Submission

No 4

INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

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Submission to the Inquiry into the Utilization of Rail Corridors

Committee on Transport and Infrastructure

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Introduction

Transport to and from one's workplace from and to one's residence (ie, commuting) is the major utilization of both private and public transport. The majority of public transport is via the railways and the majority of private transport is via motor vehicles. There has been a growing use, albeit a small minority, of transport (commuting) being via bicycles. This has the advantage of reducing use of fossil fuels (of both private and public transport mechanisms) and increasing general health benefits of the cyclists. However, they currently must share the road with other motor vehicles, trucks and buses. As the number of cyclists increase on the roads, there is a concomitant increase in the risk of death and injury due to accidents between motorized vehicles and cyclists. Therefore, in terms of urban transport infrastructure planning, there is some need to separate the growing number of cyclists from the bulk of other road users.

Submission

Regarding the use of the land adjacent to the rail corridors I would like to respectfully submit that the committee should consider converting some of the land into bicycling paths. These "railway" bicycling paths would become the cycling equivalent to the motor vehicle expressways. The cycling paths would be in a single direction separated by the rail carriageway. The entry and exit points would be at the train stations and, possibly, at the bridges over the railway lines.

The immediate advantages of the proposal are:

- Bicycle paths can be provisioned with minimal encroachment on the current road infrastructure.
- It physically separates (for the bulk of their commuting journey) the cyclists from other road users.
- Provides a safer (and faster) transport corridor for the cyclists to and from different parts of the city.
- Since most railway lines traverse through level or very shallow gradients, it is ideal for cycling paths.
- Facilitates commuting via bicycle and thereby reduces motor vehicle use.

The anticipated savings of the proposal are:

- Reduction in rates of death and injury to cyclists from vehicular accidents
- Reduction in fossil fuel consumption by individual cyclists
- Reduction in cycling commuting time over the same distance
- Reduction in the use of private vehicles for commuting
- Increased general health benefits to the increased number of cyclists

The disadvantages of the proposal are:

- Cost (investigation, planning, logistics and implementation).
- At some points along the railway corridor, there is insufficient space for the cycling paths (especially in the inner city).
- In the case of accidents, there may be access problems for emergency vehicles.
- Without speed limits along the corridor, there is the possibility of major accidents.

The working model of the proposed cycling paths is that of the road expressways. There should be two paths along the railway corridor with each path only allowing traffic in one direction. One path

would be dedicated to going towards the Sydney Central Railway Station (the left side path whilst looking towards Central) and the other path would be dedicated to going away from the Sydney Central Railway Station (on the left side path whilst looking away from Central). The paths should have at least two lanes, preferable three. The entry and exit points should be an additional entry/exit lane to allow cyclists to sufficient space to increase or decrease their speed as they join/leave the "cycling" corridor. Cyclists should stay in the left lane unless overtaking (prior to which they should signal by some auditory means).

Conclusion

Bicycling paths along the railway lines would provide a safer and faster network of routes throughout the metropolitan area. It would facilitate the uptake of bicycles as a means of commuting to and from work and also provide safer routes for other bicycle users, like school children, to and from their destinations. The use of railway corridor land for this purpose would minimize any encroachment of roads. The main impediments are costs considering the number current cyclists commuting and the availability of sufficient space for the bicycle path, entry/exit lanes and safety buffer zones (from the railway and from footpath). I will leave it to some economist to calculate the real cost/benefit analysis of the proposal.