
MM1/20 PROPOSED CHANGES IN 2021 TO F3 PARRAMATTA RIVER FERRY SERVICES - The Mayor, Councillor Jerome Laxale

File Number: MYR/07/10/20 - BP20/152

Transdev Sydney Ferries plan to change the F3 Parramatta River Service which runs from Parramatta to the city.

Under the proposed changes, the service will terminate at Barangaroo instead of Circular Quay and there will also be other changes to the frequency of services and destination of some services.

Parramatta Council has prepared a comprehensive submission outlining its comments on the proposal and at its meeting last night, Hunters Hill Council also resolved to lodge a submission against the proposal.

I recommend that City of Ryde also lodge a submission.

A copy of the submission lodged by Parramatta Council is **attached**.

The closing date for submissions has been extended to mid March 2020.

RECOMMENDATION:

- (a) That Council prepare and lodge a submission to Transdev in relation to the changes proposed to the F3 Parramatta Ferry Service.
- (b) That the submission be forwarded to Hon Anthony Roberts MP, Hon Victor Dominello MP and Hon Dominic Perrottet MP.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Submission by Parramatta Council regarding changes for Ferry Service - Parramatta to City

Report Prepared By:



Councillor Jerome Laxale
Mayor

MM1/20 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 1



Submission

to Transdev Australia

In response to Proposed 2021 Changes to
F3 Parramatta River Ferry Services

Resolved by Council

10.02.2020

cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au

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1. INTRODUCTION

Council wishes to thank Transdev Australia for the opportunity to provide a submission to this public consultation on proposed 2021 changes to the F3 Parramatta River Ferry. We look forward to working closely and proactively with Transdev Australia and Transport for NSW as these important service changes are further refined and considered by the NSW Government.

We note that Transdev proposes the following changes to F3 Ferry service which are relevant to the City of Parramatta from 2021:

- Changing the eastern end point of all F3 Parramatta River Ferries to Barangaroo rather than Circular Quay
- A shuttle ferry service operating every 60 minutes from Parramatta to Sydney Olympic Park during peak periods, replacing the current once per hour shuttle between Parramatta and Rydalmere
- A faster, limited stop service from Sydney Olympic Park to Barangaroo with increased service frequency
- Increasing the number of services into Parramatta at weekends, however these are indicated as all stop services, and proposing to remove popular weekend express services
- Ordering 10 new Parramatta River Class ferries to progressively replace the Charter, SuperCat and HarbourCat fleets.

Council sees ferries as an important (and symbolic) public transport option, which should be carefully planned and provided to support the needs of our residents and visitors. Council notes that the proposed changes are described in the consultation materials mostly from the perspective of bringing customers to Sydney CBD in the Eastern Harbour City. To realise the State Government's Three Cities vision, and as more offices and attractions open in Parramatta, planning for 2021 and beyond should widen the focus to cater to increased passenger flows along the river and to Parramatta CBD.

Council's position is that while it supports increased service frequency and connectivity on the river, in particular it does not support the removal of the direct service connection to Circular Quay, nor the removal of weekend express services. Council also suggests that given its role of representing the City, earlier consultation would have been appropriate and appreciated.

2. SENDING PARRAMATTA FERRIES TO BARANGAROO

Parramatta attracts international, domestic and local visitors accessing the ferry to come to Parramatta to enjoy our heritage, cultural and natural assets.

The change in the eastern termination of the ferry from Circular Quay to Barangaroo is a significant concern to Council. As Circular Quay is at the centre of tourist and visitor activity in Metropolitan Sydney, losing this direct connection to Parramatta will likely impact our tourism and visitation objectives. City of Parramatta has considered the following factors in the evaluation of this proposed change.

- Circular Quay is the central tourist attraction in Sydney and having our ferries berth effectively advertises a day trip to Parramatta as a viable option for all visitors to Sydney.
- Circular Quay provides easy transfer to numerous modes of travel and attractions including the bulk of the ferry network, tourist buses and cruise ships.
- Many of Sydney's international hotels are closer to Circular Quay than Barangaroo
- Increasing numbers of visitors are using Parramatta as an accommodation alternative to the Sydney CBD, and a direct connection to Circular Quay supports this development.
- While our customers can still access Circular Quay via a short connection, for visitor and tourist users, this is not the same as having a direct connection.

Council acknowledges the constrained nature of the Circular Quay Ferry Wharf. We are aware that the completion of new wharves at Barangaroo provides an opportunity to establish an additional hub within the ferry network. It is also understood that Barangaroo is a dynamic and growing precinct with good transport connections and many of its own attractions already. However, for the reasons detailed above, Council is opposed to the relocation of our service to this location. Council requests Transdev Australia and Transport for NSW to reconsider these proposed changes in light of our concerns.

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3. FERRY SERVICE FOR PARRAMATTA

Council acknowledges the value in separating upper river services between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park, and lower river services between Sydney Olympic Park and Barangaroo. This will allow increased service to Sydney Olympic Park and may increase reliability as tidal impacts may be mitigated by usage of smaller, lower-wash vessels serving Parramatta.

However, Council feels that introduction of a peak hour shuttle represents an additional opportunity to increase services connecting Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park. Please see Section 4 for further discussion of this priority.

Council also notes that travel times between Parramatta and Sydney are not improved by the proposal. Travel times between Parramatta and Barangaroo do not change substantially, and for users continuing to Circular Quay, their travel time will be considerably longer (especially as the F4 connecting service from Balmain East only connects to Circular Quay via McMahon's Point and Milsons Point).

We do note a slight improvement in peak period travel between the two cities, and Parramatta passengers may transfer to or from faster services at Olympic Park. Council cautions that, whatever solutions are implemented, timetabling should support short wait times for users transferring to connecting services at Olympic Park and at Balmain East. Council further expects that these interchanges will be monitored to ensure unduly long connections are not created.

Increased frequency on Sundays, and markedly increased frequency on Saturdays, will benefit our community and visitors. However, in light of our tourism objectives described in Section 2, City of Parramatta does not support the loss of our popular weekend express services between Parramatta and Sydney CBD. These express services are particularly important for bringing visitors to Parramatta both to enjoy travel along the river and to visit heritage and cultural attractions within easy reach of the ferry wharf such as Parramatta Park and Old Government House, Hambledon Cottage, Elizabeth Farm, Bankwest Stadium, Church Street (Eat Street), and the new Powerhouse Museum.

4. FERRY SERVICE AT SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK

At Sydney Olympic Park, although travel times are only slightly improved, the proposal represents real and significant frequency and capacity improvements which are strongly supported. Moving to 10- and 20-minute frequencies in these periods will give residents more transport options in Wentworth Point. Additional services at night and longer operating hours will also be beneficial.

Council also acknowledges that, for residents of Wentworth Point, who may use the ferry to access jobs in Sydney CBD, terminating the line in Barangaroo may not adversely affect their commutes. Visitors, however, and residents making leisure trips at weekends will find the termination in Barangaroo limits their access to Circular Quay.

Concerning connectivity between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park, Council has made several representations to Transport for NSW concerning the need for greater public transport connectivity between the Olympic Peninsula and Parramatta. Previous efforts have focused on buses, rail and light rail, however residential growth in Wentworth Point, and increasing connectivity from Newington and Sydney Olympic Park, combined with increasing commercial development and jobs growth in the Parramatta CBD mean the F3 Ferry Route could play a part in meeting these needs.

The improvement to travel time (from 30–35 minutes to 26 minutes) between Parramatta and Wentworth Point is supported by Council. However, given the State's goal of 30-minute connectivity between residential development and nearest Metropolitan Centre, Council notes that greater frequency will be needed to establish a viable alternative to residents who will otherwise make the trip on over-crowded roads or trains. Peak hour shuttles should be increased to three or four times per hour to establish the ferry as a viable commute alternative. Consideration should also be given to providing increased frequency on weekdays in off-peak periods.

5. NEW PARRAMATTA RIVER CLASS FERRIES

Council supports Transdev Australia, and Transport for NSW's efforts to replace the aging RiverCat and HarbourCat vessels, which serve the F3 Parramatta River.

Ferry operations on the Parramatta River have a level of environmental impact.

Bow waves, wakes and underwater propeller wash erodes banks and stirs up sediment from the riverbed. These hydrodynamic effects of watercraft in the shallow, narrow waterway of the upper Parramatta River impact on travel time and on natural resources and existing infrastructure, including:

- Eroding and undermining seawalls, some of which are heritage assets
- Bank erosion, damage to mangroves and impacts to other flora and fauna along the foreshore
- Increased turbidity—the suspension of sediment in the water column—and the potential for release of contamination by stirring-up sediments on the river bottom
- Decrease in habitat, for example large woody debris, which must be removed for the safe operation of the ferry.

In addition to hydrodynamic impacts, Ferries have many impacts on the environment arising from their specification, construction and operation. For example, RiverCats are currently powered by twin diesel engines. The use of non-renewable diesel to power the ferry fleet contributes to noise, air pollution and sustainability.

Procurement of new vessels presents an opportunity to improve the energy efficiency of the service, and improve and protect our natural and built environment. Transport for NSW and Transdev should consider technological advances in battery storage and propulsion technology which have allowed cities in Norway, Taiwan, and New Zealand to specify electric and hybrid-electric power plants for their ferry fleets. Additional world-leading practice in reducing wash and wave impacts should be incorporated in vessel design. These improvements would also potentially increase the speed and efficiency of the service.

Council is aware of several proposals, including those by NRMA, private operators and landowners, to offer faster, more frequent service—with smaller ferry craft—between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park for people who live and work along the river foreshore. Council considers that such options (and the use of "new mobility" and "on-demand" services) should be considered during this consultation and for forward planning, vessel specification and purchasing. Additionally Council is aware of other "new mobility" and "on-demand" services, being trialled by Transport for NSW for ferries and other modes of public transport.

City of Parramatta would like to collaborate with Transdev Australia and Transport for NSW to ensure that sustainable ferry vessels are designed and delivered to best meet our community's needs.

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6. NEXT STEPS

In our role governing the Central River City, we see ferries as a valid and important public transport option, which should be carefully planned and provided to support our residents and visitors. Service provision is important, as are integration with other modes of transport and fare structures.

The ferry journey is one of the great ways of arriving in Parramatta and has valuable social and historical significance.

To summarise council's key responses to the proposed changes:

- Council supports the procurement of low shoreline, low sediment and low impact vessels and would welcome the opportunity to work with Transdev to ensure a 20 minute frequency of service is achieved between Parramatta and Olympic Park;
- Council believes that Transdev and Transport for NSW need to plan ferry services to support the future population, jobs growth and tourism opportunities in Parramatta as the Central River City with faster, more frequent ferry services;
- Council does not support changing the F3 eastern termination point for all Parramatta River services to Barangaroo;
- Council welcomes increased services to Sydney Olympic Park and increased weekend services to Parramatta;
- Council seeks to retain popular weekend express services between Parramatta and Circular Quay;
- Council advocates for increased service frequency between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park.

Transport for NSW should consult with Council and our residents to integrate ferry service with Parramatta Light Rail, and to support visitation to the Powerhouse Museum, both set to open in 2023.

Council looks forward to working closely and proactively with Transdev Australia and Transport for NSW as a major stakeholder, prior to the finalisation of changes to the F3 Parramatta River ferry service by the NSW Government.