

New Shuttle Bus Service for Artarmon Industrial Area by Stuart Sexton

Willoughby City Council (WCC) has introduced a shuttle bus service for the Artarmon Industrial Area (AIA) bounded by Herbert Street, the Gore Hill Freeway and Pacific Highway. The service commenced on Monday 4 May, and runs in a loop from St Leonards Station via Herbert Street, Frederick Street, Reserve Road, Campbell Street, Clarendon Street, and Hotham Parade, returning to St Leonards Station along the Pacific Highway (see route map for stops). Buses run every 15 minutes from St Leonards between 6am and 6pm, Monday to Friday, and are equipped with facilities to carry bicycles. The service is free of charge, and will run initially for one year as a trial.

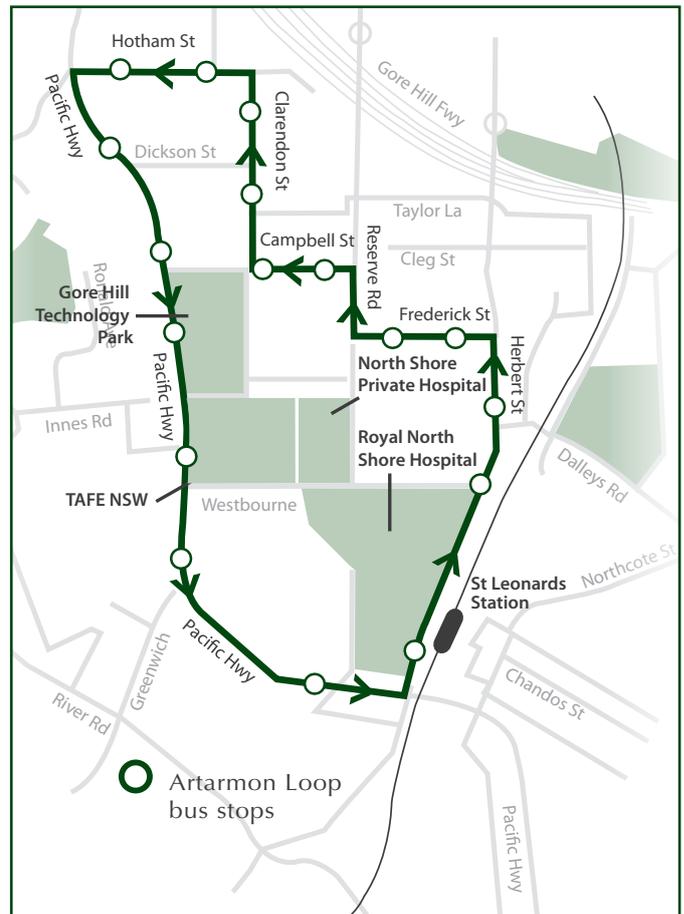
In 2007 WCC conducted a survey of local businesses in the AIA to assess current travel patterns and transport requirements. The results showed that 61% of respondents drove to or were driven to work by car. Both businesses and employees highlighted the critical shortage of parking in the area as a key concern. With 22% of businesses planning to redevelop or expand in the future, there will be increased demand for parking and further stress on the local road network. As a result, 89% of businesses in the area expressed support for providing additional public transport services to the area. This provided a rationale for introducing the shuttle bus service.

In the first year, the buses will be hired and Council will then consider whether to continue with the service and to purchase buses. As 78% of the AIA's workers who use public transport travel by train, the shuttle bus will provide a link from St Leonards station to workplaces within the industrial area and back through the Gore Hill Technology Park (when operational) and return to the station. It is also hoped that the bus will encourage many car drivers to reconsider their travel mode and make use of rail in conjunction with the shuttle for their travel to and from work. The technology park is contributing funding towards the shuttle as part of the Voluntary Planning Agreement for the redevelopment

of the ABC site. The route was selected so that it passed within reasonable proximity to all businesses within the AIA. It was also designed to pass within close proximity to the former Council works depot site, which is planned to become a bulky goods retail centre.

The one-way circuit limits the number of bus stops which had to be installed, and minimises the amount of parking spaces removed. It also allows for better familiarity with the route. Depending on the popularity of the bus service, consideration may be given to altering or extending the route when the results of the trial are assessed. Despite being called the 'Artarmon Loop', the service does not currently extend to Artarmon Station. People from the AIA who go to the Hampden Road shopping precinct at lunchtime would benefit if the service was to be extended to Artarmon. Such a change could be incorporated into future routing subject to customer feedback, funding, traffic issues, and availability of buses.

Criteria for the success of the trial will include the level of patronage, feedback from drivers and customers, and patterns of usage (e.g. assessing the times when patronage rises and falls). Effects on traffic patterns may also have an influence –



congestion in Herbert Street and around bus stops, and changes in parking volumes could be measured as well.

WCC views this service as a positive step to reduce reliance on private cars for commuters to the AIA, and it may be of additional benefit as developing and expanding businesses increase their workforce. It is hoped that those businesses that expressed support for the service will also encourage their staff to use it. Shuttle bus service details are available on the Council's website www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au in the *Traffic and Transport* section under the *Community* heading.