

Media Release

Sydney Business Chamber



Monday, 19 July 2010

Chamber calls for trialling changed school hours to reduce Sydney transport congestion

The Sydney Business Chamber has asked the NSW Government to trial delayed starting hours for high schools in Sydney as part of a transport demand strategy to reduce congestion on Sydney's transport network.

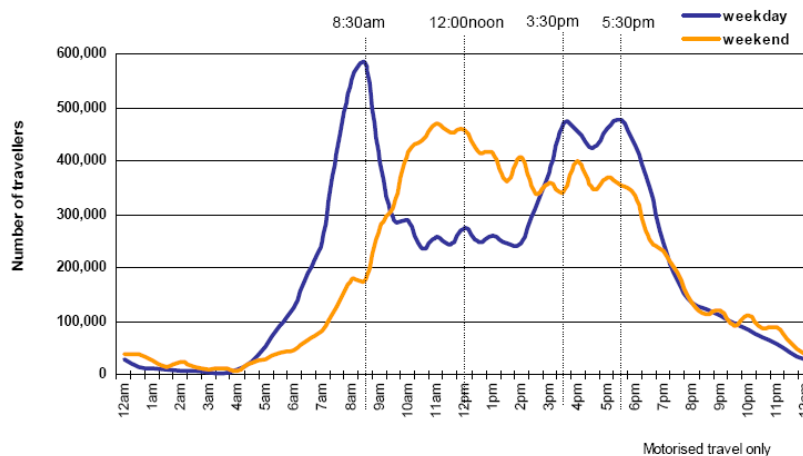
The Chamber has written to the Premier outlining the benefits of a later starting time for high schools that would free up capacity on trains and buses during the morning peak and reduce road congestion.

“Shifting the start of high schools back an hour is about using our existing infrastructure more intelligently – at the moment we are all rushing to get to school or the workplace by 9.00am which is placing tremendous pressure on our transport network,” said Patricia Forsythe, Executive Director of the Sydney Business Chamber.

“Transport congestion is a major impost for business and is a disincentive for existing businesses to grow and create new jobs or for new businesses to set up shop in Sydney. Business wants to see a strategy that manages the demands on our transport network while we wait for new road, rail and other transport upgrades – part of that strategy could be to move high school hours back.”

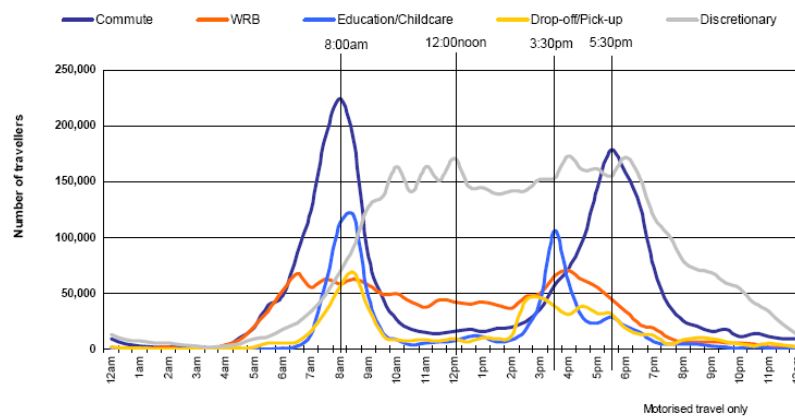
Mrs Forsythe said the transport network currently experiences three distinct peaks, one in the morning, 8.30am, and two in the afternoon, 3.30pm and 5.30pm (Fig 3.18). The larger peak in the morning corresponds to both the commencement of school and workplaces around 9.00am, the smaller peaks in the afternoon/evening correspond to the conclusion of schools around 3.00pm - 3.30pm and the conclusion of the working day from 5.00pm.

Figure 3.18 Motorised trips by time of day, average weekday and weekend, 2008/09



¹ NSW Department of Transport, 2008/09 Household Travel Survey Summary Report 2010 Release, p.17.

Figure 3.19 Motorised (unlinked) trips for selected purposes by time of day, average weekday, 2008/09



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“Sydneyiders know that there is less congestion on buses, trains, ferries and on the roads during school holiday periods. We should be trying to apply a limited form of “school holiday relief” permanently to the transport network by moving school hours back from the start of the working day.”

Mrs Forsythe said that school holidays reduced morning congestion by up to 100,000 car travellers and congestion on the transport network, particularly roads, could be reduced by spreading the use of the network by commuters and students over a longer period.

“Delaying the commencement of high schools would also provide additional capacity on buses and trains for commuters travelling to work. Moving school hours would provide additional capacity on some of Sydney’s already overcrowded trains as students could catch later trains to school.

“In the case of buses, such a change would be more pronounced given that the use of ‘Free School Passes’ is the second most common fare type³. Delaying school starting times would allow buses that would otherwise be transporting students to provide additional capacity during the workplace commute peak before being used to transport students to school.”

Mrs Forsythe said the Sydney Business Chamber would support strongly a trial of delayed starting hours for high schools in one or several of Sydney’s education regions. Given the lead times for some families to change arrangements and for buses to change timetables, such a trial could commence at the start of 2012.

“This proposal is by no means the single solution to Sydney’s congestion challenge but changing the way commuters use our transport network, widening and reducing the morning peak usage of our trains, buses and roads, is an alternative approach to increasing budget allocations on new or expanding infrastructure.”

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² *ibid.*

³ *ibid*, p.13