

Submission

No 37

INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

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Date Received: 29/02/2012

29 February 2012

The Committee Manager
Committee on Transport and Infrastructure
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Ref: The utilisation of rail corridors (Inquiry)

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for receiving submissions on this topic. As the committee has not yet specified its particular areas of interest and focus I will be brief and general in my comments.

As the previous CEO of Bicycle NSW, I had the privilege and challenge of looking at the provision of all forms of transport choices as they affect communities, business and individual choices. The transport network – in particular in Sydney – but also through the critical links to regional NSW – profoundly affects economic vitality as well as community wellbeing. Today this network is fractured, works in a piecemeal fashion and does not cater for the change in work and travel patterns. It also fails to cater well to visitors.

The current dysfunctional approach of a separate rail network mentality has reinforced blinkered views on overall access and accommodation of inter-connectivity issues with other forms of transport. In the example case of cyclists, the inconsistent application of lockers, on-train storage and even access to rail stations is holding Sydney and NSW back when compared with other cities and states in Australia and internationally.

Today we understand that “active travel” is a key element to better health as well as reducing the congestion that the predicted population growth is bring upon us. Providing attractive and easily accessible alternatives to motor vehicles is the best chance for us to address these issues concurrently and the rail corridors are uniquely placed as facilitator towards that end.

To be brief, I bring to the attention of the Committee these areas for specific consideration:

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1. Looking at the use of rail corridors to offer community links by way of cycle and footpaths alongside whenever possible. The rail corridors offer a unique opportunity for relatively level and segregated paths between communities otherwise challenged by geography or increasingly busy roadways. This option may be a less expensive and more attractive option to the creation of more on-road facilities especially in already crowded areas.
2. To investigate the re-purposing of lengths of railway corridors no longer in active use for use by cyclists and pedestrians to further encourage community and economic vitality of adjacent areas. The Fernleigh Track near Newcastle as a good example of a rail line including tunnel now in use as a popular track for locals as well as tourists. Other opportunities are available for similar treatment.
3. To facilitate the development of rail infrastructure that better integrates with other modes of transport and in particular adequate footpaths and cycle paths and facilities. It has come to my attention that locker facilities at rail stations are rarely adequate or well thought out and that the provisioning of foot or cycle paths to and from the stations are rarely considered as part of the scope of rail projects.
4. To provide improved access and allocated areas for mobility aids and bicycles on trains. Consideration for the increasing use of mobility devices and adequate lifts should also be well integrated into planning to accommodate the change in demographics. More hooks for bicycles on carriages with a possibility of locking devices should be considered. The integration of bicycle rentals at major rail facilities especially in tourist areas should also be considered as part of the facilitation of increased tourism opportunities.

There are many other specific areas that many others will be sure to contribute with far more expertise than I can offer. However, I do encourage the Committee to look at the rail corridors as a journey facilitator - not a dedicated transport mode. The corridors themselves have additional value to the community than is being realized or prosecuted. These rail assets are a precious resource for the overall facilitation of the movement of people with a broad spectrum of needs and abilities and must be used more effectively.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Omar Khalifa