

William Street: *Boulevard of Broken Promises*

The Lemma Government has proposed removing the bicycle lanes on each side of William Street, east of Palmer St, to make room for an extra traffic lane. The bike lanes in Craigend Street and Kings Cross Road will go, too.

The reasons the Government must reject the changes and retain all Cross City Tunnel project bike lanes are:

1. The proposal is diametrically opposed to the objectives of the Cross City Tunnel project.

The RTA claimed that "*The Cross City Tunnel will improve access to and movement within the city for...cyclists*¹". One of the primary objectives of the project was "*to improve the reliability and efficiency of travel between areas east and west of Central Sydney*" and the project "*would allow the **re-allocation of road space within Central Sydney from general traffic in favour of public transport, pedestrians and cyclists***"². The NSW Government Strategic Policy Objectives the project was to address included "*to improve facilities for cyclists*³".

2. It is in breach of NSW Government policy.

*"The NSW Government will make comprehensive provision for bicycles in all new major road infrastructure projects"*⁴

3. It is in breach of the Minister's Conditions of Approval for the CCT project.

Condition of Approval No. 69: "*The Proponent shall, in consultation with Bicycle NSW, CCS and SSCC and to the satisfaction of the Director-General, develop a Plan and implement the construction of cycle lanes in William Street, Park Street, Kings Cross Road and Craigend Street.*"

4. It severs the RTA regional route network.

"the bicycle lanes represent an identified RTA regional bicycle route between Sydney and Woolloomooloo." "*Given the importance of William Street as a bicycle corridor, it is essential to maximise the kerbside lane width in term of Austroads Guidelines.*"⁵

5. It is a denial of access.

*"Existing access to and from the City via the Kings Cross Tunnel would be prohibited and replaced with access over the top of the tunnel through Craigend Street and Kings Cross Road"*⁶ yet these modifications do not include restoring access to the Kings Cross Tunnel.

Discontinuity of the bike route along William Street effectively makes it impossible to travel safely between the City and East. The CCT project promised to improve access for cyclists, but the Operational Traffic Assessment admits the modifications mean it will not

¹ Cross City Tunnel – Release of the Preferred Activity Report for the Supplementary Environmental Impact Statement, RTA, November 2002

² Cross City Tunnel Supplementary Environmental Impact Statement, Vol.1, PPK, July 2002

³ Director-General's Report, Proposed Cross City Tunnel, September 2001

⁴ BikePlan2010, RTA, 1999

⁵ Operational Traffic Assessment, RTA, June 2006

⁶ Director-General's Report, Proposed Cross City Tunnel, September 2001

be improved; it will be *"similar to that previously provided (before CCT)"*. The proposal denies safe access along this 'important bicycle corridor'.

6. It contravenes the NSW Government's new Metropolitan Strategy⁷.

"Sydney's neighbourhoods will have improved local transport with walking and cycling facilities"

"Many of the social, resource and environment impacts of transport can be managed through a greater emphasis on sustainable transport to meet travel needs - walking, cycling and public transport. Greater use of these modes also contributes to broader Metropolitan Strategy goals of creating vibrant liveable communities."

"The cost of meeting unconstrained travel demands, particularly in peak periods, is becoming prohibitive. Building new capacity just to meet peak needs is very expensive, and as has been demonstrated in other cities, will not solve transport problems or improve accessibility on its own. Demand for travel needs to be managed and sustainable travel choices and access should be maintained or improved."

"Better facilities will encourage more walking and cycling for everyday travel. Walkers and cyclists need high quality, safe and direct routes."

The Strategy's Objective D3.1 is to *"Improve local and regional walking and cycling networks"*.

This proposal will do the exact opposite.

7. It undermines other NSW Government policy targets.

By severing such an 'important bicycle corridor', this proposal undermines the NSW Government's ability to meet its targets⁸ of tripling cycling levels and reducing growth in VKT (vehicle kilometres travelled).

8. It runs counter to recent Auditor-General's recommendations.

Last year the Auditor-General⁹ reported *"The Government is not succeeding in encouraging people to reduce their reliance on cars"*. And, *"Poor transport infrastructure planning has the potential to induce more traffic and congestion, hence more pollution. A key objective of Action for Air was that transport planning better consider likely air quality impacts."*

The Auditor-General concluded *"A defined role for the DEC and NSW Health in transport planning and assessment is crucial to minimising the environmental and health impacts of transport proposals."* Yet DEC and NSW Health have not been consulted at all on the nature of the proposed changes.

9. It undermines NSW Government planning processes and their credibility.

The NSW Government's Metropolitan Strategy vision is *"Transport investment decisions will be based on sound planning, evaluation and assessment."* While existing NSW Government policies, plans, promises and even Approval Conditions are so blatantly breached and reversed, the Premier is mistaken if he thinks that with a new State Plan he can *"change perceptions that the Government does not keep its promises"* (SMH 27/6/06).

⁷ City of Cities – a Plan for Sydney's Future, NSW Government, 2005

⁸ Action for Air, NSW Government, 1998

⁹ Performance Report - Managing Air Quality, NSW Auditor-General, 2005

10. It contradicts the NSW Greenhouse Plan¹⁰.

"The NSW Government aims to curb the growth in transport emissions while maximising transport choice. To achieve this, the NSW Government is...facilitating and promoting cycling and walking". Notably, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stated that "changes in urban and transport infrastructure to reduce the need for motorised transport and shift demand to less energy-intensive transport modes may be among the most important elements of a long-term strategy for greenhouse gas mitigation from the transport sector".

11. It contradicts the NSW State of the Environment Report 2003.

"The NSW Government's environmental response to the transport issue is to reduce VKT and emissions to improve air quality". The Plan "includes actions to reduce vehicle emissions; integrate land-use and transport planning; encourage public transport use, walking and cycling". "Integrated land-use and transport planning aims to reduce dependence on cars by improving access to public transport, walking and cycling". "Action for Bikes: BikePlan 2010 is a 10-year plan for the creation of comprehensive bicycle networks across NSW. The \$251-million program will create an average of 200 kilometres of cycleways each year."

12. The proposed changes are already delaying other crucial bicycle projects.

The City of Sydney project to construct bike lanes on Kent Street, required to meet Approval Condition 67, has been suspended by the RTA as a result of the Premier's announced changes.

13. It undermines the credibility of the ALP commitment on climate change.

ALP Federal Shadow Environment Minister, Anthony Albanese, promotes Labor's Blueprint Number Six, "Protecting Australia from the Threat of Climate Change". Yet the ALP state government is failing to stem the fastest growing source of GHG emissions, transport, and is actively suppressing the emission-free alternative by not providing sufficient infrastructure. More rhetoric not matched by action.

14. It panders to a minority interest, rather than the greater health, environment and government policy considerations.

The delay of a relatively small number of residents of eastern Sydney who choose to drive home from northern Sydney in peak hour should not override planning decisions which were made to improve the air quality of the population of Sydney. Sound NSW Government policy must be held to, despite local pockets of short term opposition. Otherwise, voters can have no faith in Government policy.

15. It will be costly to NSW taxpayers and inequitable.

The compensation costs and construction costs resulting from the changes will be met by all NSW taxpayers including those in western Sydney and the rest of New South Wales. All for the benefit of just one line of peak hour traffic of eastern suburbs drivers.

16. It will not fix the problem.

An extra bit of traffic lane will not solve Sydney's congestion problems, nor will it solve drivers' dissatisfaction with the Cross City Tunnel. It is improvements to public transport

¹⁰ NSW Greenhouse Plan, NSW Government, November 2005

investment and priority measures and a bicycle route network located to enable the substitution for short car trips that will solve Sydney's congestion problems. Leadership, foresight and proper planning and implementation are also required.

The RTA application for modification admits "The proposal will result in **a direct trade off between bicycle safety and the need for traffic efficiency**" and "Traffic efficiency in this critical section of William is prioritised above the needs of bicyclists" even though "the bicycle lanes represent an identified RTA regional bicycle route" and refers to "the importance of William Street as a bicycle corridor".

The space for storing unused motor vehicles is still there, making it also 'prioritised above the needs of bicyclists'. The primary function of roads is transport, not storage. The decision to prioritise the safe transport of a vulnerable road user group below storage (parking) space may become a difficult decision to defend.

Conclusion

The NSW Government is reminded that bikes outsell cars every year in Australia. Half Sydney's households have bicycles. That means a large proportion of the electorate have the equipment and the will to make a positive contribution to health, environment, and reducing road congestion. All these people are stifled by the NSW Government's failure to provide sufficient infrastructure. As a result, NSW trails all states in proportion of trips.

In 1999 the NSW Government committed to investing \$25 million per annum for ten years in bicycle infrastructure, but the current \$5 million is only a tenth of one percent of the RTA budget. Bicycles are currently used for 1% of trips. A three percent proportion of the RTA budget (\$99 million) would be more commensurate with the NSW Government commitments to promote cycling and triple current cycling levels.

Cycleways are public health infrastructure - as important to solving the modern day health epidemic of obesity and related illnesses, as the building of sewerage systems and provision of clean water was to prevent epidemics of the past.

To destroy public health infrastructure and to further suppress the use of a clean, healthy, efficient transport mode that a majority of people in NSW want is not the right decision. It leaves the impression of a Government that does not implement its own sound plans or policies or keep its promises.

We urge the NSW Government not to make William Street a boulevard of broken promises.

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