

annual transport reliability report

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The Transport Industry Overview on pages 109-122 also provides information about the rail, bus and ferry sectors as context for this report.

1. introduction

Reliability performance standards are set by Government. They are included in the performance agreements in place for rail infrastructure, CityRail and CountryLink services and bus and ferry services. The standards in place in 2005-06 were the same as for 2004-05 with the exception of a change to the CityRail suburban on-time running tolerance. On 1 July 2005, this changed from 3 minutes 59 seconds to 5 minutes.

The scale of the transport task covered by the agreements and Government funding is illustrated in Table I.1.

Table I.1 NSW Government funding and transport task 2005-06

	Main task	Payments from Government
RailCorp – CityRail	Urban rail transit 273.7m passengers	(a)\$1313m
RailCorp – CountryLink	Long distance rail passenger 1.6m passengers	(b)
Rail Infrastructure Corporation	Provision of 3110km country regional track for freight and passenger trains	\$138m
State Transit – Sydney Buses and Newcastle Services	Urban transit bus 200.4m passengers (c)	\$257m
Private bus (d)	35m (estimated) urban transit	\$485m
Sydney Ferries Corporation	Ferry 14m passengers on Sydney Harbour	\$43m

(a) Includes CountryLink, excluding capital.

(b) Included in RailCorp CityRail.

(c) Passenger numbers are those reported to the Ministry of Transport under the Funding Agreement. Note that this is different to the boarding data reported to the Ministry under bus contract arrangements (see note (d) below).

(d) Private bus passenger numbers estimated from 8 month average of boardings as reported to the Ministry of Transport under bus contract arrangements and included in the Ministry's submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. This is based on boardings and excluded School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) riders. Hence it is not comparable to the STA figure reported in this table – the comparable STA figure is around 100m.

Sources: 2005-06 task and payments from Budget Paper No. 3, 2006-07. Reports from transport service providers to the Ministry of Transport.

The following sections deal with performance against these standards:

2. Rail

3. Bus

4. Ferries

5. Transport Coordination.

Summary and conclusions are presented in section 6.

background

Reliability performance standards in place for RailCorp's CityRail and CountryLink passenger train services are covered by the Rail Performance Agreement and the CityRail Customer Commitment. Also, there are standards in place for Rail Infrastructure Corporation's (RIC's) rail infrastructure on the Country Regional Network under the relevant Funding Agreement with the Ministry of Transport.

RailCorp

The Rail Performance Agreement

The Rail Performance Agreement is between the Minister for Transport and RailCorp. It covers reliability standards for CityRail and its services and Metropolitan Rail Area network infrastructure.

The Rail Performance Agreement operative in 2005-06 was the same as for 2004-05. It seeks three outcomes from the system operated by RailCorp which align with the legislative objectives set for RailCorp:

1. Clean, safe, secure and reliable railway passenger services in NSW provided in an efficient, effective and financially responsible manner. Although safety remains paramount, a priority is to return reliability of CityRail services to acceptable levels;
2. For that part of the NSW rail network vested in or owned by RailCorp, RailCorp is to enable the effective provision of safe and reliable passenger and freight services; and
3. Organisational capability and culture necessary for responsible management, a strong safety culture and a commitment to excellent customer service.

Outcome area 1; clean, safe and reliable services, relates to CityRail and CountryLink. Outcome area 2 relates to the Metropolitan Rail Area network. Outcome area 3; organisational capability etc., relates to internal rail matters and is of lesser interest in this Report.

In each of the outcome areas there are performance indicators. For most of these indicators, targets are set. RailCorp provides monthly reports on performance to the Ministry of Transport. These form the basis for most of the comments below.

Rail services

CityRail

RailCorp reports on matters under the headings of reliability (operational performance), secure environment, customer service and capacity-demand matching.

Operational performance

As noted in last year's Report, the performance indicators in the Agreement embody a more narrow definition of reliability than in ITSRR's legislation.¹ The Agreement refers to operational performance measures such as service cancellations, skipped stops and on-time running. Results for 2005-06 are shown in Table 2.1.

1. Legislation for ITSRR, the *Transport Administration Act (1988)* s.42 defines reliability as:
 "quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the service, having regard to the following matters:
 (a) management and administration of infrastructure, assets, resources and liabilities,
 (b) fulfilment of obligations under contracts and arrangements relating to the provision of services, including timeliness and quality of services,
 (c) any other matters prescribed by the regulations".

Table 2.1

CityRail operational performance 2005-06

	Target	Performance
Peak hours timetabled services cancelled	1%	1.0%
Peak hours stops skipped	1%	0.5%
Metropolitan on-time running	92% to within 5 minutes	88.5%
Intercity on-time running	92% to within 6 minutes	89.4%
CityRail on-time running	92%	88.6%

Source: RailCorp reports to the Ministry of Transport.

In the last two years, ITSRR's Transport Reliability Reports highlighted poor on-time running as a key issue for CityRail. In 2005-06 there was a substantial improvement in this aspect of performance. This is shown in Figure 2.1.

A new definition of the margin of on-time running was introduced on 1 July 2005. This increased the margin for suburban trains from 3 minutes 59 seconds to 5 minutes i.e. by around 1 minute. The new 5 minute margin was adopted by the Government following consideration of a review by ITSRR regarding CityRail on-time running.²

ITSRR's review noted the relevance of the interplay between 3 aspects of the on-time running target: the % factor, the margin and the definition of peak hours. It concluded that the reason for the selection of 92% was unclear. When combined with the (then) 3 minute 59 second margin for suburban trains, the target was most aggressive by national and international standards, in comparison with historical performance, and given the then timetable. In any event, the change in the margin accounts for only a small proportion of the observed improvement in operational performance in 2005-06, as can be seen in Figure 2.1 by comparing results July – September 2005 (new margin, "old" timetable) with September – June 2006 (new margin, "new" timetable).

A most substantial improvement in on-time running occurred alongside the introduction of new CityRail timetables in 2005-06. The timetables for Sector 2 and 3 (North, West and South West) were introduced in September 2005, and for Sector 1 (Eastern Suburbs, Illawarra) in May 2006.³ Given the scale and complexity of CityRail's operations, it is necessary to design and plan for the introduction of a new timetable well in advance of its delivery. The basic plan for the new timetable was completed in 2004-05.

As was the case for 2004-05, RailCorp provided the Ministry of Transport with more detailed statistics relating to operational performance, in particular data relating to "incidents". Reported incidents declined substantially with the new timetable, resulting in the improvement in on-time running, as can be seen in Figure 2.1.

The new timetable involved both a reduction and a scheduled slowing in services, as well as introducing greater consistency in stopping patterns.⁴

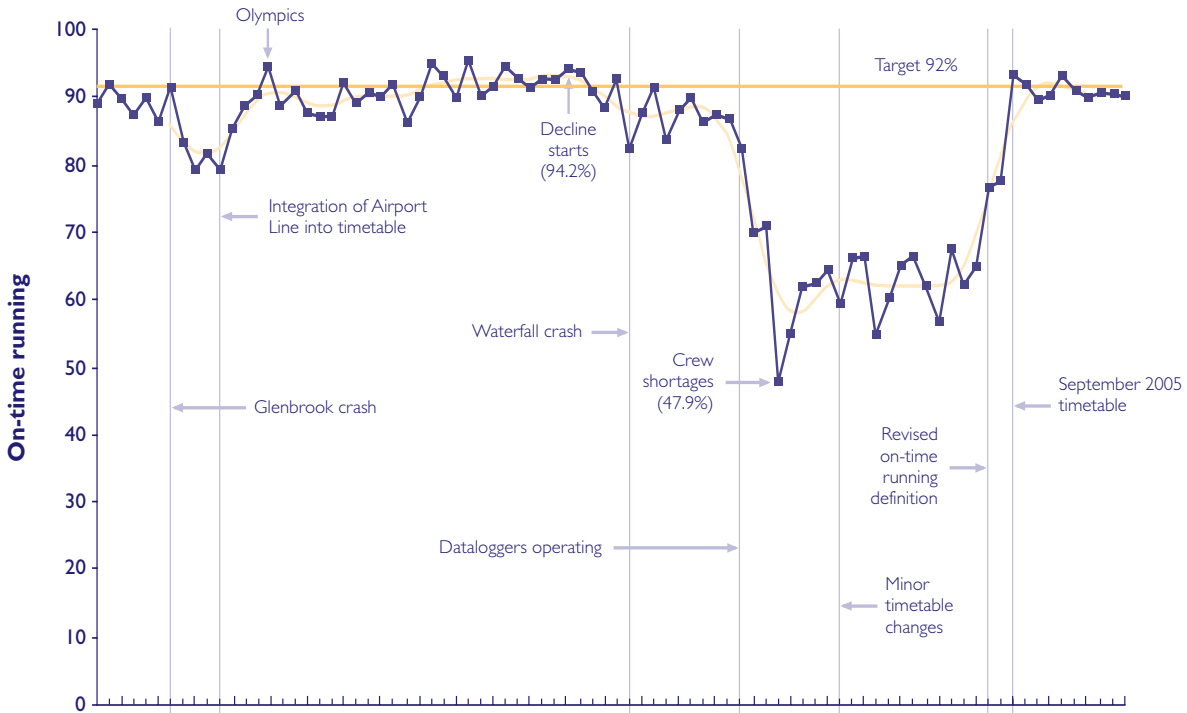
Service reductions included some 257 off-peak services, largely in the period between the defined AM and PM peaks. This is roughly 11% of off-peak weekday services. It was expected that this would minimise the transmission of delays into the PM peak.

All services were slowed, by an average of between three and six minutes on a 60 minute journey.⁵ This reflected longer average station stopping times and increased margins for recovery of time en route. There also were some changes in stopping patterns and in routes that added to point to point travel times.⁶

Some 13 peak services, 3% of total peak services, also were deleted from the timetable. RailCorp advises that this was due primarily to a shortage of rollingstock. This arose from the slower running of trains.

2. Review of on-time running of CityRail services, June 2004 (available on the ITSRR website). 3. There also were some minor changes to the Sector 2 and Sector 3 timetables in May 2006. 4. The actual slowing in transit times for passengers is likely to be less than scheduled given the existence of delays prior to the introduction of the timetable. 5. RailCorp's submission to the IPART Determination of CityRail Fares, April 2006. 6. For example for Campbelltown/Macarthur services on the Airport-East Hills line.

Monthly peak on-time running: CityRail July 1999 – June 2006



Number of trains delayed and number of incidents

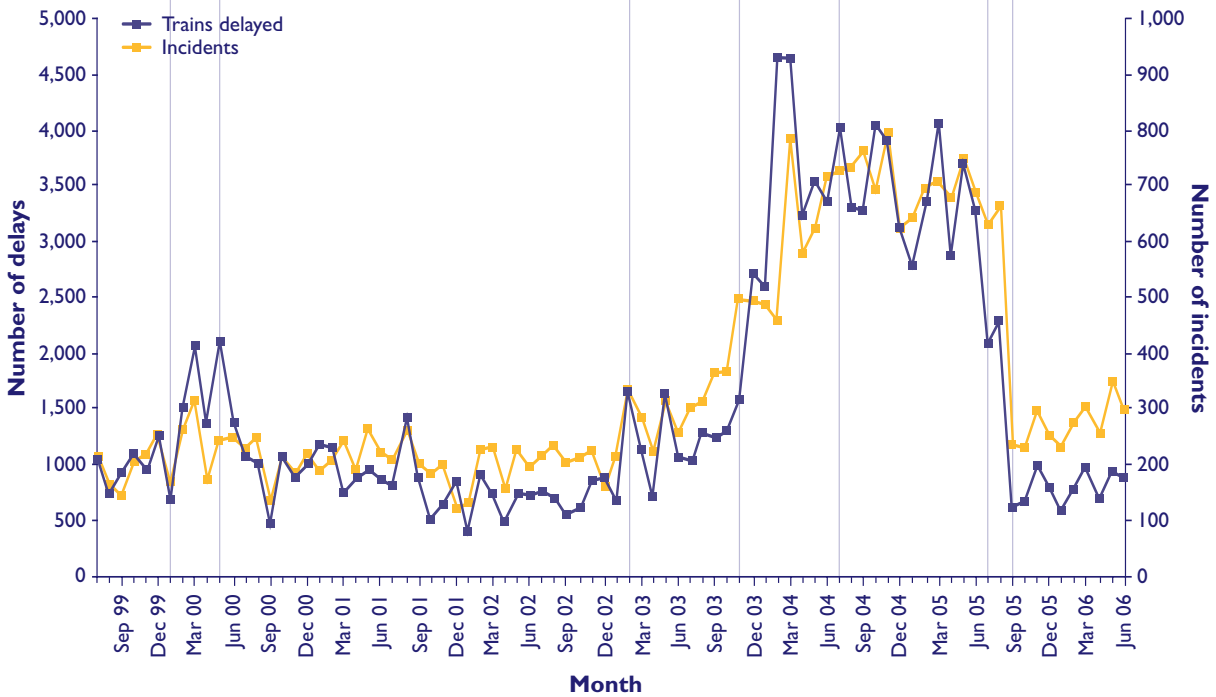


Figure 2.1 CityRail — on-time running
Source: ITSRR September 2006.

There is a trade-off between service levels and operational performance for a given transport network and level of resources. The new timetable uses the trade-off and places greater weight on CityRail achieving strong operational performance.

To assess the impact on passengers, shortly after the introduction of the timetable for Sectors 2 and 3, ITSRR conducted a survey of CityRail customers.⁷ In previous ITSRR surveys, customers had identified improvements in operational performance as the top priority for CityRail.

The post-timetable survey found improvements in the perceptions of passengers about punctuality, delays, cancellations and train frequency. There were also improvements in perceptions about other aspects of service including travel time and crowding. There were substantial increases in the proportion of customers whose expectations were met and decreases in proportions of customers whose expectations were not met.

With the improvement in operational performance and planned increase in investment in fleet, the Government requested the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to make a new determination for CityRail fares.⁸ The process of this determination included submissions by RailCorp, public consultation and hearings. IPART received a large number of submissions from members of the public and organisations, most of which were critical of the proposals for fare increases, including the proposed increase in off-peak fares, and the relationship between transport policy, fares and service quality.

ITSRR's role focuses on service quality rather than fares; however, it does have an interest in the types of service matters raised in submissions to IPART. Among the principal issues identified was the increase in transit time and reduction in services under the new timetable. IPART did not attempt to assess the operational performance-service level trade-off. Of the submissions presented to IPART, only ITSRR's, which was based on the Survey, provided qualitative information related to the system wide trade-off.

As part of its general research, RailCorp for some years has undertaken assessments of the relative importance to CityRail customers of a number of aspects of service quality, including running to schedule and transit time. This research is relevant to the service level-operational performance trade-off. Very broadly, RailCorp estimates imply that on average customers consider that they would be slightly better off if unexpected delays could be reduced by 1 minute even if it was necessary to slow their timetabled train by 3 minutes to achieve this. Comparisons along these lines are difficult to make due to a number of factors, for example, lack of data regarding CityRail customer delays.⁹ However, some research has been undertaken suggesting that the timetable has resulted in an overall benefit to passengers.¹⁰

Last year's Annual Transport Reliability Report highlighted the Rail Clearways Plan, which is being implemented to improve CityRail reliability and capacity with measurable improvements from 2008. RailCorp advises that it intends to establish a new timetable in 2008 for the opening of the Epping to Chatswood rail line which is integral to the Clearways Plan. A timetable to capture the benefits of all Clearways projects is to be introduced in 2011.¹¹

Secure environment and customer service

ITSRR's surveys of CityRail customers have found that the secure environment and customer service aspects were more likely to meet customer expectations than reliability and crowding.¹²

The Rail Performance Agreement's indicators on "secure environment" include offences against persons (e.g. assault or robbery) and vandalism. The data shows the decline in offences against persons, which coincided with the introduction of Transit Officers onto the network, continued into the early months of 2005-06. While there appeared to be some flattening out and even an increase in the middle of 2005-06, the statistics showed a further decline towards the end of the year. The results for the 2005-06 year as a whole were slightly below those for 2004-05.

Customer service indicators include availability of ticket machines, public address systems, closed circuit television (CCTV) and help points. As was the case for 2004-05 all measures are within or very close to current targets – as shown in Table 2.2. As ITSRR pointed out last year, some care needs to be used in interpreting figures such as shown in this Table as they do not capture customer experience.

ITSRR did raise with RailCorp questions regarding the reported results for PA systems on trains. These systems may have a safety function and as such it is important that management is aware of their performance. RailCorp's management reviewed the situation and a survey of en route performance was undertaken. This matter is now being addressed under the rail safety regulatory framework. Reporting under the Rail Performance Agreement, however, remained unchanged.

7. Mini Survey of CityRail Customers 2005, February 2006, (available at the ITSRR website). 8. IPART to consider CityRail fares options in 2006, Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport News Release, Friday 24 February 2006. 9. The matter of customer delay measures was raised by ITSRR in the On-time running Report 2004, June 2004 (available at the ITSRR website). IPART and RailCorp had previously worked on a reporting framework that included measures of train delays, being "primary delays". See: CityRail Efficiency Performance Measurement Framework Final Report 20 May 2004 LEK Consulting (available at the IPART website) at e.g. p37. 10. Valuing Rail Service Attributes through Rating Surveys, paper for the Australian Transport Research Forum, Neil Douglas 2006. 11. CityRail website. 12. See, for example Survey of CityRail Customers 2005, September 2005, (available at the ITSRR website).

Table 2.2

Passenger facilities available 2005-06

	Target	RailCorp's reported performance (a)
CityRail ticketing systems	98.5%	99.4%
CCTV availability	99.0%	99.1%
Help point availability	99.0%	99.4%
PA systems on trains	99.0%	99.1%

(a) Year to May 2006. Report for June 2006 indicates all measures exceed targets for that month.

Source: RailCorp reports to the Ministry of Transport.

Capacity-demand matching

Capacity relates to service provision, and demand to passenger numbers. The indicators dealing with the matching of capacity and demand relate to crowding. Crowding continues to be rated by customer respondents to ITSRR surveys as one of the more important issues.

In last year's Transport Reliability Report, ITSRR alluded to the potential impact on patronage of a change in petrol prices in 2005-06. The Government released comparisons claiming substantial financial savings from the use of public transport in the new environment of higher petrol prices.¹³

In the event, total estimated patronage increased, although growth was around 1.2% for the year as a whole – patronage recovered to around the levels of early 2004. This is shown in Figure 2.2. RailCorp expects future patronage growth to average around 1.4% pa.¹⁴

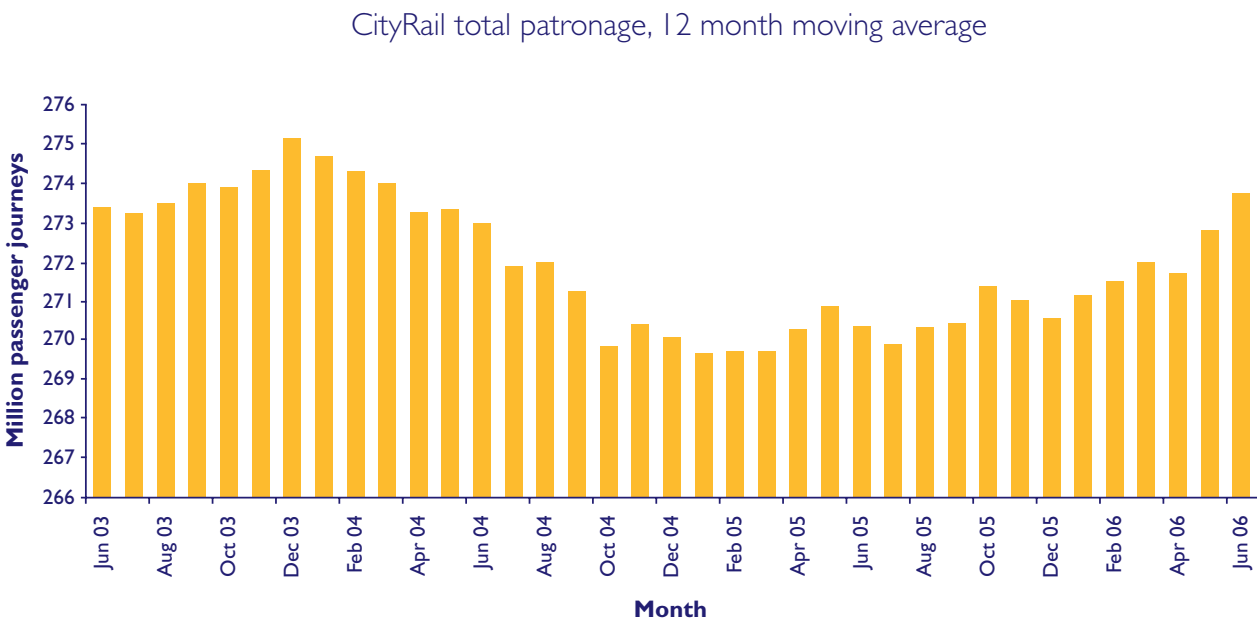


Figure 2.2 CityRail patronage

Source: CityRail website.

13. A comparison table is available from the CityRail website. **14.** RailCorp's submission to the IPART Determination of CityRail Fares, April 2006.

The implication of slower and fewer services under the new timetable is a reduction in nominal CityRail capacity in 2005-06.¹⁵

The Rail Performance Agreement does not specify the number of train services to operate or capacity on particular lines. This is unlike previous arrangements for CityRail, and places greater importance on crowding indicators for service planning.

The Agreement's standards for crowding include that only 5 percent of peak period train services should have a load factor of more than 135 percent, i.e. crowding is a load greater than 135 percent.¹⁶ CityRail measures train loads by surveys conducted in September and March at the CBD cordon and other selected stations. Results for the last few years are shown in Figure 2.3.

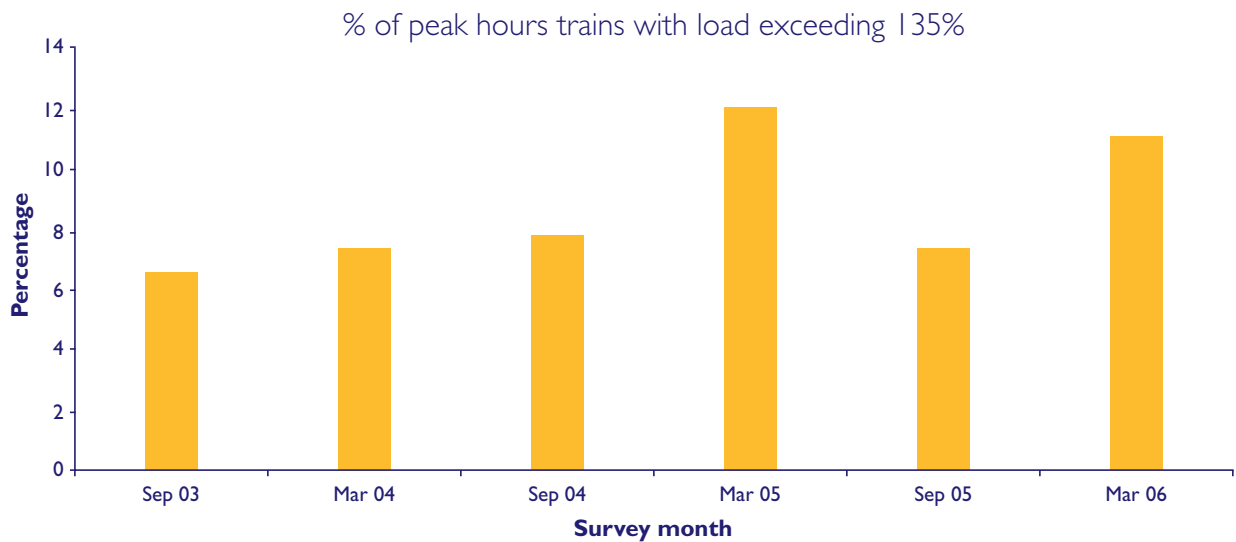


Figure 2.3 CityRail on-board crowding

Source: RailCorp July 2006.

Measured crowding fell with the introduction of the new timetable in September 2005. It might be expected that service reductions under this timetable would have led to increased train loads. However, it has been suggested that improved punctuality under the timetable allows passengers to spread more evenly among trains, minimising crowding. The result is consistent with this suggestion.

The crowding measure then increased in March 2006. Figure 2.3 also shows that the crowding target of 5%, has not been achieved for several years.

Beyond this, the 2004-05 Transport Reliability Report highlighted an apparent paradox – a reported decline in overall patronage but an increase in the number of crowded trains. This type of effect continued in 2005-06, where there was an increase in passenger numbers but a decrease in crowding. ITSRR discussed these matters with RailCorp and the Ministry of Transport during 2005-06. RailCorp indicated that the number of CBD bound passengers had increased. A number of issues emerged from these discussions such as the way in which patronage is measured and the desirability of synthesising or harmonising patronage estimates from the various sources of ticket sales, barrier counts and surveys.

A further issue that emerged is the definition of the morning and evening peak periods. It appears that the times of maximum passenger demand are not fully congruent with the formal definition of the peaks.¹⁷ Of note in this regard is that the March 2006 train load survey indicated that a number of trains operating outside of the peaks had loads in excess of the crowding standard. Moreover, there were no trains with loads in excess of the crowding standard in the first hour of the peaks.

Clearly these are most significant issues in the design of services to improve service quality.

¹⁵. Nominal capacity relates to the potential for the system to deal with a “passenger task” (number of passengers and transit times). Measures of actual capacity would need to take into account the reliability at which this task can be performed e.g. if there are delays, actual capacity would be less than nominal capacity. ¹⁶. The indicator referred to in reports under the Rail Performance Agreement is: “percentage of Peak CityRail suburban trains at a load factor above 135% and where there was no alternative train within 15 minutes”. The target is 5% by 2008. The reference to peak hours in this indicator reflects the likelihood that these will be the more crowded trains. ¹⁷. This matter was noted in ITSRR’s On-time Running Report 2004, June 2004 (available at the ITSRR website).

Complaints handling

Customer complaints are potentially an important source of information about perceptions of CityRail services. Table 2.3 provides a summary for the number of complaints and time taken by RailCorp to respond in 2005-06.

In 2005-06 complaints decreased by 24 percent compared with 2004-05. The overwhelming reason for this was the fall in complaints about on-time running, some 494 per month or 60 percent below that for 2004-05. Complaints in most other categories declined or remained stable, except for complaints about service, which increased 5 percent, and about the timetable. These results, and the decrease in complaints on nearly all lines, reflect CityRail's performance in the year.

Times taken to respond to customers decreased on average due to faster turn-around of complaints made via the 131 500 Transport Infoline where most complaints are made.

Table 2.3 Complaints and complaint resolution, CityRail 2005-06

Average monthly complaints/days to resolution	
Topic	Number of complaints
– on-time running	417
– timetable	177
– service	220
– about staff	267
– information	165
– ticketing	178
– safety and security	212
– cleanliness and facilities	208
Total	1913
Close with customer	
	Average days to resolution (a)
– phone	1.6
– letter	8.4
– web	3.6

(a) Compares with Customer Services Commitment standards of 5 days for following up customer complaints by phone, and 21 days for responding to letters.

Sources: RailCorp reports to the Ministry of Transport, CityRail Customer Complaints Report to ITSRR.

CountryLink

The declining trend in CountryLink patronage continued in 2005-06, with a fall of 1.6 percent compared with 2004-05.

There were no major operational changes in 2005-06. In late September, the Government announced a number of changes for CountryLink including changes to bookings, new fares, and refurbishment of XPT carriages.¹⁸

Although CountryLink operates coaches which carry over 500,000 passengers, or around 30 percent of total patronage, on-time running is reported by RailCorp for CountryLink train services only. Table 2.4 shows that on-time running (to 10 minutes) averaged 76 percent in the year. There was considerable variation in on-time running between the different services with the Sydney–Melbourne XPT attaining only 59 percent. There was also considerable variation between months with a low of 60 percent in February 2006 and a high of 87 percent in August 2005.

Table 2.4 CountryLink train on-time running 2005-06

CountryLink service regions	Performance to 10 minutes	Performance to 30 minutes
North Coast	82.5	92.7
North-west	73.1	89.8
West	79.4	91.8
South	59.0	74.1
Canberra/Griffith	80.5	93.6

Source: RailCorp August 2006.

On 9 February 2006 a CountryLink XPT train sustained a broken axle and derailed near Harden NSW. Following this, all XPTs were removed from service and all wheels and axles were checked. Services were progressively reintroduced from 16 February and services were back in operation by 6 March. The derailment is under investigation by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau.

There were 2578 complaints to CountryLink during the year. This represents a 52 percent increase in complaints compared with the number reported to ITSRR for the 2004-05 Transport Reliability Report. One third of the complaints related to the quality and level of service and nearly one quarter related to ticketing. Ticketing complaints showed a large increase in October and there remained substantially higher levels of complaints after that time – the increase was dominated by ticketing and service issues.

Indicators of call centre performance bookings for CountryLink are shown in Table 2.5. These remained broadly similar to the levels for 2004-05, although a smaller percentage of calls were lost.

Table 2.5 CountryLink bookings – Call Centre performance (a)

CountryLink service regions	Performance 2003-04	Performance 2004-05	Performance 2005-06
Call waiting average seconds	33	45	28
Call duration average seconds	166	184	190
Percentage of calls not answered (b)	3.0%	5.4%	3.2%

(a) New indicators for Call Centres were provided by RailCorp during 2005-06.

(b) Calls received to calls lost.

Source: RailCorp August 2006.

18. \$32m CountryLink Reform Package Secures Future Rail Services Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for State Development News Release, 27 September 2005.

Metropolitan Rail Area network

A number of infrastructure indicators are called up by the Rail Performance Agreement for the Metropolitan Rail Area (MRA). While the Agreement does not set standards or targets for these, some targets are set within RailCorp.

Infrastructure incidents that may cause train delays include failures in signalling equipment and track faults. In some cases, temporary speed restrictions are imposed due to track condition and these may also result in train delays.

Increased attention has been paid to infrastructure maintenance and renewal work on the MRA since the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. As shown in Figure 2.4 in 2005-06 the number of infrastructure incidents causing delays to peak trains reduced significantly to come within RailCorp's targets. At least part of this reduction could be attributed to the new timetable introduced in September 2005 which has more built-in recovery time for incidents before they start causing delays. However, since September 2005 the number of infrastructure incidents has been fluctuating around the target. This indicates that despite clear improvements due to increased infrastructure maintenance and renewal, the network condition is still "fragile" and the increased maintenance effort will need to continue for acceptable performance to be sustained.

MRA condition indicators

RailCorp reports a number of condition-related indicators to the Ministry of Transport in the Rail Performance Agreement.

RailCorp also provides to ITSRR monthly Infrastructure Performance reports which are more detailed than the reports provided to the Ministry of Transport.

ITSRR examines these indicators and a larger range of more specific reports in advising Government about current condition and future prospects. A key element in this is major periodic maintenance (MPM) works. MPM covers aspects such as sleeper renewal, contact wire renewal, ballast depth and drainage improvement. The aim of the MPM program is to prevent premature deterioration and life expiry of rail infrastructure and ensure that the network continues to operate at design levels.

Overall, subject to some qualifications, there has been an improvement in the condition of infrastructure, with the increased level of MPM work over the past few years being a likely contributing factor. As shown in Fig 2.4 there also has been an improvement apparent since late 2004 in the number of infrastructure incidents causing delays.

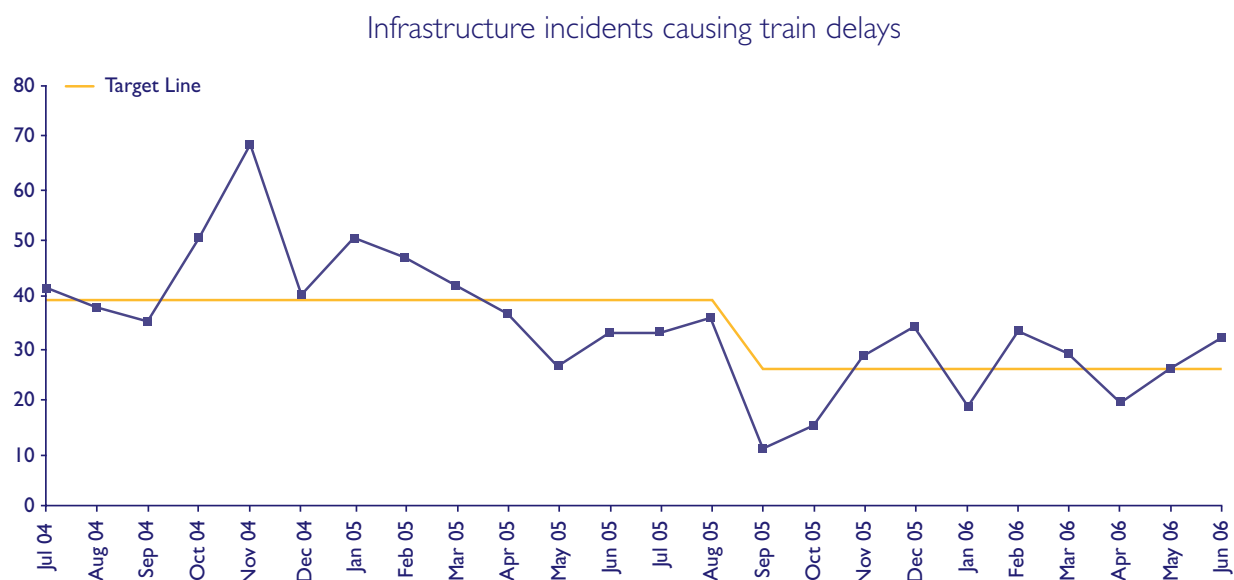


Figure 2.4 Metropolitan Rail Area network: Infrastructure incidents — July 2004 to June 2006

Source: ITSRR September 2006.

Other Metropolitan Rail Area issues

The MRA is used by passenger trains and by freight trains. During 2005-06 ITSRR completed its review of the impact of freight incidents on CityRail. The central issues were the extent to which freight train delays resulted in delays to CityRail passenger services and what could be done to mitigate any impacts.

ITSRR's reports found that while freight incidents play only a minor overall role in CityRail peak on-time running, particular incidents can cause considerable inconvenience to CityRail customers from time to time.

Important context for consideration of the issues includes the pivotal role of the MRA to the national freight task, expected growth in freight, the need for cooperation between RailCorp and freight train operators and the commercial relationships between those parties. The Government's establishment of RailCorp as a single point of accountability for the network has important implications for the leadership needed to address any issues that might arise.

Fleet

ITSRR also monitors the performance of CityRail's fleet. RailCorp provided some reports to the Ministry on fleet performance reliability, including mechanical failure rates and incidents.

Figure 2.5 shows CityRail fleet incidents over the medium term – it is analogous to Figure 2.1. However, it does show a substantial rise occurring in late 2003 and early 2004. There has been a significant reduction following the introduction of the new timetables, however, failure rates for most fleet types continue to remain above RailCorp's internal targets.

RailCorp has a number of programs that aim to deal with specific recurring problems with doors, brakes, traction systems and communications. Late in the year, an internal RailCorp reorganisation saw the Passenger Fleet Maintenance area coming under the scope of the Asset Management Group.

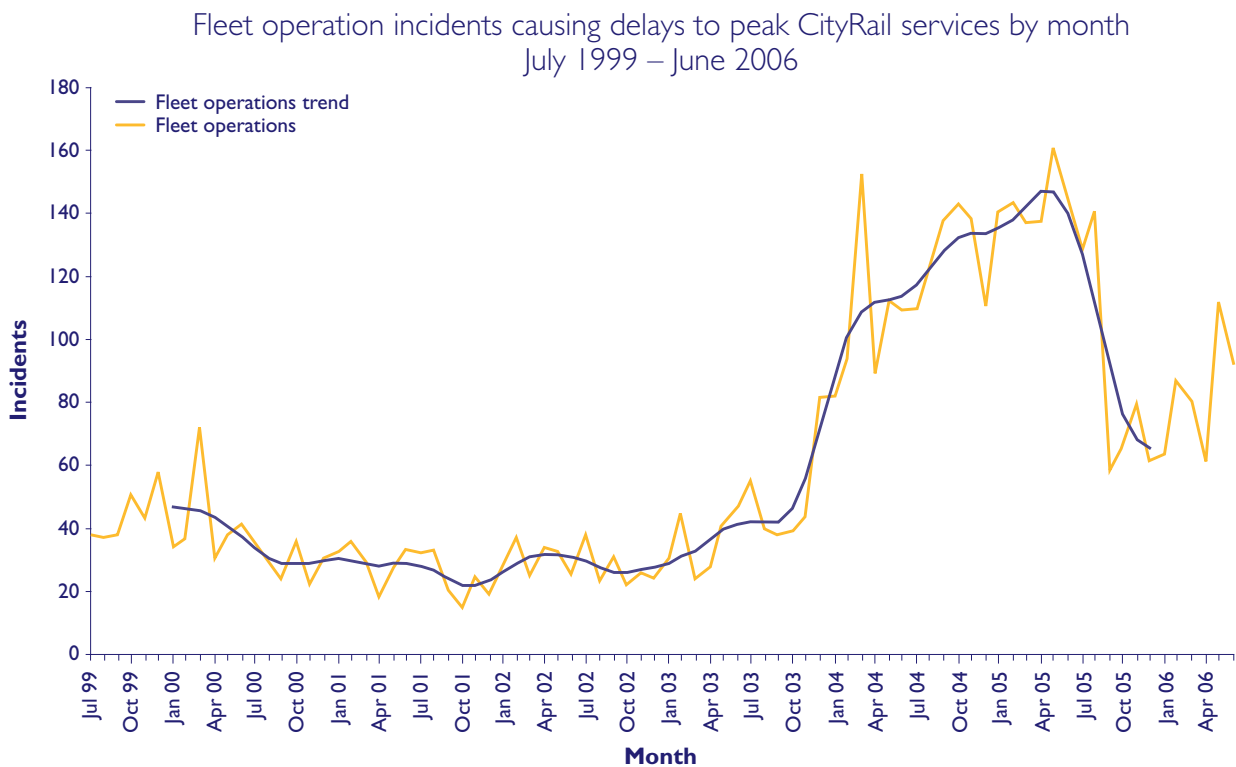


Figure 2.5 CityRail: Fleet incidents — July 1999 to July 2006

Source: ITSRR September 2006.

Comments and outlook for RailCorp in 2006-07

Four major issues can be identified for RailCorp in 2006-07.

The first arises out of the Premier's announcement of the development of a NSW State Plan.¹⁹ This sets as a key theme for the Government the development of a blueprint for better public services, including for transport. Given the centrality of CityRail to public transport in Sydney and the submissions from the public to the IPART review of fares, the performance of RailCorp in the planning and delivery of CityRail services will be a most important influence on the success of the Plan.

The second, related to this, concerns the design of and preparation for implementing new CityRail timetables. This includes proposed changes in 2008 which will cover the Epping – Chatswood rail line. The design and preparatory work for this will need to be well underway in 2006-07. This work may need to review current practices such as the definitions of the CityRail peaks and measurement of customer delay. This is part of the challenge of understanding demand that ITSRR highlighted in the 2004-05 Transport Reliability report. The forecast of growth in demand underlines the importance of this challenge.

A third issue, freight, arises in a wider agenda. The performance and capacity of the MRA regarding freight is important from a national economic perspective and also from the State and local perspective of reducing truck movements on roads. The freight agenda encompasses national reforms sought by the Council of Australian Governments. The abutment of the MRA with the territory managed by the Commonwealth's Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) calls for a careful appraisal of relevant issues by the Ministry of Transport in its policy advisory role and by RailCorp in its role as single point of MRA accountability to Government.

The fourth issue relates to ensuring that the above matters – service improvements, new timetables and freight – are addressed in a sustainable manner. Among the important matters here will be continuing maintenance of infrastructure, especially on the existing network, fleet maintenance and skill development. The aim is to ensure that a solid base for growth is developed. This is especially important in an operation the scale and extent of that run by RailCorp as a very substantial proportion of growth in demand is likely to occur on the existing network.

the Country Network and Rail Infrastructure Corporation

Framework

The Country Regional Network is financially supported by NSW under the Funding Agreement between the Ministry of Transport and the Rail Infrastructure Corporation (RIC). The Funding Agreement is intended to cover the gap between network access charges and the cost of maintaining infrastructure to acceptable standards. The Agreement provides \$110 million per annum to RIC as base funding and this is the predominant source of RIC's finance. Additional funding was provided by the Ministry to RIC in 2005-06 for Restricted lines (R-lines).

The Country Regional Network should be distinguished from the "leased network" managed by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC). The leased network comprises the interstate lines (Defined Interstate Rail Network – known as the DIRN) and Hunter Valley lines (which are primarily used for coal) and is not subject to Reliability monitoring by ITSRR.

¹⁹ A NSW State Plan: The New Direction, News Release, Premier of New South Wales, 26 June 2006.

Governance

As noted in the 2004-05 Transport Reliability Report, the Funding Agreements do not require the Government rail organisations to report to the Ministry of Transport on asset plans or asset condition. Rather they seek to focus on transport outcomes. In the case of the Country Regional Network, these outcomes relate to the availability of the network for use by certain trains and for pathing.²⁰

Country Regional Network: Standards and results

The Funding Agreement is for 5 years. It requires RIC to provide the Ministry of Transport with quarterly reports which include temporary speed restrictions (TSRs), the availability of train paths under the Train Operating Conditions Manual as well as some other indicators, each at an aggregate level. Results for 2005-06 are in Table 2.6.

In the 2004-05 Transport Reliability Report, ITSRR highlighted concerns regarding the then poor quality of reporting from RIC to Government concerning the Country Regional Network. This continued in the early months of 2005-06; however, RIC subsequently has moved to address the issue by providing monthly reports to ITSRR on items and indicators that ITSRR's Service Reliability Division specified.²¹ These reports include the scope of maintenance and renewal work being undertaken. RIC has provided ITSRR with these reports each month since March 2006. Service Reliability has also specified a range of additional indicators for quarterly and annual reporting by RIC. Collectively, this will allow ITSRR to make some assessment of the work being undertaken to ensure the sustainability of the network, although it may take some time for a more thorough determination to be made on the matter.

RIC has indicated that a number of significant works in 2005-06 have resulted in overall improvements on the Country Regional Network, including restoration or renewal of a number of bridges. The program of works proposed for 2006-07 will build on those improvements in certain areas whilst maintaining the rest of the network at the current standard. Notwithstanding this, there was a substantial increase in minutes lost due to temporary speed restrictions during the warmer months of 2005-06, although this reduced towards the end of the year.

The transport task on the Country Regional Network is measured by million gross tonne kilometres (mgtk). To some extent this is seasonal and affected by annual fluctuations in grain volumes, particularly on the R-lines. The transport task for 2005-06 was slightly below the level of 2004-05 but this is still around 5 percent more than the 5 year average. General freight and passenger mgtks increased over 2004-05 levels, while grain and minerals declined. ARTC is currently establishing a modelling capability to better forecast market demand and revenue on both the Country Regional Network as well as the leased network but this capability was not available in time to support the 2006-07 planning process. For 2006-07 it has been assumed that traffic will remain fairly stable overall.

In 2005-06 the funding available for major maintenance works on the Country Regional Network was not fully expended.

²⁰. Pathing refers to the use of the network by a train. Trains are permitted onto the network by train control at particular times. The location and time of entry, transit, and exit are known as a "train path". Train operations in terms of lengths, weights, speeds etc. are set in the Train Operating Conditions manual and this affects potential paths. ²¹. Under the arrangements agreed by the parties, RIC owns the Country Regional Network, but the principal maintainer is ARTC. RIC retains the accountability to Government for the condition of the network and for the use of Government funds. Among the implications of this is that ARTC drafts a plan for works on the network, and RIC considers it – and if appropriate – approves the plan. ARTC collects information on network performance and implementation of the plan and reports this to RIC

The 2004-05 Transport Reliability Report also identified some issues regarding the restricted lines (R-lines). In early 2005-06 the Government announced increased funding for works on the 11 R-lines which remain operational. The works, to take place over 3 years, were broadly outlined in terms of sleepers to be replaced, ballast and tamping activities and bridge repairs. The aim is to enable infrastructure improvements and secure the operation of the lines while the Government finalises a long term lease plan with the grain industry. In February 2006, the Minister announced that issues regarding the Australian Wheat Board and the ownership of Pacific National have meant that the Government could not then go to the market seeking expressions of interest in arrangements for the lease of grain lines.²²

According to RIC and ARTC the announced funding and program is sufficient to maintain the R-lines in a “fit for purpose” condition for the next three expected harvests. In most cases the lines will have tonnage and speed restrictions and during hot summer months trains will not run during the heat of the day.

However, RIC and ARTC have highlighted that some lightly used lines are reaching a position where continuity of services can no longer be guaranteed in the long term.

Reporting by RIC to Treasury under the Statement of Corporate Intent remained broadly unchanged in 2005-06. These reports largely deal with financial data but some performance information, including aggregated measures of track quality and speed restrictions for the network, are included. The relevant information is included in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6 Rail Infrastructure Corporation – reports to Ministry of Transport under the Funding Agreement

Issue	Indicator	2004-05	2005-06
Temporary speed restrictions (TSRs)	Time lost (minutes)		
	– grain lines	1269	1477
	– freight lines	1090	943
	– passenger lines	471	405
Train Operating Conditions Manual	No. waivers granted (a)	na	14
Paths	No. path requests unable to be granted	na	0
Gross tonne kilometres (gtk)	Million gtk per month	301	296

(a) This number is for 1 April 2006 to 30 June 2006.

Source: Rail Infrastructure Corporation Country Regional Network Funding Agreement Progress Report 1 April to 30 June 2006.

22. \$69 million Upgrade for Western NSW Grain Lines, Minister for Transport, News Release, 7 July 2005, AWB Corruption Scandal Delays NSW Grain Lines Progress, Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for State Development, News Release, 26 February 2006. 23. 2004/2005, and 2005/2006 NSW Lease Annual Condition Reports, ARTC.

ARTC leased network standards and results

The lease requires ARTC to provide an Annual Condition Report on Defined Interstate Rail Network (DIRN) and Hunter Valley lines to RIC. This Condition Report covers a number of indicators. ARTC has provided RIC with two reports; one for 2004-05 and one for 2005-06. These show compliance with virtually all terms and performance indicators under the lease, with the exception of transit time delays for XPTs in the west and in the Hunter.

The lease requires substantial investment in infrastructure. ARTC reported it has commenced investment in north coast telemetry, replacement of the Wagga bridge, the Southern Sydney Freight Line and Sandgate (Kooragang) grade separation.²³

Comments and outlook for 2006-07

ITSRR's reliability monitoring coverage relates to the Country Regional Network which is heavily reliant on funds from the NSW Government. Reliability monitoring does not extend to the network leased to the ARTC which includes the DIRN and Hunter Valley lines.

During 2005-06 RIC progressively provided better and more meaningful information regarding the condition and performance of the Country Regional Network. At this stage it is too early to determine the sustainability of the network under current practices.

The R-lines present specific issues. The future use of these lines will depend on works currently underway and on discussions between Government and industry on future arrangements. RIC and ARTC assess that the level of proposed expenditure on maintenance is not sufficient to restore the infrastructure to its design condition. RIC also advises that planned maintenance expenditure levels are not sufficient to finance the completion of works on the Weemelah Line in 2006-07.

The parties make a more general point about future maintenance expenditure. While expenditure on major maintenance in 2005-06 was less than the available finance, RIC and ARTC suggest the level of finance available from current sources is around \$10 million below long term requirements. ITSRR has no views on this estimate but notes that it is unlikely that increased revenues from access charges will be able to bridge a gap of this magnitude. ITSRR intends to monitor the condition of the Country Regional Network more closely in coming years and welcomes RIC's cooperation in this matter. If there are unanticipated changes in condition detected by this monitoring, further policy consideration of the future of parts of the network and of financing may be warranted.

Developments on the network leased to ARTC are not closely monitored by ITSRR from a reliability perspective as it is not funded by the NSW Government and falls outside ITSRR's statutory mandate. The safety performance of the leased network is subject to ITSRR's regulatory oversight. Notwithstanding this, under the lease, ARTC is to make a report once each year to the NSW Government via RIC. The latest report for 2005-06 broadly shows that ARTC is conforming to the obligations of the lease.

background

Bus services in NSW are provided under contracts administered by the Ministry of Transport. The Government's Bus Reform program commenced in 2004-05. Further implementation of the reforms occurred in 2005-06.

bus reform

The Reform program

The Ministry of Transport and metropolitan bus operators have entered into new bus contracts. The new contracts involve changes to subsidisation of bus operations and the introduction of new performance measures and reporting systems, some of which are to be introduced after the finalisation of contract arrangements.

The Reform program applies equally to privately owned bus operators and to the Government's State Transit Authority (STA).

Reporting under new bus contracts

Bus operators are required to regularly provide data to the Ministry regarding: non-financial performance, operational performance and a service quality incentive. Under the new contracts STA provides the same information to the Ministry as do privately owned operators.

Non-financial performance indicators include revenue km, fleet age profile and passengers carried. Revenue km can be seen as a proxy for coverage of bus services in the contract area in terms of frequency and routes.

The **Operational Performance Regime** is intended to measure the punctuality and "reliability" of bus services. The Metropolitan Bus System Contract sets out the stages in the process for the introduction of this, with the first stage commencing with the signing of new bus contracts. In the interim, the new contracts require bus operators to record relevant data from the date of service commencement.²⁴

The **Service Quality Incentive** is to deal with a number of matters relating to services including passenger complaints, stakeholder views of the operator and its approach to services, bus loads, bus cleanliness and customer perceptions.

The Reform program also requires operators to provide the Ministry of Transport with financial data. The Ministry structures payments to operators around costs, patronage and incentives. The Ministry collects farebox revenue and takes fare risks and makes submissions to IPART regarding fares.

²⁴ The Operational Performance Regime is set out in Schedule 2 to the Metropolitan Bus System Contract. The Contract and Schedule 2 are available at the Ministry of Transport's website.

Status of bus reform in 2005-06²⁵

In 2005-06 Bus Reform was focused on the metropolitan area, although the extension of changes to other areas commenced. The Ministry of Transport has established 15 regions in the metropolitan area, each of which is covered by a single contract covering both regular route and school buses. STA is contracted for 4 of these regions.

There are a number of stages in implementing the Bus Reforms. By October 2005, all of the metropolitan area was covered by the new contracts. This was accompanied by a rollout of the Pensioner Excursion Ticket to areas previously service by privately owned operators. Associated with bus reform was standardisation of distance based cash fares across Sydney.

On 22 April 2006 the first new contract for an outer metropolitan area was signed – for the Central Coast. At the time of writing 4 out of the 10 outer metropolitan bus contract areas – the Blue Mountains, Wollongong, Newcastle and the Central Coast – were operating under the new arrangements.

Activation of contract provisions

All terms of a contract start at the commencement date. From that time there is a requirement for regular reporting of data to the Ministry of Transport.

Funding provisions under the contracts include a fixed payment, a payment based on the level of services and a payment based on the number of passengers carried. As a result, operators have an incentive to ask for additional services where current patronage is high or where there is expected to be growth in patronage.

Government, via the Ministry of Transport, approves the services and in some cases organises the provision of buses for new services. In 2005-06 new services were added in a number of high or growing patronage areas including the M2-CBD corridor (where 13 new AM services were added) and in some areas serviced by STA.²⁶

Regarding the Operational Performance Regime, the Ministry is currently consulting with operators and trialling performance measures.

Associated with this is the plan for bus priority on strategic corridors. The Government announced a target speed of 25kph on each of the corridors. To achieve this, a number of measures are being introduced including dedicated bus or by-pass lanes and adjustments to traffic signals. 2005-06 saw commencement of the rollout of the Public Transport Information and Priority System (PTIPS) program, noted in last year's Transport Reliability Report. Two of the 43 strategic corridors were furnished with PTIPS — Hurstville – Miranda and Liverpool – Bankstown.

Community consultation

Under the contracts, significant network changes and regular service reviews are implemented after community consultation. An initial round is used to assist in the determination of service levels and patterns and further annual rounds will be used to aid in the adjustment of services. The initial round is referred to as an integrated network review.

The Ministry of Transport advises that an initial round of community consultation was undertaken for the development of strategic corridors in Region 10 (Southern Sydney) – completed in October 2005 and in Region 13 (Bankstown/Liverpool) – completed in December 2005. As a result there were adjustments to services in Region 10 introduced at the same time as changes to the CityRail timetable in May 2006. Changes to services in Region 13 commenced in September 2006.

Community consultation was undertaken in April and May 2006 regarding integration of bus network services (in Regions 1 and 4) into the North West T-way. This T-way is scheduled to open early in 2007.

The Ministry has identified the timing of the rollout of integrated network reviews. The following integrated networks will be introduced in 2007: Region 3 (Liverpool – Parramatta), Region 2 (Campbelltown – Liverpool), Region 15 (Camden – Campbelltown) and Region 1 (Penrith – Blacktown).

²⁵. More detail on the Bus Reform program and developments is available at the Ministry of Transport website. ²⁶. Public Bus Patronage Grows by 60,000 Passengers A Week, Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport News Release, 23 May 2006.

current performance results

Background

As noted in the 2004-05 Transport Reliability Report, there will be issues in gaining and assessing information until the rollout of the new arrangements is complete. However, the Ministry collected self-reported information from all metropolitan contract operators for the full 2005-06 year.

The information available to ITSRR is summarised below. It is aggregated for the metropolitan contract areas. As noted above, Bus Reform is extending beyond the metropolitan area in 2006-07 and out years, and hence results are not yet available for those areas.

Patronage

STA provides patronage data to the Ministry under the framework involving Government ownership of the Authority. This has passenger journeys for 2005-06 at around 200 million, broadly the same level as for 2004-05. There was a substantial increase in Western Sydney Buses passenger journeys to nearly 2 million.

Metropolitan contract regions reported around 135 million initial boardings in 2005-06. This was dominated by initial boardings in the contract regions held by STA (100 million).²⁷ These results are not comparable with the above STA passenger journey figures as they relate to boardings only. The Ministry explains that some of the difference between the passenger journeys and the boardings figures is due to the ability of some ticket types to be used on multiple sequential bus rides – these count as a single initial boarding even though there may be multiple journeys and there may be School Student Transport Scheme riders included in the larger journey numbers.

Given the lack of comparable sector wide data for previous years, it is not possible to make definitive comments about changes in aggregate metropolitan bus patronage.²⁸ The Ministry's Submission to IPART shows growth in aggregates through the course of the year and while it is likely that some change has occurred, including in response to reductions in fares and changes in petrol prices, the quantum is unknown as data has not been seasonally adjusted. The Ministry also has pointed to growth on particular corridors including the M2-CBD route which may relate to peak hour passengers.

While passenger data for some routes may be known with accuracy, clearly there remain issues regarding aggregate passenger data at this stage of the Bus Reform process.

Trips and service kilometres

Self reporting data provided to the Ministry shows around 7 million bus trips – scheduled bus journeys – in 2005-06. Around 40 percent of these were in contract regions other than those held by STA. This is significantly higher than the share of total patronage and indicates a lower number of initial passenger boardings per bus trip by private operators.

Reported service kilometres were around 100 million in 2005-06, implying an average passenger trip length of around 13km. It appears that the average trip length is slightly higher in the contract areas not held by STA. Combining boardings per bus trip and service length, it can be seen that passengers per service km are significantly lower for private buses – around half the level of the STA.

Again, data for bus trips and service kilometres from previous years is not available and it is not possible to determine whether there has been a net increase in service levels. New services have been introduced on some high patronage routes; however, there also have been reports of some reductions in services in other areas.

²⁷ The Ministry's submission to IPART for bus fares for 2007 has STA (initial boarding) patronage in the order of 100m and private bus (initial boarding) patronage in the order of 35m over 2005-06. Data for the first 4 months of the year is not available, and these figures scale up the results reported to the Ministry (and included in the submission) by 12/8 i.e. for a full year **28**. During 2005-06, the Government noted that STA (Sydney and Newcastle) bus patronage had increased by 0.75m passengers over the year to the three months ended April 2006. Out of a base of 200m passengers, on an annualised basis and if held consistently through the year, this would equate with growth in the region of 1.5%.

Operational performance

Aspects of operational performance covered by the new contracts include on-time running, service cancellations, skipped stops and bus full on-route. Complaint data is also reported. A summary of these indicators is in Table 3.1

This suggests that over 99.5% of buses operated to schedule and that there were very few service cancellations. It also suggests a higher frequency of complaints regarding STA, notwithstanding its better reported performance.

As noted in earlier Transport Reliability Reports, this type of result for punctuality should be treated as experimental only. In particular, the on-time running result may be driven by its measurement at bus terminus points, rather than on-route. Thus the apparently very small margin available for improvement in on-time running – less than one half of one percentage point – does not undermine the potential for benefits of measures to introduce bus priority measures which are intended to improve both punctuality in congested areas and increase transit speeds. Similar comments could be made with respect to cancelled services.

At this time, data regarding crowding (bus full on-route) is not available to ITSRR, although some experimental data was included in the 2004-05 Transport Reliability Report. This type of indicator relates to buses which do not pick up passengers at stops because they are fully loaded. Clearly this will be a key indicator of capacity–demand matching, at least at the route level. Increases in the indicator on particular routes might trigger consideration of additional services. This again highlights bus data issues as flagged in previous Transport Reliability Reports. Similarly, “average fleet age” and “% of fleet wheelchair accessible”, which previously was reported to ITSRR for STA is not available.

Table 3.1 Summary of metropolitan bus operational data reported to the Ministry of Transport 2005-06

Indicator	STA result	Private result	Total result
On-time running	99.8%	99.6%	99.7%
% of trips cancelled	0.06%	0.02%	0.05%
Complaints per 100,000 passengers	25.8	16.8	23.9

Source: Ministry of Transport August 2006.

Data issues

In the last two Transport Reliability Reports, ITSRR noted issues regarding the quality of bus data. It indicated a keen interest in the methodology and process by which the Ministry of Transport collects information from bus operators in areas such as patronage and operational performance.

The new bus contracts are intended to address these matters. However, given the relevant history, and the staged introduction of the Operational Performance Regime, it will take some time for completely accurate and verifiable information to become available under Bus Reform.

Against this background, in November 2004, the Ministry of Transport and ITSRR conducted a limited operational survey of bus punctuality. Punctuality and service cancellations were measured at some major bus stops in the metropolitan area, rather than at terminus points.²⁹ That Report concluded that there was an impression that on-time running at major pick up and drop off points, i.e. at bus stops, is below that measured at terminus points and that there is substantial variation in on-time running across bus routes, across bus stops and at different times of the day. Claims or targets of 95% on-time running, such as in the Customer Commitment, may be unrealistic for all on-route stops, but clearly there is scope for programs aimed at providing priority for buses in road traffic to improve performance.

²⁹ On-time running was defined as within a 7 minute band of a bus on a particular route at the bus stop – within 2 minutes before and 5 minutes after the scheduled time for the bus. Cancellations were defined as bus route services that did not appear to operate.

Service quality index

ITSRR's interest in bus performance is at the more aggregate level, rather than the bus operator level which is the domain of the Ministry of Transport. It was in this context ITSRR's submission to 2004-05 IPART bus and ferry fare determination proposed a service quality index. IPART's determination in November 2005 did not specifically call on this. It focussed on cost, efficiency, impact on passengers and the more traditional partial indicators of service quality.³⁰ Nonetheless, reflecting its advisory role ITSRR intends to further develop the concept of an index.

To do so, towards the end of 2005-06 it began consulting with transport and survey experts, including those who have proposed such indexes in recent years. Apart from the index issue, this consultation is covering the existing survey methodology employed by ITSRR and how surveys might be improved to give a better understanding of customer needs.

On the service quality index issue, it has been suggested that there are issues relating to the methodologies of assessing the value of particular aspects of service quality to customers. Methodologies generally require surveys of customer preferences. Different groups of customers, travelling at different times or between different locations, have varying views as to which aspects of service quality are more important than others. Aggregation among all groups may present a challenge. Also the manner in which customer views are assessed may have a bearing on results, generally more accurate results flow from simpler preference surveys – those preference surveys which ask customers fewer and simpler questions.

However, generally it was suggested that customer needs should be assessed at a broader and deeper level than the operational survey. That is, on-time running is not the only aspect relevant to bus passengers, but to the extent that it is important, an operational survey entailing more locations would be desirable, especially if it focussed more strongly on consistency of services as perceived by customers as distinct from operators. ITSRR will be addressing this in 2006-07.

Apart from this, it should be noted that Bus Reform envisages that there will be Service Quality Incentive surveys for individual contract areas for the purposes of contract management. The Ministry will be piloting Service Quality Incentive surveys next year.

Summary and issues for 2006-07

Bus Reform progressed further towards full implementation in 2005-06 with the bedding down of new arrangements. Of particular interest to ITSRR is the improvement in regular reporting from operators to the Ministry of Transport on a number of measures under the new contracts. However, as there is no comparable data from previous years, comparative assessments need to be interpreted with some caution. This is particularly relevant to aggregate passenger tasks.

The previous section of this Transport Reliability Report regarding rail highlighted the relevance of the draft NSW State Plan to public transport.³¹ The capacity and reliability of bus services will be important to aspects of this Plan, notably to the draft Plan's Priority of increasing the share of peak hour commuters who use public transport. This will be especially important in those areas of the metropolitan area which are some distance from the CityRail network.

Commentators have indicated that demand for some bus services is growing, especially in particular corridors. While continuation of the reform process (including public consultation) will be an issue for 2006-07; the responsiveness of industry to changing patterns of passenger demand will also be important. While buses may have more flexibility in this than rail, the industry and the Ministry may face issues arising from the large number and wide coverage of routes and services.

³⁰. IPART adopted a similar approach in relation to its Determination of CityRail fares in May 2006. ³¹. Draft State Plan Priority 11 available at the NSW State Plan website.

4. ferries

ITSRR's interest in Sydney Ferries Corporation relates to its performance as part of Sydney's public transport system.³² Sydney Ferries Corporation entered a Performance Agreement with the Minister for Transport in June 2006. The Agreement sets out two outcomes:

1. Sydney Ferries, as an integrated part of Sydney's public transport system, is to provide safe, reliable and quality ferry services that meet the needs of its customers and the wider community; and
2. Sydney Ferries must demonstrate that public funds expended in the delivery of its services are used in a cost-effective and responsible manner.

Reports are made to the Minister each month on the achievement of performance benchmarks and on other matters.

The performance benchmarks and results are shown in Table 4.1.

Sydney Ferries carried some 14 million passengers in 2005-06, around the same level as for 2004-05. Operational performance, while strong overall, was slightly below target at 98.3 percent of ferries running on-time and 98.8 percent of services operating. This is similar to performance in previous years.

There were some issues with vessel availability, particularly in the first half of the year. While the second half of the year showed an improvement in this area, results remained below target. Customer complaints increased sharply in July 2005 and January 2006, before declining in the final months of 2005-06. There were a number of high profile incidents in late 2004-05 and early 2005-06 and during the year Sydney Ferries revised its management structure and put in place a number of initiatives to improve performance, including 12-hour rosters and a new Crew Resource Management system.

Table 4.1

Sydney Ferries Corporation performance benchmarks and results 2005-06

Indicator	Target	Result
Vessel		
– availability	80%	71%
– reliability	95%	91%
Service reliability		
– % of scheduled services that run	99.5%	98.8%
– % of services that run on-time	99.5%	98.3%
– number of customer complaints	820	1243
Sustainability		
– number of reportable incidents of environmental damage	8	12
– number of sick leave days per employee	8	10
– percentage patronage growth	1%	0%

Source: Reports from Sydney Ferries Corporation to the Ministry of Transport 2006.

32. Safety regulation is undertaken by NSW Maritime. Readers interested in the safety performance of ferries should refer to the NSW Maritime Annual Report.

5. transport coordination

ITSRR has an interest in extending performance monitoring to transport coordination. A number of Government announcements and policies are aimed at improving transport coordination, such as the proposed State Plan under which the Premier has called for “more integrated transport systems”.

131500 Transport Infoline

Among the issues identified in the 2004-05 Transport Reliability Report was the 131500 Transport Infoline. This service which was previously procured by the Government through the Transport Administration Corporation, is now managed by the Ministry of Transport. Funding is in the order of \$7 million per annum. The service is supported by (and tied to) the main transport service providers: RailCorp, State Transit and Sydney Ferries Corporation.

Three elements of service are provided through the 131500 Transport Infoline on its website or through a call centre:

- information for planning of trips; for example, public transport options and timetables, notice of maintenance closures for rail;
- real time information about service disruptions, including rail delays and route alterations for buses; and
- receipt of complaints and feedback.

Demand for the service is shown in Table 5.1.

In the lead-up to the introduction of the new CityRail timetable, the Minister for Transport announced an upgrade and revision to the 131500 website, which includes an advanced trip planner and faster search times.³³ In April 2006, the Minister indicated that the use of the website had almost doubled over the previous year.

Table 5.1 Main aspects of 131500 Transport Infoline 2005-06

Performance indicator	Result (% change on 2004-05)
Number of:	
– telephone enquiries	3.1m (-7%)
– website hits	22.8m (19%)

Source: Transport Development Corporation August 2006.

Integrated ticketing

Integrated ticketing in NSW refers to the use of a single ticket medium to use all public transport modes in the Sydney area. At present, the Government and its agencies are working with a private company, ERG, to develop and implement a system based on “smartcard” technology. The Government anticipates a progressive rollout of the system to major elements of the public transport system commencing in 2007.

From 1 July 2006, the Public Transport Ticketing Corporation commenced operations as a stand-alone organisation to deliver and implement integrated ticketing. The Government is providing \$86 million for capital expenditure on integrated ticketing system development and implementation in 2006-07.

33. New 131500 Transport Website Launched Ahead of Rail Timetable. Saturday 27th August, News Release Deputy Premier, Ministry for Transport and Minister for State Development.

6. summary and conclusion

This third Reliability Report provides an overview of the reliability performance of the major NSW rail, bus and ferry systems in 2005-06. As for previous years, service quality issues have been the focus, especially comparison of these with standards set by the Government. Information has largely been sourced from the Government's procurement agency, the Ministry of Transport and from RailCorp (as the largest of the funded transport authorities).

Rail

CityRail's operational performance in 2005-06 improved substantially after the introduction of new timetables. On-time running since has tracked close to the 92% target averaged across all lines. The new timetables reduced the number and speed of services. Thus there has been some rebalancing of the trade-off between capacity and operational performance.

While CityRail fleet performance remained an issue throughout the year, the performance of infrastructure in the Metropolitan Rail Area continued to improve. Infrastructure performance and capacity is important to the national economy, especially through its use by freight trains. Work completed by ITSRR in 2005-06 identified some of the challenges in this regard including the projected growth in freight and the national framework for access.

For the near future, challenges facing CityRail will include the further understanding of demand, and the matching of its service supply – through the timetable – with demand patterns. The 2008 timetable, under development now, may provide an opportunity to make gains in this regard.

CountryLink performance remained relatively stable. However, the decline in patronage evident from 2001 continued. There was a substantial increase in complaints about CountryLink services and ticketing after October 2005.

RIC commenced reporting on the condition of the Country Regional Network in 2005-06, as required under its Funding Agreement. Given the short duration of this reporting it is not possible to be definitive about the sustainability of the network under current and proposed practices. RIC has flagged questions about the adequacy of resourcing available to maintain the network and ITSRR intends to monitor this more closely in 2006-07.

Bus, ferry and transport coordination

The Government's Bus Reform program took further steps in 2005-06, although it is likely to be several more years before it is fully implemented, including in the metropolitan area.

The issue of the adequacy of bus data remains.

ITSRR's suggestions about a service quality index were not taken up by IPART. Nonetheless, ITSRR continues to explore the matter with experts. Preliminary conclusions are that the index is an important concept. It would be broader and deeper than current reporting that focuses largely on partial measures of operator specific operational performance and some individual aspects which may relate to service quality. It should be noted that the new bus contracts also see the Ministry having surveys in individual contract areas for the purposes of the Bus Reform Service Quality Incentive.

Issues regarding rural and regional buses were not addressed in 2005-06, and this may be a task for the future.

Sydney Ferries Corporation entered a performance agreement for 2005-06. Its operational performance remained close to target, although there were a number of incidents in the year.

Transport coordination is taking a higher profile within the Government. The 131500 web site was used a record number of times in 2005-06. Also at the end of 2005-06, the Public Transport Ticketing Corporation was formed to take charge of the integrated ticketing project – known as the TCard.

In conclusion, the development of a State Plan has important implications for transport. One of the priorities of the draft State Plan is to increase the share of commuters who use public transport. While the performance and capacity of CityRail is central to achieving this, the bus network extends to areas at some distance from CityRail services and thus it also has a crucial role to play. In the future, the coordination of public transport is likely to play a pivotal role in the transport aspects of the State Plan.