

Owen Andrews

The Secretary
Public Works Committee
Parliament of Tasmania
Parliament House
Hobart TAS 7000

To the committee,

I'm writing to raise my concerns regarding the State Government's plan to construct a "Northern Access Road" to Macquarie Point wharf on the northern side of the Hobart cenotaph. Of major concern is that the current planned location of the road is directly in place of the existing rail corridor into Macquarie Point, completely blocking any future rail access to Macquarie Point, the planned stadium, and the Hobart CBD.

The railway corridor from Macquarie Point extends 18km through Hobart's northern suburbs, representing enormous untapped economic opportunity for these areas and Hobart more generally. An opportunity that governments in other Australian jurisdictions could only dream of. In the last five years new-build passenger rail projects have been undertaken in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, and Canberra – all requiring land acquisition to the tune of millions of dollars to form new transit corridors. Hobart's transit corridor is ready made, and the Government is sleeping on its potential.

Of course, the State Government will say that the corridor's fate to become a busway is sealed, and that we need not consider rail in the equation at all. After a decade of reports and business cases the government announced in 2024 that it would progress the establishment of "Bus Rapid Transit" system along the corridor. This is despite a Transport Mode Study conducted by firm PwC showing that buses have the *least* ability to stimulate economic development. The report found that rail has the greatest potential, estimated to stimulate the construction of 4,657 new dwellings, and 1,082 new jobs¹ – that's 4 times that of the estimate for rapid buses. To be clear, this is not an argument against a rapid bus network – not at all. We need an integrated public transport network involving different modes; However, we needn't destroy the rail corridor to achieve this end.

¹ *Transport Mode Study: Options Assessment Report Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor*. Retrieved from https://www.hobartcitydeal.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/271707/Northern_Suburbs_Transit_Corridor_Transport_Mode_Study_Final_Summary_Report.PDF

The economic potential of rail on the transit corridor only increase when one considers that the above-mentioned study was undertaken before the conception of the Macquarie Point Stadium, a 23,000-seat facility which has been roundly recognised as needing greater public transport links in-order to be successful. There is also the unrealised tourism potential of heritage rail from cruise ships moored at Macquarie Point, transporting passengers to the Botanic Gardens, MONA, and the planned Cadbury Chocolate Factory experience. Far from a pipe dream, just last year the Tasmanian Transport Museum extended its weekend steam train experience along the northern end of the transit corridor from Glenorchy through to Berriedale – a journey of 7km with plans for the next extension to Claremont already underway.

In closing, the Government's Bus Rapid Transit plan for the northern suburbs is yet to be ratified by Parliament, or this committee. On this basis I ask that in doing its work to assess the "present and prospective public value of the work" the committee consider the opportunity cost of the Northern Access Road. Specifically, not just what it would cost to build, but also what it would cost Tasmania in terms of the projects and associated economic development that would be precluded because of it. And consider if there are any alternative plans that would preserve the rail corridor into Macquarie Point, thereby allowing this project to achieve its goals without jeopardising the future economic potential of the entire rail corridor.

Kind regards,

Owen Andrews