

INQUIRY INTO CROSS CITY TUNNEL

Organisation: Bike North
Name: Dr Graeme Woodward
Telephone:
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Theme:

Summary

Submission into the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Cross City Tunnel Project.

This document is written in relation to the call for submissions into the Cross City Tunnel Project, specifically relating to Terms of Reference 1(g) through 1(j). These items are specific to the Lane Cove Tunnel (LCT) project.

I write with particular reference to the inclusion of cycle and pedestrian facilities as part of this project.

One of the major goals of the LCT project is to reduce the traffic volumes and congestion on Epping Rd through Lane Cove, with specific benefits to the local residents and community as a whole by a general downgrading of Epping Rd as a thoroughfare. We should not lose sight of this goal when assessing the progress and outcomes from the project. In particular, there is currently considerable pressure from some interest groups to maintain the existing traffic capacity of Epping Rd, and thus lose the opportunity to make this area more 'liveable' for the residents and deliver important sustainable transport options for walking, cycling and public transport.

Throughout the LCT project there has been considerable consultation with many interest groups in relation to the shared path, designed for cyclists and pedestrians. I am a member of BikeNorth – representing cyclists throughout the northern suburbs of Sydney. BikeNorth is a 'Bicycle User Group' that falls under the umbrella of Bicycle NSW – the peak State bicycle organisation. I currently participate in the LCT Local Area Traffic Management Committee (LATM) for the area of Ryde. I have also participated in numerous meetings hosted by the LCT consortium, where they sought input from cyclists on design issues relating to the project. BikeNorth undertook an extensive review of the Cycling and Pedestrian Plan associated with the LCT project. We submitted a written report, and have met with the LCT consortium in April of this year to discuss the report. BikeNorth, and affiliated cycle groups, serve on numerous of the LCT project CCLG committees.

Through participation in this process, it is evident that there are often differing views on how (or whether) certain facilities should be constructed. This has frequently led to very emotive arguments. Inevitably compromises must be made. This certainly applies to the cycleway (shared path) component of the project. However, the necessary step of making these compromises, and the fact that some people will feel that the eventual solution is not as they may like it, should not be taken as an indication that the consultation process has been inadequate – the terms of reference of this inquiry.

As anyone who has lived in or near the area is well aware, residents of Lane Cove have campaigned very vocally over many years for a tunnel under Epping Road to remove the traffic and return the road space to the local community. Retaining the existing capacity of Epping Rd is inconsistent with this goal. It is also clearly unnecessary given that the combination of the new tunnel and the redesigned Epping Rd will provide substantially increased traffic capacity compared to the current situation.

There have been some representations concerning the safety of various aspects of the cycleway, and this has, on occasions, led to arguments that the cycleway be removed, or relocated away from Epping Road. A shared path along Epping Road is clearly the most direct, lowest gradient, most useful and safest route of all feasible options. All possible alternate routes have significant design and safety issues. For example, Mowbray Road has a very steep section, is heavily trafficked and has numerous intersections, creating potential conflict points. The intersection with the Pacific Highway is particularly problematic. All other routes based on back-streets away from Epping Rd have similar problems – unreasonable gradients, numerous intersections and circuitous routes.

Compared to the existing situation, the planned shared path is infinitely preferable and safer, and should attract many additional users who would not currently consider cycling in this area as an option. Currently there is no route linking the major centres of North Ryde, Lane Cove, North Sydney and the CBD for all but the most hardy of cyclists. A less direct, safe, pleasant or convenient route would inevitably lead to lower potential usage – a wasted opportunity to promote sustainable transport alternatives and satiate the latent demand for cycle facilities (evidenced by booming bicycle sales and numerous recent surveys).

Provision of a cycleway along Epping Road is consistent with the publicised policies of the elected governments – both state and federal. Applicable policies include BikePlan 2010, Action for Air and Action for Transport.

In summary – while public consultation on the cycle aspects of this project has not been perfect, there has been significant consultation throughout. There have been numerous unavoidable compromises made in arriving at the current design as a result of this consultation with numerous interest groups. I believe that the current design broadly represents a reasonable outcome for all parties. Consultation is ongoing concerning some final design details. It is imperative that this project deliver the promised pedestrian, bicycle and public transport facilities.

Graeme Woodward, 25/5/2006.^(v.2)