

NSW Transport Reliability Report

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1. Introduction

In 2004-05 standards were in place for rail infrastructure, CityRail and CountryLink services, and bus and ferry services.

These performance standards are set by Government. They are included in the performance agreements¹ and contracts administered by the Ministry of Transport. The scale of the transport task covered by the agreements and Government funding is illustrated in Table 1.1.

The following sections deal with performance against these standards in:

- Rail (Section 2)
- Bus (Section 3)
- Ferries (Section 4)
- Transport Coordination (Section 5).

A summary and conclusions are presented in Section 6.

Table 1.1: NSW Government funding and transport task 2004-05

| | Main task | Payments from Government |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| RailCorp – CityRail | Urban rail transit 268.8m passengers Provision of Metropolitan Rail Area network | \$1257m (a) |
| RailCorp – CountryLink | Long distance rail passenger 1.6m passengers | (b) |
| Rail Infrastructure Corporation (c) | Provision of 3900km country regional track for freight and passenger trains | \$123m |
| State Transit – Sydney Buses and Newcastle Bus and Ferry Services | Urban transit bus 200.3m passengers | \$242m |
| Private bus | Urban transit and school students (d) | \$442m |
| Sydney Ferries Corporation | Ferry 13.5m passengers on Sydney Harbour | \$45m |
| Other (e) | Various | \$70m |
| (a) Includes CountryLink, excluding capital. (b) Included in RailCorp CityRail. (c) Hunter Valley and interstate lines were leased to ARTC in September 2004. (d) Metropolitan daily task is reported to be 367,000 per weekday, of which some 110,000 are on school buses. (e) Includes RTA - Transitway capital grant, public transport infrastructure, non-cash capital grants - interchanges and parking, Integrated Ticketing - contribution to private Transport operators. | | |
| Sources: 2004-05 task and payments from <i>Budget Paper No. 3, 2005-06</i> . Track km from ITSRR <i>State of the System</i> (forthcoming). Private bus patronage from Table in <i>Sydney Bus Reforms 97% Complete</i> News Release by the Minister for Transport, Minister for State Development, August 7 2005 | | |

¹ Funding agreements and performance agreements superceded the rail Community Service Obligation (CSO) agreements during 2004/05.

2. Rail

Background

The Government has reliability performance standards in place for RailCorp's CityRail and CountryLink passenger train services, including a Rail Performance Agreement. It also has an agreement in place for Rail Infrastructure Corporation's (RIC) rail infrastructure on the Country Regional Network, which includes some output performance standards for that infrastructure (although there are no comprehensive standards for infrastructure condition).

RailCorp

Background and the Rail Performance Agreement

The Government's agreements with RailCorp for reliability standards deal with three broad areas: CityRail and its services; CountryLink and its services; and the Metropolitan Rail Area network infrastructure. The key document is the Rail Performance Agreement between the Minister for Transport and RailCorp. This Agreement is required by legislation². Together with the Funding Agreement between the Ministry of Transport and RailCorp, the Rail Performance Agreement replaced the CityRail Services Agreement during 2004-05³.

The new Rail Performance Agreement seeks three outcomes from the system operated by RailCorp. These align with the objectives set for RailCorp by the legislation. The outcomes are:

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.
3. Organisational capability and culture necessary for responsible management, a strong safety culture and a commitment to excellent customer service.

Outcome 1 relates to CityRail and CountryLink passenger services. Outcome 2 relates to the management of the Metropolitan Rail Area network infrastructure and network control. Outcome 3 relates to internal rail matters, and is of lesser interest in this report.

In each of the outcome areas there are performance indicators, and for most of these indicators, targets are set. Following the signing of the Agreement, RailCorp has been providing monthly reports on performance to the Ministry of Transport. These form the basis for most of the comments below.

Rail services

CityRail

Aspects of CityRail performance monitored under the Rail Performance Agreement include matters under the headings of reliability, secure environment, and customer service and capacity-demand matching.

Reliability

The performance indicators in the Agreement embody a more narrow definition of reliability than in ITSRR's legislation⁴. The Agreement refers to service cancellations, skipped stops and on-time running.

Results for 2004-05 peak hours are shown in Table 2.1.

The operational difficulties experienced by CityRail in 2003-04 continued into 2004-05, notwithstanding the introduction of a Reliability Improvement Plan.

² Transport Administration Act (1988), s.17C.

³ Referred to in ITSRR's 2003-04 Annual Reliability Report.

⁴ Legislation for ITSRR 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.

All CityRail lines were adversely affected. The best performance for punctuality was for the South Coast intercity line, and the worst on the Main South suburban line (Fairfield, Liverpool). Overall performance did not substantially improve through the course of 2004-05.

ITSRR's Survey of CityRail Customers 2004⁵ confirmed the perceptions of the impact of poor reliability on passengers. Delays and cancellations (identified by 56 percent of respondents) and punctuality (54 percent) were the top two aspects of service for which passenger expectations of CityRail services were not being met. Together with crowding (53%), these results were substantially higher than those for other elements of service quality such as cost, temperature and cleanliness. This may be attributable to the fact that where there are fewer services (such as in the off peak), poor performance in time running, skipped stops, delays and cancellations will lead to longer delays for some individual passengers.

During 2004-05, RailCorp provided the Ministry of Transport and Government more detailed statistics as to reasons for this poor performance. These statistics relate to "incidents". A high level of incidents is usually associated with low on-time running, as depicted in Figure 2.1. This shows CityRail peak on-time running and incidents by month from July 1999.

| | Target | Performance |
|--|--|--------------------|
| Peak hours timetabled services cancelled | 1% | 2.5% |
| Stops skipped (peak hours) | 1% | 1.3% |
| Metropolitan on-time running | 92% to within 3 minutes 59 seconds (a) | 61.1% |
| Intercity on-time running | 92% to within 5 minutes 59 seconds (b) | 72.2% |
| Total CityRail on-time running | 92% | 63.1% |

(a) Changed to 5 minutes from 1 July 2005.
 (b) Changed to 6 minutes from 1 July 2005.

Source: RailCorp reports to the Ministry of Transport.

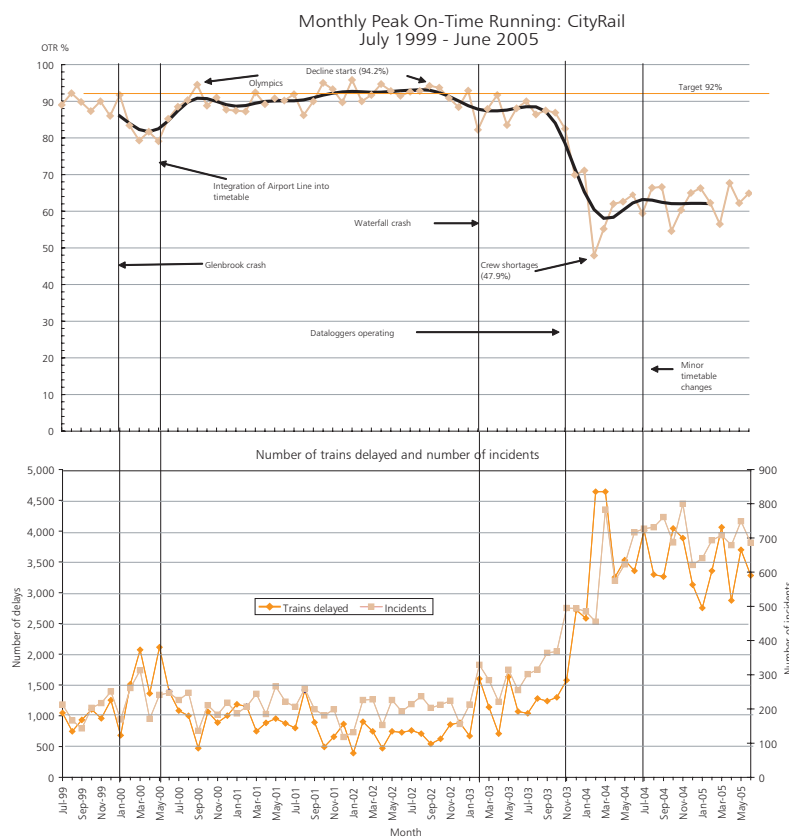


Figure 2.1: CityRail – on-time running and incidents

⁵ Survey of CityRail Customers 2004 ITSRR February 2005. Note that this survey included both peak and off-peak services.

ITSRR assisted the Government with an analysis of the incident statistics. Major incident types contributing to performance in 2004-05 included those related to crew, infrastructure and fleet.

In the latter stages of 2004-05, RailCorp made intensive preparations for the new CityRail timetable to be introduced in September 2005. RailCorp expects the new timetable to significantly improve on-time running. This is due to an expectation of some reduction in delays arising from particular incidents, and also an expectation of a reduction in some incident types, for example train crew related incidents. However, fewer services will operate (including at off-peak times). ITSRR intends to closely monitor performance once the new timetable is introduced.

The rail Clearways Plan, noted in last year's report, is expected to improve CityRail reliability. Construction of the first of the 15 projects, the Bondi Junction turnback and the Macdonaldtown stabling, has commenced.

However, this is a longer term initiative with CityRail expecting measurable improvements from 2008.

Secure Environment and Customer Service

ITSRR's Survey of CityRail customers published in February 2005 found that the secure environment, staff politeness, website information and station cleanliness met customer expectations.

The Rail Performance Agreement's indicators under the heading of secure environment include offences against persons e.g. assault, robbery, and vandalism. The data shows a decline in offences against persons in 2004-05, continuing an earlier trend. RailCorp notes that this decline coincides with the introduction of Transit Officers onto the network.

Customer service indicators include availability of ticket machines, public address systems, closed circuit television (CCTV) and help points. RailCorp notes that all

measures are within or very close to current targets – as shown in Table 2.2. Some care needs to be used in interpreting figures such as shown in this table, as they do not capture customer experience. It is possible for certain customers, or indeed a number of customers, to have adverse experiences without this being evident on these figures. For example, the availability of ticketing does not indicate the length of time taken by a customer to buy tickets. Another example of this is the type of communications issues identified in a report of the Auditor General regarding CityRail's management of service disruptions⁶.

Capacity-Demand Matching

Capacity-demand matching relates to crowding. As noted above, crowding was rated by customers as one of the top three areas where expectations of CityRail were not being met in 2004.

Crowding is generally a function of the number of train services, the timetable, and the number of

Table 2.2: Passenger facilities available

| | Target | RailCorp's reported performance |
|----------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| CityRail ticketing systems | 98.5% | 99.5% |
| CCTV availability | 99.0% | 99.6% |
| Help point availability | 99.0% | 99.8% |
| PA systems on trains | 99.0% | 98.9% |

Source: RailCorp reports to the Ministry of Transport.

⁶ Managing Disruptions to CityRail Passenger Services NSW Auditor General's Report, Performance Audit, June 2005.

passengers at a given time. In urban transit systems such as CityRail, crowding occurs during commuter peak hours, e.g. journeys to and from work, and schools. There are well known "imbalances" in passenger demand through the day, and system design and operation aim to provide capacity for peak loads while seeking to minimise costs. Typically rail systems have large and relatively fixed capacity, meaning they are not as flexible as some other modes in adapting to changing demands. Operational matching of capacity with demand is achieved via the timetable.

NSW Government standards for crowding include that only 5% of peak period train services should have a load factor of more than 135%, i.e. crowding is a load greater than 135%⁷. In terms of a Millennium train with a seating capacity of around 900, this would equate to a train load of near 1220.

CityRail measures the crowding on trains by twice-yearly surveys of certain trains at particular stations. CityRail also conducts some counts of passengers passing through barriers at particular stations.

The previous CityRail Services Agreement specified the number of train services to operate on

particular lines in particular time frames, provisions that were not in the Rail Performance Agreement during 2004-05. This places greater importance on crowding indicators under the Rail Performance Agreement.

In 2004-05, RailCorp reduced the number of CityRail services. RailCorp also sought to improve performance in the p.m. peak by allowing for greater flexibility to recover from incidents during and after the a.m. peak. Such measures should not increase reported crowding, as the affected services were relatively lightly patronised. The new timetable, introduced in September 2005, further reduces services including off-peak services

Notwithstanding this and a reported decline in overall patronage,⁸ crowding on trains as measured by CityRail increased significantly in 2004-05. In the result for March 2005, crowding exceeded target levels with 12% of surveyed peak trains reporting crowding compared with, compared with 8% in September 2004 and 7% in March 2004.

CityRail also has been noting some increase in the number of passengers passing through CBD station barriers. These results, of fewer passengers but crowding on more trains, may give rise to questions about the methodologies used to

measure patronage and crowding.

ITSRR will be discussing these matters with RailCorp and the Ministry of Transport in 2005-06, as part of the intense monitoring of performance under the new timetable, and in the context of comments suggesting that the substantial increase in petrol prices through 2005 is likely to increase public transport usage.

Complaints Handling

RailCorp provides complaints data to ITSRR. Together with surveys of customer satisfaction, this is 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 2004-05.

In 2004-05 complaints increased by 2.2% compared with 2003-04. The overwhelming reason for this was the increase in complaints about on-time running, some 283 per month or 20% above that for 2003-04. Complaints in most other categories declined or remained stable, except for complaints about the timetable which increased by 59%. These results, and the increase in complaints on nearly all lines, reflect CityRail's performance in the year.

⁷ 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.

⁸ RailCorp reported that total CityRail patronage fell by 4.5 million or 1.6% in 2004-05. Rail Corp has suggested that the availability of Pensioner Excursion Tickets on private buses may account for a significant proportion of this fall – CityRail estimates patronage from ticket sales.

Table 2.3: Complaints and Complaint Resolution, CityRail 2004-05

| Average monthly complaints/days to resolution | |
|---|----------------------------|
| Topic | Number of complaints |
| - on time running | 1 197 |
| - timetable | 146 |
| - service | 184 |
| - about staff | 284 |
| - information | 209 |
| - ticketing | 266 |
| - safety and security | 199 |
| - cleanliness and facilities | 178 |
| Total | 2737 |
| Close with customer | Average days to resolution |
| - phone | 4.1 days (a) |
| - letter | 36.9 days (a) |
| - web | 9.1 days |

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

Times taken to respond to customers decreased on average, due to faster turn-around of complaints made via 131500. It should be noted that most complaints are made to this line. However, response times increased in some other categories for complaints made via a letter or online.

CountryLink

The declining trend in CountryLink patronage that commenced in late 2001 continued in 2004-05, with a fall of 8 per cent compared with 2003-04. Passengers and seat utilisation are shown in Table 2.4.

There were no major operational changes during the year apart from

an increase in sectional running times between Sydney and Albury. There were major changes to the system for making reservations: the Sydney Call Centre closed; the Newcastle Call Centre opened; and an online booking system was introduced. The latter was part of an upgraded website.

Although CountryLink operates

coaches, on-time running is reported for train services only. Table 2.5 shows that on-time running (to 10 minutes) averaged 79% across the year. There was considerable variation in on-time running between the different services with the Sydney–Melbourne XPT attaining only 53%. There was also considerable variation between months with a low of 60% in April 2005 and a high of 83% in August 2004. It was noted that on-time running has, in recent years, followed an oscillating pattern.

CountryLink reduced the maximum speed of its trains from 160km/h to 120km/h following the level crossing collision and derailment of a train at Baan Baa in the north west of the State in May 2004.

The main contributor to the late running of CountryLink trains was faulty rolling stock which accounted for 14% of the lost time. Speed restrictions, generally attributable to the condition of the track, accounted for 12% of the lost time. The most frequently occurring incidents which cause delays relate to passengers and luggage; however, such incidents

Table 2.4: CountryLink Passengers and Seat Utilisation 2004-05 (a)

| CountryLink service regions | Passengers monthly average | Seat utilisation (load factor) |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| North | 51802 | 47% |
| North-West | 16567 | 54% |
| West | 24797 | 37% |
| South | 49241 | 46% |

(a) Includes replacement coach services.

Source: RailCorp August 2005.

are relatively short in duration.

Customer service indicators include complaint management and bookings. At this time indicators for internal carriage condition (e.g. seating) are yet to be developed.

There were 1,832 complaints during the year. This represents a 36% reduction in complaints compared with 2003-04. One-quarter of the complaints related to the quality and level of service.

Indicators of responses to bookings calls are shown in Table 2.6. In comparison to result for 2003-04, each of these has increased. It must be noted that performance reported for time taken to answer calls does not strictly accord with the target. However, the *average* response time is greater than the target.

Table 2.5: CountryLink Train On-time running 2004-05 (a)

| CountryLink service regions | Performance to 10 minutes | Performance to 30 minutes |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| North Coast | 78.4% | 91.3% |
| North-west | 73.7% | 86.5% |
| West | 79.0% | 91.6% |
| South | 53.1% | 70.3% |
| Canberra/Griffith | 71.8% | 89.9% |
| (a) Includes replacement coach services | | |
| Source: RailCorp August 2005. | | |

Table 2.6: CountryLink Bookings- Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne Call Centre Performance

| CountryLink services | Target (b) | Performance 2003-04 | Performance 2004-05 |
|---|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds | >80% | Average 35 seconds | Average 46 seconds |
| Average call time | < 150 seconds | 156 seconds | 160 seconds |
| Percentage of calls not answered (a) | <8% | 3.0% | 6.3% |
| (a) Number of calls received to numbers of calls lost. | | | |
| (b) Targets sourced from 2003-04 Annual Reliability Report. | | | |
| Sources: 2003-04 Annual Reliability Report, RailCorp August 2005. | | | |

Metropolitan Rail Area Network

A number of infrastructure indicators are referred to in the Rail Performance Agreement for the Metropolitan Rail Area. While the Agreement does not set standards or targets for these, the Ministry of Transport's interest appears to be in the understanding of trends. However, 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.

Since 2001, there has been increased infrastructure maintenance and renewal work on the Metropolitan Rail Area network and this continued in 2004-05. However, in 2004-05 the number of infrastructure incidents causing train delays was still significantly above RailCorp's targets. The second half of the year saw some evidence of the start of an improving trend, although given the relatively short period of time – and the possibility of seasonal influences - it is not possible to draw firm conclusions at this time.

Condition indicators

RailCorp reports a number of condition related indicators to the

Ministry of Transport in the Rail Performance Agreement. These include an aggregated track condition index, the number of broken rails and misalignments, and the number of temporary speed restrictions.

ITSRR examines these indicators, and a larger range of more specific reports in advising Government about current condition and future prospects. This work is a continuation of monitoring that commenced with an increase in Government funding for rail, an increase that was used to support a larger long-term program of rail infrastructure Major Periodic Maintenance (MPM) renewals work. The MPM works cover aspects such as rail replacement, sleeper renewal and improvement, contact wire renewal, ballast depth and drainage improvement, and points machine replacement.

The aim of the program is to achieve acceptable network performance, a "steady state", and over time, eliminate a backlog of MPM work that had been allowed to develop up to 2001⁹.

Overall, subject to some qualifications, there has been an improvement in the condition of infrastructure, with the increases in MPM work under the "steady state" program over the past few years being a likely contributing factor. There also has been an apparent improvement since late 2004 in the

number of infrastructure incidents causing delays as shown in Figure 2.2 which shows infrastructure performance over the medium term.

⁹ See: *The Godfrey Report - Independent Review of Rail Infrastructure Corporation (RIC) Metropolitan Maintenance Funding and Related Issues - October 2002*, at the Ministry of Transport's website.

Fleet

ITSRR also monitors the performance of CityRail’s fleet. In 2004-05 RailCorp commenced providing reports to the Ministry of Transport on fleet reliability including mechanical failure rates and incidents.

Figure 2.3 shows fleet incidents over the medium term – it is largely analogous to the trends in Figure 2.2. However, it does show a substantial rise occurring in late 2003 and early 2004, without a corresponding decline towards the end of the period.

In 2004-05, RailCorp instituted a number of initiatives to address these issues including action programs to address problems with doors, brakes, traction systems and communications. RailCorp’s Passenger Fleet Maintenance area is amending the scope of component change out programs, reviewing technical maintenance plans, increasing staff training, and is seeking to eliminate a backlog of major component change outs.

Comments and outlook for RailCorp in 2005-06

The major issue for RailCorp in 2005-06 will be the implementation of the new timetable starting in September 2005. RailCorp expects this to result in an improvement on some important operational measures, notably on-time running, cancellations and skipped stops. ITSRR’s survey of CityRail Customers (which was not limited to peak hour services), confirmed

the importance of achieving good results for these facets of CityRail’s operations.

Further timetable changes are mooted for the introduction of major capital works including the Epping-Chatswood rail link in 2008 and extensions to the system in

later years. Initial work on timetable design for these will need to commence in the near future.

ITSRR’s review of on-time running of CityRail services published in June 2004 indicated the importance to service delivery of RailCorp

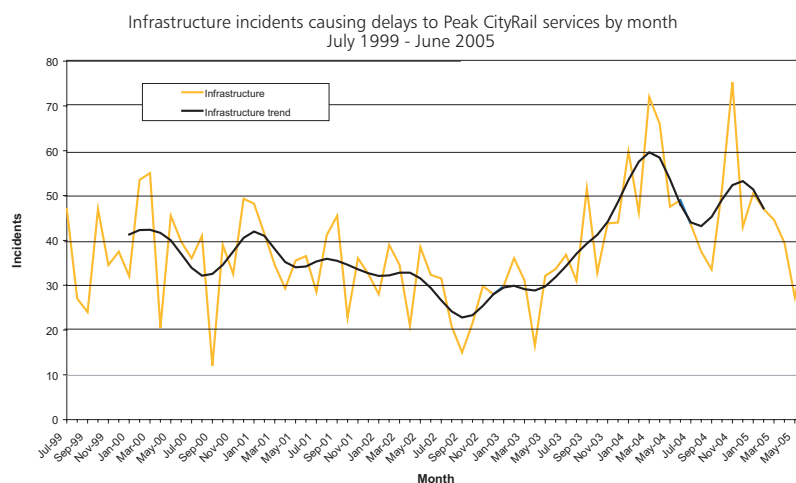


Figure 2.2: Metropolitan Rail Area network: Infrastructure Incidents July 1999 to July 2005

Source: RailCorp September 2005

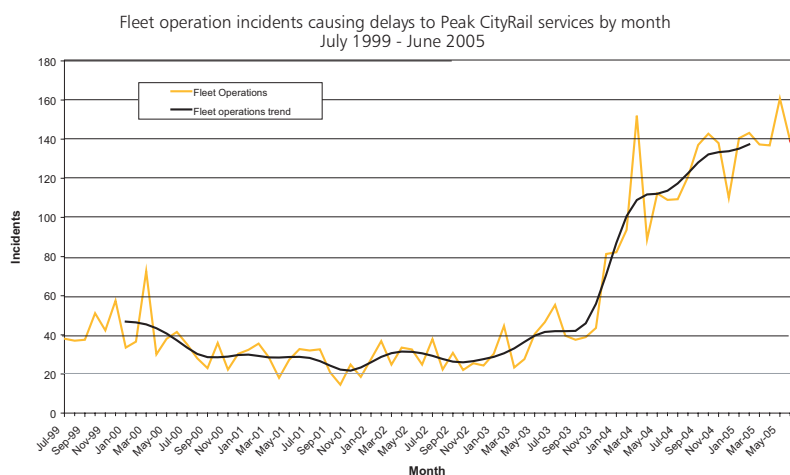


Figure 2.3: CityRail: Fleet Incidents July 1999 to July 2005

Source: RailCorp September 2005

addressing incidents and the factors underlying them. ITSRR's focus on incidents in 2004-05, particularly on infrastructure and fleet incidents, will continue.

A challenge remains in understanding demand. As indicated previously, customers viewed crowding as one of the top three areas where their expectations were not being met in 2004. Up until the implementation of the new timetable in September 2005, CityRail conducted two surveys of crowding each year. Given the new timetable, the importance of understanding these issues will increase. ITSRR has some questions about RailCorp's current methodologies and will be focusing on demand issues in 2005-06.

The Country Network and Rail Infrastructure Corporation

Framework

The Country Network is used predominantly by freight trains; however, some passenger trains also use the network.

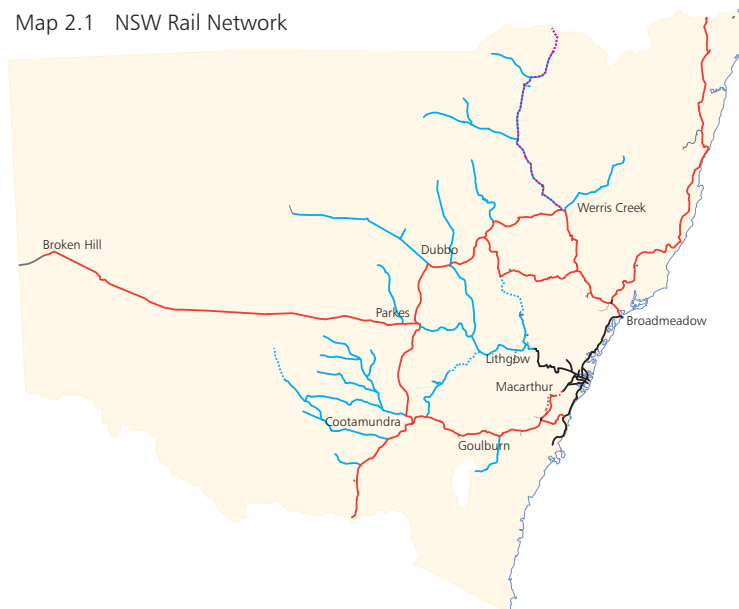
Substantial changes to the frameworks for the Country Network took place during 2004-05. From 4 September 2004, part of the network was leased to the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC), and this was no longer financed by NSW. The Government financed the remainder of the network, the Country Regional Network, under new arrangements.

Geographic coverage

The Line CSO covers the Rail Infrastructure Corporation (RIC) Country network (see next page for an outline of the line CSO, under "Governance"). Until 4 September 2004, the Line CSO continued to cover the full Country Network.

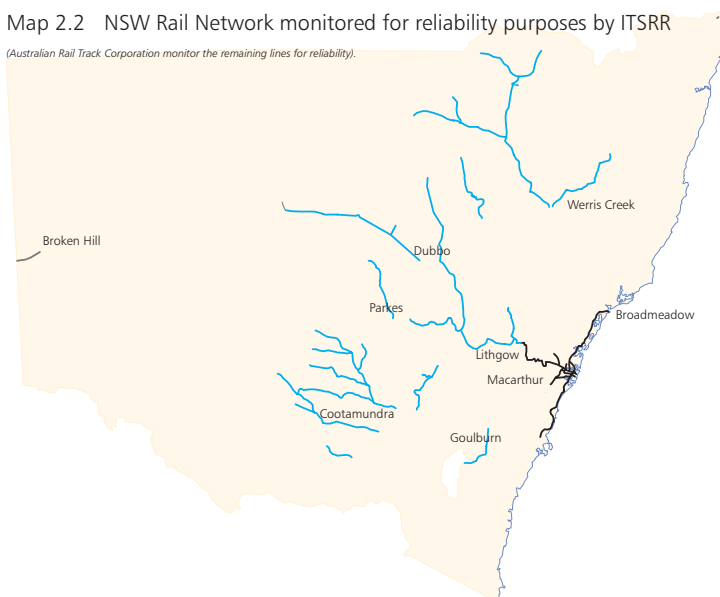
This was under the control of Rail Infrastructure Corporation (RIC) as it had been in 2003-04 (see Map 2.1). After 4 September 2004, the Line CSO covered only the (smaller) Country Regional Network controlled by RIC (see Map 2.2).

Map 2.1 NSW Rail Network



Map 2.2 NSW Rail Network monitored for reliability purposes by ITSRR

(Australian Rail Track Corporation monitor the remaining lines for reliability).



Finance for the Country Regional Network comes from the payment of access charges by rail operators, and from the NSW Government via a RIC funding agreement. As such, the network is within the scope of reliability monitoring¹⁰. Like the Line CSO, the funding agreement is intended to cover the gap between network access charges and the cost of maintaining infrastructure to acceptable standards. Government funding is by far the largest source of RIC's income.

From 4 September 2004, the interstate lines outside of the electrified area were leased to and controlled by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC). ARTC also leased the Hunter Valley lines. ARTC is not in receipt of NSW funding for these lines. Finance for the ARTC network comes from the payment of access charges by rail operators, and from the Commonwealth. As such, it is largely outside the scope of ITSRR's reliability monitoring. However, the NSW Government's lease with ARTC does have some performance standards and these are outlined below.

As a result of the smaller geographic area it covers, the RIC funding agreement is for \$110 million per annum, compared with \$285 million per annum for the former Line CSO¹¹.

Governance

The relationship between RIC and Government agencies changed with the advent of the Funding Agreement in 2004-05. The previous Line CSO required RIC to develop a five year Network Management Plan; report against the Plan; participate in a Consultative Committee; and achieve certain performance standards¹². The performance standards were technical measures relating to track quality, track condition indices, and temporary speed restrictions. These were reported to the Ministry of Transport from RIC on a line segment basis¹³. In addition to the Line CSO, RIC provided certain more aggregate performance information to its shareholders, the Premier and the Treasurer, via Treasury through the periodic reports on its Statement of Corporate Intent.

Under the new approach, while reporting under the Statement of Corporate Intent remains unchanged, the Ministry of Transport, consistent with its position on transport reform, has revised the reporting arrangements for RIC and for RailCorp. The revisions are in the new funding agreements.

The new funding Agreement provides a reporting tool for the Ministry to demonstrate that services delivered by Rail Infrastructure Corporation (RIC) deliver NSW

Government policy priorities. In this role, the Agreement's reports relate to higher level service outcomes, rather than the detailed monitoring of infrastructure condition.

Therefore these new funding agreements do not require the Government rail organisations to report to the Ministry of Transport on asset plans or asset condition. Rather they 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 pathing¹⁴. Reporting to the Director General of the Ministry of Transport occurs quarterly through a cross-agency Committee including RIC and the Ministry.

Country Regional Network: Standards and Results

The RIC Funding Agreement is for five years. It requires RIC to report to the Ministry of Transport on 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. At this time, draft benchmarks have been developed but not finalised.

RIC has provided some information to the Ministry of Transport for 2004-05 which is summarised in Table 2.7.

¹⁰ The scope of reliability monitoring and reporting relates to organisations owned or financed by the NSW Government.

¹¹ Budget Paper No. 3 refers to \$123m rather than \$110m. The difference is additional Government funding for the Restricted or R lines on the Country Regional Network. These lines primarily are used by trains carrying grain.

¹² See: ITSRR *Annual Reliability Report* 2003-04.

¹³ The R lines were not subject to these reliability performance standards under the Line CSO.

¹⁴ 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.

Table 2.7: RIC - Reports to Ministry of Transport under the Funding Agreement

| Issue | Indicator | 2002/03 | 2003/04 | 2004/05 |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Temporary speed restrictions (TSRs) ¹⁵ | Time lost (minutes) | | | |
| | . passenger lines | 23 | 18 | 59 |
| | . branch lines | 353 | 400 | 449 |
| Track condition ¹⁶ | Track Condition Index (TCI)(a) | | | |
| | . west region | 47 | 48 | 44 |
| | . north region | 60 | 58 | Na |
| | . south region | 57 | 57 | Na |
| Track condition | Track Quality Index (TQI) (a) | | | |
| | . west region | Na | Na | 38 |
| | . north region | Na | Na | 35 |
| | . south region | Na | Na | 48 |
| Tonnage | Million gross tonne kilometres (gtk) | 274 | 245 | 301 |
| (a) The TCI is not directly comparable to the TQI – the TQI figures generally are lower for the same geometric quality. | | | | |
| Source: Reports from Rail Infrastructure Corporation to the Ministry of Transport July, 2005 | | | | |

¹⁵ Average time lost (minutes) for quarter based on the last day of each 3 month period.

¹⁶ A lower figure represents better overall track geometry. A decreasing TCI/TQI indicates improving track geometry.

In 2004-05 there was a significant increase in time lost due to speed restrictions, particularly on passenger lines.

This can be attributed to factors, such as:

- a deteriorating condition of infrastructure;
- an increased level of maintenance work (temporary speed restrictions are normally imposed immediately following maintenance work as a safety precaution);
- a more conservative approach to safety taken by an infrastructure maintainer; and
- a combination of the above.

RIC acknowledges that time lost due to speed restrictions is above historic levels but attributes this to on-going maintenance work and predicts an improvement in 2005-06.

However, it is interesting to note in RIC's final 2004-05 report to Ministry of Transport that the worse trends with respect to time lost due to speed restrictions occur in the North Region and the South Region – the two regions where the actual scope of MPM and Capital work delivered in 2004-05 was less than planned.

This is a cause for concern, particularly when combined with the following:

- lack of any other information from RIC on the condition and performance of rail infrastructure across the Country Regional Network;
- the known high level of maintenance backlog across the Country Regional Network at the end of 2003-04; and
- the known poor condition of "Restricted Lines" resulting in suspension of train operations on some lines.

While not required under the funding agreement, RIC also reported track condition statistics to the Ministry at the end of 2004-05. These included reports for line segments. It can be seen from Table 2.7 that the track condition statistics are more aggregated than that required under the former Line CSO – which included reference to the component elements of the indexes. Also, the basis of reporting has changed from Track Condition Index to Track Quality Index and these different indexes are not strictly comparable.

Tonnages on the Country Regional Network increased significantly in 2004-05, by 22%. The increase is largely attributable to strong

growth in general freight and coal, and some recovery in grain.

RIC's advice to the Ministry also raises some issues concerning the restricted lines (also known as "R-lines")¹⁷. In recent years, maintenance on these lines has been minimal while there has been consideration of policy options regarding grain transport¹⁸. The condition of the lines has deteriorated and during 2004-05 several were withdrawn from service, including withdrawals following safety incidents¹⁹.

In April 2005 and in July 2005, the Government announced increased funding for works on the 11 R-lines which remain operational. The works were broadly outlined in terms of sleepers to be replaced, ballast and tamping activities, and bridge repairs etc. 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 industry²⁰.

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. On other lines, coal, minerals and general freight tonnages increased in 2004-05.

¹⁷ These are lines on which operations are restricted in terms of train weights and speeds. They are used primarily for transporting grain

¹⁸ A more complete explanation of the R-lines and policy issues is contained in the *Grain Infrastructure Advisory Committee Report January 2004*.

¹⁹ For example, part of the Griffith-Hillston line was withdrawn from service following a derailment caused by track condition in March 2005. As a further example, rail operations on the Camurra-Weemeloh line were suspended in February 2005 during an ITSRR safety audit of RIC.

²⁰ See: *\$69 million Upgrade for Western NSW Grain Lines*, Minister for Transport News Release 7 July 2005.

Reporting by RIC to Treasury under the Statement of Corporate Intent remains broadly unchanged. These reports mainly deal with financial data but some performance information, including aggregated measures of track quality, and of speed restrictions for the network, are included. The basis of the track quality index changed in 2004-05 and is different to the former track condition index for which a target was set. Speed restriction performance and delays exceeded i.e. was worse than the target. RIC advised that this was mainly due to Major Periodic Maintenance works in progress with additional work being planned in 2005-06. As MPM is delivered, the results are expected to move towards the target.

ARTC Lease Network Standards and Results

The NSW Government's lease to ARTC for the interstate mainline track and Hunter Valley network is for 60 years. The lease requires ARTC to provide an Annual Condition Report to RIC each year. This Condition Report is to cover a number of indicators. At the time of writing this report was not available on behalf of the Government RIC has asked ARTC to provide the report by end September 2005²¹. The following comments therefore are limited to outlining some aspects of the lease and its provisions.

The leased network is expected by ARTC to support an increasing level of traffic in future years. As such the lease and accompanying agreements require ARTC to invest substantial sums in upgrading the network over the next few years. This includes major capacity enhancements in the Hunter Valley for coal, and improvements in line speeds and transit times for the interstate corridors e.g. Melbourne-Sydney²².

The lease requires measurement and reporting of a number of indicators, referred to as KPIs. These generally are for the network as a whole, rather than for particular lines or line segments. They include:

- transit time delays by corridor (except Hunter Valley) – these delays relate to measures of the impact of operating restrictions that may be imposed in advance of maintenance being conducted;
- track condition index (except Hunter Valley);
- trains exiting on-time;
- large rail defects;
- sleeper population and replacement;
- bridge restrictions and replacement;
- signal failures; and
- maximum speed and axle load combinations.

Comments and outlook for 2005-06

It is not possible to comment in detail on system performance, or issues arising from assets, given that reporting is provided at an aggregate level. It should be noted that from a safety perspective ITSRR's interests are in both the ARTC-leased and Country Regional Network. However, from the reliability perspective, ITSRR's primary concern is the Country Regional Network, which is publicly funded, rather than the network leased to the ARTC.

Most of the above reported results for the *Country Regional Network* might be consistent with a well-managed, albeit lightly used system, in reasonable condition, adequately maintained and financed and with no major current or future issues. However, for a network that has been deteriorating, higher-level reporting can mask poor general network condition, large and escalating backlogs and major current problems that may require large financial injections.

For this reason, during 2004-05 ITSRR sought more specific and detailed information from RIC on the condition and performance of the Country Regional Network to allow a comparison with the state of the network as reported in the Annual Reliability Report for 2003-04. ITSRR had made similar requests to RailCorp for the Metropolitan Network.

²¹ In future years this report will be available for inclusion in the ITSRR Reliability Report.

²² See: Australian Rail Track Corporation website North South Corridor Strategic Plan 27 May 2005.

Unlike the case with RailCorp, this more specific information has not been provided by RIC to ITSRR for the period beyond September 2004. In these circumstances, ITSRR is unable to advise on current performance or future sustainability of the Country Regional Network.

ITSRR does note that information provided to the Ministry of Transport under the funding agreement outlines an increase in the impact of temporary speed restrictions and issues with the R-lines. These factors do not support a view that the underlying network is in a good and improving condition. Rather they suggest that detailed condition monitoring should be of increasing importance to stakeholders. It therefore is important that reporting procedures are in place that can capture the detail that provides the fuller picture of infrastructure condition.

Apart from this, RIC is in the process of providing ITSRR with information it is using in the development of its 2005-06 asset management plan, and associated forward works programs, for the Country Regional Network.

In relation to the ARTC-leased network, information was not available at the time of writing to assess whether performance is at the standard envisaged by the lease. This is a result of the current reporting cycle in which ARTC has been requested to provide relevant information to RIC by the end of September 2005. However, given

the ARTC's future works program and the nature of the lease, it is to be expected that the focus will be on capacity and transit times rather than more detailed baseline infrastructure condition indicators.

Generally, the condition indicators need to be viewed over a period of time (e.g. several years). At this stage, the first year of the lease, insufficient information is available to assess current or expected future performance.

3. Bus

Background

As indicated in the 2003-04 Annual Reliability Report, bus services in NSW are provided under statutory contracts administered by the Ministry of Transport. The 2004-05 year saw the initiation of the Government's Bus Reform Program. Also in 2004-05, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sought a submission from ITSRR on the reliability of buses. The following comments draw largely on this submission.

Bus Reform

The Reform Program

In mid 2004, the Government announced its intention to introduce new contracting arrangements for buses in NSW. The main elements of these flowed from a review of buses by Mr Barrie Unsworth²³. The Government's response to the review is on the Ministry of Transport's website – it is known as Bus Reform.

As a result of Bus Reform, the Ministry of Transport and bus operators are entering into new bus contracts. These contracts are largely based on the premise of exclusive rights to an area, similarly to before, with allowances for cross-regional service needs. However, there is a reduction in the number of contract regions in the metropolitan area, changes in the arrangements for subsidisation of

bus operations, and the introduction of new performance measures and reporting systems.

The new bus contracts apply equally to the privately owned bus operators and to the Government's State Transit Authority (STA). Beyond 2004-05, Community Service Obligation payments will no longer be provided to STA.

The new bus contracts

The Ministry of Transport's new pro-forma metropolitan bus contract²⁴ requires operators to regularly provide data to the Ministry about matters under three broad headings: Non-financial performance, Operational Performance Regime, and Service Quality Incentive.

Non-financial performance indicators include revenue km, fleet age profile, and passengers carried. Revenue km might 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 services²⁵. This will focus on disruptions to scheduled regular route bus services. The regime will commence with the new contracts and mature over time. It is expected that measurement of performance will improve over the next few years and move towards full automation. It may take until

early 2007 for this to be realised. In the interim, the contract requires the operator to record relevant data from the date of service commencement.

A *Service Quality Incentive* also is to be included. This 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.

Status of Bus Reform in 2004-05

In 2004-05 Bus Reform was focused on the Sydney metropolitan area. The Ministry of Transport has established 15 regions in the metropolitan area, each of which will be covered by a single contract covering both regular route and school buses. STA is contracted for four of these regions.

There are a number of stages in implementing the Bus Reforms. A summary of progress is in Table 3.1. While the program has commenced for nearly all of the metropolitan area, the operational changes are at their initial stage.

Activation of contract provisions

All provisions of the contract start at the commencement date. From that time, provisions come into effect requiring regular reporting of data to the Ministry of Transport.

²³ Ministerial Review of Bus Services in NSW – Final Report (Unsworth) February 2004.

²⁴ A pro-forma has been provided to ITSRR on a commercial-in-confidence basis.

²⁵ In this context, "reliability" is measured by (the absence of) service cancellations.

Table 3.1: Status of new bus contracts

| Region | Description | Service Commencement |
|--------|--|-------------------------|
| 1 | Penrith, Kurrajong, Warragamba & Blacktown | Expected 1 October 2005 |
| 2 | Badgerys Creek, Bringelly, South West Sector | 1 July 2005 |
| 3 | Wetherill Park, Bosley Park & Liverpool | Expected 1 October 2005 |
| 4 | Glenorie, Castle Hill, Blacktown & Parramatta | 1 August 2005 |
| 5 | Strathfield, Bankstown, Hurstville & Lugarno | 1 July 2005 |
| 6 | Sydney CBD, Parramatta, Strathfield & Kingsgrove | 1 July 2005 |
| 7 | North Sydney, Chatswood, Epping & Parramatta | 1 July 2005 |
| 8 | Palm Beach, Frenchs Forest & North Sydney | 1 July 2005 |
| 9 | Sydney's Eastern Suburbs & CBD | 1 July 2005 |
| 10 | Bankstown, Sutherland & Engadine | 1 January 2005 |
| 11 | Cronulla, Kurnell, Miranda & Bundeena | 1 April 2005 |
| 12 | Berowra, Hornsby, Chatswood & St Ives | 1 June 2005 |
| 13 | Parramatta, Fairfield, Bankstown & Liverpool | 1 May 2005 |
| 14 | Chatswood, Frenchs Forest, Terrey Hills & Gordon | 1 April 2005 |
| 15 | Campbelltown, Camden & Appin | 1 June 2005 |

Source: Ministry of Transport August 2005.

The contract makes provision for the Operational Performance Regime to come into effect once a valid method of monitoring punctuality is in place. The Regime will be piloted and trialled prior to its full implementation. It is expected that this process will take 2 years.

Community consultation

Under the contracts, significant network changes and regular service reviews may be implemented after community consultation.

The Ministry of Transport advises that substantial preparatory work for this process was undertaken in 2004-05. The first significant network changes, to support the development of strategic corridors

in Regions 10 (Southern Sydney) and 13 (Bankstown/Liverpool), will commence in 2005-06.

Network development is also being undertaken in significant parts of Region 1 (Penrith etc.) and Region 4 (Glenorie etc.) to support the introduction of the North West Transitway. Key dates in these processes are in Table 3.2.

The Ministry of Transport intends to use Region 14 (Northern Sydney) as a pilot for the Annual Service Review process. This will commence in November 2005. Following assessment of this approach, services in each region will be reviewed during 2006, either through the development of a network plan or through the annual service review process.

Table 3.2: Planned network development to end 2006

| | Region 10 | Region 13 | Regions 1 and 4 (N-W Transitway) |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|----------------------------------|
| Regional Planning Forum | July 2005 | Sept 2005 | Feb 2005 |
| Community Consultation | Sep 2005 | Nov 2005 | April 2005 |
| Network Approval | Late 2005 | Early 2006 | Mid 2006 |
| Implementation | Mar 2006 | June 2006 | Dec 2006 |

Source: Ministry of Transport August 2005.

Current performance results

Background

Bus Reform is being progressively rolled out. To date, this has concentrated on the metropolitan area. Reflecting the current progress with implementation of the new arrangements, 2004-05 saw most operations under the existing "old" bus contracts. As noted in last year's Annual Reliability Report, there are substantial issues in gaining information under the old arrangements. The information available to ITSRR is summarised below.

State Transit Authority

The State Transit Authority (STA) continued to operate under the Community Service Obligation agreement in 2004-05. Performance is shown in Table 3.3. The on-time running result for the 2004-05 year for STA's Sydney

buses is reported at 95%. This is consistent with the target noted in the Customer Commitment, and only slightly lower than the result for 2003-04.

Service availability relates to cancellations. It can be seen that the number of reported cancellations remains very low – the same level as for 2003-04.

STA reported that the average fleet age increased since 2000-01 from 11.7 years to 13.0 years in 2003-04, before declining somewhat to 12.8 years in 2004-05. With a fleet of around 1700 buses, significant reductions in fleet age may require substantial bus acquisition programs. It is anticipated that new bus acquisition in 2005-06 will bring STA within the target of less than 12 years.

Private bus operators

ITSRR has requested advice from the Ministry of Transport on the

reports made by the private operators under the new bus contracts. While the Ministry indicates it is on target to achieve the reliability reporting requirements set out in the new bus contracts, at this time the Ministry has not collected detailed reports on all aspects of private bus operator performance. This reflects the current status of the Bus Reform program.

As shown in the ITSRR 2003-04 Annual Reliability Report, the Ministry of Transport has been collecting some bus self-reporting data. An important aim of the self reporting scheme is to improve the reporting culture of the industry. The Ministry received monthly reports from over 90% of operators in 2004-05, including from non-metropolitan operators. A summary of the self-reporting data provided by the Ministry to ITSRR is shown in Table 3.4

Table 3.3: State Transit Reported Sydney Bus Performance 2004-05

| Sydney Buses | |
|---|------------|
| Passengers | 200.3m (a) |
| On-time running (b) | 95.0% |
| Service Availability (c) | 99.4% |
| Complaints per 100,000 trips (d) | 11.9 |
| Fleet average age (e) | 12.8 years |
| % of fleet wheelchair accessible | 34.7% |
| (a) Includes Newcastle buses (b) To within 5 minutes of timetable at terminus on route. (c) Timetabled services operating. (d) Compared with a target of <15 complaints. (e) Compared with target of <12 years. | |
| Source: Ministry of Transport submission to IPART July 2005. Budget Paper No. 3, 2005/06. | |

Table 3.4: Ministry of Transport - Private Bus Self-reporting Data 2004-05

| Bus Trips | Number | % of Bus trips reported |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Total | 4,719,705 | na |
| Early | 78 | Less than 0.01% |
| Late | 12,655 | 0.27% |
| Missed/cancelled | 707 | 0.01% |
| Full load on route | 678 | 0.01% |

Source: Ministry of Transport September 2005

Data issues

The punctuality figures from both STA and from the self-reporting- scheme appear high when compared with other transport modes, especially given comments such as by the Ministry of Transport on the impact of a “significant increase in traffic congestion”²⁶. Part of the explanation may lie in exactly what the punctuality figures represent. For STA’s Sydney Buses the figure does not show on-time running measured with reference to terminus points rather than at any particular bus stop on a route where passengers may be waiting. Given the scheduling of buses, and the possibility of en route delays, on-time running measured at the terminus points may well show higher or “better” results than if measured at bus stops.

In last year’s Annual Reliability Report, ITSRR noted issues regarding the quality of bus data, in particular regarding the limited self-reporting data. ITSRR 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.

As noted above, the new bus contracts – which also apply to STA - are intended to address these matters and, for example, allow measurement on on-time running for en-route points. The Ministry currently is negotiating implementation details of the Operational Performance Regime with each operator, which will result in detailed operator performance information in the future. At this time this detailed information is not available.

Bus Punctuality

Noting that the above will take some time, the Ministry of Transport and ITSRR conducted a limited survey of bus punctuality in November 2004. Punctuality and service cancellations were

measured at some major bus stops in the metropolitan area, rather than at terminus points²⁷. Key results are shown in Figures 3.1 to 3.3. These generally show on-time running (at bus stops) to be lower than reported to the Ministry (for terminus points).

Figure 3.1 shows within the survey itself, punctuality appears to be higher for bus stops near railway stations. This would be important for commuters who may need to change modes. Strong results would be likely to be important for service planning and for long-term transport planning.

The relatively low result for the CBD may reflect some traffic congestion. Note however, that this might be offset to some extent for travel within the CBD by a relatively high frequency of buses.

²⁶ See: Ministry of Transport Submission to IPART July 2005 at page 23, note (1).

²⁷ 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.

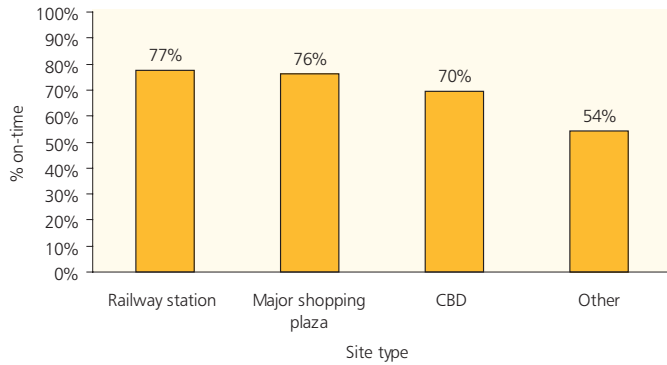


Figure 3.1. On-time running of bus services – by site type

Source: ITSRR and Ministry of Transport survey

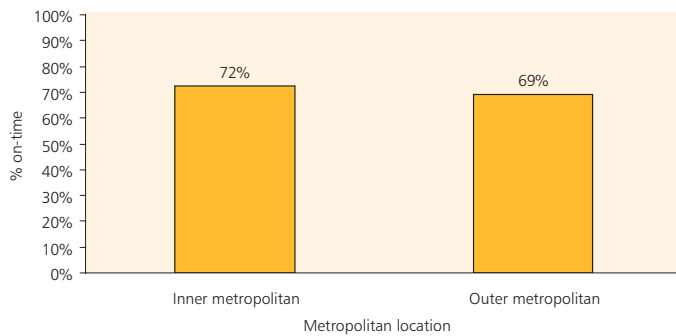


Figure 3.2. On-time running bus services – inner and outer metropolitan

Source: ITSRR and Ministry of Transport survey

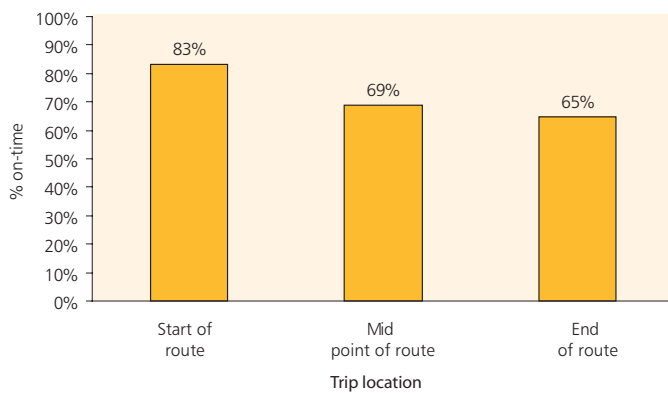


Figure 3.3. On-time services – trip location

Source: ITSRR and Ministry of Transport survey

What the survey measured was on-time running of a particular bus (route) service.

Figure 3.2 suggests that on-time running of bus services at the time of survey was marginally lower in the outer metropolitan area than in the inner area. It is unclear what effect traffic congestion may have on on-time running in outer metropolitan areas. It could be expected that regular and frequent congestion is to some extent factored into timetables. Thus the results may reflect the inability of timetables to reflect variations in congestion among days in particular locations.

The comments above regarding on-time running measures implied there may be some influence on the statistics by the location of the site at which the measurement is made. For example, measurement of departure from depot might be expected to show a higher figure than at mid or end route, especially if there is significant unexpected traffic congestion. The survey by the Ministry of Transport and ITSRR also looked at this issue by dividing the route into start, mid route and end route. The results, shown in Figure 3.3, support this view.

In summary, the results from this limited survey support the impression that on-time running at major pick up and drop off points, i.e. at bus stops, is substantially below that measured at terminus points such as in data previously reported for STA. The results are below on-time running presented by STA and in self-reporting. The measured performance at terminus points may be affected by some en route and layover leeway built into timetables. However, neither of these leeway factors will necessarily be of benefit to passengers on that bus trip.

Other results from the survey appear to indicate some substantial variation in on-time running across bus routes, across bus stops, and at different times of the day. This would be consistent with differences in timetabling, e.g. section running times, and differences in traffic congestion, i.e. traffic congestion affecting buses is worse in some locations than others, and at different times.

It needs to be recognised that a single survey does not present a definitive picture of bus service reliability, and that more work needs to be done. Moreover, while the results suggest that claims or targets of 95% on-time running, such as in the Customer Commitment, may be unrealistic for all en route stops, they highlight the potential benefits of the Government's programs aimed at providing priority for buses in road traffic. These are programs such as the electronic Public Transport

Information and Priority System and bus lanes. Put simply, to the extent that buses are running on-time less than 95% of the time, there is scope for improvement in performance via bus priority measures or even timetable changes.

The Ministry of Transport's Operational Performance Regime, and the proposed technological improvements to monitoring, may result in a "change of series" for on-time running and reliability figures, e.g. on-time running measured at a number of en route locations. The effect of this at any given level of delays, may be to reduce the current reported on-time running figure, as distinct from that experienced by passengers. However, this will allow the Ministry of Transport to better plan for bus services and improvements and thus facilitate a better performing system, with customers observing improvements, in the medium term.

ITSRR's future work - service quality index

Unlike the Ministry of Transport, which needs to deal with individual bus operators through a contractual process, ITSRR's interest in bus performance is at the more aggregate level. Given this, its interest will be with indicators most relevant to the system as a whole. These will include indicators of passenger numbers and of customer perceptions.

To ascertain developments in overall bus performance, ITSRR's submission to the Independent Pricing

and Regulatory Tribunal proposed a service quality index. The aim would be to combine elements of service quality within a given contract area, and to combine results of the contract areas into a metropolitan-wide index. The index, or even an operator's component, would not necessarily be used in contract management, but rather aim at providing an overall measure of performance. Necessarily, this would take some time to develop.

4. Ferries

A significant governance change took effect in the publicly owned Sydney ferry operator during 2004-05. This was the creation of Sydney Ferries Corporation as a State-owned Corporation separate from the State Transit Authority.

The legislation effecting this change requires Sydney Ferries to enter a Performance Agreement with the Minister setting out performance benchmarks for the ferry services it provides.

A draft of the Performance Agreement was developed in 2004-05 but it has not yet been concluded. The agreement is intended to include outcomes such as meeting customer needs, being an integrated part of the public transport system, and cost effectiveness. Indicators would likely include on-time running, cancellations and customer complaints. Sydney Ferries submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal fare review inquiry provides some information on these.

Sydney Ferries carried some 13.5 million passengers in 2004-05, a slight increase from 13.4 million

in 2003-04. Operational performance remained strong at 98.9 per cent of ferries running on-time and 99.1 per cent of services operating i.e. less than 1 per cent of service cancellations. This is similar to performance in previous years, although slightly below the targets of 99.5 per cent for on-time running and service operation that were set.



ITSRR provides advice to the Minister for Transport on the reliability of ferries.

5. Transport Coordination

In last year's Reliability Report, ITSRR indicated an interest in extending performance monitoring to transport coordination. That is, services that apply across the various modes. There are a number of respects in which this can be relevant including provision of transport for major events such as the Royal Easter Show, and events in the Olympic Park precinct, interchange performance and construction, and the 131500 Transport Infoline.

The 131500 Transport Infoline service is procured by the Government through the Transport Development Corporation which is a subsidiary of the Ministry of Transport. Funding is in the order of \$7.3m per annum. The service is supported by and tied to the main transport service providers; RailCorp, State Transit Authority, Sydney Ferries Corporation etc.

Three elements of service are provided through the 131500 Transport Infoline. They are avail-

able on a website and through a call centre. The elements are:

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

The contract procuring these services includes performance indicators for response times.

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 times²⁸.

²⁸ See: *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 second Reliability Report provides an overview of the reliability performance of the major NSW rail, bus and ferry systems in 2004-05. As for 2003-04, service quality issues have been the focus, especially in comparison with standards set by the Government. Information has largely been sourced from the Government's procurement agency, the Ministry of Transport, and from RailCorp.

Rail

CityRail's performance in 2004-05 continued to be disappointing. The Reliability Improvement Plan referred to in last year's Annual Reliability Report, the new Rail Performance Agreement, and the reduction in some services, did not result in a substantially improved performance. On-time running, skipped stops and service cancellations all performed below the Government's targets. Notwithstanding a reported decline in overall patronage, measured peak period crowding increased.

Infrastructure performance under RailCorp's management, and the Metropolitan Rail Area Network, appeared to improve. This may reflect the lagged result of an increase in maintenance effort since 2000. However, fleet performance was an issue in 2004-05, with fleet incidents contributing significantly to poor service performance in the year.

In the latter stages of the year, RailCorp focused on preparation for a new timetable to be introduced in September 2005. Together with some change in reporting standards for on-time running, RailCorp expects this to result in improved on-time running performance. The new timetable is constructed around a reduction in the total number of services and slower running of trains.

ITSRR intends to closely monitor performance under the new timetable. It will continue to concentrate on incidents including infrastructure and fleet incidents that cause delays. It also intends to focus on issues such as crowding measurement.

CountryLink performance remained relatively stable. However, the decline in patronage, evident since 2001, continued.

Major changes to infrastructure management in the country area took place in September 2004. This involved Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) leasing interstate lines in the Country Network and the Hunter Valley system. Rail Infrastructure Corporation continued to hold the remainder, the Country Regional Network. In effect this moved much of the Country Network, and the Hunter Valley, outside of the scope of ITSRR reliability reporting. ARTC is required to provide an annual condition report to RIC on the infrastructure it has leased. This was not available at the time of writing.

The Country Regional Network does remain within ITSRR's reliability reporting scope. As foreshadowed last year, the Line CSO was replaced, and a new Funding Agreement was entered. Reporting under this Agreement was at a very aggregated level dealing with transport outcomes. This is consistent with expectations of the Ministry but is substantially less for the relevant network parts than under the previous Line CSO. It is not adequate for ITSRR's purposes for advising on network condition. To deal with this issue, ITSRR separately sought supplementary information from RIC. However, at the time of writing this was not available, and consequently ITSRR cannot comment on the condition of, or developments in, the Country Regional Network. ITSRR does note, however, that the information provided by RIC to the Ministry under the Funding Agreement does not support a view that the network is in good and improving condition, or that detailed condition monitoring should now become a lower priority.

Bus and ferry

The Government commenced its Bus Reform program in 2004-05 for the metropolitan area. Negotiations between the Ministry of Transport and bus operators continued in the year. During this time, it became evident that it would take some time, well beyond the 2004-05 year, for substantial data from the private bus sector to become available to the Ministry

of Transport and to ITSRR. In last year's Annual Reliability Report, ITSRR raised some issues about data quality.

The Ministry of Transport's self reporting scheme for bus operators was extended in 2004-05 and monthly reports were received from over 90 percent of operators. Data on bus operational performance also was available from the State Transit Authority.

The Ministry of Transport and ITSRR undertook a limited survey of bus operating performance in late 2004. While a single survey will not present a definitive picture of bus service reliability, and more work needs to be done on this issue, the results indicated that on-time running benchmarks, such as appearing in the Customer Commitment on the 131500 website for 95 per cent, were not being met at all bus stops in Sydney. The results were below those from self reporting and from STA. There may be a number of reasons for this. For example, reported on-time running of 95 percent for the STA's Sydney Buses, may reflect definitional matters; e.g. STA on-time running is measured at terminus points and not at individual bus stops.

It is in this context that some of the measures and initiatives associated with Bus Reform, such as bus priority lanes and cashless fares can be expected to have impacts on services. These are likely to be more noticeable than if bus punctuality at all bus stops was already around 95 per cent.

ITSRR's focus is on aggregates. The Ministry of Transport, not ITSRR, is responsible for bus contract administration and dealing with particular operators. A key issue is aggregation of bus performance results, especially service quality results, over the 15 metropolitan contract areas. Discussions between the Ministry of Transport and ITSRR indicate that the aggregation issue also is likely to be a matter of interest to the Ministry of Transport due to the policy direction of uniform distance-based metropolitan bus fares, and the Ministry of Transport's view that at least some parts of fares should be linked with service quality improvements. ITSRR intends to address this issue via a service quality index with work commencing on the index in 2005-06.



During the year Government began implementing its bus reforms for the Sydney metropolitan area.