FROGS letterhead

8th September 2011

Director, High Speed Rail Study

Department of Infrastructure and Transport

GPO Box 594

Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Director,

In response to the invitation to provide comment to the High Speed Rail Phase One Report 10,000 Friends of Greater Sydney (FROGS) makes this submission.

***Credentials for making the Submission***

Two hundred of Australia’s leading professionals and practitioners invested 31/2 years and $4 million in the *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project (STSC). The project’s leaders and contributors covered a wide range of disciplines including urban planning, transport, economics, law, community behaviour, health and education. They were drawn from all States of Australia and included invited overseas specialists from the UK, Europe and the United States. Almost 2000 persons drawn from the wider community were involved in the project.

FROGS was established specifically to pursue implementation of the STSC findings and broaden that to the objective of developing a sustainable, liveable Sydney. The STSC project as well as subsequent work has specifically addressed High Speed Rail in the context of a growing Sydney. While FROGS is currently expanding the STSC study to 2051, current outcomes indicate that the earlier findings remain current in 2011.

***Background to Submission***

This submission relates the findings of work by FROGS on High Speed Rail to the Phase One Report, principally related to Sydney but with a focus on a National (Federal Government) perspective.

This submission comprises this letter and the attached:

* 10,000 Friends of Greater Sydney Brochure
* *Towards a Sustainable NSW Central Coast Region* brochure
* *Sydney Rail Plan Stage 1 - A Strategy to Take Advantage of the Existing Rail Infrastructure* and supporting documents *Introducing Modern Single-Deck Trains to Sydney* and *Why does Sydney need a new fast Metro to the West ?*

***Comments on the High Speed Rail Phase One Report***

**General comments**

The Phase One and Two approach with feedback between the two appears a very sound basis on which to examine the potential feasibility for High Speed Rail (HSR) along the East Coast of Australia.

However the key issue is “how do you make it happen?” A comprehensive study with sound recommendations flowing therefrom, while vital to the process, can achieve nothing by themselves unless there is a political will to do something and a mechanism to make it happen, especially how to finance the project.

It would seem that the Phase One report has already substantiated the need and feasibility of an East Coast HSR connection Brisbane-Sydney-Canberra-Melbourne. The question remaining is when ? To leave the option open it would seem wise to reserve a corridor now for the HSR route and thereby obviate any future cost of route through urban areas by being forced underground as has happened with rail implementation projects in Sydney.

Key elements that appear vital to move forward would seem to be:

* A long term vision for transport and land use related to the HSR proposal to ensure investment potential leverage is realized in funding the HSR. This requires a clearer statement of the objective of HSR, what we want it to deliver - not just passenger transport but grow the East Coast of Australia as we seek it to grow in terms of population and industry spread; and thence
* An effective governance mechanism to implement any HSR proposal that would embrace the Federal Government and the State Governments involved.

**Comments on Cost estimates and risk**

* The infrastructure cost of $61-108 billion (excluding trains and planning costs) is encouraging. As the HSR would seem to obviate the need for a 2nd Sydney Airport it would be worthwhile including for comparative purposes the cost estimate for this Airport.
* In Phase 2, it would also assist in addressing the financial feasibility of the project if the cost of various stages of were included. This is particularly relevant as early stages with patronage support from commuter traffic (e.g. Sydney - Central Coast - Newcastle and Sydney - Wollongong - possibly Canberra) are likely to be financially feasible, whence later stages could then be viewed as incremental additions with earlier major costs already met e.g. for train sets.
* The benefits to the Nation by active decentralization of population that HSR connection to major regional centres would facilitate should be included in the cost benefit analysis in Phase 2 as it would reduce infrastructure costs in major cities.

**Comments on Patronage Demand Modeling**

* It should be appreciated that connection to major regional centres as proposed grows the regional centre. This should be taken into account in modeling and financial assessment. The benchmark for Sydney in this respect is South East England where 900,000 people commute to Greater London each day to work by fast rail and 300,000 workers commute from Greater London to Regional Cities within a 150 km radius.
* It is noted that various fare structures were modeled to assess impact on patronage. It is suggested that this variance be extended to travel time variance with different stops and technologies.

**Comments on Inter-city Corridors**

* Restricting the study to the east coast corridors is considered sound as it is unlikely that other corridors would be financially feasible for HSR in the foreseeable future.
* The technology to be adopted should be left open at this stage. Both wheel-on rail and magnetic levitation should be considered as options with the objective of what it is desired to achieve and the timing proposed for implementing HSR driving the technology. In this respect we are concerned with the seemly emphasis on wheel-on-rail alone and overly optimistic operating speeds that it can achieve, which seem to be maximum not actual operating speeds on existing systems.

Technology is rapidly advancing with China and Japan focusing on magnetic levitation. This is especially relevant to early stage routes, Sydney-Central Coast-Newcastle and possibly Sydney - Wollongong - Canberra where significant topography and environmental constraints are largely overcome by magnetic levitation HSR units which can accommodate up to 5% grades. This technology could also ease the need and significantly greater cost for tunneling close to urban areas which would also impact on the operating speed.

* It should be appreciated that a separate HSR connection Sydney to Newcastle would take the passenger load off the existing rail track allowing it to give priory to freight on this high demand freight line. It would also ease the planned cost of enhancements to this track. Similarly an ultimate Brisbane-Sydney-Melbourne HSR would take the passenger load of the existing rail track allowing its use almost exclusively for freight between the capital cities.

**Comments on Stations and City Access**

* Limiting access to the few stations at city centres, major regional centres and possibly some airports provides a sound basis for HSR operation over long distances without undue loss to the travel time advantage of HSR.
* A Parramatta location is the preferred site for the Sydney HSR station. This is because by 2036 there will be more people centered around Parramatta that the Sydney CBD; by 2051 there will be an estimated 2 ½ million centered around the CBD and 4 million centered around Parramatta. Also the planned Fast CBD-Parramatta Metro (see Friends report abovementioned) with an interchange station with the proposed HSR at Parramatta would provide a fast service to the existing CBD and thence to all parts of Sydney. Parramatta is the centroid of future Sydney, the more logical and far less costly that an eastern seaboard location at the CBD.
* An HSR connection to Newcastle and Canberra opens the opportunity for airports at these locations to be used as focal points for regional air services in lieu of Sydney Airport with direct access by HSR therefrom to the city centre. This further obviates the need for a 2nd Sydney Airport.

Yours faithfully

**Desmond Dent CEO**

*Desmond Dent*

*Secretary and CEO*

*10000 Friends of Greater Sydney*

*Signed on behalf of the following Directors*

Ken Dobinson Dobinson and Associates

Ann Turner Ann Turner Consultants

Bob Meyer Cox Richardson

Morris Caputi Veolia Transport

Kary Petersen TTF

Wayne Costin Costin Roe

Piers Brogan

Steve Green Gosford Council

John McInerney City of Sydney Council