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'BUILD LIGHT RAIL WHERE THE JOBS ARE' SAYS RYDE MAYOR

Business leaders have thrown their support behind Ryde Council's campaign to urge the State Government to build the Parramatta to Macquarie Park link 'where the jobs are' as the first route for the \$1-billion Western Sydney Light Rail Network project.

The response follows reports that the Government is considering building the initial stage of the project from Parramatta to Strathfield via Olympic Park.

City of Ryde Mayor, Cllr Bill Pickering said the State Government had only to look at the numbers in its own Metropolitan Strategy to see that the Macquarie Park/Parramatta route via Carlingford and Epping, offers the greatest potential for success. "A route from Parramatta to Macquarie Park would service 10 times the passenger numbers than the Olympic Park option. Looking at the numbers, it's a no-brainer," he said.

The combined Macquarie Park/Parramatta CBDs currently employ 80,000+ workers a figure that will increase to 130,000 over the next 10 years. This compares to a projected total of around 25,000 jobs for Olympic Park.

Mayor Pickering said it has to be a priority for the Government to 'build where the jobs are': "Jobs growth in Macquarie Park over the next 10 years is equivalent to building another airport at Macquarie Park. It stands to reason you wouldn't put another 40,000 jobs anywhere without the necessary transport infrastructure.

"By connecting the Parramatta and Macquarie Park residential and business centres, as well as key education, health and community facilities, with fast, effective and affordable travel for tens of thousands of commuters travelling from Western Sydney to Macquarie Park, will ensure the financial success for the light rail network, and that's what we all want," he added.

At a recent Light Rail Symposium hosted by Ryde Council and Macquarie University, the route between Macquarie Park and Parramatta was unanimously agreed as the preferred first stage of the North West Light Rail Network by two State cabinet ministers, a Federal minister, two mayors and Macquarie Park business leaders.

Andrew Parker, National Manager, Employee Experience HR – Singtel Optus, whose head office campus is located in Macquarie Park, said: "Optus firmly believes that completing the missing link to Parramatta is vital to the future and success of Macquarie Park.

“More Optus employees commute from Central Western Sydney than any other region in Sydney. This demonstrates the significance of the relationship between these two key regions, not just for Optus but all employers in Macquarie Park.”

Tony Abboud, Chair of the Ryde Macquarie Park Chamber of Commerce, said: “Macquarie Park is part of the State’s Global Economic Corridor and a significant contributor to the State’s coffers and international reputation. Servicing this vital corridor with adequate and connected transport infrastructure will continue to ensure Macquarie Park’s status as a significant, strategic employment hub.”

Rebecca Lehman, General Manager Connect Macquarie Park + North Ryde, added: “This alignment connects strategic business centres, with two universities, two hospitals and two residential catchments already generating significant numbers of work trips.”

Mark Broomfield, Director of Property, Macquarie University, said: “From a socio-economic development perspective, a rail link would connect students along the corridor with world class educational opportunities at Macquarie University and the University of Western Sydney’s new Parramatta City Campus. This closely aligns with the NSW government’s priority precincts program in Macquarie Park. On this basis, we strongly endorse the Parramatta/Macquarie Light Rail Link.”

Mayor Pickering said Macquarie Park to Parramatta is the only section in the Global Economic Corridor that does not have a current or planned mass-transit service. “We do not see this as an either/or choice, but the priority should and must be where the jobs are.”

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