



UrbanGrowth NSW
PO Box 33
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

Wednesday, 2 April 2014

RE: REVITALISING NEWCASTLE - LIGHT RAIL FROM WICKHAM TO THE BEACH

About us

The Property Council of Australia is the lead advocate for Australia's \$600 billion property industry.

It counts the bulk of the nation's major investors, property owners and developers – as well as the industry's professional service and trade providers – amongst its members.

We underpin the health and growth of the NSW economy. In The Hunter alone, we contribute \$8.3 billion to economic growth, paying \$3.8 billion in wages and generating 75,000 jobs.

The Hunter Chapter of the Property Council of Australia comprises key industry leaders from the property development industry. Our members have a long term interest in the economic prosperity of The Hunter. Attracting and accommodating growth, delivering infrastructure and achieving planning reform are issues of particular interest to our members.

They have advocated consistently and scientifically to build a future city, a truly world-class regional capital, which can support NSW's regional economic powerhouse.

In December 2012 we formed the Newcastle Renewal Taskforce – a local industry brains trust – to advise government on the city centre's revitalisation. When the NSW Government exhibited options for light rail routes in Newcastle, the Taskforce was resourced to commission independent research (Appendix A) and consult widely with business and community leaders.

This is their submission. Above all else, the Taskforce found;

Using the existing heavy rail corridor for light rail represents marginal change to the urban design of Newcastle and will not support the strategic priorities of the Government's Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy (NURS).

The Voice of Leadership

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Executive Summary

An effective and sustainable public transport solution for NSW's second largest city will provide better mobility and enhance the city's three distinct precincts, improve liveability and provide a pathway for growth.

Newcastle's transport infrastructure must compliment the real drivers of sustainable economic growth and urban renewal. It must give primary consideration to changing patterns of land use and the places where people want to live, learn, work and play in the future.

Current and proposed developments make Hunter Street the dominant axis for the City Centre. Embedding the new light rail infrastructure along this alignment will;

- ✓ Confirm urban renewal and creating a competitive, liveable city as the highest order outcome
- ✓ Support its role as a multi modal transport corridor
- ✓ Attract investment and jobs
- ✓ Unlock the greatest development opportunity
- ✓ Leverage the funding of major public realm upgrades
- ✓ Deliver economic and social dividends
- ✓ **Create a City Centre that is authentically Novocastrian**

WHY HUNTER STREET?

Light rail can reshape Hunter Street as the key destination within the city. It will promote activity, business opportunities, events and other uses to form a vibrant city centre offering a range of experiences to residents, workers and visitors.

The Hunter Street option will:

- ✓ Create an active and liveable city centre
- ✓ Provide new and enhanced connections
- ✓ Support an integrated pedestrian and cyclist network
- ✓ Service established activity areas
- ✓ Maximise patronage
- ✓ Improve and activate the streetscape
- ✓ Accelerate adaptive reuse of heritage buildings
- ✓ Contribute to way finding and place making
- ✓ Give life to the CBD's three distinct precincts
- ✓ Encourage additional retail trade
- ✓ Promote the city's key public domain areas
- ✓ Cater for 10,000 new jobs and 6,000 new dwellings by 2036



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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

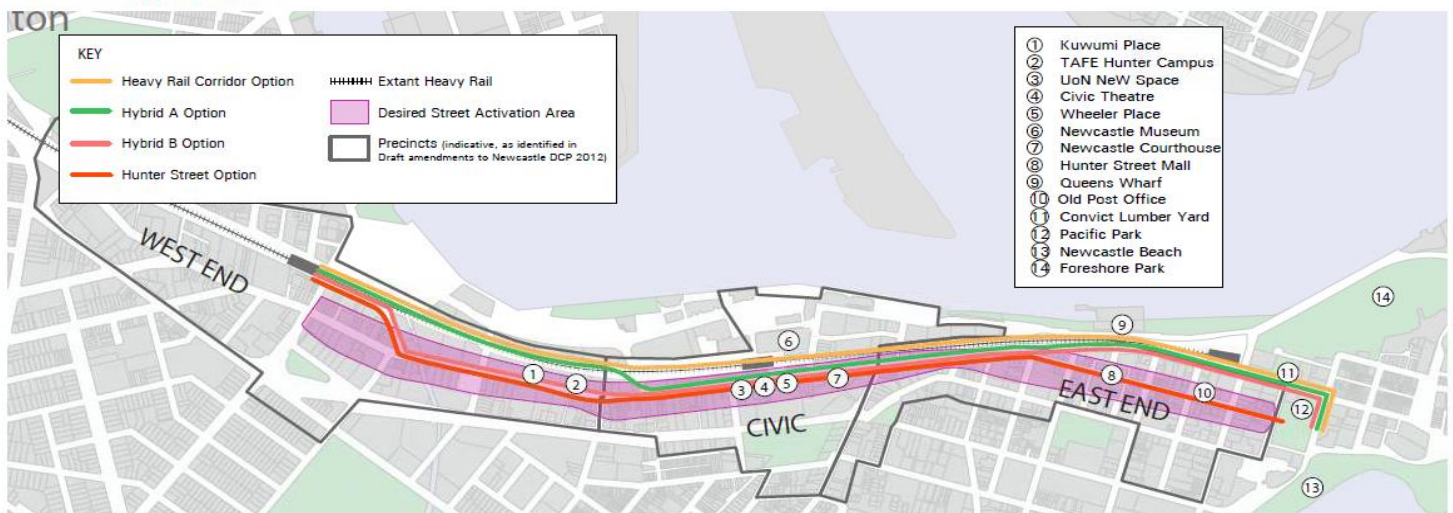
- ✓ A Light Rail route from the Wickham Interchange, along the heavy rail corridor to Bellevue Street, then onto Hunter Street to Scott Street, and terminating on Telford Street adjacent to Pacific Park.
- ✓ A world-class regional transport interchange at Wickham characterised by:
 1. At-grade transitions from heavy rail to light rail
 2. High levels of pedestrian and cyclist amenity
 3. A parking strategy to reduce car dependency
- ✓ Two Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes as the interim transport solution during construction from Broadmeadow Station to the East End
- ✓ Truncate the Heavy Rail line at Broadmeadow before September 30th 2014 to begin opening up ground breaking new connections from the city to the waterfront and launch fresh, vibrant precincts.

1. The Best Light Rail Route

The primary consideration in determining the best Light Rail route has been to maximise urban renewal opportunities. The map below clearly demonstrates;

1. Using the existing heavy rail corridor for Light Rail will NOT activate the three distinct precincts or the areas around key public spaces and buildings.
2. Routing Light Rail along Hunter Street will create a permeable street network for pedestrians and will deliver people to the “front doors” of their final destination.
3. Terminating Light Rail on Telford Street at Pacific Park will be a point of high user demand, promote tourism and create a positive commuter experience by greatly assisting wayfinding.

Activation Opportunities

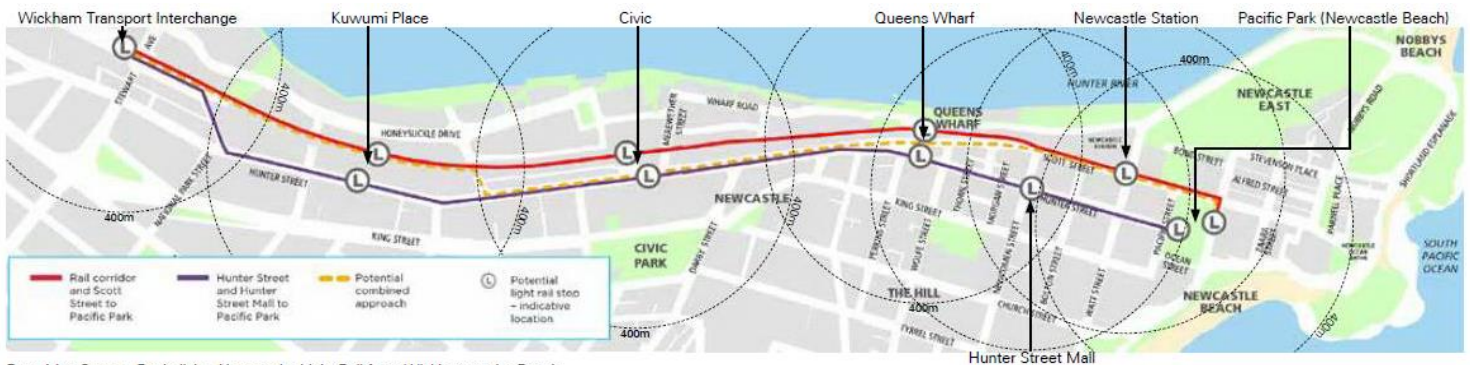


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Proposed Locations of Light Rail Stops



Base Map Source: Revitalising Newcastle: Light Rail from Wickham to the Beach

Potential Route Assessment

The matrix below evaluates each route against key criteria and **strongly supports the Hunter Street option.**

	Street Permeability	"Front Door Delivery"	Future Network Capacity	Activation of Key Precincts			Sightlines from Termination Point
				W End	CIV	E End	
Hunter Street	Very Good Street pattern is of finest grain along Hunter Street, which allows for maximum permeability. There are also various streets such as Union Street and Merewether Street that terminate at Hunter Street, which indicates Hunter Street is important for pedestrian permeability for Newcastle City Centre.	Very Good Will travel past the most front doors of any route and most importantly traverse adjacent to sites that would be expected to generate a significant number of patrons such as UoN NeW Space Campus and the Newcastle Courthouse.	Very Low The width of the street will permit just a single track in Hunter Street Mall. This may limit long term future growth of a light rail network and any breakdowns along this stretch may have significant impacts on planned services.	✓	✓	✓	Average -To Hunter Street - Minor sightlines to Newcastle Beach, which is the most significant public space in the immediate area
Hybrid A	Good Generally good with limited street permeability available towards Market Town in West End where the route would travel along the heavy rail corridor. Good permeability would be provided towards Honeysuckle through Steel Street, Kuvumi Place and Worth Place.	Good Will traverse a highly urbanised route through Civic and East End Precincts but limited front door deliverance available through West End as most buildings along this stretch face either Hunter Street or Honeysuckle Drive.	Good East-west capacity will not be limited on Hunter Street up to the Civic Precinct upon approach from west. Limited reduced capacity on Hunter St will support activation of the street		✓	✓	Good -To Newcastle Beach -Towards Foreshore Park
Rail Corridor	Low Permeability most limited of potential route options. Streets that terminate at Hunter Street (such as Union Street) will become tertiary pedestrian streets from light rail stops.	Low Very few buildings currently have front entrances to the heavy rail corridor outside of the East End, which indicates the corridor is not where people want to travel to.	Very Good Light rail is not expected to significantly impact on the capacity for vehicular travel on Hunter Street			✓	Good -To Newcastle Beach -Towards Foreshore Park
Hybrid B	Very Good In the West End, Hunter Street provides the greatest permeability, while Scott Street in the East End affords similar permeability to that afforded by Hunter Street.	Very Good Will traverse through fine grain urban areas and deliver people to front doors along a significant portion of Hunter Street, which is a desired activation area. Additional exposure from passing trade will be provided to support businesses along the route.	Good East-west capacity will not be limited on Hunter Street up to the Civic Precinct upon approach from west. Limited reduced capacity on Hunter St will support activation of the street	✓	✓	✓	Good -To Newcastle Beach -Towards Foreshore Park

RECOMMENDATION

A Light Rail route from the Wickham Interchange, along the heavy rail corridor to Bellevue Street, then onto Hunter Street to Scott Street, and terminating on Telford Street adjacent to Pacific Park.

2. A world-class Regional Transport Interchange

As the primary transport hub for The Hunter, the Wickham Transport Interchange must be designed with a focus on;

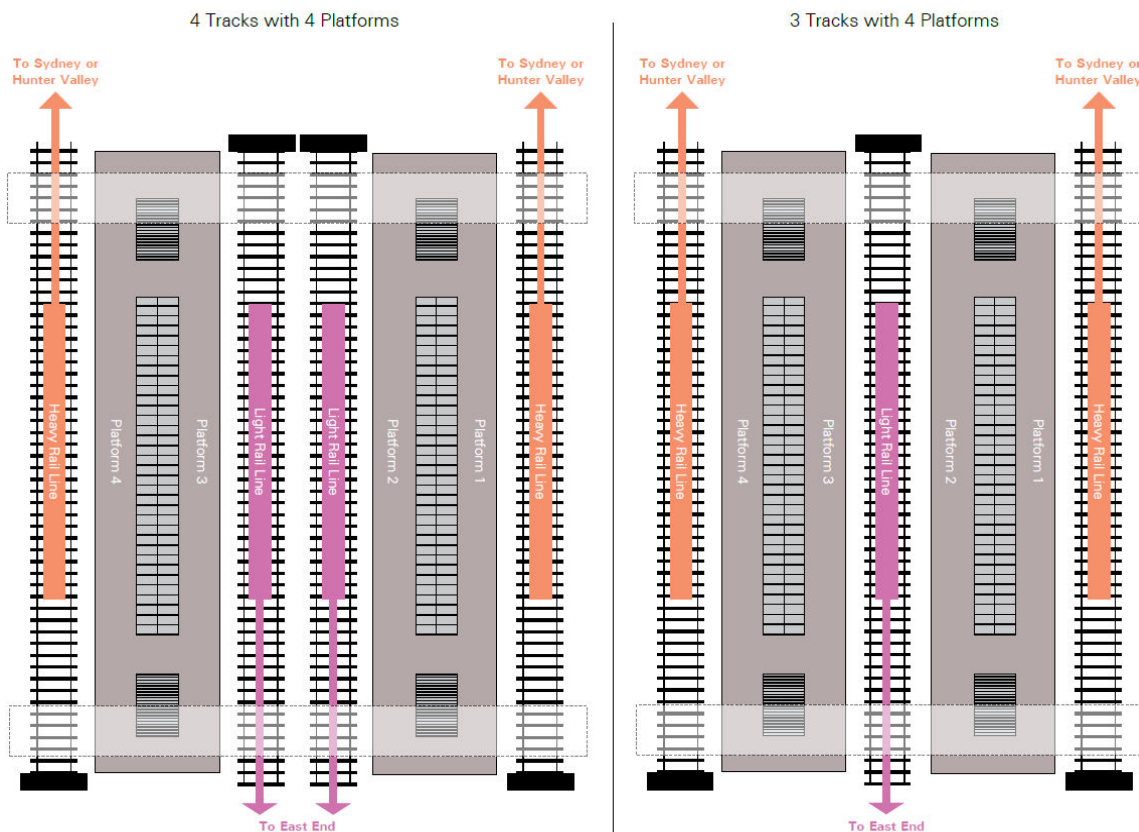
- ✓ Providing a positive commuter experience
- ✓ Providing a seamless nexus for all transit modes

At-grade transitions between Heavy Rail and Light Rail

The most important operational feature of the Wickham Transport Interchange will be limiting the amount of time required to transition between rail modes. **Commuters should not be required to change platforms.**

To make transition between various other modes of transport and the public domain seamless, the final Interchange design should also be without impediments such as grade changes and road crossings.

The diagram below shows indicative examples of such a platform configuration.

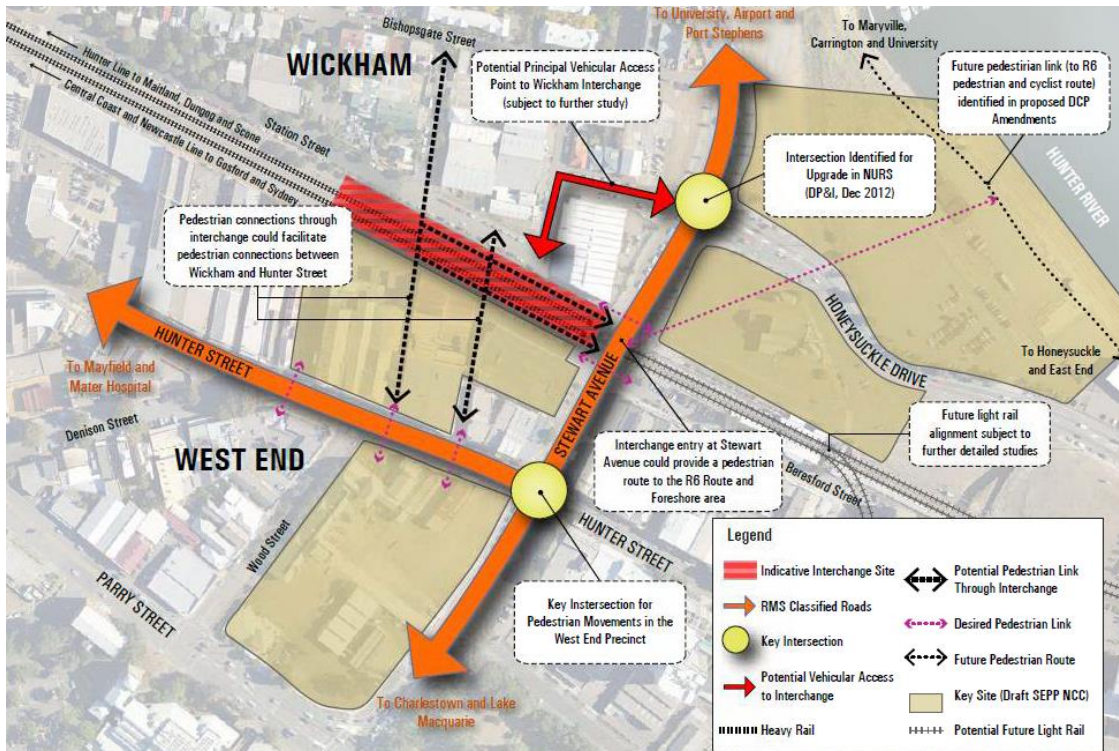
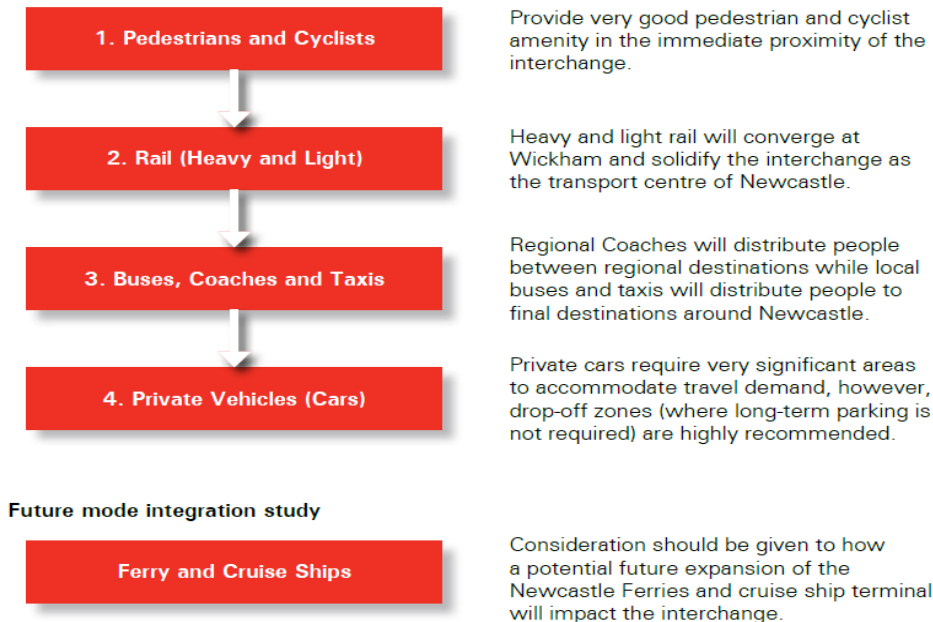


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Provision for all Transport Modes

The final design of the Wickham Transport Interchange should give priority to pedestrian and cyclist trips, while also making itself an attractive destination for buses, coaches and taxis. The flow chart and figure below shows a best-practice **Strategic Transport Hierarchy for the West End Precinct**.



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RECOMMENDATION

A world-class regional transport interchange at Wickham characterised by;

- 1. At-grade transitions from heavy rail to light rail**
- 2. High levels of pedestrian and cyclist amenity**
- 3. A parking strategy to reduce car dependency**

3. Interim Transport Arrangements

The proposed interim bus arrangements during truncation of the heavy rail line and construction of the Wickham Transport Interchange are without fault.

Stops will be provided in close proximity to existing rail stations and the Hunter Street alignment will deliver people to the activation areas which are a strategic priority of the NURS.

RECOMMENDATION

Two Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes as the interim transport solution during construction from Broadmeadow Station to the East End;

- 1. Express Bus Route via Tudor Street**
- 2. All Stops Route via Beaumont Street**

4. Commence work in 2014

In the twelve months following release of the NURS, property industry confidence in Newcastle improved and the mood within the CBD business community was buoyant. Since late last year there has been a decided swing in sentiment.

- ✘** Uncertainty is growing around the timing of opening up the city centre to the foreshore.
- ✘** Doubts are emerging around infrastructure delivery.
- ✘** Concern is building that the NURS has been hijacked by a transport project.
- ✘** Investors are hesitant whilever nothing is changing on the ground.

While concluding negotiations on the lease of the Port of Newcastle are necessary to provide the funding of Light Rail Infrastructure, they are not contingent on getting on with the job of revitalising the city centre. The funds are available **today** to commence these upgrades.

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The Fix

- ✓ Truncation of the heavy rail service before September 30th 2014
- ✓ Commence interim bus arrangements until completion of the Interchange and Light Rail Infrastructure
- ✓ Completion of key intersection upgrades in the short-term.
- ✓ Begin public domain works and other initiatives tabled with Government in December 2012.

The Benefits

- ✓ Make for a more liveable and sustainable CBD sooner
- ✓ Give confidence to investors and residents
- ✓ Satisfy the demand of new residents and workers
- ✓ Provide regional incentives to reduce car based travel

Conclusion

The Property Council of Australia believes the O'Farrell Government has shown true leadership in deciding to open up ground breaking new connections from the city to the waterfront and launch fresh, vibrant precincts.

We believe the O'Farrell Government has shown true vision with its bold judgement on light rail as the gold-plated solution for Newcastle's future transport system.

The Newcastle Renewal Taskforce, a team of local experts, was convened within days of the Government's announcement to work through the detail of the strategy and lead the industry response.

They were resourced to commission independent research and consult widely with key stakeholders.

The Taskforce findings contained in this submission prove the NSW Government's initiatives can provide a \$2.5 billion turbo-charge to the local economy if the right decision is made on the route of Newcastle's Light Rail System.

All the available facts and market insights point clearly to Hunter Street as the only viable route option to unleash that wave of investment and achieve the Government's strategic priorities for Newcastle.



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