

PERFORMANCE AUDIT IN BRIEF

Connecting with Public Transport Ministry of Transport



THE AUDIT OFFICE
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

About the audit

The NSW Government released the State Plan – A New Direction for NSW in November 2006. A priority area is to increase the public transport system's share of peak hour journeys undertaken in Sydney.

Interchanges provide access to public transport. They include bus stops, railway stations, ferry wharves, taxi ranks, kiss and ride areas, cycle racks and park and ride areas. Many key aspects of integration come together at interchanges including information, ticketing, network accessibility, service coordination and personal security.

Our audit looks at the effectiveness of interchanges in promoting increased use of public transport in Sydney. It has included a review of interchange projects built since 1992-93. In more recent years there has been less interchange development. In this context, the audit has looked for areas for improvement that the Ministry of Transport can apply in its development of new processes.

Audit opinion

We see considerable potential for the Ministry of Transport to plan and manage interchanges more effectively, so as to make better use of our public transport network.

Interchanges can promote access to the public transport network with good waiting environments and fast transfers. But poor interchanges, with long walks, stairs, long waits, poor travelling information, and poor weather protection can substantially discourage access to public transport.

The State Government has in recent years developed a *State Plan*, a *Metropolitan Strategy* and an *Urban Transport Statement* to encourage development in

accessible locations and improve transport between Sydney's centres. During this period, the Ministry has focused particularly on arrangements to improve private bus services.

We believe that the Ministry now needs to focus more on multi-modal transport planning and interchange performance. It needs to assign responsibility for the coordination and oversight of inter-modal operations to an entity resourced for the purpose. Without this it will continue to be very difficult to identify and address unmet needs, seek and secure stakeholder funding, and monitor and evaluate system performance.

Key findings

Has the Government adopted a coordinated and strategic approach?

The State Government has in recent years developed high level documents integrating land use and public transport, including the need to encourage development in accessible locations and improve transport between Sydney's centres.

We found that interchange projects prior to this were not selected within a long term strategic framework. There is little to indicate how or why specific projects were chosen, and what may have been needed in the longer term. There were no multi-modal transport plans that integrated Sydney's inter-modal transport network as a whole.

There is now an opportunity for a coordinating body to provide a strategic focus on interchanges.



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Coordination requires:

- a network linking bus routes with rail and ferry that responds to a more diverse range of commuter destinations and times
- closely integrated interchanges and terminus facilities
- network development involving fare coordination, schedule and service coordination, public information and marketing coordination and administrative coordination.

Are there adequate information systems to inform the public and management?

At most interchanges there is limited local signage. The main source of information for Sydney metropolitan passengers planning to travel by more than one travel mode is the Transport Infoline 131500 website. This service does not indicate how the interchange is laid out and which bus services depart from each rank. It does not assist people to plan part of a journey by taxi or by car.

There is no up to date system inventory and identification of interchange access attributes, capacity, utilisation and costs to enable assessment of performance. There is no listing of capital amenities provided such as shelters, timetable signage, seating, on-site retail vendors, security devices. There is no identification of access attributes such as rail service levels, capacity, utilisation and costs.

Nobody regularly reports on interchange and car park adequacy and performance. In addition, there is no evaluation process framework to establish the impact of an interchange on public transport. We found no 'before and after' studies or ongoing monitoring programs of usage, other than the limited information

available from the RailCorp annual travel survey. We found little evidence of surveys of commuters to see if behaviour had actually changed as a result of interchange development. The MoT should examine the opportunity to incorporate interchange facilities as part of the annual household travel survey.

We found no information about who is using newly constructed interchange facilities and what they used to do and whether there has been any improvement in travel time. We found nothing to indicate which facilities could be considered 'successes' and which 'failures' due to improved efficiency in movements through the interchange and increased capacity.

Has funding of interchanges been adequately addressed?

The State's total investment and future requirements cannot be readily identified.

Funding objectives and options for interchanges need to be developed.

There is a potential to make more use of alternative funding sources, such as from private sector investment and multiple use developments.

Recommendation

We recommend a series of measures to:

- assign clear responsibilities
- develop a more strategic approach
- develop and promote Best Practice
- provide better information
- systematically evaluate performance
- address the need for long term funding.