How can we encourage public transport use and alleviate Sydney’s congestion problem?

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Aims of presentation

1. Role of transport – why reduce congestion?
2. Trends
3. Individual v Government decisions
4. Public transport objectives
5. Public transport use
6. Encouraging public transport use
7. How important is road pricing reform?
8. Key steps
1. Role of transport

› Transport is an enabler
  - Provides access to allow participation in society and life opportunities: work, education, health, shopping, social/recreation, volunteering

› Transport provides accessibility
  - Provides independence and choice in social inclusion

› Public transport has a wider role
  - Health and environmental benefits
  - For all members of society
Why reduce congestion?

› Traffic congestion in Sydney will cost nearly $8 billion in lost productivity by 2020 (Financial Review, October 2011)

› Traffic congestion makes travel slower and more stressful for drivers – but they can get out of their cars

› Reducing congestion can help freight with quicker journeys – productivity benefits

› Reducing congestion can make public transport in mixed traffic move more quickly, making it more attractive

› Reducing congestion for cars reduces the attractiveness of public transport

› Congestion reduction has to have clear policy motivations
2. Trends

› The past is the ‘best’ guide for predicting the future

› Understanding what travellers do is the evidence base for strategic policy-making
High level trends: urban public transport use in Australia

- Beginning of motorised buses
- Rapid growth during WW2
- Steady growth since mid-1975 – mostly growth in heavy rail

Source: Cosgrove 2011
Modal share for urban public transport: Sydney (2010/11)

Source: BTS, Transport for NSW
Modal share for urban public transport: Sydney

- Vehicle driver
- Vehicle passenger
- Train
- Bus
- Walk only

Source: BTS, Transport for NSW
Post-war metropolitan public transport patronage: Australian capital cities

Source: Cosgrove 2011, Table 1
Post-war metropolitan public transport trips per capita: Australian capital cities

Source: Cosgrove 2011, Table 2
3. Individuals and Government: the role of economics

- Economics is fundamentally about allocation of resources
- Individual decisions v Government decisions
- Government responsibilities
  - Commitment to networks and systems (not ‘projects’ or ‘corridors’)
  - Importance of network effect
- Individual responsibilities

Source: http://mappery.com/map-of/Melbourne-Australia-Public-Transportation-Map
Analysis of Networks

› Analysis of key corridors giving constraints to the network is imperative

› Understanding how key corridors add to the network

› Improving corridors which contribute to the network effect

Source: Draft NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan, 2012, p.84
4. Public transport objectives

› Public transport policy objectives are multidimensional
  - Economic aspects
  - Environmental sustainability
  - Social aspects

› Why is urban public transport more successful
  - Density
    - provides a greater potential pool of passengers
    - diverse purposes fills up vehicles and gives viability

› Much of Sydney is low density where it is more difficult to make public transport work
  - Too much discussion about ‘projects’
  - Not enough discussion about the network as a system
  - Very little discussion about balancing the conflicting needs of coverage versus frequency
What we know

- the ‘forget the timetable’ frequency
- journey times
- parking

What sort of public transport?
Coverage versus frequency trade-off

… but when it’s presented this way, they see why it’s a tradeoff.

Source: Dr Jarrett Walker
Objectives met through frequency

› Patronage growth
› Financial
  - Fare return
› Environmental impact reduction
  - from reduced private vehicle trips.
  - Reduced emissions.

Objectives met through coverage

› Social Inclusion
› “Equity”
  - Entitlement to a public service.
  - “We pay taxes too”
› Redistributive aims
6. Encouraging public transport use – short run

› Australia has to ‘live’ with the urban form/low density cities it has, at least in the short run

› Improving public transport in the short run is not about doing the big things – eg creating new links - but making sure money is well spent

› Key issues
  - Network planning, co-ordination, integration and high frequency
  - Fares systems and policies
  - Supportive policies: eg parking policy
  - Concentrate on frequency to motivate modal switch
  - Innovative ways to deliver coverage
  - Travel demand management eg TravelSmart

Source: eastlandshomes.co.uk
Encouraging public transport use – long run

› In the longer run

› Key issues

- transport and land use planning
  - Planning the network with view to a future vision
- Providing the right price signals
  - Individuals can make informed decisions which relate to resources consumed
  - Reform the taxation principles – in particular in relation to road use
How important is road pricing reform?

› Car drivers behave as if they only consider their marginal costs
  - Fuel
  - Tolls

› Driving on congested roads
  - Gives rise to significant externalities
  - Reduces the ability to sustain productive growth

› Driving per se gives rise to significant health costs from sedentary behaviour

› Pricing reform which shifts more costs to ‘running costs’ and away from ‘standing’ or fixed costs could provide behavioural change
  - Could also make reform more acceptable
Conclusions

› Transport is an enabler that facilitates access

› What needs to happen to encourage public transport use?
  - Policy choices need to be clear and prioritised in a way that society understand.
  - And not just short term politics.

› Australia has a history of car dominated travel – change will involve attitudinal change as well as improvements to the public transport system

› Much can be done in the short run to improve use of current facilities whilst preparing the correct framework for strategic changes in the long run.