

Response to the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan Discussion Paper

May 2012

Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS)

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Table of Contents

1	About NCOSS	1
1.1	<i>NCOSS consultative mechanisms</i>	1
2	Recommendations	2
3	Objectives for the NSW transport system	4
3.1	<i>Structure of this submission</i>	4
4	Transport disadvantage	5
4.1	<i>People experiencing transport disadvantage</i>	5
4.1.1	People with low incomes	5
4.1.2	Young people	6
4.1.3	People with disability	6
4.1.4	Older people	7
4.1.5	People who are unwell	7
4.1.6	Carers	8
4.1.7	Aboriginal people	8
4.2	<i>Geographical Transport Disadvantage</i>	8
4.2.1	Outer urban areas	8
4.2.2	Rural and regional communities	11
4.2.3	Aboriginal communities	11
4.3	<i>Social and environmental costs</i>	11
5	Car Dependency	13
6	Priorities for investment	14
6.1	<i>Investment in public transport</i>	14
6.2	<i>Investment in roads</i>	15
6.3	<i>Efficient use of infrastructure</i>	15
6.4	<i>Supporting active transport</i>	16
7	A public transport system for all	17
7.1	<i>Improving our existing system</i>	17
7.1.1	Consultation	17
7.1.2	Physical accessibility	17
7.1.3	Information	17
7.1.4	Training	18
7.1.5	Integrated Ticketing and Fares	18
7.1.6	Concessions	18
7.1.7	Subsidies	19
7.2	<i>Supporting a greater diversity of services</i>	20
8	Relationship between transport and planning	21
8.1	<i>Urban Design</i>	21
8.2	<i>Land use planning</i>	21
9	Pricing and revenue raising	23
9.1	<i>Price signalling</i>	23
9.1.1	Public transport fares	23
9.1.2	Road user pricing	24
9.1.3	Car Parking	25
9.2	<i>Revenue raising</i>	25
10	Conclusion	25

1 About NCOSS

The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) is the peak body for the non-government community services sector in New South Wales (NSW). Through its organisational membership, NCOSS represents a vast network of service delivery and consumer groups.

NCOSS has a vision of a society where there is social and economic equity; a society based on cooperation, participation, sustainability and respect.

We provide independent and informed policy development, advice and review and play a key coordination and leadership role for the non-government community services sector in NSW. We work with our members, the NSW Government and its departments, and other relevant agencies, towards achieving our vision in NSW.

1.1 NCOSS consultative mechanisms

Transport is an issue that has a significant impact on the lives of vulnerable and marginalised people. As such, it is an issue in which NCOSS has had a keen interest over many years. We have worked across a range of transport issues including:

- Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Review processes;
- Urban planning and transport infrastructure;
- Bus services, contracting, and customer service charters;
- Non-Government Organisation (NGO) based community transport;
- Concessions and fines;
- Public transport fares and road pricing.

Our policy development and advocacy on transport-related matters is informed by a number of consultative mechanisms.

Each year NCOSS holds a series of consultations in rural and regional NSW with representatives from the community services sector. These consultations provide an opportunity for the sector to report on issues affecting their clients and issues relating to service delivery. Transport is consistently identified as a major concern.

The NCOSS Transport Policy Advice Group (TPAG) was established to provide advice and expertise to NCOSS on emerging and systemic transport issues affecting people and communities experiencing disadvantage. It consists of individuals and organisations committed to addressing transport disadvantage in NSW.

NCOSS also convenes a number of other networks that provide input into transport policy issues where appropriate. These include the Disability Network Forum, the Health Policy Advice Group, the Regional Forum and the Forum of Non-Government Agencies.

2 Recommendations

1. The transport system should:
 - Ensure all people have equity of access to services and to social, educational and economic opportunities,
 - Support good health for all people, including by encouraging people to cycle and walk, and by reducing the number of deaths and injuries linked to transport,
 - Foster environmentally sustainable transport choices.
2. Transport for NSW should develop an over-arching strategy to ensure that the negative health, social and environmental impacts linked to transport do not disproportionately impact vulnerable and marginalised groups.
3. The Transport Master Plan should encourage and support a move towards a low car-use society.
4. Investment in public transport should be prioritised.
5. The Transport Master Plan should contain ambitious targets for increasing the mode share of public transport over the next ten years.
6. Road infrastructure should not compete with public transport infrastructure.
7. Investment in roads should only occur within a clearly defined framework linked to the over-arching social, health and environmental objectives for the transport system outlined above
8. Transit lanes should be introduced wherever feasible, and signal priority given to high occupancy vehicles
9. Mechanisms that encourage more efficient use of both infrastructure and resources should be supported, including car-sharing and ride-sharing schemes.
10. A higher proportion of the transport budget should be spent on pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.
11. Community members should be involved in all transport planning and decision-making processes that will impact their communities, their infrastructure and their options for travel. Consultation should be an ongoing process, with appropriate consultative mechanisms established and resourced accordingly.
12. All new transport infrastructure should comply with principles of universal design.
13. Upgrading existing infrastructure and services to provide universal access should be prioritised.
14. The 131 500 number should be extended to regional and rural areas and should incorporate all transport services.
15. Travel training should be adequately resourced and made readily available.
16. All front-line service staff should receive training to ensure they understand the needs of particular groups of transport users, and are equipped to respond to those needs.
17. As integrated fares and ticketing are introduced, equity should be a central consideration.

18. The Transport Master Plan should include a commitment to comprehensively reviewing current transport concessions, including addressing existing inequities and creating a simpler framework for concessions.
19. The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme should be reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of people with disability on low incomes, and should increase the cap from \$30 to \$50.
20. The School Student Travel Scheme should be reviewed to ensure travel costs are not a barrier to accessing educational opportunities for students with low incomes.
21. Flexible and innovative services should be supported and encouraged, with greater attention given to meeting transport needs at the local level.
22. The Passenger Transport Act should be reviewed to ensure any legislative barriers to a fully integrated transport system that provides flexible and demand-responsive transport services are removed.
23. The NSW Government should develop, adopt and implement a set of healthy urban design principles, and encourage their implementation at the local government level.
24. Pedestrians should be given priority at crossings in suburban areas.
25. Transport for NSW should adopt a set of policies to ensure that streets are designed and operated with all users in mind.
26. If any Greenfield land areas are released, adequate transport services should be planned and budgeted for accordingly.
27. The NSW Government should recognise the current and likely future impact of rising oil prices on low-income households, and introduce strategies to limit the concentrations of lower-income households in highly car-dependent areas. These strategies will include curbing urban sprawl, and encouraging higher density development, including affordable housing, close to transport services.
28. Where appropriate, pricing mechanisms should encourage more sustainable transport choices.
29. The Long Term Transport Master Plan for NSW should include a commitment to reforming Sydney's existing road tolls and introducing a time-varied user-pays road pricing system that is both more equitable and more efficient.
30. The Transport Master Plan should consider car parking strategies that will encourage people to travel by public transport where this is a viable alternative.
31. The NSW State Government should introduce a \$2.00 levy on private vehicle registration fees to be hypothecated into community transport.

3 Objectives for the NSW transport system

The transport system impacts people's lives each and every day. It can mean your plans run smoothly, or it can be the cause of immense frustration. Most importantly, transport influences daily choices about how people spend their time – the activities in which they will engage, the services they will access.

Over the course of a person's life, transport will influence their ability to stay healthy, be educated, find work, raise children, age with dignity, and stay connected with family and friends.

As it shapes people's lives, so too does transport shape our society. A transport system that provides equity of access for all people will help build a fair and inclusive society. Conversely, a transport system that ignores its role as an essential social service will further entrench existing disadvantage.

Yet too often, the contribution transport can make to our society is over-looked as Governments focus on transport's contribution to the economy.

The development of a new Long Term Transport Master Plan for NSW presents an opportunity to adopt a new approach to transport planning; an approach in which social inclusion and social equity are not afterthoughts, but are central considerations in all transport decision-making processes.

NCOSS considers that the transport system's primary focus should be its contribution to positive social, health and environmental outcomes.

The Long Term Transport Master Plan should:

Ensure all people have equity of access to services and to social, educational and economic opportunities,

Support good health for all people, including by encouraging people to cycle and walk, and by reducing the number of deaths and injuries linked to transport,

Foster environmentally sustainable transport choices.

The other objectives listed in the Transport Master Plan Discussion Paper, such as putting the customer first, efficiency, and safety, are important considerations in developing an effective transport system, yet they are not an end in themselves, and should be subservient to the objectives outlined above. The emphasis should always remain on how the transport system can help shape a fairer and more sustainable society.

This submission focuses on the first of the three objectives listed above, yet recognises that the three are inter-linked. Achieving any one of these objectives will not be possible without recognising the importance of the others.

3.1 Structure of this submission

This submission begins by providing an overview of those people and communities currently experiencing transport disadvantage in NSW, and outlines the major contributing factors. We then recommend long-term strategies and systemic changes as well as short-term responses that should be included in a transport plan for NSW that is designed to deliver a fair and equitable transport system.

4 Transport disadvantage

The United Kingdom Social Exclusion Unit describes transport disadvantage as:

'the problems with transport and the location of services that contribute to social exclusion by preventing people from participating in work or learning, or accessing healthcare, food shopping and other local activities'¹.

Transport disadvantage and the social exclusion it causes can limit educational attainment and employment opportunities², exacerbate poverty, and decrease emotional, mental and physical wellbeing³. In turn, this impacts upon a community's overall health, prosperity and progress.

There are people experiencing transport disadvantage across all areas of NSW. This is because the transport system has not been designed with consideration for the needs of all people. Different groups experience transport disadvantage for different reasons: It may be priced beyond some people's ability to pay, or it may not run at the times some people need to travel. It may be unsuitable for people with low mobility or it may be culturally inaccessible. Section 3.1 provides a brief description of transport disadvantage as it relates to particular groups of people. The categories listed here are not discrete, with some people experiencing transport disadvantage on multiple dimensions (for example, low income people with disability).

While transport disadvantage can occur everywhere, it is more prevalent in some locations than in others. Section 3.2 describes those geographic locations in which transport disadvantage is concentrated.

In Australia, debate about transport in relation to social equity has primarily focused on problems related to a lack of access. It is also worth noting that the transport system can also be considered inequitable in terms of the distribution of social and environmental costs. This is discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.

4.1 People experiencing transport disadvantage

4.1.1 People with low incomes

People with low income can experience transport disadvantage due to the cost of both public and private transport. Almost 10 per cent of Australians in the bottom income quintile report that they cannot, or often have difficulty, getting to the places they need to go, compared with only 1.3 per cent of people in the top income quintile⁴.

Public transport can be prohibitively expensive for people with low incomes, particularly for those who are not entitled to a concession fare. Gaps in the provision of transport concessions in NSW are given further attention in section 7.5 of this submission.

The cost of owning and running a car disproportionately impacts the weekly budgets of people with low incomes. Information from the Victorian Coalition for People's

¹ Social Exclusion Unit (2003) *Making the Connections: Final report on transport and social exclusion*, London, p9.

² Ibid

³ Delbosc and Currie (2011) *Transport problems that matter-social and psychological links to transport disadvantage*, *Journal of Transport Geography*. 19(1): 170-178.

⁴ ABS (2006) *General Social Survey*. Cat. No. 4159.0

Transport indicates that the costs associated with car ownership consume 13 per cent of average incomes, but 28 per cent of the incomes of low-income earners⁵.

Although car ownership is expensive, many people with low incomes live in locations where access to a car is necessary in order to engage in employment or education, or to access services. They may therefore experience financial hardship in their efforts to purchase and/or to maintain a car.

Low-income people who cannot afford a car, and who cannot afford to live close to public transport therefore may experience extreme transport disadvantage and social isolation.

The relationship between transport costs and housing affordability is discussed in more detail in section 4.2.1.

4.1.2 Young people

Young people can be prevented from accessing services, opportunities for education or employment, and social and family networks due to transport disadvantage.

There is evidence that the children of sole parents miss out on opportunities for social, sport and recreational activities due to transport difficulties⁶. At the same time, young people are becoming more reliant on their parents for transport: A recent survey, for example, found that 63% of children are now driven to school, compared with only 16% in 1970⁷. This means that the role transport plays in perpetuating inter-generational disadvantage is likely to become more prominent.

For young people aged between 18 and 24 in NSW, the lack of transport is a major concern, and can influence important life choices made during this time. 12.5% of people in this age group report difficulty accessing service providers⁸. This is higher than any other age group, and compares with 7.7% of all people over the age of 18.

Many of these young people will not yet have obtained a drivers' licence, and some may find it difficult or impossible to fulfill the requirements because they do not have access to a vehicle, and/or to an older, licenced driver. This can be particularly problematic for young Aboriginal people, and for people from low-income families.

The scheduling and timetabling of public transport services also do not usually match the travel patterns of young people, and fares can be prohibitively expensive. The availability and affordability of public transport is particular problematic in rural and regional communities and this is discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.2.

4.1.3 People with disability

Many people with disability find it difficult to access mainstream public transport services – largely because much of our transport infrastructure has been designed

⁵ Victorian Coalition for People's Transport (2004) *The Place to be on PT: A Vision for Greater Melbourne's Transport*, p5.

⁶ Hurni, A (2007) Marginalised groups in Western Sydney: The experience of sole parents and unemployed young people. In Currie, G., Stanley, J & J. Stanley (Eds), *No way to go: Transport and social disadvantage in Australian communities* (pp. 10.1-10.11). Melbourne: Monash University Press.

⁷ Cycling Promotion Fund and Heart Foundation (2012) *Active Travel to School: 2012 Survey Findings*. Downloaded 23 April 2012 from <<http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/HF-CPF-Active-Travel-to-School-2012-Survey-Findings.pdf>>

⁸ ABS (2006) *General Social Survey*. Cat. No. 4159.0

only to meet the needs of people with full mobility. Other factors affecting the accessibility of our transport system include the lack of appropriate information in accessible formats, discrimination, and staff with a limited understanding of the needs of people with disability.

Some people with disability are eligible for more specialised forms of publically funded transport – such as the taxi transport subsidy scheme or community transport – yet these schemes do not always adequately address issues of transport disadvantage.

The taxi transport subsidy scheme covers 50% of the cost of a taxi fare up to a maximum cap of \$30. Although taxis are an important form of public transport for people with disabilities, the cost can be prohibitively expensive even when subsidised at a rate of 50%. The cost of taxi transport is particularly concerning for people with disability on low fixed incomes. For people with disability who cannot access other forms of transport, the cost of regular travel by taxi can also create a barrier to employment by consuming a large portion of their income.

While community transport meets some of the transport needs of people with disability, current funding guidelines mean that many people with disability are not eligible, and it is not generally able to transport people to and from employment, day programs, or respite care.

4.1.4 Older people

Transport has a significant impact on people's quality of life and ability to remain independent as they age.

Many older people experience physical and mental changes that mean they are no longer able to drive, or can only drive in limited circumstances. Yet public transport does not usually provide a viable alternative with problems including the distance to services (a problem exacerbated by inappropriate urban design, see section 8.1), inaccessible transport infrastructure, and route planning and scheduling that does not match the travel patterns of older people.

While some older people are eligible for community transport, many others who require assistance with transport are outside the eligibility criteria.

Older people who live in residential aged care facilities often have little or no access to transport. There is no clearly designated policy responsibility or allocated funding to address residents' transport needs. NCOSS research into the transport needs of people in residential aged care found that there is an almost universal reliance by residents on their family and friends as the primary source of transport support⁹.

4.1.5 People who are unwell

When people are unwell their mobility is reduced, often to the point where they are unable to drive, and may be unable to access most forms of public transport.

There are a number of transport services and other forms of support available to people who need to access health services, yet they are not always appropriate and are not adequately funded to meet the growing demand for transport for health.

⁹ NCOSS (2003) *On the Road Again: The Transport Needs of People in Residential Aged Care*, Sydney, Australia

Research conducted by the Cancer Council, the Community Transport Organisation and NCOSS found that the number of community transport trips to health services more than doubled in the ten years from 1996 to 2006: from 240,000 trips in 1996 to 680,000 trips in 2006¹⁰. It was also estimated that approximately 90,000 requests for transport to health services were refused each year.

4.1.6 Carers

The lack of appropriate transport options for people with disability, older people and people who are unwell also impacts people with caring responsibilities, and in some cases can make the role of the carer unmanageable.

4.1.7 Aboriginal people

Many Aboriginal people experience transport disadvantage as a result of poor services in locations where they live (see Section 3.2.3 below) as well as factors including discrimination, culturally inappropriate services, low levels of car ownership, and difficulties obtaining licences. Nationally, more than one quarter of Aboriginal people cannot access a vehicle when needed.¹¹ Problems with transport can aggravate other areas of disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people including access to education and employment, and to health and other services.¹²

Some Aboriginal people experience discrimination in their use of transport services, and have routinely been refused bus, taxi or other services. Community transport services can also be culturally inappropriate, and in some areas do not effectively cater for the needs of Aboriginal people and communities.

Car access is also a concern, as is the lack of older licenced drivers, which makes it difficult for young Aboriginal people to obtain a licence. Pressure to drive unlicensed can lead to fines, leading to financial pressures, and in some cases resulting in the exclusion of some Aboriginal people from the licencing system.

It is also worth noting that disability and health problems are more prevalent within the Aboriginal population, meaning that the lack of appropriate transport for these groups (as outlined above) disproportionately impacts Aboriginal people and communities.

4.2 Geographical Transport Disadvantage

4.2.1 Outer urban areas

Developed following the post World War II shift to car-based urban planning, many outer-urban areas are characterised by less frequent, less available and less accessible public transport services. Outer urban areas also often contain higher concentrations of low-income households due to the lack of affordable housing in inner-city locations.

¹⁰ Cancer Council NSW, NCOSS, Community Transport Organisation (2007) *No Transport, No Treatment: Community transport to health services in NSW*, Sydney, Australia.

¹¹ Australian Institute of Family Studies (2011) *The relationship between transport and disadvantage in Australia*, Canberra, Australia.

¹² Currie, G. and Senbergd, Z. (2007). Indigenous communities: Transport disadvantage and Aboriginal communities. In G. Currie, J. Stanley, & J. Stanley (Eds.), *No way to go: Transport and social disadvantage in Australian communities*. Melbourne: Monash University Press.

In these locations, access to education, employment and services may not be possible without access to a private vehicle. There is some evidence to suggest that low-income households in outer urban areas therefore experience 'forced car ownership'¹³, while for others their choice of location may involve a deliberate trade-off between housing costs and transport costs¹⁴.

The costs associated with car ownership consume a large portion of the weekly budget for people with low incomes (as described in Section 3.1.1). As oil prices rise¹⁵, the cost of running a car may become increasingly unaffordable, adversely impacting low-income households living in areas poorly service by public transport.

Researchers from Griffith University have been investigating the spatial distribution of socio-economic impacts resulting from increased fuel prices. According to this research, oil vulnerability in Sydney is:

*'...concentrated in Sydney's west, particularly in a broad area of localities south-west of Parramatta which extends along both the north-west and south-west corridors. Of particular note are the areas to the immediate west of Liverpool, Cabramatta and Fairfield which contain a large cluster of highly vulnerable localities. Similar although not as extensive concentrations of high oil vulnerability are found in Mount Druitt, Habersham and Hassall Grove to the north west, while a small cluster of high vulnerability is present in Campbelltown.'*¹⁶

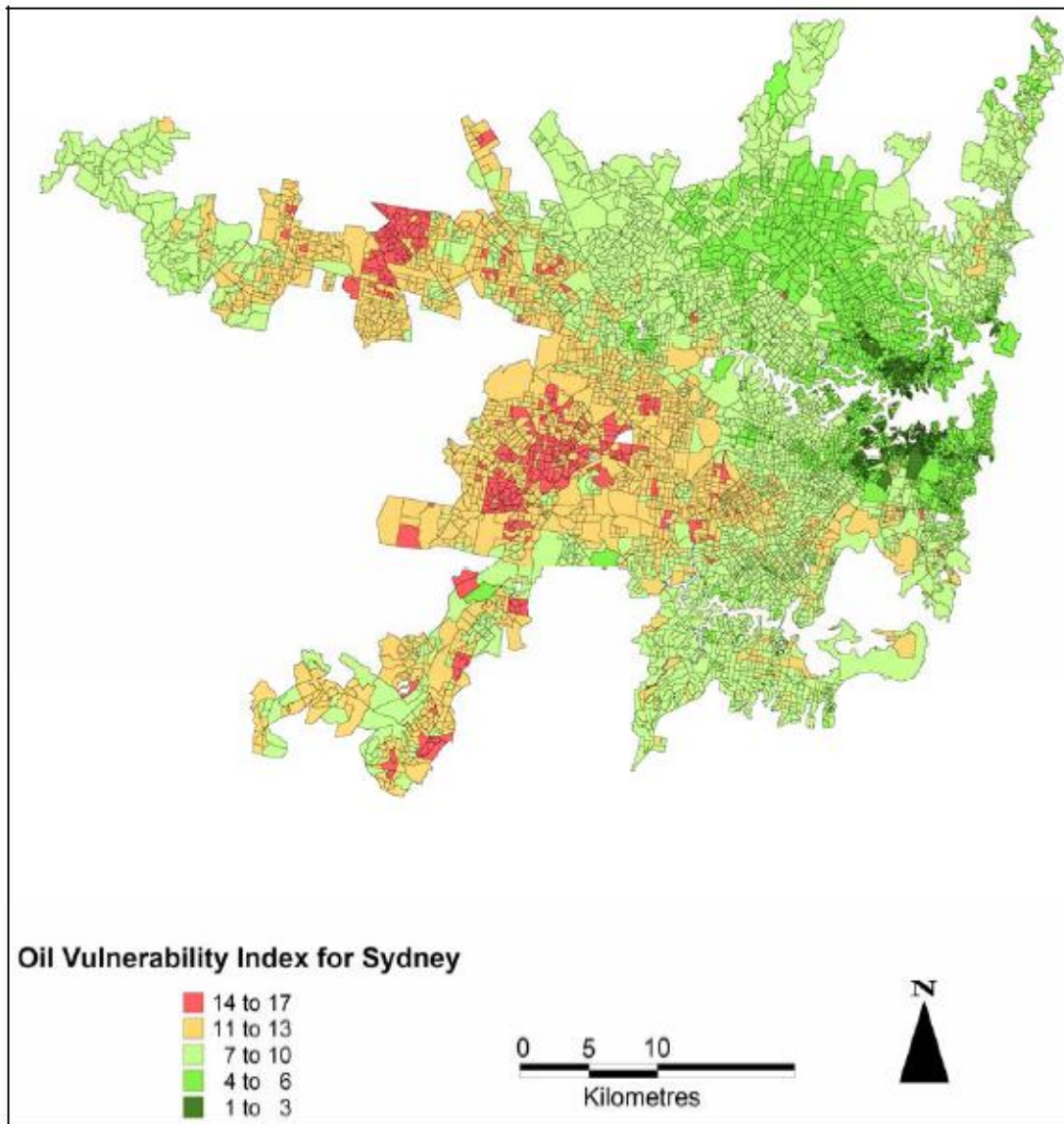
The map below, taken from the report *Oil Vulnerability in the Australian City*, illustrates the pattern of oil vulnerability in Sydney.

¹³ Currie, G., Richardson, T., Smyth, P., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hine, J., Lucas, K., Stanley, J., Morris, J., Kinnear, R., & Stanley, J. (2009). Investigating links between transport disadvantage, social exclusion and well-being in Melbourne – Preliminary results. *Transport Policy*, 16, 97–105.

¹⁴ Currie, G., Richardson, T., Smyth, P., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hine, J., Lucas, K., Stanley, J., Morris, J., Kinnear, R., & Stanley, J. (2010). Investigating links between transport disadvantage, social exclusion and well-being in Melbourne – Updated results. *Research in Transportation Economics*, 29, 287–295.

¹⁵ CSIRO predicts that the rising cost of oil may potentially result in petrol prices of \$8 a litre by 2018. CSIRO (2008) *Fuel for Thought – The future of transport fuels: Challenges and opportunities*, Canberra, Australia.

¹⁶ Dodson, J and Sipe, N (2005) *Oil Vulnerability in the Australian City*, Urban Research Program, Griffith University, Research Paper 6, p. 16



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As well as being financially impacted by the transport system, people in outer urban areas also generally experience longer commute times, and there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that this can be detrimental to both individual and community health. The time spent commuting has been found to correlate with lower reported life satisfaction¹⁷ and well-being¹⁸, physical inactivity¹⁹, fewer social connections²⁰, and less time with family²¹. While some people may choose to travel further to work order to capitalise other locational benefits, others have no choice but to endure long travel times due to factors including a lack of affordable housing close to

¹⁷ Stutzer, A. and Frey, B. S. (2008) *Stress that Doesn't Pay: The Commuting Paradox!*, Scandinavian Journal of Economics. 110(2): 339–366.

¹⁸ Crabtree, S. (2010) *Wellbeing Lower Among Workers With Long Commutes Gallup*. Retrieved 30 April 2012, from <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/142142/wellbeing-lower-among-workerslong-commutes.aspx>>.

¹⁹ World Health Organisation (2000) *Transport, Environment and Health*. Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen.

²⁰ Putnam, R. (1995) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* Robert D. Putnam; New York: Simon, Journal of Democracy. January 19: 65-78.

²¹ Flood, M. & Barbato, C. (2005) *Off to work: Commuting in Australia*. The Australia Institute, April 2005.

employment, and poor transport links to areas where low-paid jobs are concentrated.

4.2.2 Rural and regional communities

In rural and regional communities, transport disadvantage is exacerbated by the infrequency (or absence) of public transport services, the cost of services where they are available, and by the need to travel greater distances in order to access services.

In small towns, the only form of public transport may be the school bus. In slightly larger towns bus services are only available at limited times, often only during business hours on weekdays. Rural and regional bus fares are also more expensive than metropolitan bus fares, with low-income people (including young people) therefore spending a higher proportion of their incomes on transport.

On leaving school, transport as a barrier to accessing employment or educational opportunities can be a significant factor in a young person's decision to leave a community, and can also limit a young person's ability to maintain a connection with a community where an absence may be necessary in order to obtain qualifications. This will have a long-term impact on the viability of many rural and regional communities.

The urban migration of working age adults can also exacerbate transport disadvantage in rural and regional areas by reducing the number of people that play a caring role in providing transport for family, friends or neighbours who are not able to access public or private alternatives.

4.2.3 Aboriginal communities

Many Aboriginal communities are physically isolated with poor transport connections to towns and regional centres. This can include a lack of public or community transport, as well as poorly maintained roads. In many cases this isolation reflects the historical segregation of Aboriginal people from services and jobs.

Isolation from services can also occur in an urban setting – for example public transport services can be very poor in the Mt Druitt / Blacktown area in Sydney (one of the largest Aboriginal communities in NSW).

4.3 Social and environmental costs

The health, social and environmental costs associated with transport are significant. In the EU, for example, the socioeconomic cost of road traffic injuries is estimated to be about 2% of a country's gross domestic product (GDP). Other costs include air and noise pollution, congestion, and community severance.

Internationally, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest these costs are not distributed evenly across society. In the United States, for example, research has found that low-income neighbourhoods were more likely to contain major arterials and four-way intersections, and were subject to traffic volumes 2.4 times greater than high-income neighbourhoods²². Research on pedestrian deaths suggests that

²² Patrick Morency, Lise Gauvin, Céline Plante, Michel Fournier, and Catherine Morency (2012) Neighborhood Social Inequalities in Road Traffic Injuries: The Influence of Traffic Volume and Road Design. *American Journal of Public Health*. e-View Ahead of Print. Retrieved April 30 from <<http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300528>>

children from low socioeconomic groups are between four²³ and twenty-one times²⁴ more at risk of being killed on the road than children from higher socioeconomic groups.

Although the distribution of the social and economic costs of transport has not been well-studied in Australia, there is some evidence to suggest that the situation is similar here. For example, Aboriginal people are almost twice as likely to die in road traffic accidents, and are five times more likely to die in pedestrian accidents. Similarly, people over the age of 70 make up only 10% of the population in NSW, yet account for 30% of pedestrian deaths.

In the United Kingdom the Equality Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011)

In the United States, a 1994 Presidential Order directed all federal agencies to make environmental justice part of its mission. The Department of Transport has therefore recently developed an environmental justice strategy with the aim of incorporating environmental justice and non-discrimination considerations into transportation planning and decision-making processes²⁵.

NCOSS recommends that the Transport for NSW should adopt a similar approach, and develop an over-arching strategy to ensure that any negative health, social and environmental impacts linked to transport do not disproportionately impact vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Transport for NSW should develop an over-arching strategy to ensure that the negative health, social and environmental impacts linked to transport do not disproportionately impact vulnerable and marginalised groups.

²³ Desapriya, E., Sones, M., Ramanzin, T., Weinstein, S., Scime, G., and I. Pike (2011) Injury prevention in child death review: child pedestrian fatalities, *Injury Prevention*, 12 (Suppl 1), pp. i4 – i9.

²⁴ Edwards, P, Roberts et al, (2006) *Deaths from injury in children and employment status in family: analysis of trends in class specific death rates*, British Medical Journal, 333, pp 119–121

²⁵ US Department of Transportation (2012) *Environmental Justice Strategy*. Retrieved April 30 from <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/ej_at_dot/dot_ej_strategy/>

5 Car Dependency

For many of us, cars have brought far greater choice and unprecedented personal freedom. Yet our dependence on cars and the way in which this has shaped – and is continuing to shape – our society, is becoming increasingly problematic.

By definition, car-dependency makes it difficult for people who cannot drive, or who do not have access to a vehicle, to remain independent, to maintain their quality of life, and to participate fully in society. Yet there are some people, including many of those groups experiencing transport disadvantage as described above, for whom self-drive transport will never be possible. As our population ages, the proportion of people fitting this description is likely to increase.

In addition to the social impetus to move away from car dependency, there is a pressing need to reduce transport's environmental impacts. Transport currently accounts for approximately 16 per cent of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, the vast majority of which come from road transport. For households, transport is responsible for the largest proportion of energy consumption, accounting for more than one third of average emissions: more than heating and cooling and the use of all appliances combined.²⁶

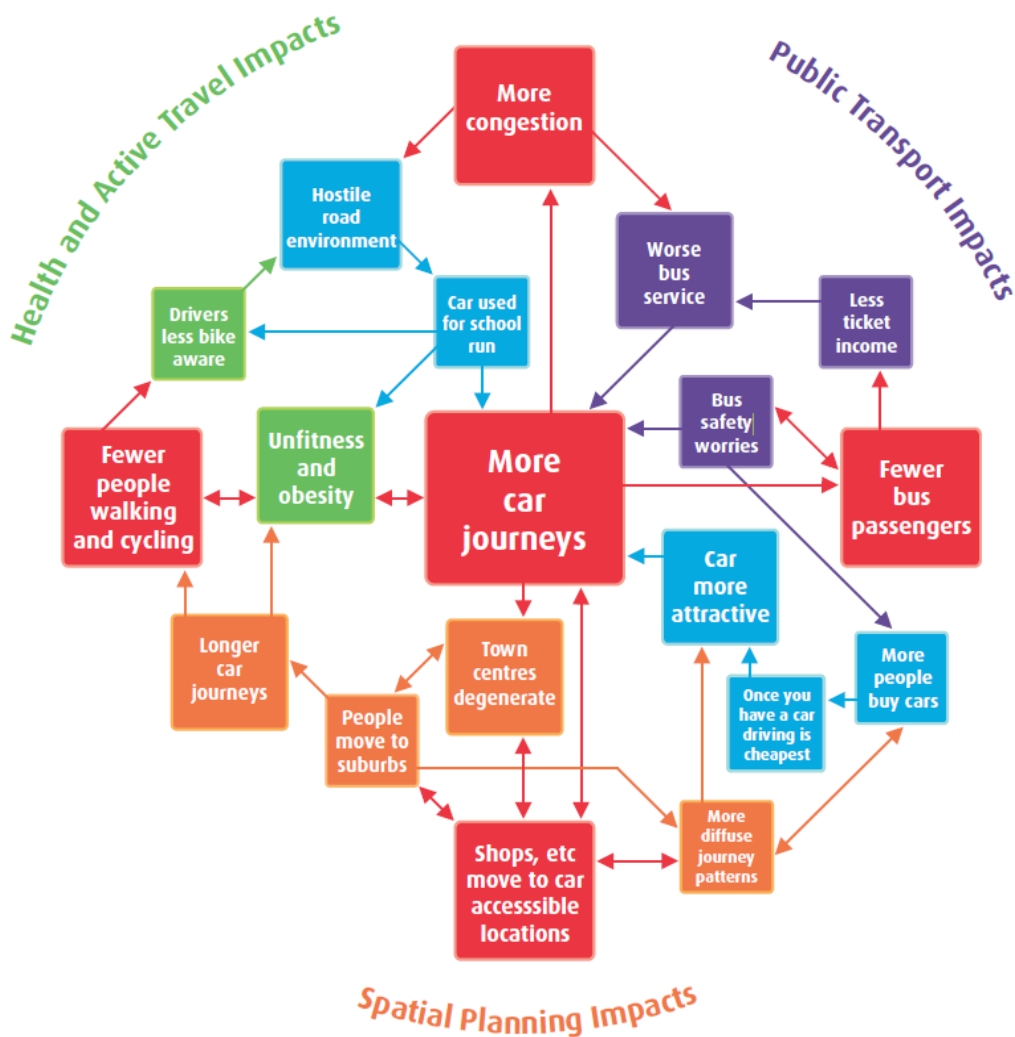
As described in Section 3.2.1, car dependency also means that the predicted increase in oil prices (related to both issues of supply as well as environmental concerns) will disproportionately impact people with low incomes. Lower-income households will also be less able to adapt to higher oil prices by, for example, buying more fuel-efficient vehicles.

The diagram below, taken from the UK Sustainable Development Commission's report *Fairness in a Car Dependent Society*, illustrates the inter-relationships created by the growth of car dependency²⁷. This diagram shows that car dependency can create vicious cycles, including by:

- Making other forms of transport such as cycling and walking less attractive, and thereby encouraging car use;
- Making public transport less viable, leading to a reduction in services, and thereby making public transport less attractive and encouraging car use;
- Influencing planning and land use decisions that reflect car dependent lifestyles, such as the movement of shops, hospitals and other services to locations that are only accessible by car, thereby encouraging car use.

²⁶ Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency (2011) *Australian National Greenhouse Accounts: Quarterly Update of Australia's National Greenhouse Gas Inventory*, September 2011, Canberra, Australia.

²⁷ Sustainable Development Commission (2011) *Fairness in a car dependent society*, London, England.



In the NSW context, these cycles of car dependency have already been set firmly in motion. Reshaping our transport future will therefore require strong political leadership.

Yet for both the social and environmental reasons outlined above it is imperative that the new Long Term Transport Master Plan for NSW encourage and support a transition towards a low car-use society. Failure to do so will result in growing social divides in terms of access to transport – and therefore in access to other life opportunities.

The Transport Master Plan should encourage and support a move towards a low car-use society.

6 Priorities for investment

6.1 Investment in public transport

Historically, Government investment in transport has favoured car use and car ownership. The Australian Conservation Foundation’s report *Australia’s Public Transport: Investment for a Clean Transport Future* found that over the last ten years, Governments at all levels have spent more than four times the amount of

money on the construction of public roads and bridges than on the construction of public railways²⁸.

NCOSS believes that commitment to the development of a fair, equitable and sustainable transport system would require rebalancing the investment of public monies in favour of public transport.

Investment in public transport should be prioritised.

The Long-Term Transport Master Plan should also contain ambitious targets for increasing the mode share of public transport beyond the targets for 2016 contained in the State Plan NSW 2021.

The Transport Master Plan should contain ambitious targets for increasing the mode share of public transport over the next ten years.

6.2 Investment in roads

Previous Governments, when making policy and funding decisions on transport investments, have not readily acknowledged that the road and public transport systems are inter-dependent. They have therefore largely developed as two separate systems. This lack of a clear vision for how different parts of the transport system might work together, has in some cases meant that investment in roads has been at odds with objectives for public transport.

Aims for the public transport system, for example, include increased patronage and efficient operation. Yet roads that duplicate public transport services reduce the incentive to catch public transport as exemplified by the opening of the M5 East motorway in Sydney, which reportedly caused a 7.1 per cent fall in patronage on the adjacent rail line²⁹.

Road infrastructure should not compete with public transport infrastructure. Investment in roads should only occur within a clearly defined framework linked to the over-arching social, health and environmental objectives for the transport system outlined above.

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Investment in roads should only occur within a clearly defined framework linked to the over-arching social, health and environmental objectives for the transport system outlined above

6.3 Efficient use of infrastructure

A large proportion of land in Sydney is already dedicated to roads and to infrastructure that supports car usage, such as parking spaces. Tackling congestion should focus on using this existing infrastructure more efficiently.

²⁸ Australian Conservation Foundation (2011), *Australia's Public Transport: Investment for a Clean Transport Future*, Melbourne, Australia.

²⁹ Smith, A. (2004). Motorway design must learn from past mistakes. *Sydney Morning Herald*. Sydney, 24 August.

Transport consultant Jarrett Walker argues that streets should be designed for people movement rather than vehicle movement³⁰. Road use should therefore prioritise more affordable and space-efficient transport modes such as walking, cycling and road-based public transport.

Transit lanes should be introduced wherever feasible based on both a fair allocation of existing road space to public transport users, and on ridership projections should a fast, reliable alternative to car-based transport be available. Where possible, signal priority should be given to high occupancy vehicles such as buses (and trams) rather than low occupancy vehicles.

Transit lanes should be introduced wherever feasible, and signal priority given to high occupancy vehicles

Other mechanisms that encourage more efficient use of both infrastructure and resources should also be supported, including car-sharing and ride-sharing schemes.

Mechanisms that encourage more efficient use of both infrastructure and resources should be supported, including car-sharing and ride-sharing schemes.

6.4 Supporting active transport

Cycling and walking play an important role in our transport system, and most people who use the transport system are a pedestrian at some point during their journey. Walking is a particularly important form of transport for people with low-incomes³¹.

A transport system that supports and encourages the use of active transport also facilitates healthy lifestyles. Yet, although the importance of active transport in relation to health is almost universally acknowledged, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure has traditionally consumed only a very small portion of the transport budget.

A higher proportion of the transport budget should therefore be spent on pedestrian and cycling infrastructure rather than on roads. This investment may result in savings in other areas of Government expenditure. In Austria, for example, where the modal share of cycling as at 2009 was 5%, it is estimated 412 lives were being saved each year through regular physical activity as a result. This equates to monetary savings from reduced mortality of approximately €405 million per year³².

A higher proportion of the transport budget should be spent on pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.

That measures to support car travel have taken precedence over walking and cycling is reflected not only in budget allocations, but also in planning decisions that discourage or prevent active travel. These are discussed in more detail in Section 8.1.

³⁰ Walker, J. (2012) *Human Transit: How Clearer Thinking about Public Transit can Enrich our Communities and our Lives*. Island Press, Washington DC.

³¹ Social Exclusion Unit (2003) *Making the Connections: Final report on transport and social exclusion*, London

³² World Health Organization. *Facts and Figures on Economic cost of transport-related health effects*. Retrieved April 30 from <<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/environment-and-health/Transport-and-health/facts-and-figures/economic-cost-of-transport-related-health-effects2>>

7 A public transport system for all

7.1 Improving our existing system

7.1.1 Consultation

Consultation is an important process in ensuring the transport system meets the needs of all members of our community. NCOSS commends the Government on its efforts to engage the community in the development of this Long Term Transport Master Plan. We believe, however, that consultation is an ongoing process that is integral to effective transport planning and decision-making processes. Appropriate consultative mechanisms should therefore be established and resourced accordingly. Particular efforts should be made to engage in meaningful consultation with vulnerable and marginalised groups including Aboriginal people, people with disability, older people, carers, younger people and people with low incomes.

Community members should be involved in all transport planning and decision-making processes that will impact their communities, their infrastructure and their options for travel. Consultation should be an ongoing process, with appropriate consultative mechanisms established and resourced accordingly.

7.1.2 Physical accessibility

In agreements related to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, the NSW Government has committed to making public transport more accessible. These commitments, together with an agreed timeline, are outlined in the Physical Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT). Currently, NSW is well behind meeting the agreed targets: for example, while 55% of stations should be accessible by 2012, as of June 2010 only 39% complied with the standards.

The NSW government should increase its investment in the relevant transport programs, such as the Easy Access program, to accelerate work that will make the transport system more accessible. This will benefit people with disability, older people, parents with prams, bike-riders etc. Moreover, the Physical Disability Standards should be seen as detailing only the minimum standards for accessibility, with efforts made to go above and beyond these standards in ensuring our transport infrastructure meets the needs of all people.

All new transport infrastructure should comply with principles of universal design.

Upgrading existing infrastructure and services to provide universal access should be prioritised.

7.1.3 Information

The lack of timely and appropriate information can prevent many people from accessing the public transport system. The NSW should invest in ensuring transport information is readily available in formats suitable for all people. The 131 500 number should be extended to regional and rural areas and should incorporate all transport services.

The 131 500 number should be extended to regional and rural areas and should incorporate all transport services.

Travel training can support people to develop the confidence and skills required to access the transport system. This includes older people who may not have previously used the transport system, and people with mental or physical disability. Travel training should be adequately resourced and made readily available.

Travel training should be adequately resourced and made readily available.

7.1.4 Training

Front-line service staff who understand the needs of all customers can play an important role in making the transport system more accessible. For example, the AENEAS project in Europe found that bus driver training can help create a safer, more comfortable and more inviting environment for older bus travelers.

All front-line service staff should receive training to ensure they understand the needs of particular groups of transport users, and are equipped to respond to those needs.

7.1.5 Integrated Ticketing and Fares

NCOSS has long called for the introduction of integrated fares and ticketing to reduce barriers to the use of public transport services. The current lack of integration is likely to have a bigger impact on low-income people as they are more likely to be reliant on public transport, including multi-modal trips, and are therefore charged a flag-fall for each leg of the journey. NCOSS has welcomed the Government's commitment to introducing an electronic ticketing system in Sydney. As integrated fares and ticketing are introduced, equity should be a central consideration, to ensure that no groups are disadvantaged by the system³³.

As integrated fares and ticketing are introduced, equity should be a central consideration.

7.1.6 Concessions

Concession fares are an important mechanism to reduce transport costs for people on low incomes. In NSW, however, many concession fares are poorly targeted, and some people are unfairly disadvantaged by the current system. For example, Centrelink beneficiaries (particularly Newstart recipients) are denied access to public transport concessions if they earn any money at all. This can mean a significant portion of earnings are spent on travel costs, creating a disincentive to work. Other issues include low income working people who either work part time, or work full time for low wages, people who work a limited number of hours to supplement a low fixed income, and asylum seekers being processed in the community.

NCOSS notes that the introduction of an electronic ticketing system presents an opportunity for a comprehensive and fully transparent review of both public transport fares and concessions. Such a review of transport concessions in NSW is long

³³ Equity must be a consideration in both the development of a new fare structure (for example, the system should not disadvantage people who must travel long distances because no direct service is available), and in the implementation of the ticketing system (for example, consideration should be given to the needs of people with intellectual disability).

overdue, with the previous two attempts – in 1999 and 2004 – never finalised and made publically available.³⁴

The Transport Master Plan should include a commitment to comprehensively reviewing current transport concessions, including addressing existing inequities and creating a simpler framework for concessions.

7.1.7 Subsidies

The NSW Government also provides a number of transport subsidies that reduce transport costs for particular groups of people.

The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) covers 50% of the cost of taxi travel for people with severe and permanent disability up to a cap of \$30. There is, however, a widening gap between the cost of taxis and the adequacy of the taxi subsidy. Since 1999 Taxi fares in NSW have increased by more than 60%, yet the subsidy cap of \$30 has not been lifted during this same period. In comparison, the cap for the equivalent Victorian scheme was doubled from \$30 to \$60 in 2008.

As described in Section 4.1.3, the cost of taxi travel, even when subsidised at a rate of 50%, can be prohibitive for people with disability who are on a low income.

NCOSS therefore recommends that the NSW Government review the TTSS scheme to ensure it meets the needs of people with disability on low incomes. The subsidy cap should be increased, and other outstanding issues, such as the introduction of a smart card system should be addressed.

The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme should be reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of people with disability on low incomes, and should increase the cap from \$30 to \$50.

The School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) provides subsidised travel for eligible school students on rail, bus, ferry and long distance coach services. A subsidy is also available for transport to and from school in private vehicles in areas where there is no public transport.

The SSTS has failed to keep pace with changes to educational policy, such as an increased focus on vocational education and training that involve partnerships with other educational providers. Yet because the scheme cannot be used for travel between educational institutions, travel costs can prevent students from low-income households from accessing the opportunities available to their peers.

The SSTS also contains a number of inefficiencies, including the payment of subsidies for services that are not actually used, and the payment of subsidies that cover the full distance travelled regardless of whether a student is travelling to the closest school. NCOSS believes that these inefficiencies may provide an opportunity to offset the costs associated with addressing the inequities in the scheme described above.

The School Student Travel Scheme should be reviewed to ensure travel costs are not a barrier to accessing educational opportunities for students with low incomes.

³⁴ The 1999 Review incorporated an extensive consultation process, although the results were never made publically available. In mid-2004 the then Minister for Transport announced another Review of Transport Concession Policy, and it was understood that this review would take into account the findings of the 1999 Review and would be finalised by late 2004 in order to inform the negotiation of metropolitan bus contracts.

7.2 Supporting a greater diversity of services

It is impractical to assume that mass passenger systems will be able to meet the needs of all transport users. Yet other forms of public transport have been paid comparatively little attention. There is a pressing need to explore models of service delivery that may complement and support existing mass passenger services, while catering for the needs of those people experiencing transport disadvantage.

In other jurisdictions demand-responsive and flexible transport models have been shown to facilitate access for people with limited mobility, and to work effectively in less densely populated areas such as outer regional, regional and rural areas.

Examples include:

- The Telebus services in Victoria, Australia: Telebus services may deviate from a fixed route timetable to pick up or drop off passengers at home for a small surcharge.
- The CallConnect services in and around Lincolnshire, England: CallConnect is an on demand bus service that operates only in response to pre-booked requests (on a 'dial a bus' basis). There is no fixed timetable as the route the bus takes is defined by passenger demand and can differ each day.
- The PubliCar in Switzerland: a fully flexible demand -responsive door to door minibus service available in 32 regions in Switzerland, which can be booked via call centres.

Innovative services such as these should be supported and encouraged. This will require reviewing the Passenger Transport Act to remove legislative barriers, and to facilitate integration across all modes of public and community transport.

Flexible and innovative services should be supported and encouraged, with greater attention given to meeting transport needs at the local level.

The Passenger Transport Act should be reviewed to ensure any legislative barriers to a fully integrated transport system that provides flexible and demand-responsive transport services are removed.

8 Relationship between transport and planning

8.1 Urban Design

Thoughtful urban design can provide a pleasant and more liveable environment and can facilitate access to shops, services, social and recreational activities, education, and opportunities for paid or voluntary employment. It can also support the use of active transport (such as cycling and walking) for people of all ages.

Current barriers to walking as a means of transport include safety fears, lighting, uneven or narrow footpaths, a lack of shade and appropriate rest spots.

A range of planning tools have been developed to support healthy urban design and encourage active transport.³⁵ NCOSS recommends that based on these tools, the NSW Government develop, adopt and implement a set of healthy urban design principles, and encourage their implementation at the local government level.

The NSW Government should develop, adopt and implement a set of healthy urban design principles, and encourage their implementation at the local government level.

Other barriers to walking are linked to the priority given to car-based transport over pedestrians. These include inconvenient crossing locations, and long wait times and short pedestrian cycles at signal-controlled crossings.

Pedestrians should be given priority at crossings in suburban areas.

The Complete Streets movement in the USA encourages transportation planners and engineers to design and operate roadways with all users in mind - including bicyclists, public transportation vehicles and riders, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

Transport for NSW should adopt a set of policies to ensure that streets are designed and operated with all users in mind.

8.2 Land use planning

The relationship between transport and land use planning is critical, particularly as Sydney seeks to accommodate a growing population.

Transport for NSW has modelled the impact on the transport system of population growth accommodated through infill development vs greenfield land releases. Changes to the various ratios (in the range of 70:30 to 50:50) have been described as having a minimal impact on Sydney's transport. NCOSS understands, however, that this modelling is based on commuter traffic flows, and does not take into account the increased demand for local transport services that would result from greenfield land releases.

If any greenfield land areas are released, processes (including budgeting processes) should ensure housing development does not outstrip transport services. Planning

³⁵ See for example National Heart Foundation of Australia (Victorian Division), *Healthy by Design: a planners' guide to environments for active living*, June 2004; Heart Foundation/Planning Institute Australia/Australian Local Government Association, *Healthy Spaces & Places: a national guide to designing places for healthy living*, available online at www.healthypaces.org.au and NSW Government, *Planning guidelines for walking and cycling*, December 2004.

for adequate public transport options, including local transport services that will meet the need of transport disadvantaged people, is essential.

We note that a recently commenced bus service covering two new greenfield housing estates in the South West Growth Centre only operates hourly for substantial parts of week days and on weekends. A service as infrequent as this cannot meet the needs of transport disadvantaged people.

If any Greenfield land areas are released, adequate transport services should be planned and budgeted for accordingly.

Land use planning based on current patterns of car usage will perpetuate the trend for lower-income households to move towards outer urban, highly car-dependent areas. As described in Section 4.2.1, these areas are more vulnerable to rising oil prices. Peter Newman, Professor of Sustainability at Curtin University and one of the authors of the Planning Institute of Australia's major study on the impact of peak oil, has said "If we continue to roll out new land releases and suburbs that are car-dependent, they will become the slums of the future".³⁶

Although it is generally acknowledged that oil prices will continue to rise, policy responses have given little consideration to the social implications, particularly the impact on low-income households and transport disadvantaged communities. The NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan presents an opportunity to develop strategies to mitigate the likely impacts, and to shape a more resilient society.

Where new passenger rail infrastructure, or new transit lanes are provided in established or infill areas, land use controls in those corridors should be reviewed to identify opportunities for increased and higher density residential development, including a suitable level of affordable housing, particularly within walking distance of new railway stations and bus stops. This would both help to contain urban sprawl in fringe areas and contribute to addressing our well-known affordable housing challenge.

The NSW Government should recognise the current and likely future impact of rising oil prices on low-income households, and introduce strategies to limit the concentrations of lower-income households in highly car-dependent areas. These strategies will include curbing urban sprawl, and encouraging higher density development, including affordable housing, close to transport services.

³⁶ West, Andrew (2010) 'Report warns of oil woes' *The Age*, 28 December 2010, Melbourne, Australia.

9 Pricing and revenue raising

9.1 Price signalling

The cost of transport has a strong influence over people's choice of travel mode; whether they will drive or take the bus. Yet there is currently very little relationship between the price paid by the consumer and the true financial, social and environmental costs of people's transport choices. This is true for both public transport and for car ownership and usage, both of which are examined in more detail below.

In an effort to move towards a low car use society, NCOSS recommends that where appropriate, pricing mechanisms should encourage more sustainable transport choices.

Where appropriate, pricing mechanisms should encourage more sustainable transport choices.

9.1.1 Public transport fares

Determining maximum public transport fares is currently the responsibility of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). IPART's approach to determining public transport fares is based on an assessment of the efficient costs of providing a service. The externalities associated with that service are also calculated, with the view that it is reasonable for tax-payers to subsidise services to the extent to which they benefit society. The remaining costs are those to be recovered through the fare-box.

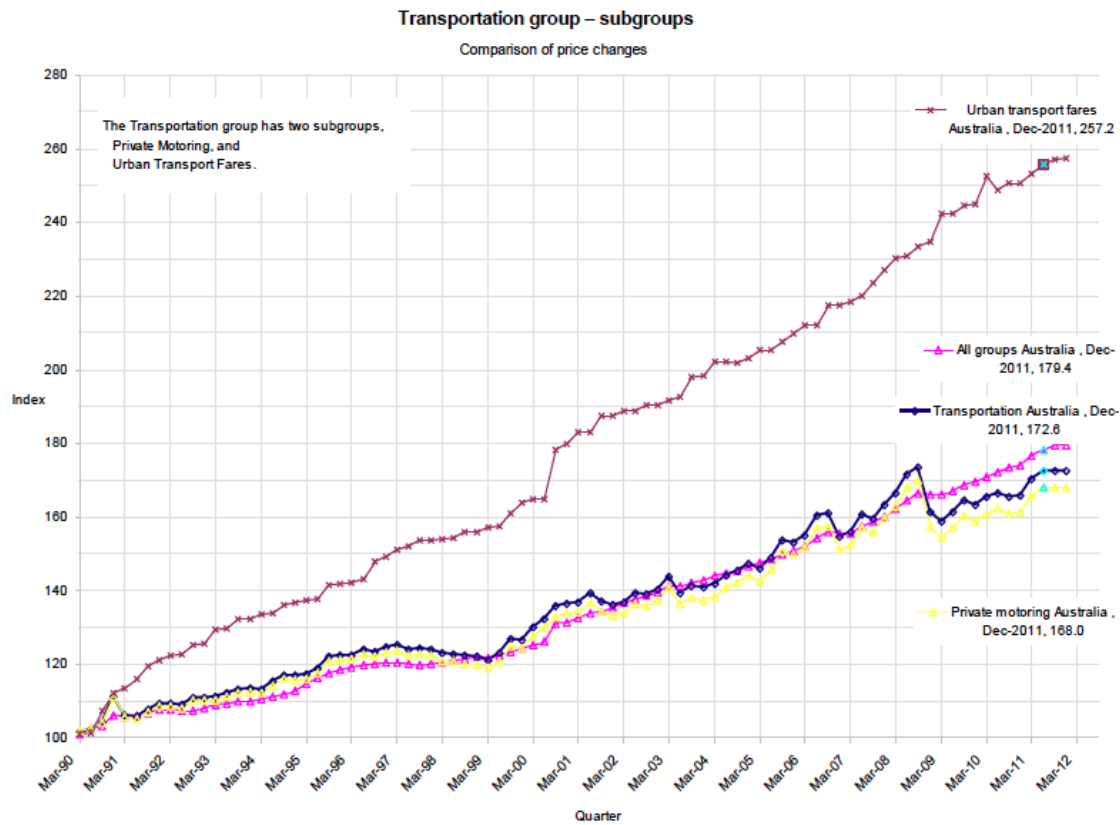
IPART's calculations provide important information that should be taken into consideration in setting fare policies. Yet it is necessary to overlay these calculations with other policy considerations such:

- Ensuring people with low-incomes can access transport
- Encouraging modal shift
- Spreading demand more evenly across the day

NCOSS considers that while the approach outlined above may be reasonable in the long-term (provided all externalities are properly accounted for), its short-term application to public transport – particularly in the absence of a similar approach to road pricing – may run counter to other policy goals.

In ensuring public transport fares are set at a level so as to encourage modal shift, they must be considered in relation to the cost of driving. The graph below shows that while changes to the cost of transport are roughly equivalent to changes in the cost of living, urban transport fares are increasing at a faster rate³⁷. If this trend continues, it will create further disincentives to switch to public transport, particularly once people have made an initial investment in car ownership.

³⁷ This graph is taken from Dufty, G, (2012) *Cost of living pressures – impact on low income households*. ACOSS National Conference, 2012. Retrieved 30 April 2012 from <<http://acoss.org.au/uploads/Gavin%20Dufty.pdf>>



9.1.2 Road user pricing

Road-pricing systems can encourage people to switch to public transport, effectively reducing peak traffic and associated congestion. These systems can take a number of forms, including cordon charging, urban toll rings, and express toll lanes. Depending on their implementation, road pricing systems can be considered to be equitable or otherwise, and this has been the subject of much research and debate³⁸.

While NCOSS supports the introduction of road user pricing, we believe that equity should be a primary consideration. This would require thorough analysis of the likely effects upon households, particularly low-income households.

The following principles should apply:

- Any road-pricing system should be implemented in such a way as to ensure it would not unfairly disadvantage people unable to access public transport alternatives.
- Any revenue must be retained by government and hypothecated for improving transport alternatives, including public transport, walking and cycling – not for general revenue, building more roads or compensating road-builders.

The Long Term Transport Master Plan for NSW should include a commitment to reforming Sydney's existing road tolls and introducing a time-varied user-pays road pricing system that is both more equitable and more efficient.

³⁸ See for example Ecola, L., and Light, T (2009) *Equity and Congestion Pricing, A Review of the Evidence*. RAND Transportation, Space, and Technology Program.

9.1.3 Car Parking

Limits or restrictions on car parking (including pricing) can contribute to the efficient use of existing transport resources. In particular, parking restrictions can be used to discourage car use in areas well-served by public transport. The Transport Master Plan should consider car parking strategies that will encourage people to travel by public transport where this is a viable alternative. We note, however, that adequate provision should be made for those people who are unable to travel by public transport, such as people with mobility limitations.

The Transport Master Plan should consider car parking strategies that will encourage people to travel by public transport where this is a viable alternative.

9.2 Revenue raising

In our 2012/13 Pre-Budget Submission NCOSS recommended the introduction of a \$2.00 levy on private vehicle registration to be hypothecated into public transport. We believe this would create an ongoing revenue stream of approximately \$9 million per annum for community transport programs addressing transport disadvantage. Such a scheme would contribute to both vertical and horizontal equity by establishing a pool of funds to support people who are unable to access private transport, and by contributing to building a system that provides transport options for people at all stages of their life.

The NSW State Government should introduce a \$2.00 levy on private vehicle registration fees to be hypothecated into community transport.

10 Conclusion

NCOSS welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the development of a new Long Term Transport Master Plan for NSW. We are hopeful that this plan will mark the beginning of a genuinely new approach to transport planning and decision-making – an approach that maintains a clear focus on transport's role in shaping a fairer, healthier and more sustainable society.

We look forward to providing ongoing input into the development of this Master Plan, and into the resulting implementation processes.