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Submission to Marrickville Council Draft Section 94 Contributions Plan 2003

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Marrickville-South Sydney Bicycle Group (MASSBUG)

Marrickville-South Sydney Bicycle Group is a local bicycle user group established in 1991, affiliated with Bicycle New South Wales. We work with Marrickville and South Sydney Councils and state government bodies for the improvement of cycling infrastructure, urban amenity, community health and safety. We also provide information, advice and rides for members of the local community and local schools.

Our vision is for a safe, healthy, vibrant community whose planning and infrastructure provide for greater share of transport by walking and cycling, in order that the personal, community and environmental benefits of more sustainable transport can be realised. We also regard public transport services as essential.

We are pleased to present this submission to Marrickville Council's Draft Section 94 Contributions Plan 2003 and would welcome the opportunity to discuss further any of the issues in this submission.

Introduction

We commend Marrickville Council on the consideration of cycling and the specific inclusion of bicycle facilities in the Draft Section 94 Contributions Plan 2003. However, we believe that, with regard to its relationship to other plans, more needs to be done to reflect the emphasis on reducing car use and improving alternatives that exists in other Council documents, including the Marrickville State of the Environment Report 2000, Agenda21 and the 2003/2006 Management Plan.

MASSBUG has written to Marrickville Council staff on a number of occasions since June 2002, asking to be involved in the development of the Draft Section 94 Plan at the appropriate time. We were very disappointed that, despite this previous expression of interest, we were not notified when the Draft Plan went on exhibition.

General Comments

The principle reason for community resistance against increasing densities and development of multi-unit housing is concern about motor traffic. It is essential to get transport right for urban consolidation. The aim should be not just to **mitigate** the traffic impact with traffic management and road works, but for development to contribute to **reducing** motor vehicle traffic by improving alternatives. Improving pedestrian amenity, priority and safety and improving bicycle facilities and access to public transport is completely consistent with Council's stated goals (especially to increase social capital) and current Management Plan.

We believe that the Draft Section 94 Contributions Plan 2003 still underestimates the importance and priority of non-motor vehicle infrastructure in reducing the load placed on the community of new development and increasing population.

We believe that the following facts justify increasing the proportion of Traffic Management Works Program to be spent on bicycle facilities.

1. Twenty-eight percent of Marrickville households do not have a car¹. Twenty-eight percent of households do not benefit from a focus on improving conditions for motor vehicles. But all residents and businesses benefit from improvements to conditions for walking and cycling, either directly or indirectly.
2. South Sydney Council found that the statistics for residential flat buildings are even less car-dependent, with 60.5% of apartments comprising no-car households and a further 30.1% with only one car. For multi-unit housing, the majority of new residents will be better served with cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure.
3. As pointed out by South Sydney in their Contributions Plan, "it is at the time that new households first move into an area, that decisions on future mobility are first made. Public and alternative transport options such as cycleways and pedestrian routes, need to be in place as early as possible in the life of any new development".
4. Marrickville has a demonstrated high demand for cycling, walking and public transport. The SoE 2000 states on page 15 that 22% of the Marrickville Council population over 5 years old. Marrickville **has the second highest bicycle mode share by origin SLA in Sydney, at 2.18%** (behind South Sydney at 2.49%) compared with an average of 0.83%². Provision of better facilities will result in realising more of the much larger, latent demand.

The meagre allocation of just 5% of the Traffic Management Works Plan budget is not sufficient to live up to "Council's goal to have an urban environment that encourages walking, public transport and cycle transport". Especially given the need to catch up for many decades of neglect, we believe that an allocation similar to that for pedestrians – a third of what is allocated for motor vehicles (one fifth of the total) is more appropriate.

3.1 Open Space, Parks Infrastructure and Sports Facilities

Recognising that Marrickville has a low rate of open space provision, we commend to you the approach taken by South Sydney Council regarding open space. Firstly it recognises the increasing social and recreation function that the streets themselves serve, and values the public space created by road closures. Secondly it seeks to apply a strategic approach to the acquisition of land, so that it contributes to a **network** to link open spaces, to maximise both people's access and useability (and biodiversity). They also aim to be a child-friendly city, believing that as they mature, children should be free to explore their neighbourhood enjoying increasing degrees of independent access to local play areas, school and other destinations. This requires an increased level of social capital and (non motor vehicle) street activity as well as provision of improved infrastructure for cycling and walking and connected open space.

¹ 1996 Census

² 2001 Census

3.3 Traffic Management and Road Works

We commend the recognition of “the move towards more sustainable transport” and the inclusion of provision for Bicycle Facilities. We are disappointed, though, with the low sights set in the next paragraph with, “Council is committed to ensure that the existing traffic conditions are maintained and improvements are made to existing traffic management programs to meet these new demands”. Council needs to commit to measures to *reduce* demand for motor traffic.

Council’s Draft Plan states that, in particular, multi-unit housing will have a significant impact and “create demand for access”. This is in contrast to the statement in South Sydney’s Contributions Plan, that “both the existing trends in car ownership within unit developments and the need to retain and build on them are significant”, referring to their low car ownership. Like Marrickville, South Sydney also found that new residents had a higher rate of car ownership than existing residents, but also noted that registrations dropped off over time.

The gap between Marrickville Council’s rhetoric and goals and its proposed actions is disappointing. To help close this gap, we suggest that there is likely to be a need to build capacity of council staff for practical ways to support its stated goals.

3.3.2 Road Works

It is rare that *new* roads are constructed in Marrickville, offering the opportunity to ensure a wide enough road reservation to properly cater for all road users. The new roads referred to in section 3.3.2 should be wide enough to accommodate a full width bike lane in each direction. South Sydney requires the new roads in Green Square to be 20m and 36m wide.

We also note that the reference to new signals at Rich Street, on page 53, is more flexible with “or Chapel Street”. We would support the latter to improve the safety of crossing Victoria Road because Chapel Street serves as a thoroughfare between bike routes L7 and L5 (between Marrickville Metro and Henson Park, alternative to Sydenham Road).

4.3 Traffic Management

The costing of Bicycle Facilities at \$20,000, said to be “based on Council’s existing expenditure and the estimated requirements to meet the needs of new development” is significantly below Council’s existing expenditure of \$50,000 (plus RTA matched funds) per annum for the last five years or more. Perhaps a mistake has been made here and correction is needed.

The 2003/2004 Resources Plan includes \$80,000 for Bike Route Improvement, \$10,000 for the Hawthorne Canal Cycleway Bridge and \$10,000 for the Alexandra Canal Cycleway investigation and design. Spending projections for 2004/5 and 2005/6 are higher still. South Sydney is budgeting approximately \$220,000 per annum for the next three years.

As stated above, we believe that at least one fifth of each LATM program could be spent on bicycle facilities - \$100,000 not \$20,000, for Council to achieve its goals.

5.4 Dedication of Land

We recommend an additional criterion for Location, being “Whether it contributes to permeability for pedestrians and bicycles”.

Typographical Errors

The second paragraph of section 2.5: “tend to live within 500 metres walking distance of their homes” needs to be reworded. We also recommend that it include walking time of 10mins be used to indicate walkability.

In the second paragraph on page 12, “less costly option that”, should end in “than”.

In Conclusion

Council's stated goals are: social capital; citizenship; ecologically sustainable development; and value for money³. Reducing car use is the most effective known treatment for increasing social capital⁴. There is ample evidence of the benefits of increasing cycling and walking for ecologically sustainable development goals in the State of the Environment Report 2000. Investing in cycling and walking infrastructure also represents excellent value for money for Council as well as providing equity benefits for the community.

We hope that Council accommodates our suggestions the Draft Section 94 Contributions Plan 2003 and we would be happy to elaborate or learn about the limits to the feasibility of our suggestions.

From 2003/2006 Management Plan

"It is Council's goal to have an urban environment that encourages walking, public transport and cycle transport. Success in achieving this goal will be measured by the number of (new) marked or identified bicycle routes, the level of bicycle use and the level of public transport use." (p.25)

From Marrickville State of the Environment Report 2000

In the Mayor's foreword to the State of the Environment Report 2000, the first of his list of environmental pressures facing Marrickville is "increasing use of the motor vehicle".

The three Genuine Progress Indicators for Land (p.7) are:

- (1) Number of (new) marked or identified bicycle routes
- (2) Level of bicycle use in Marrickville
- (3) Level of public transport use.

The report discusses Section 94 funds on page 9, reporting "Council's existing studies ... demonstrate the need for improving infrastructure in the following areas: ... continued improvements to bicycle routes".

Page 11 talks of "addressing issues of access and amenity" because "most of the traditional local centres suffer from the impacts associated with traffic: ... poor vehicular access; noise and pollution" but are "conveniently located close to transport nodes and are surrounded by existing residential catchments".

It reports (p. 13) "Marrickville Agenda 21 (1999) incorporates recommendations aimed at reducing car dependency, improving public transport and facilities for cyclists and improving the safety and liveability of the Marrickville Council Area."

"Cycling as a transport option has enormous environmental advantages, using 1/50 of the energy of an average car and producing no noise or air pollution. Given this, Council supports traffic calming, truck route containment and lowering private vehicle use to encourage cycling in the area (Geoplan, 1996)." (p.15)

Under "What still needs to be done?" (p. 23), we find "Finalise the review of the Section 94 Plan" and "Work towards continued improvement of cycle network and facilities."

In the section on Air, on page 35, we hear "the increase in vehicle use ... is the reason air pollution has reached crisis point" and refers to the Action for Air quality goals for NSW. Action for Air includes the state government aim of tripling safe cycling.

Air's "What still needs to be done?" includes "Promote cycling and walking as an effective means of transport".

³ 2003/2006 Management Plan

⁴ Appleyard (1970). See page 4 of the MASSBUG submission (Oct, 2003) to the draft Marrickville Recreation Strategic Plan for more detail (www.massbug.org.au > advocacy).