

Bicycle NSW response to Roads Australia's

Draft Policy Statement on Motor Traffic Congestion on Urban Roads, focussing on 'Reliability'

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Bicycle NSW welcomes the invitation to comment on the draft policy statement ('Draft Policy') concerning motor traffic congestion of Australia's road network and road space.

About Bicycle NSW

Bicycle NSW is a member-based association. Our association is dedicated to promote, advocate, and support cycling in all its forms as an environmentally sustainable and healthy form of transport, recreation and tourism through the engagement of government, industry and the community at all levels. This necessitates more places to ride safely, and places to ride to.

We maintain regular contact with our Members, Supporters and BUGs through our website (www.bicyclensw.org.au), a twice-monthly e-newsletter (to 30,000 recipients), and *PushOn* (a monthly online magazine). Bicycle NSW also publishes submissions made to inquiries and consultations.

Bicycle NSW supports public discussion of our society's future transport services, its goals, and investment priorities. We consider that long-term planning, shaped by the principles of ecologically sustainable development, including inter-generational equity, requires a break from business-as-usual practices to embrace more innovative practices to be able to secure a more equitable future for Australia's largest city.

Bicycle NSW supports schools and workplaces (including tertiary education and hospital campuses) in the development of, and communication about, safe cycling routes to work and cycling proficiency.

More detailed information about Bicycle NSW is contained on its website and in introductions to submissions.

<http://www.bicyclensw.org.au/>

Comments overall

From the Draft Policy, we understand its purpose is to address the goal of reliability in dealing with the problem of "avoidable congestion" on urban roads.

Overall, Bicycle NSW recognises the value of maximizing the efficient use of our road networks for mobility and accessibility – the thrust of this Draft Policy (21pp).

The Draft Policy usefully summarises Roads Australia's **priorities** developed at the April 2010 Summit (p.11).

Bicycle NSW applauds the declaration that a function of roads being "**moving people not cars**" (p.12). That this declaration need be made and applied is indicated by a recent submission by BikeSydney (2010) to the NSW Staysafe Committee of Inquiry into Vulnerable Road Users; BikeSydney recommended that:

*The RTA refocus their objectives to support the movement of people rather than primarily on the movement of private vehicles. All infrastructure should be planned and designed to meet the needs of all road users. This should include new and existing infrastructure. (Recommendation 5.2)
(Executive Summary p.8).*

Clarity of purpose of roads in their specific locations would enable safer design and better amenity for all road users, not only people in motor vehicles. For that reason, Bicycle NSW (2010, p.8) has emphasised the value of having a “functional categorisation of roads” as in the Netherlands, whereas the traditional concept of road hierarchy in NSW, at least, seems to be primarily about the movement of vehicles, and to some extent the division of governance between the State government and local councils.

This need for better clarity of purpose is particularly apparent in urban renewal and making the urban road space more people-friendly, as explained in a submission on pedestrian road safety by the City of Sydney (2009).

Connected transport networks for accessibility and travel time reliability between activities (= mobility)

This policy position agreed by Roads Australia’s April 2010 Summit, is central to better managing traffic congestion:

Promote the institution of connected and managed transport networks in:

- *Freeways, busways and cycleways* [NB on-road rail networks of tram/light rail services, of growing importance in Australian cities and towns]
- *Rail network*

*Promote accessibility and travel time reliability between activities – not parts of the transport system.
(page 18).*

Above all, Bicycle NSW appreciates the recognition of cycleways. We draw your attention to the new NSW State Plan target for bicycling mode share and the consequences of this for asset management planning by local councils under NSW statute, as discussed in submissions to the Metropolitan Strategy Review and to Staysafe’s Inquiry into Vulnerable Road Users. Perhaps it represents a first as a numerical target for mode shift – this has considerable potential for inclusion in the package of measures for congestion management and has considerable, demonstrable cost benefits.

In NSW, Bicycle NSW has advocated for better connectivity of separate transport networks and more appropriate governance. This is most evident from our submission to a Senate Committee inquiring into government funding of public transport (and walking and cycling facilities).

To consider **travel time reliability**, we note the value of injecting a discussion of road users and their geographic location, resulting in a greater recognition of a functional hierarchy of

roads. In denser urban places, roads function as streets or places where the function of motor traffic mobility has to be tempered by other uses and users. Bicycle NSW is concerned to improve the liveability of our urban environment for people of all ages in which road space occupies a large part of the public domain.

In urban areas, it is well documented that some local trips by walking and cycling take longer because of crossing roads and light phasing needs to take into account location and changed function of the road where access and mobility of people need to be given greater priority than the movement of vehicles!

Specific comments on congestion management

On **congestion management**, in particular, Bicycle NSW has urged governments to mainstream bicycle riding into the transport system in its entirety; this includes

- infrastructure and land use planning
- relating the use of the road system to public transport – both the mobility and access to light rail, bus and train services
- traffic management – reducing traffic speeds in centres, more responsive traffic signals for access by road users other than occupants of motor vehicles (noting for example the studies by Jan Gehl in the City of Sydney, for example)
- pricing (true-cost), funding, coordination, communications and
- ongoing maintenance, paying specific attention to utility access to roads and footpaths and the occurrence of damage as a source of risk and loss of amenity for users.

Although the Draft Policy refers to two other ‘policy chapters’ – Sustainability and Financing & Funding – it is not entirely clear how these are brought together with ‘reliability’ to form a draft policy on congestion management. Further, it is conceivable discussion of road user charging (and environmental degradation by incentives to drive to work), made in the Henry Report following the April Summit, are likely to bear upon the policy for congestion management. These do not seem to have been recognised in the Draft Policy, yet may well be raised at workshops.

From a sustainability perspective, of course, urban traffic congestion has been a subject of long-standing interest internationally (e.g. Factor Four) and more particularly with impacts of road transport in terms of land-take, materials used and vehicle movements. Dispersed urban environments are associated with more frequent and longer trips by motor vehicle.

Specific comments on text

Under a discussion of **Integrated Responses (p.9)** we make a few comments:

- Noting its emphasis on supply and demand, we suggest considering putting the principles(guiding the method) in a different order to so that demand (as an

indicator of need) can be used for framing efficient use of the existing asset – road space.

- Within ‘integration’ we suggest to ensure a principle for integration with land use planning and development (urban renewal) as well expressed as Priority 6, by the priorities established at the Summit (p.11). We note that other jurisdictions have a broader concept of policy integration, starting with the landuse and extending to environment (internalisation of externalities) and to safety and health (active travel and air and noise pollution reduction).
- On the discussion of approach in dealing with big issues (p.9.4), we are aware of the risk of over-looking the potential for innovation e.g. starting to provide for safe cycling in geographic areas where the current levels of cycling mode share are low; also see OECD (2010).
- peak oil and climate change – not only fuel and materials of vehicles, but the roads themselves. It’d be interesting for Roads Australia to lead a discussion on embodied carbon in road materials and ways of reducing this.
- fuel efficient vehicles – likely to reduce the size of motor vehicles in the fleet – so it is puzzling why road authorities have not supported the introduction of smaller parking spaces for cars to provide a further incentive to people driving smaller cars, and reducing the additional problem of queuing across intersections caused by larger motor vehicles.

Under the rationale for using the **focus of Reliability** (p. 10-11), this would be strengthened by adding a small section on the need to better delineate the functions of roads in places, as Bicycle NSW(2009) outlined in its recent submission to the NSW Staysafe Committee of Inquiry into Vulnerable Road Users. We note much later in the Draft Policy, at **Opportunities** (p. 19.8) the recognition that measures/initiatives for congestion management are “network and location specific” [our emphasis]. Surely, then the measures should have input from the local council and local community? And be integrated with local measures for pedestrians, people riding bicycles, and traffic calming?

Despite reference to urban ‘liveability’ (from the COAG Congestion Review, p.5 and we note the Major Cities Unit of Infrastructure Australia), there’s a risk that this section on Reliability overlooks that people use roads or streets as places, particularly in urban centres or adjacent to major transport interchanges or railway stations, where the flow of vehicles needs moderating to accommodate the change of use of the road. In these places, (motor) traffic flow should be only one function of the road.

The **travel speed of vehicles** needs reducing to safer, lower speeds in these denser urban locations and other road treatments are to be made to accommodate people walking and riding bicycles (e.g. advanced stop lines; contra-flow lanes on roads where the motor traffic is one way; the greater use of shared zones).

In the month following the Summit, May 2010, we note the Henry Report confirmed that the taxation and transfer system is serving as a perverse incentive to drive, particularly to work. The Henry Report made a number of recommendations about road pricing that incorporated the true-cost pricing of roads, that would not only act as a means of managing

demand but also temper supply of road space, whether as part of the network or the over-investment in “commuter (car) parking” (see Daniels (2010)).

Principles

It would be easier to follow these five principles were they more closely aligned with 7 priorities listed on page 11.

Using an economic framework of supply and demand necessitates attention to price, and as a society, purpose of the good or service – thus the Principle 4 (Travel Demand Management & Pricing) could be helpful in framing the other principles. Roads provide a complex range of services in a wide range of places to a wide range of users. So the twin concepts of efficiency and effectiveness are brought into play for roads as part of a broader system of land transport as part of the way we use land (and water and air) for our activities. We have referred above to the Henry Report and think it provides some context for longer-term planning, and governance approaches.

Analysis of current policy initiatives [measures]

Flowing from our comment above about Principles, we suggest, too, that in investigating the policies listed on pages 20-21, the last three dot points (page 21.3) be brought forward as they are determinative of pricing, funding and financing.

Next steps

This section is very helpful to readers.

As stated, we consider it would be desirable for the Draft Policy to keep abreast of developments in other policy chapters particularly *Roads Australia Sustainability Chapter*.

We are not familiar with the Roads Australia paper *A new deal: solutions to the administration and funding of transport and road infrastructure* (referred on page 8), we would welcome some information on its development. We are aware of the public transport industry’s report *Moving People - Solutions for a growing Australia* (Stanley & Barrett 2010). Bicycle NSW is supporting a more comprehensive approach to people moving, moving people that enables access and mobility particularly to enable more people to ride bicycles and walk for a range of purposes. This approach would result in more livable cities, be more sustainable (in the sense of Ecologically Sustainable Development), healthy and socially inclusive.

We encourage Roads Australia to consider mode shift targets as a measure in congestion management, as discussed above in relation to the NSW State Plan target for cycling for short trips and the requisite response for asset management by road managers at the local level.

We welcome further discussion and any questions, particularly with the bringing together of input from Roads Australia on sustainability and financing and funding policy, prior to the planned workshops on congestion management.

References

Banister, David (2005), *Unsustainable Transport : City Transport In The New Century* London : Routledge.

Bicycle NSW submissions

website <http://www.bicyclensw.org.au/> > Advocacy > Submissions.

Bicycle NSW 2010 Submission to Staysafe (August 2010)

Bicycle NSW 2010 Submission to NSW Government on Metropolitan Strategy Review etc

Bicycle NSW 2009 Submission to the Henry Review (2009).

Bicycle NSW 2009 Submission to Senate Committee (2009).

City of Sydney (2009) Submission to NSW Staysafe Committee of Inquiry into Pedestrian Safety

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/70F924D0E29AFFE3CA25761F00274926>

Daniels R. (2010), "Transport costs don't add up", Letter to *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August 2010.

NSW Staysafe Committee of Inquiry into Vulnerable Road Users

Submissions:

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/V3ListSubmissions?open&ParentUNID=BD0C30FA449977D9CA2577270021AA13>

Bike Sydney 2010 Submission to Staysafe Inquiry into Vulnerable Road Users.

Henry Report (2010), *Australia's Future Tax System. Final Report.* May

www.taxreview.treasury.gov.au

OECD (2010) *Effective Transport Policies for Corporate Mobility Management.*

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee (2009), *Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services*

Submissions:

http://www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/committee/rrat_ctte/public_transport/submissions/sublist.htm

Stanley J, Barrett S. (2010) *Moving People – Solutions for a Growing Australia*

Australasian Railway Association, Bus Industry Confederation, with UITP. March

http://www.ara.net.au/site/urban_mobility.php