

The Telegraph

Sydney monorail set to be torn down:

Sydney's controversial monorail – more popular with tourists than locals – is set to be torn down under plans to redevelop one of the city's main visitor precincts.

By Jonathan Pearlman in Sydney

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The 2.2 mile line opened in 1988 and was supposed to attract 12 million passengers a year, but most days attracts just a smattering of tourists on what has been labelled one of the most expensive commutes – per yard – in the world. Each ride costs £3.30 for a trip that can be as short as 160 yards.



But the monorail – long considered one of Sydney's biggest white elephants – could be scrapped under plans to redevelop the convention centre at the popular tourist hub, Darling Harbour.

The body advising the New South Wales government on the development has flagged it would be open to proposals that want to tear down the monorail – at an estimated cost of £20 to £30 million.

The line, opened amid much fanfare during Australia's Bicentennial year, has long been criticised as a metallic eyesore and secured only about a third of its annual target of 12 million passengers. A recent downturn in tourist numbers, caused by the global financial crisis and the strong Australian dollar, has also drained numbers.

But the single-rail service has been popular with tourists, who on Monday seemed to be the only passengers displaying regret at its possible passing.

The line has limited appeal for workers flocking in from across the city but stops at popular destinations such as Darling Harbour and the World Square shopping centre.

"The monorail is very good for the city centre," said a tourist from New Caledonia, Eric Cazeres. "We can go everywhere and it's very good, beautiful, very nice."

A visitor from Melbourne, Jennifer Sui, who was travelling with her in-laws from western China, told ABC Radio: "You can see some famous landmarks from here and also it's quite unique for Sydney ... It's fun for the kids."

The Government signalled it was too early to clarify whether the monorail would stay because the final tender on the Darling Harbour project was only due to be released in March.

But a report in Fairfax newspapers on Monday said that potential bidders had claimed "the word from the government is 'don't let the monorail constrain your thinking'".

The monorail has drawn virtual non-stop criticism and ridicule from Sydneysiders and politicians since it opened more than 23 years ago. The city's long-serving Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, has called the monorail "ugly and intrusive", saying it should be torn down to allow for an extension of Sydney's expanding light rail network.