to be protected and supported, rather than separate the individual corridors as specific financial opportunities.