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20 August 2008

Director – Strategic Assessments  
Department of Planning  
GPO Box 39  
Sydney NSW 2001

To whom it may concern,

## **RESPONSE TO SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK MASTER PLAN 2030 DRAFT**

### **TOURISM & TRANSPORT FORUM (TTF)**

TTF is a national, Member-funded CEO forum, advocating the public policy interests of the 200 most prestigious corporations and institutions in the Australian transport, property, tourism and infrastructure sectors.

TTF's membership comprises the most significant players in the tourism sector including all major domestic and international airlines, major airports, major hotels, attractions and major event venues, investment banks, other tourism and hospitality operators and service providers to these sectors.

As the nation's leading advocacy voice for the passenger transport sector, TTF is committed to improving the quality of passenger transport across the country. TTF's Members include public transport operators, investors, infrastructure developers, consultants and many others with an interest in improving accessibility to passenger transport in Australia. TTF is working to give people genuine transport choices that meet their needs, by encouraging the integration of land use planning, infrastructure development and community and business requirements.

### **INTRODUCTION**

TTF supports the Sydney Olympic Park (SOP) Master Plan 2030 and believes it provides the framework to secure the future of SOP as a premium venue for major events as well as a business, residential, sporting and education hub. Considering the bias for the former, a necessary transition requiring forward strategic thinking and careful planning will ensure a balance remains between the sometimes competing priorities.

SOP will remain a major event precinct in the future and densification should not come at the expense of the systems that sustain the amenity and appeal of the park during major events.

TTF considers transport as the facilitator of both of these priorities and as such this submission predominately focuses on transport. Transport will be crucial for the amenity and appeal of the park and will be critical to sustainable growth. Unlike other areas in Sydney, SOP has the benefit of existing transport infrastructure that can largely cater for the current needs of the Park. However, transport planners must not get complacent. Full appreciation of the demands on the system in the future will quickly show there is much work to do.

Below is a brief summary of the major issues facing the park and some strategies to ensure a viable integrated transport network into the future. Other considerations in relation to convention space and smaller events are also discussed.

## **CURRENT PLANS AND FORECASTS**

- *SOP*

Today there are 60 businesses, 6,000 workers, and a hotel capacity of almost 700. Under the SOP 2030 Masterplan this will balloon to 34,000 workers, 14,000 residents, 5,000 students, with daily visitors of approximately 45,000. In the very near future, 3,000 residents are expected to reside in the park by 2012 and 5,000 Commonwealth Bank employees will relocate to the park next year. The current transport network is considered just adequate to cater for the current 6,000 workers and additional visitors on a daily basis.

- *Surrounding Areas*

SOP is situated between the Inner West Sydney and Central Western Sydney statistical local areas (SLA). According to the Transport Data Centre these two areas are expected to grow from 242,962 residents in 2006 to 312,760 residents by 2031 – an increase of almost 29%. This is without considering the 18% population growth on the other nearby SLAs such as Lower Northern Sydney and Central Northern Sydney.<sup>1</sup>

SOP will need to integrate effectively with the wider local transport, commercial, and residential networks in order to ensure the greater local area keeps its appeal and amenity.

## **THE TRANSPORT NETWORK**

- *Transport trends and the road network*

At present car use represents 68% of travel by residents within the inner west Sydney SLA and 70% in the central west Sydney SLA. While public transport represents just 21% and 12% respectively.<sup>2</sup> Traffic congestion is already considered a major problem on

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<sup>1</sup> Transport and Population Data Centre (TPDC), NSW SLA Population Projections, 2001 to 2031, 2005 Release.

<sup>2</sup> Transport Data Centre, Key Transport Indicators: (a) by Statistical Local Area of Residence (SLA), 2005, Inner Western Sydney Statistical Sub-Division (SSD), 2008.

the arterial roads within the areas. Those specifically surrounding SOP, namely Silverwater Road, Parramatta Road, Homebush Bay Drive, and the M4 have long been regarded as traffic bottlenecks especially during the peak periods. Further congestion will be caused on these roads as a result of new residential and commercial developments in Sydney's greater western areas and increased freight movements with the expansion of Port Botany.

- *Current public transport provisions outside of major events*

It is a misconception to think transportation to and from SOP is based solely on major events. On the contrary, SOP is currently serviced by all modes of public transport, bar light rail. It has four dedicated bus routes operating daily linking the park to Strathfield, Burwood, Parramatta, Lidcombe, Chatswood and Hurstville to name just a few centres. It also has a regular shuttle train service operating every 20 minutes from Lidcombe Station and an off peak service direct to the city. The Parramatta River ferry services are less regular and operate mainly to service tourists, however they are integrated with one of the four bus routes to transfer people from the wharf to the central areas of the park and beyond.

- *Car parking*

The current car parking capacity stands at about 10,000. Of this half is uncovered. While there will undoubtedly be a need to provide parking for residents, better utilisation of existing parking during non-event periods in combination with a dedicated shuttle service around the Park will ensure more parking spaces for the 45,000 daily visitors in 2030 are not required. Already there are enough car spaces to enable 20% of these daily visitors to park their cars. Increasing the number of car spaces for daily visitors will merely place unnecessary pressure on the existing surrounding local road network. Consideration should also be given to placing existing uncovered car parks underground to better utilise existing land space.

- *Pedestrian and cycleways*

SOPA has been progressive in the consideration of pedestrians and cyclists in transport development strategies for the park. Dedicated cycleways and foot paths around the park have added to the amenity and appeal of the area. Further opportunities exist to encourage more use of these facilities through innovative marketing strategies.

- *Current transport patterns*

A survey undertaken in March 2008 of more than 10,000 SOP workers found that public transport use to the park is high relative to SOP surrounding areas.<sup>3</sup> 41% of SOP Business Association respondents use public transport daily, and 46% of Commonwealth Bank respondents catch a bus or a train to work. Despite this the relative high number of connections needed to get to SOP is taking its toll with 56% of public transport users rating their journey to work as difficult and 51% of users rating public transport timetabling as poor. There are signs of encouragement with 72% of private vehicle users stating they would consider using public transport if services were improved.

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<sup>3</sup> Results of Survey of Sydney Olympic Park Workers undertaken March 2008

## KEY ISSUES FACING THE TRANSPORT NETWORK

Despite the relative good access to SOP by public transport and roads there still exists a number of issues that continue to hinder the speed and efficiency of travel to and from the park. Below are just some of these issues.

- *Transport Co-ordination*  
The transport system at SOP must be able to cater for the needs and requirements of the numerous businesses and operations at the park. At times smaller events, booked by different operators at the same time, has lead to localised congestion. Better co-ordination of transport through coordinated planning will ensure adequate resources are provided for the whole park during and outside of major events. To this end a SOP Transport Authority should be established to oversee these matters and others such as public transport marketing strategies.
- *Public transport frequencies*  
The current rail loop timetable between Lidcombe and SOP of 20 minutes each weekday and 10 minutes throughout the weekend does not correspond to the demand for rail at various times. With the growth in employment at the park, more peak services are required and some weekend services could be withdrawn.
- *Rail track work co-ordination*  
The timing of track work on various rail lines during major events has led to congestion on the road network around the park. Better co-ordination with RailCorp about the timing of events with scheduled track work is necessary to minimise the impact on the local road network around SOP. This could form part of the role of a dedicated SOP Transport Authority.
- *Bus services*  
While there are four bus routes that service the park, there are a number of areas in Sydney that are not provided with direct or indirect links to the park outside of major events. No bus services operate to the park from North West Sydney for instance. As SOP evolves to become a commercial, residential, and educational centre, more bus routes that service Sydney's growth areas must be considered.
- *Integrated event and transport ticketing*  
Integrated event and public transport ticketing has been successful in encouraging more commuters to use public transport to travel to and from major events. However, at present integrated ticketing is not applied to all major events. Moreover, a strategy does not exist for the entire SOP precinct when more than one smaller event takes place at the one time. Consideration of how to better utilise integrated ticketing at SOP is required.
- *Car parking*  
With 10,000 available spaces spread across six major car parks SOP has enough capacity so that all employees can currently drive into work. However with the projected number of daily visitors at SOP in the near future, SOPA will need to change the way car spaces are utilised. Innovative strategies that provide links from the car parks to localised employment areas, such as a shuttle bus service will allow

SOPA to better co-ordinate the different car parks and isolate any local traffic congestion.

## **SUGGESTED TRANSPORT STRATEGIES**

The strategies outlined below are a mix of both short term and long term priorities to cater for transport demand within and around SOP:

### *Short Term*

- A dedicated SOP transport authority should be established to cater for the completion of staged development and to better co-ordinate transport services in the area.
- The shuttle heavy rail service frequencies should increase to 10 minutes initially during the peak and shoulder periods, and in the near future throughout the entire day.
- The direct Sydney CBD via Strathfield heavy rail service should operate the entire day including extra services during the peak periods.
- Dedicated bus routes linking the Park to Sydney's Growth Centres in the North West and South West should commence immediately.
- Extra services on existing bus routes to the park should commence and bus priority measures should be employed such as GPS priority lights technology and dedicated bus lanes.
- There should be better management and utilisation of the facilities available during non-major event periods such as bus and car parking.
- A dedicated free shuttle bus loop service linking the major destinations of the park and car parks should commence.
- Travel demand management strategies should be put in place to spread demand for public transport and local roads throughout the day during non-major event periods.
- Marketing strategies should be initiated in line with the completion of new developments to encourage greater public transport use.
- Integrated ticketing should continue for major events with consideration of applying this to smaller events.
- Transit oriented development should be employed such that local transport hubs within the Park are strategically placed around commercial, retail, and residential centres.

### *Long Term*

- SOP should have a dedicated train line linking the area to major Greater metropolitan centres. The proposed West Metro between Parramatta and Sydney CBD should

include a stop at the Park as should the proposed high speed link between Penrith and the Sydney CBD.

- Service frequencies on the existing shuttle rail service should be increased and direct services to Parramatta, Penrith, and Liverpool should be considered.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- *Expansion of convention facilities at SOP*

In consideration of the O'Neill review, convention centre space in Sydney is in desperate need of expansion. SOP, in its role as a major events precinct, has the opportunity to provide more space in order to capture the domestic trade show and events markets. Expansion of convention facilities that can support greater than 2,000 people will secure SOP as the premium events precinct and to this more space must be allocated.

Sydney Showgrounds is currently the second major exhibition venue in Sydney, hosting approximately 30 trade and consumer shows each year. Despite the inadequacy of current facilities, existing event demand has demonstrated that the showgrounds site is viable for an expansion. Its primary advantages are its location in the centre of the Sydney metro area and the availability of parking.

Convention and exhibition facilities are critical business infrastructure and make a vital contribution to the economy. The most recent data shows Sydney's large-scale facilities, the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre and the Sydney Showgrounds at Sydney Olympic Park, generate \$2.3 billion in economic activity within NSW each year, contribute \$1.055 billion to Gross State Product (GSP) and result in 14,685 jobs. These facilities represent a city's ability and willingness to do business.

TTF understands that the Government is currently looking at proposals for expansion of the Sydney Showgrounds convention and exhibition facilities. TTF strongly supports the need for this expansion and the need for this to be Government funded.

## **CONCLUSION**

As SOP evolves from a centre of major events to also become a centre for education, business, and residents, it is essential the necessary operational frameworks and critical infrastructure are in place to cater for the ballooning daily population and the balance between the two priorities.

TTF supports the 2030 Masterplan as the strategy to ensure this transition is smooth and SOP has the tools to face new challenges in the years ahead. TTF asserts the proposals put forward in this submission provide the necessary input to ensure the plan works more effectively. These proposals will require a partnership between Government, business, and SOPA to ensure delivery is prompt and outcomes are optimised.

As the leading national peak body for the tourism and passenger transport sectors, TTF stands ready and willing to work with Federal, State, and Local Governments as well as

industry, and SOPA to achieve consensus on the way forward, and to deliver genuine long-term solutions to SOP.

If you would like to discuss the submission further, please contact Caroline Wilkie, National Manager – Tourism in my office on 02 9240 2016 or at [cwilkie@ttf.org.au](mailto:cwilkie@ttf.org.au).

Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C Brown', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**CHRISTOPHER BROWN**  
Managing Director