

**Submission
No 118**

INQUIRY INTO CROSS CITY TUNNEL

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Theme:

Summary

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BNP/LCT007

25 May, 2006

Chairperson,
Joint Select Committee on Cross City Tunnel,
Parliament House

Lane Cove Tunnel Inquiry – Bike North Submission

Dear Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Lane Cove Tunnel Inquiry component of the Cross City Tunnel Inquiry.

We have been involved in the consultation process at various stages of this process and our comments are documented in the attached submission.

Yours Sincerely

Graeme Edwards
President
Bike North

SUBMISSION TO CROSS CITY INQUIRY – LANE COVE TUNNEL COMPONENT

Introduction

Bike North Inc welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation process of the Lane Cove Tunnel Project, where we believe our experience can contribute towards ‘the extent to which the substance of the Lane Cove Tunnel contract was determined through community consultation processes’

Bike North is a bicycle user group affiliated with Bicycle New South Wales, that works with councils and state government authorities to achieve best practice cycling facilities in Northern Sydney. We directly work, usually through a bicycle committee structure, with seven local councils: North Sydney, Willoughby, Ryde, Hunters Hill, Mosman, Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Councils. Through our membership base we also indirectly work with Lane Cove, Parramatta and Baulkham Hills Councils. We promote cycling throughout the communities of Northern Sydney as an alternative, clean, sustainable, efficient, active and healthy form of transport and for recreation.

Bike North is entirely run by volunteers and we represent:

- our own financial membership base of over 400 members
- membership base of Bicycle New South Wales who live, work, study or otherwise participate in our region of Sydney
- all people who cycle through our region of Sydney
- all residents of Sydney who would like to cycle through our region of Sydney but are deterred by the lack of safe, appropriate cycling facilities.

Bike North has expressed an interest in the Lane Cove Tunnel Project since ‘Lane Cove Tunnel, Overview Report, Lane Cove – Gore Hill Corridor’ went on public exhibition in 1999. We responded to that public exhibition as detailed below.

We were not directly invited to participate in the EIS process – invitation to join the Pedestrian, Bicycle and Public Transport Focus Group was initially made to our affiliated parent, Bicycle New South Wales and another bicycle user group, North Shore Bicycle Group (who represented the lower north shore area only). Subsequently two of our active executive members were asked to ‘backup’ the other bicycle representatives, and maintained an active role in the remainder of the EIS consultation process.

Our representatives have been actively involved in various consultation forums during the design and construction period. Two of our members were appointed to two of the Community Consultation Liaison Groups (CCLG) and three have been appointed to the LATM Consultation Groups. Two of our members have also been more recently invited to attend meetings of another CCLG group.

Four of our members have also participated in an informal bicycle consultation group which met with the LCT project team infrequently throughout the design and construction period.

Benefits of Cycling

The construction of high quality cycling facilities is an essential aspect of the Lane Cove Tunnel project due to the benefits it will bring to the community as a whole. These benefits include:

- Health benefits; both to individuals and the wider community. It is indisputable that any facility that encourages physical activity will benefit the health of individuals. As individual cases of illness due to physical inactivity decline, valuable community health resources will be under less pressure thereby benefiting the wider community.
- Economic benefits; both in terms of the cost of healthcare and the cost of traffic to the community. The health benefits described above have a flow on economic benefit to the community as pressure is taken off the health system and the individual. Encouraging commuters onto bicycles will have the benefits of reducing traffic on our roads as well as the associated costs of private motor transport to both the taxpayer and the individual.
- Environmental benefits; any measures that reduce reliance on private motor transport have an obvious, indisputable benefit to the environment. At the local level, fewer cars will result in cleaner, more breathable air while at the global level fewer greenhouse gases will help protect from the further progression of global warming.
- Transport benefits; recent media reports have increasingly focused on the importance of diversifying the current transport mix which is far too heavily reliant on private motor cars. A high quality cycle facility will add to this mix by providing another viable alternative to the private motor car.
- Equity; bicycles have a legal right to use public roads, including busy main roads. However, high stress environments, especially those caused by fast moving, heavy traffic passing cyclists within the same lane, give rise to serious safety issues. By denying safe passage to cyclists along preferred routes where cars travel, a serious inequity occurs in relation to the rights of cyclists against the rights of motorists. As the Lane Cove Tunnel will not be accessible to cyclists, it is essential that high quality cycling facilities along Epping / Longueville Road.
- Social benefits; the social benefits of high quality cyclist facilities must be considered. Cycling is a popular, inexpensive and growing mode of transport for children and families within their local community. This is especially true of short to medium trips that are often inconvenient for cars. The community will also benefit from high quality cycling facilities by encouraging commerce and intercourse within the local community rather than driving to far off centres. The cycling facility will also be a much needed piece of recreational infrastructure connecting with many other community facilities such as local shops, parks, churches, the aquatic centre and council library.

Need for Alternative Transport Modes

Sydney's reliance on private motor vehicles is unsustainable both in terms of the monetary cost and the impact on the community and environment. High quality cycling facilities will help reduce these costs in several ways:

- Resource availability; roads, parking spaces, raw materials and fossil fuels are all important community resources. Bicycles are an extremely efficient use of these resources and should be encouraged with high quality cycling facilities. Bicycles take up far less space on roads thereby causing far less congestion. Up to 20 bicycles can be stored in the area needed by one car. The energy and raw material cost of the production of one car would support many more bicycles. Obviously, bicycles have no fossil fuel or pollution cost.
- Fuel pricing; the recent sharp rises in the cost of fuel will serve as an incentive for motorists to seek alternatives to private motor vehicles. It is inevitable that demand for high quality cycling facilities will increase; therefore it is essential that they are made available.
- Traffic congestion; traffic congestion costs dearly. This cost is borne both by the individual and the economy as a whole. Just as importantly, the social costs of traffic congestion contribute to a diminished quality of life. The provision of high quality cycling facilities will

assist in the reduction of traffic congestion as commuters seek to use them as a way of avoiding daily traffic jams.

- Air pollution; the Lane Cove Tunnel project has highlighted concerns in the community regarding vehicle emissions. Failure to provide high quality cycling facilities will only serve to worsen air pollution in the area. The more commuters who are lured out of cars onto bicycles; the less air pollution will be generated. This will benefit everyone, especially the local residents.
- Greenhouse gases; Australia ranks amongst the highest per-capita producers of greenhouse gases. Of this, a major contributing factor is the use of the motor car. The construction of a high quality cycling facility will assist the community in reducing its greenhouse gas emissions.

High Latent Demand for Cycling

As a result in shifting community attitudes towards vehicle emissions, the impact of traffic congestion and rising petrol prices, there has already been a significant increase in bicycle usage in those areas of Sydney within the scope of this project. This can be measured in terms of trip counts, surveys and bicycle sales (which have consistently outsold cars). As awareness of these issues increases, the potential for increasing numbers of commuter cyclists is very high.

- Consistent increase in all areas of inner Sydney; statistics for 2001 show a universal increase in numbers of commuter cyclists. In particular, the North Sydney local government area registered a 119% increase since 1996 for both residents and employees. This is significant as North Sydney is a major trip generator in the area of the Lane Cove Tunnel.
- Bicycle sales; in the past several years, bicycle sales have exceeded car sales with this trend showing no sign of reversing. High quality cycling facilities are needed to cater for the vastly increasing numbers of cyclists in the community.
- Bicycle use surveys; bike plans, published by many local councils, have indicated increasing bicycle use. For example, a telephone survey in 2002 by consultants preparing the North Sydney Bike Plan identified that 34% of adult males and 20% of adult females has cycled in the past 12 month.
- Bicycle trip counters; bicycle trip counters on major bicycle routes around Sydney have recorded significant rises in the numbers of cyclists using these facilities. In particular on the busiest cycle commuter path in Sydney, the Sydney Harbour Bridge Cycleway, a 7% increase was recorded between 2003 and 2004 alone. The number of bicycle trips on that cycleway would be in the vicinity of 1000 each working day. Newer paths such as the ANZAC Bridge recorded a huge increase of 50% and Browns Waterhole 20% increase. ANZAC Bridge recorded increases of 20% and 50% respectively. This demonstrates a clear demand for high quality cycling facilities such as those proposed as part of the Lane Cove Tunnel project.
- NSW cycle to work figures in previous census years are low compared to all other states, a reflection on the lack of cycling facilities in Sydney compared to other capital cities. This illustrates the potential for growth in usage, if good quality, continuous, connecting cycling facilities are provided.
- Internationally, Australia as a whole sits very low in terms of cycle usage. Countries like Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and Sweden all exhibit at least 10 fold times cycling for transport than Australia. This is not simply a reflection of different cultures. All these countries activities encouraged cycling by building appropriate facilities, especially after the first 'oil shocks' of the 1970s.

National and State Government Policy

The provision of cycling facilities is national and state government policy and it is state government policy to provide cycling facilities in all new roadworks. Providing continuous, high

quality cycle facilities for the entire length of the Lane Cove Tunnel Project is entirely consistent with state policy.

National Policy

The Australian National Cycling Strategy 2005-2010 identified responsibilities that lay with various governments to encourage and facilitate increased cycling in Australia. This was endorsed by four NSW government ministers:

- The Hon Joseph Tripodi MP
- The Hon John Watkins MLA
- The Hon Michael Costa MLC
- The Hon Eric Roozendaal MLC

This National Cycling Strategy was a renewal of the previous National Strategy 1999-2004, which was seen as playing a significant role in raising the profile of cycling in Australia.

New South Wales Policy

State policy over at least the last decade has directly supported the encouragement of cycling as alternative transport and provision of cycling facilities and provided guidelines for high quality use. Examples include:

- Action for Air (NSW Govt, 1996)
- Action for Transport (NSW Govt, 1998)
- Action for Bikes, BikePlan 2010 New South Walks (NSW Govt, 1999)
- NSW Bicycle Guidelines (RTA, 2003)
- Planning guidelines for walking and cycling (NSW Govt, 2004)

State Policy in Action

After many decades of providing for cars with no recognition of alternative modes such as walking and cycling, the last decade has seen a progressive improvement in provision of bicycle facilities in all new road works, in line with state government policy. Examples include:

- Gore Hill Freeway – narrow bike lanes installed
- M2 – wide bike lanes installed
- M7 – 4 metre shared path for walkers and cyclists plus shoulders available for more experienced cyclists
- Pacific Highway Upgrade – includes shoulders for cyclists

Background to Lane Cove Tunnel Project

The background to the Lane Cove Tunnel project provides compelling reasons to ensure that there is a high quality cyclist facility included.

- For many years, residents of Lane Cove have campaigned strongly for a tunnel under Epping Road. The principal reasons have been the reduction of motor traffic along Epping Road and the return of road space to the local community. The addition of a high quality cyclist facility is consistent with these aims as a shift from motor traffic to bicycles will reduce the amount of traffic. The reallocation of road space to cyclists will be of benefit to the local community, giving them a high quality recreation and transport resource.
- The Lane Cove Tunnel is a link from the M2 motorway to the Gore Hill Expressway. This is also true for cyclists who currently have no continuity of high quality cyclist facilities. Whilst cars will be well catered for by the tunnel, cyclists will not be permitted in the tunnel. In order to provide equity, there must be a high quality cyclist facility linking the existing facilities.

Consultation Role in the LCT Project – Pre EIS

As the opening of the Lane Cove Tunnel approaches, motoring groups are raising objections to the reallocation of road space on Epping Road. As with the Cross City Tunnel, many eleventh-hour objections are being made on grounds that there was a lack of consultation or notice. It must be noted that these plans, including the reallocation of road space, have been in the public domain and available for public scrutiny for many years. As a result, all interested parties have had ample time to be heard. This public scrutiny commenced with the Lane Cove Tunnel, Overview Report, Lane Cove – Gore Hill Corridor, which went on public exhibition from December 1999 to February 2000. It should be noted that there was widespread awareness in the local community (brochure letter boxed) that this report was on public exhibition for comments. The stated objectives included:

- Measures to reduce traffic volumes on local roads.
- Improve conditions for buses, cyclists and pedestrians.
- Management and containment of motor traffic growth in the corridor.

Included within this concept design were

- Dedicated cycle lanes from Mowbray Rd West to Moore Street
- Cycle lane from Moore Street to Centennial Ave where car parking was not provided
- Dedicated cycle Lane from Centennial Ave to Longueville Rd
- Cycle use of transit lane shoulder of Gore Hill Freeway

Bike North responded to these public documents in a submission, which included the following points:

- Bike North did not support building a road tunnel in view of the government's stated intention to reduce dependence on private motor vehicles; and as it would run parallel to the then proposed rail development between Chatswood and Parramatta thus detracting from the incentive to move away from car use;
- If it did proceed, that the highest priority be given to promoting sustainable public transport and bicycle transport;
- That, to this end, this project should then form a major regional cycle route and be of the highest quality so as to encourage maximum use;
- It would be an opportunity to fit world's best practice in cycle facilities along this alignment, which offers the best grades and most direct travel between the residential, employment and educational sectors of the lower north shore and North Ryde / Macquarie Park;
- Drew attention to the extremely hostile conditions for cyclists along this highly desirable route for bicycles; therefore, cyclists facilities must be upgraded along this alignment regardless of whether the tunnel proposal went ahead.
- Separately marked lanes for cyclists were required for the entire length to safely cater for all people in bikes; it was not adequate to share with parked cars, a widened kerbside lane, transit or bus lane. Neither was it appropriate that a commuter cycle lane share with pedestrians.
- Cycle lane width should be a minimum of 2 metres as recommended by the standards specified in Austroads 14

Consultation Role in the LCT project - EIS Process

A range of focus groups were formed and were subject to consultation over the years prior to the release of the EIS. These included both residents groups and special interest groups.

Bicycle New South Wales and North Shore Bicycle Group (NSBG) were invited to participate in the Pedestrian, Bicycle and Public Transport Focus Group. Bike North was not initially invited but two of their members, were subsequently asked to 'backup' the regular attendees due to long absence. They continued their involvement for the remainder of the EIS Process. The following points relate to this consultation period.

- Strongly supported the proposal that the number of general travel lanes on Epping Road should be decreased as otherwise there was a great danger of induced traffic, which was contrary to the objective of reduced vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT).
- Supported the suggestion that was put to the focus group that bus lanes be provided in place of transit lanes;
- Cycling facilities proposal put to the Focus Groups for bicycles had changed significantly since the Overview Document. Rather than bike lanes, it was now proposed to provide an off road shared path for recreational use.
- Bicycle representatives forcefully disagreed at these meetings that this facility would be primarily for recreational use and only after representation to the RTA's Bicycle Unit was it acknowledged that this was a commuter route. This reflected a poor understanding of the needs of this route by the consultants engaged for this EIS process.
- Bicycle representatives did not agree with the proposal put for two direction shared path along Epping Road, as, in some locations it would create opportunities for conflict between pedestrians and cyclists and between cyclists and cars at driveways and intersections – made forceful representation that the bicycle facility should be single direction, on each side of the road, separated from pedestrians and from cars. There was much discussion and consultation but bicycle representatives were overruled by the consultants.
- Bicycle representatives supported a two-way shared facility alongside the Gore Hill Freeway, as the issue of driveways and intersections was not relevant in this location and pedestrian traffic was not anticipated to be heavy. They also maintained that the freeway shoulders should be retained for bicycle use, to support high speed, confident cyclists who were already using the existing narrower bike lane, and would travel at speeds not compatible with pedestrians
- Naremburn – Park Rd to Chermisford Rd section – there was a great deal of discussion over the alignment of this section separately within two relevant focus groups; a residents group and the transport group. Cyclists had concerns over potential steep grades and adjoining residents had privacy concerns. Alignment was adjusted between focus group meetings taking these concerns into consideration and finally a proposal made that was much more removed from the residences but well designed to reduce out potential grade issues. This is an example of the consultation process working well.
- Bicycle representatives requested grade separated facility between Gore Hill Freeway and Longueville Rd shared paths under the Pacific Highway to provide continuity of travel and equity with motor cars. Initially rejected as too expensive, but eventually agreed that this should be included as continuity of travel for regional routes is in accordance with Austroads 14 and the emerging NSW Bicycle Guidelines
- Bicycle representatives requested grade separated access between M2 shoulders and Epping Road to provide continuity of travel and equity with motor cars. Rejected as too expensive, although agreed that an at grade connection should be made (as stated in EIS).

EIS Public Exhibition

EIS eventually went on exhibition in 2002. This proposal was for a shared path although separated space was generally designated for pedestrians and cyclists. This was mostly designated by a white line, but there were sections physically separated by a kerb. This EIS was well advertised and these details were open to full public scrutiny throughout this period.

Bicycle NSW responded, in consultation with Bike North and NSBG. In summary the response

- continued to call for priority for public transport , cycling and walking rather than building more roads

- stated support for a cycling facility along the Epping Road / Gore Hill Freeway alignment – there was no other suitable alignment
- stated preference for a facility that was separated both from cars and pedestrians
- made recommendation for improving safety and usefulness of a shared / separated facility as proposed
- made recommendations that good accessibility be provided between the bus lane and the shared/separated facility to enable most effective use of the bus lane by cyclists. The shared facility was not seen as suitable for high speed cyclists, except when travelling up-hill and it was envisioned that most would use the bus lanes on the down-hill sections. Access between the bus lane and shared/separated path in up-hill sections would enable them to move out of the bus lane as their speed reduced – a win-win solution for everyone, pedestrians, cyclists and buses.
- made recommendation for continuance of Gore Hill Freeway bike lane shoulder for higher speed, experienced, confident cyclists, the best way to slow speeds on the shared path..

It did not appear that any recommendations for change made in the BNSW response were taken on board.

Approval Process

Changes were made to the design of the project in the Naremburn area after the EIS and the Recommendation Report but before approval. These changes were not subject to any community consultation, neither by the local residents nor the local bicycle groups.

These changes resulted in the loss of the existing bicycle lane shoulders between Park Rd, Naremburn and Naremburn Shops. In compensation for this loss, the shared path was extended from Park Rd, Naremburn to Naremburn Shops. The route proposed was not ideal from a cycling perspective – it was a severe downgrade on the existing bicycle lane shoulders in terms of gradients and potential pedestrian conflict.

This route was eventually subject to a major consultative review during the project design/construction phase, but by this time the scope for useful alternative designs were limited and the existing proposal was the only feasible, compromised option..

Consultation Process during Design and Construction Phase

The following points document our perspective of consultation during the design and construction phase:

- **Community Consultation Liaison Groups (CCLG)**
Representatives from the bicycle community were successful in gaining a place on only two of the four community consultation liaison groups. This meant there was no one to provide the perspective of a local bicycle user in two of the consultation groups.
- **Bicycle Groups Consultation**
Group from Bicycle NSW and local cycling groups was formed informally to review plans with project team. Consultation with BNSW with respect to the Cycling and Pedestrian Plan was required as condition of consent, although how that should be done was not specified. The discussion at these meetings was at a far greater depth of detail than at the CCLG, but were held infrequently and usually tried to cover far too great a scope of the project in a single meeting, with the result that some sections of the proposed shared path were not adequately covered.
- **Bicycle representatives accepted the approved cycle facility design as the starting point during design/construction stage. Recognised it as not ideal but still a far better facility than was available now – second best design and also much better than suggestions that were being made by other community representatives who had no experience on cycling needs.**

The bicycle representatives made recommendations for the best possible design within that constraint.

- Sadly, an aggressively negative approach to the proposed cycleway taken by the Lane Cove Council representative resulted in an inability to work together for the best design along the Epping /Longueville alignment (as we did with other councils) – instead we were forced to defend the compromised design against the threat of an even worse option using hilly backroads – a completely inappropriate location for an off-road path.
- Naremburn – Park Rd to Chelmsford
Due to a specific condition of consent, there was a great deal of consultation during design, with residents in this area who requested that the pathway be built along the northern alignment. This was despite the good compromise that had been achieved during the EIS period. The LCT project team sensibly decided that the existing proposal to use the south side of the freeway, where there was plenty of available RTA land, should be retained over the residents' proposal to use the northern alignment which was very constrained and would have required intrusion into other resident's property, land acquisition and further consultation with other impacted residents. It was a long protracted phase of consultation, which was not handled as well as it could have been by the LCT team.
- Park Rd to Naremburn Shops
There was very extensive consultation with shopkeepers, residents and bicycle groups over this section of shared path. As stated previously, this had not been part of the EIS proposal and there had been no previous consultation. While a range of options were proposed, unfortunately, by this stage it was too late to include the best option, to integrate the shared path as part of the viaduct widening. The second best option from a cycling perspective, a bridge over Willoughby Road was not preferred by the local residents and was rejected. In the end, the only reasonable alternative remaining was that documented in the approved project, albeit a compromised route.
- Epping Road – intersections
One potential issue with the Epping Road shared path route (as opposed to single direction bike lanes) is the potential for conflict and corresponding legal use of crossing at intersections. Supporting legislation for use of bicycle paths at intersections crossings is woefully inadequate. Major intersections are signalised which increases safety and by the installation of bicycle lamps legalises bicycle use of these crossing. Minor roads can be an issue with motorists not checking for pedestrians and cyclists crossing the intersection. Pedestrian crossings are not the answer as existing legislation does not cover cyclist use of crossings, nor provide an alternative type of crossing that cyclists could use. The bicycle representatives recognised that under existing legislation and driver attitudes, bicycle priority was not possible at these intersection, but we did seek to include measures that improved motorists' awareness of the potential for cyclist and pedestrian crossing these intersections, encouraged them to slow down and avoid blocking the pathway. Suggestions that platforms be installed on the road at these intersections, have failed to be taken on board. We responded to concerns that cyclists may think they have priority by suggesting the installation of Give Way signs at the pathways for the cyclists and pedestrians. Unfortunately our suggestions are unable to be trialled as Lane Cove Council was instrumental in removing from the design the only one that was proposed by the project team.
- Underpass Longueville Road
This extremely important access link which was the one major improvement gained through the EIS Focus Group was regularly discredited by the Lane Cove Council representative, on the basis of personal security, despite the fact that the design was not yet available. The design has only been recently completed and is a credit to the design team in addressing the potential issues raised by both council and bicycle groups and taking on board suggestions made by bicycle groups. This proposed design appears to also have the support of Lane Cove Council.
- M2 Links
Despite the EIS including connections between the shared path and the shoulders of the M2, to date this has not been fully included in the design, although a shared path has been

provided on the opposite side of Delhi Road. There is no legalised crossing of Delhi Road with access to the east and west board shoulders. We can only assume this was left out of the contract, despite its inclusion in the EIS.

Summary Comments on Consultation

The following points summarises our comments on consultation for the Lane Cove Tunnel Project

- There was a great deal of consultation over this project. The residential community, motoring interests and the cycling community have had many opportunities to put forward their opinions, at various stages. Therefore, eleventh-hour compromises should not be made that will detract from the quality of the cyclist facilities;
- Through the consultation, a wide range of opinions on the cycling facility have been received from some community groups. These have often been contradictory to bicycle group opinion. It is understandable that the project team has had to consider all views however, this should not detract from the project objective of, 'to improve conditions for ... cyclists and pedestrians';
- Some recommendations made by bicycle groups have been taken on board, but this has been minimal. The EIS stage, before contracts to design and deliver were signed, was the time when the opportunities to make significant change for a better quality facility were much more possible and we recognise that design/build team is often constrained in the improvements they can make;.
- The facility proposed, while not the ideal that the bicycle representatives involved would prefer, is far better than what is now available. If finally built to the best quality possible, it will be well used and provide a valuable part of the transport mix on the lower North Shore. It is therefore vital that no further downgrading occur.
- During EIS phase, lack of understanding of cycling requirements by the contracted consultants was very evident.
- Failure during EIS to take on board local pedestrian concerns, supported by North Sydney Council and Bicycle NSW, around the Falcon St ramps and the need for a separate grade separated crossing of the Warringah Freeway was quite contrary to the objective 'to improve conditions for ... cyclists and pedestrians'
- A major flaw in the process between EIS and Project Approval is evident whereby major changes were made to the project without public consultation.
- During design and construction, consultation has failed to take on board bicycle user advice that special treatment is required, for safety reasons, at intersections to slow cars and avoid cars blocking the intersection.
- During design and consultation, the project team has failed to take notice of bicycle user advice that a shared/separated facility cannot cater to all levels of cycling purpose, expertise and confidence. Furthermore, that low cost facilities such as ramps between bus lanes and shared path and access to shoulders on Gore Hill Freeway would provide not just a higher quality facility for these cyclists but a safer shared facility for less experienced cyclists and pedestrian as well less potential for delay for buses.