Submission
No 112

INQUIRY INTO CROSS CITY TUNNEL

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Theme:

Summary

Annie Marshall - Submission to Cross City Tunnel Inquiry -- Lane Cove Tunnel

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To: <crosscitytunnel@parliament.nsw.gov.au>
Date: Tuesday, 30 May 2006 12:56
Subject: Submission to Cross City Tunnel Inquiry -- Lane Cove Tunnel

The Chair,
Rev. Fred Nile, MLC
Cross City Tunnel Inquiry
NSW Parliament.

Dear Sir,

SUBMISSION TO CROSS CITY TUNNEL INQUIRY REGARDING THE LANE COVE TUNNEL

The North Shore Bicycle Group (founded in 1982), affiliated with Bicycle New South Wales, welcomes this opportunity to provide a submission to the Cross City Tunnel Inquiry and its extension to the Lane Cove Tunnel.

The corridor involving the Lane Cove Tunnel Project is a crucial transport corridor, linking the North Ryde region (M2 and the adjacent traffic generators including the Macquarie Business Park, Macquarie University and Macquarie Shopping Centre) with Lane Cove, Chatswood, Artarmon Industrial Area, North Sydney and the Sydney CBD through to Port Botany, Sydney airport and beyond.

Currently cycling along much of the project's corridor is extremely unattractive due to high traffic volumes combined with the loss of cyclist access to the Gore Hill Freeway shoulders during the construction phase. Even local access, also affecting pedestrians, has and is being severed for unnecessarily prolonged periods.

Commendably, this project includes a 7.5km long cycleway and pedestrian path between Naremburn and Wicks Road, North Ryde. Three sections are involved:

1. Merrenburn Ave, Naremburn – Pacific Highway -- along the Gore Hill Freeway – covered by CCLG3 (Community Consultative Liaison Group No.3)
2. Pacific Highway – Mowbray Road – along Longueville / Epping Roads

   -- generally covered by CCLG2
3. Mowbray Road – Wicks Road, North Ryde along Epping Road – CCLG1

SITUATION PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION WORK THROUGH TO NOW

1. Gore Hill Freeway (Merrenburn Ave – Pacific Highway)

Prior to the start of construction works, cyclists were able to legally ride on the 1.5 metre wide shoulders along this freeway. During the design process in the late 1980's, the then Bicycle Institute of NSW (now Bicycle New South Wales) and the North Shore Bicycle Group with the strong support of Willoughby Council successfully negotiated with the then Department of Main Roads

(RTA since 1988) to widen the shoulders from to just 0.3m wide to 1.2m then finally 1.5 metres. The concern with shoulders just 0.3m wide was that a broken-down vehicle would have no alternative but to stop in the high speed left travel lane due to concrete New Jersey Barriers and/or high sound walls hard up again the narrow shoulder. With the LCTP, these shoulders will be narrowed to just 1.2m wide and taper to only 0.5m wide through the Willoughby Road underpass adjacent to the Naremburn Shopping Centre. This narrowing will result in less protection for broken-down vehicles. Unfortunately, during the prolonged construction phase, cyclists have been banned from the shoulders and directed onto a very indirect, back-street route involving steep terrain and through a heavily-trafficked industrial area.
Currently, the bicycle/pedestrian facility located immediately south of the freeway is nearing completion, but until it is opened cyclists have an extremely indirect, hilly route to negotiate, combined with a heavily-trafficked industrial area.

2. Longueville Road & Epping Road through Lane Cove
This section has long been appalling for cycling with very high traffic volumes and narrow kerbside lanes typical of many main roads in Sydney. To the west of the residential area, not even a formalised footpath is available through to the Lane Cove River.
The contract requires the provision of bus lanes, turning bays, cycleway and pedestrian paths, to be completed within 6 months of the tunnel's opening.
All of the cycling facility is off-road, however much of its length will be located on the southern side in the position of the existing westbound kerbside lane, but deviating away from the roadway near bus stops to avoid potential conflict with bus commuters.

The LCTP contract specifies the construction of shared path underpasses of the Pacific Highway and the adjacent Longueville Road westbound on-ramp. The design of this vitally important facility was recently provided for comment. Given the major property constraints in the vicinity of these two underpasses, the design has been well received. The grade separation of these two very busy roads is a very significant component of the cycleway, enhancing safety together with a convenient facility instead of the two inconvenient, dangerous signalised crossings currently on the surface.

3. West from Mowbray Road / Lane Cove River
Again, substantial sections of Epping Road has narrow kerbside lanes, high speed traffic and no or limited footpaths. However due to the Lane Cove Tunnel Project, increasing sections of the cycleway and pedestrian paths have been completed.

COMMENTS ON DESIGN
To finally have cycling facilities along the 7.5 km long corridor will be a most welcome development and will result in a major impetus to cycling through the region. Overall, we consider the design to be adequate to good, though it often depend on the section involved. We consider the recently provided underpass design of the Pacific Highway and the adjacent Longueville Road no-ramp offers a good solution given the extremely limited space available in the immediate area.

1. BICENNTENNIAL RESERVE / PARK ROAD VALLEY
We have concerns with the steep grades over 8% to 10% over hundreds of metres in the vicinity of the Park Rd / Bicentennial Reserve (Naremburn) valley. Here the GHF, designed for the 1992 construction, is on very high piers providing excellent (safe and convenient) access beneath the freeway to the Bicentennial Reserve from local streets. Unfortunately, the proposed cycleway and pedestrian path follow the steep decent into the valley with consequent inappropriately steep grades adjacent to a narrow underpass of Willoughby Road. In stark contrast, the freeway high above has a grade of less that 2%, so with the narrowing of the shoulders, most cyclists will have no choice but to use a very substandard new facility. We requested an elevated structure be incorporated into the new freeway widening across this valley, but this has unfortunately been rejected. This problem has occurred due to very poor design specifications by the RTA.

2. FALCON STREET OVERPASS OF WARRINGAH FREEWAY

As part of the LCTP, the northern footpath (shared path) has been severed by three north-facing ramps to provide tolled access to and from the Warringah Freeway. Cyclists and pedestrians will now need to cross a series of crossings. Estimates indicate that these introduced delays may be close to 7 minutes, though authorities have been reluctant to provide these details in writing. This transformation is a disgrace as it will result in pedestrians and cyclists being seriously injured and killed. It is inexcusable not to provide a grade separated facility as requested by North Sydney council, pedestrian and cycling groups.

It is interesting to note that on the southern side of the overpass, there has never been a footpath or a cycling facility. This bridge was designed by the Department of Main Roads in the 1960's and their planners presumably decided it was too dangerous to provide a footpath on that side. However, as part of the LCTP, the RTA has specified a
footpath on this southern side (we are still waiting as to whether it will be a shared facility), despite the even greater dangers due to the much higher traffic volumes on that side. The end result will be a series of dangerous crossings for pedestrians and cyclists on BOTH sides of the bridge. This sham, under the guise of planning, shows a total incompetence with regard to pedestrian and cycling safety and convenience. It would appear that the RTA will be exposed to litigation due to their incompetence.

NSBG requests that the RTA engineer who signed off on this design be required to appear before your inquiry to explain his or her actions. This person should also be required to provide details on how the RTA will rectify the design, including what new bridge structure/s will be provided, its location, how it connects into existing pedestrian facilities and signposted bicycle routes and when construction will be completed.

3. LONGUEVILLE ROAD / EPPING ROAD

Properties, primarily homes and units, extend along Longueville Road and Epping Road for nearly two kilometers from the PacificHighway. The remaining one and a half kilometres through to the Mowbray Road (adjacent to the Lane Cove River bridge) consists of adjacent bushland and the Shell Service Station Complex.
Along this section, there are five signalised intersections ..... Pacific Highway, Longueville Road / Epping Road, Centennial Ave, Tantallon Road and Sam Johnson Way. These intersections are largely designed to maximise the throughput of motor vehicles with the safety and convenience of pedestrians given only limited consideration e.g. frequent major delays for pedestrians crossing at these sites.

PLATFORMS / THRESHOLDS:

Along the southern side where the off-road cycleway will be located there are five side-streets ..... Kimberley Avenue, Phoenix Street, Coxs Lane, Munro Street and Moore Street. The Environmental Impact Statement recommended platforms / raised thresholds at these intersections. However, due to the opposition from Lane Cove council, even the Munro Street platform recommended in Sub Plan C (May 2005) has been rejected. This is of major concern to NSBG. With a platform being at the same level as the footpath, it raises pedestrians and cyclists so they are more easily seen by the motorist. The same safety reasoning is used with Wombat Crossings outside of schools. The platform also provides a visual message to motorists that they are crossing a special facility as well as slowing turning vehicles, further enhancing safety. Platforms are also very commonly used in new subdivisions adjacent to main roads and when retro-fitting.

STOP SIGNS:

NSBG considers that these side-streets should have STOP signs facing the traffic about to enter the main road. Legally, a turning vehicle is required to give way to pedestrians, a fact not even known by RTA, TJH and council engineers at a recent meeting. It is therefore absurd to design intersections that do not address the legal requirement. Were a pedestrian or cyclist to be unfortunately hit by a turning vehicle, if the vehicle has stopped, the impact speed will be less resulting in reduced injury to

the pedestrian or cyclist.

COXS LANE

At Coxs Lane, the combination of this laneway having a steep approach to Epping Road, being very narrow (about 5 metres wide) and with a high fence and vegetation, results in visibility being markedly limited, compromising the safety of those using the Epping Road footpath .....pedestrians, joggers and adult cyclists riding with their children under the age of twelve. Council has finally agreed to the installation of a STOP sign at this laneway, but only after an incredibly tortuous process.

PRIORITY

Currently, while turning vehicles are required to give way to pedestrians, cyclists using a shared path (or even a Regional Bicycle Route) are required to give way to these turning vehicles. However, a cyclist riding in the adjacent kerbside lane has priority over the turning vehicle, resulting in many cyclists preferring to ride on the road.

As mentioned above, the principal function of signalised intersections is to maximise capacity. To achieve a more appropriate balanced, it is not unreasonable to give cyclists an increased measure of priority at side-streets by having the same give way requirement as for pedestrians.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

The experience with CCLG2 is that the majority of members have significant concerns with potential conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians, but fail to recognise the real danger to pedestrians (and cyclists). In NSW last year of the 504 fatalities, 100 were pedestrians, who are largely being killed by motor vehicles. In metropolitan Sydney, there are usually more pedestrians killed than motorists each year. I represented the Bicycle Institute of New South Wales on the State Bicycle Committee for nearly a decade. This committee was aware of three unusual fatalities, one involving a cyclist where the pedestrian stepped off a mid-block kerb without looking, colliding with a cyclist riding in the kerbside lane. The other two pedestrians were killed as a result of collisions with joggers.

Community representatives appear not to appreciate the total width of the footpath and cycleway is generally 4 metres (a much wider facility than occurs over much of metropolitan Sydney), this being a very generous space for the two road user groups to co-exist. Also, there seems to be no understanding that a cyclist wants to avoid a crash, as they often come off worst.

During the consultative process with the CCLG's, it has become evident that the authorities responsible for the make-up of these community groups have regretted not having a cycling representative on CCLG1, despite requests from cycling groups for such representation. Members for this CCLG have tried unreasonably to modify the proposed facility, while there is no opportunity to present the case for cycling to be part of the transport choice.

DESIGN THROUGH LANE COVE

Some influential residents have little or no understanding of cycling, yet ensure their views dominate design. This is best demonstrated with Lane Cove Tunnel Action Group's leaflet to residents seeking responses to TJH's Sub Plan C report for the section of the project along the Lane Cove section of the corridor. Close to three-quarters of this leaflet was devoted to problems with the proposed cycleway, hardly supportive of their principal requirement for much cleaner air.

Over a year ago, a majority of CCLG2 members went to the media, without consulting all members, regarding concerns with the design of the Pacific Highway underpass, despite the fact that no design had been produced.

Another local environmental group claimed that three large trees were being removed for the cycleway, when in fact these trees need to be removed for the construction of the westbound bus lane. Even if there was no cycleway, these trees would still need to be removed. Despite convincing them of their error, there was no retraction.

These actions are clearly designed to ensure their views dominate.

From a design viewpoint, the principal concerns are:

1. DRIVEWAYS

Much of the off-road cycleway will be located in the present westbound kerbside lane, but on the approach to a bus stop the cycleway will deviate behind the bus stop towards the footpath. For two unit blocks just to the east of the BP Service Station a short distance from Centennial Avenue, the proposed cycleway would be adjacent to the property boundaries and pass relatively steep driveways, affecting visibility.

Prolonged discussions regarding this aspect has taking up an extraordinary amount of time at our monthly CCLG2 meetings, but it is only in recent weeks that Thiess John Holland has indicated a possible solution. We understand they are prepared to consider modifying at least a couple of driveways to create a more level approach to the cycleway and footpath. Adjacent letterboxes and garbage bin areas also need to be relocated by a metre or so. These facilities and their fences are probably more than 40 years old. In this critical location, a eucalypt has pushed the front brick fence across the footpath, creating a dangerous sharp projection onto this public walkway. The fences, etc. need to be replaced, with the new ones setback about a metre as now occurs with many new fences adjacent to main roads. Such measures would markedly improve the sightlines for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists enhancing everyone's safety.

One of the local representative seriously suggested that cyclists should be required to dismount east of Centennial Ave that would require a walk of over a kilometre, yet the same person opposed STOP signs at side-streets.

2. KIMBERLEY AVE

This is the first side-street west of the Pacific Highway. There is concern that the angled 'Y' shaped intersection design may well have been a contributing factor in the fatality of an elderly pedestrian last May. Traditional intersections are 'T' shaped, so the motorist's peripheral vision tends to see pedestrians approaching from the left. At side-streets, motorists are threatened by vehicles approaching along the main road from the right, but unfortunately are far less likely to look for the pedestrian or cyclist on the left, despite the legal requirement to give way to pedestrians. This intersection is very wide at Longueville Road, so it is essential that this intersection be modified to a 'T' shaped design.

Early this year an email with an attachment showing a modified 'T' shaped design was sent to CCLG2 members from Lane Cove Council. This design originated from Thiess John Holland's designers and would provide a good solution. However, Lane Cove Council had a concern and TJH took this as a rejection. Subsequently, when we realised, to our great concern, that the 'Y' shape was to be retained, we approached council and TJH to hopefully use a design similar to that proposed by TJH. We are still awaiting a response.

3. PHOENIX STREET

This is the next side-street to the west. Currently, pedestrians are required to traverse nearly 14 metres of asphalt from dropped kerb to dropped kerb, creating unnecessary danger.

Immediately to the east is the main bus stop, which is being retained in its present location, markedly restricting the visibility of approaching vehicles. Bus stops should be located on the departure side of side-streets to maximise visibility, particularly turning vehicles. To compound these dangers, traffic is often travelling at high speed from the Pacific Highway and particularly from the Gore Hill Freeway, less than 200 metres to the east. With a bus or buses stopped at the bus stop, it will be possible for traffic to turn left from the centre lane into Phoenix Street at speeds close to 30 km/h because of the much greater turning arc, compared to 20 km/h from the kerbside lane. Compounding the danger to pedestrians and cyclists is the extremely limited visibility due to the buses. NSBG suggested one option was to ban this left turn, resulting in a major narrowing of this very wide intersection and consequently enhancing safety of commuters.

During peak hour about 60 vehicles per hour undertake this left turn, but could and should instead proceed via the nearby slip lane, already an option for motorists. This proposal has been rejected as the CCLG2 and professional engineers are largely focussed on motorist convenience, not on

pedestrian or cyclist safety.

4. SLIP LANE

Immediately to the west is a slip lane as Longueville Road curves left past the council chambers. Slip lanes are very dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists, as they allow motor vehicles to turn at speed at exactly the point where pedestrians and cyclists are crossing the road. By contrast, the Victorian planning authority, Vic Urban, the City of Melbourne and Melbourne Docklands do not allow the use of slip lanes due to the dangers to these road users.

In adjoining Willoughby, at a recent meeting their engineers could not recall any slip lane in their municipality.

Even in Germany with its unrestricted speeds on autobahns, slip lanes are not used at the connection to the main road due to the recognised dangers.

Again, in this case a slip lane, the real dangers to pedestrians (and cyclists) are being rejected by CCLG2 but far more importantly, the engineers (RTA, council and TJH), simply on the basis of capacity requirements.

5. MOORE STREET

The proposed design curves away from the Epping Road kerb and loses height due to the terrain on the approach to the crossing of Moore Street. NSBG is concerned that pedestrians and cyclists will be less visible than normal. Again, this is an excellent reason to incorporate platforms in the design in order to elevate these users.

CAPACITY ALONG THE CORRIDOR

There has been concern with the impacts of the Cross City Tunnel, particularly the attempts to divert traffic into the tunnel, the cost and in particular, the impact on William Street and surrounding streets. With only 40,000 vehicles per day using the tunnel even when it was free compared to the projected 94,000 vehicles per day, clearly the proponents of this tunnel, including the NRMA, have got it terribly wrong. Those who invested in this inappropriate project must bear the financial consequences. Clearly, the free period demonstrated that the vast majority of motorists want to access the city region, not bypass it.

There has been an attempt through the media to contrast these problems with the Lane Cove Tunnel Project. As mentioned above, this tunnel will directly link the M2, the Gore Hill Freeway, Warringah Freeway, the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Tunnel, the North Sydney and Sydney CBD's, the Eastern and Western Distributors through to Port Botany, the airport and beyond. With such a crucial corridor, the LCT will be very well used by many, including a very high proportion of business people.

According to available figures, currently about 3,700 vehicles per hour use Epping Road / Longueville Road. In the tunnel, the two lanes in each direction in the tunnel will have a capacity of 4,400 vph in each direction. On the surface, the arrangement will allow close to 1,450 vph. Consequently, with the opening of the tunnel, capacity will increase from 3,700 vph to close to 5,850 vph, an increase in capacity of 58%! Consequently, close to 60% of the current traffic will need to use the tunnel, a proportion that would seem very reasonable given the very high proportion of business people, who would be expected to appropriately value their time.

Note that while there will be one lane mid-block (plus the bus lane) sections on Epping Road, on the approach to the signalised intersections there will be two storage lanes with the two being maintained on the departure side of the intersection. Hence, from a capacity viewpoint, it provides significantly greater capacity compared to the media suggestions of a single lane in each direction.

CONGESTION

The above section suggests that there is more than adequate capacity. However, it would appear that congestion will occur almost totally due to the capacity constraints of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Tunnel. This cross-harbour constraint is quite appropriate as more capacity through the provision of another bridge or tunnel will generate even more trips and associated pollution.

Capacity, particularly on the SHB, should be maximised through the use of trains (2,000 commuters per train), buses, hopefully light rail, and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

Currently, this cross-harbour infrastructure appropriately limits traffic capacity. For motorist heading north to North Sydney, Chatswood, Lane Cove and beyond, in peak periods they will be delayed on the approach to these crossings, but once onto the Warringah Freeway, GHF, LCT and M2, capacity would appear to be adequate.
However city-bound, the cross-harbour capacity limit will continue following the opening of the LCT. Currently, queues extend an extraordinary distance from the cross-harbour facilities, not infrequently to the Gore Hill Freeway and are likely to be even longer, probably extending into the LCT. The only mitigating factor is the new transit lane in each direction on the Gore Hill Freeway delivered as part of the LCTP. These lanes and the bus lane in each direction on Epping Road will result in a largely unimpeded bus travel from the Lane Cove River all the way across the SHB. Consequently, it is likely that a significant proportion of car commuters will transfer to the buses due to far superior travel times through the avoidance of the continuing city-bound congestion.
However, it will be essential to increase the capacity and frequency of the bus service.
Any modification to the current contract such as an increase in travel lanes on Epping Road or the change of the contracted Epping Road bus lanes to transit lanes will only exacerbate the city-bound congestion problems and require massive compensation.

NSW BIKEPLAN 2010

In September 1999, the New South Wales Government launched 'Action for Bikes – BikePlan 2010'. This document states:
"This masterplan involves the expenditure of $251 million dollars across NSW over a decade. ..... The result will be 420 km of major off-road cycleways and 214 km of major links on quiet streets."
This compares with an RTA roads budget of $2.8 billion, the Lane Cove Tunnel now close to $1.4 billion, $427 million annually for the School Student Transport Scheme to transport children to and from school, while in stark contrast the RTA bicycle budget has been reduced to just $5 million.

BikePlan 2010 specified a network of Regional Bicycle Routes extending across much of metropolitan Sydney.
The cost of one kilometre of a Regional Bicycle Route is often close to $2 million. This compares to close to $400 million per kilometre for the LCTP.
While a number of the above routes have been constructed, particularly in western Sydney, its implementation staging is way behind schedule. Indeed, we understand that recently the NSW bicycle budget was reduced from $15 million to just $5 million, with the RTA's bicycle unit being incorporated into their Traffic Section and the manager not being replaced. The following details how BikePlan 2010 relates to the LCTP and the Lower North Shore.

CONNECTIONS TO PROJECT'S CYCLEWAY

Bicycle New South Wales, Bike North and NSBG had expected that this new LCTP facility would have connected to the following Regional Bicycle Routes as specified in the NSW Government's BikePlan 2010 (note completion dates in brackets). All three routes connect to the LCTP:

1. the southeast end of the LCTP was to connect to the Sydney Harbour Bridge cycleway (2004). However, the RTA claimed this section was being briefly delayed so that it would connect to the LCTP in conjunction with its completion. While the planning for the route has occurred, the RTA says it has been postponed due to lack of funding.
2. the above part extended to Chatswood Railway Station (2004) along the railway easement. Again, planning has occurred, but with no funding or implementation.
3. Gladesville – Chatswood (2005): Again, planning has occurred with the route expected to go via Lane Cove, but there has been no implementation.

Such a network would be an invaluable contribution to healthy, sustainable transport extending across a significant population region and employment centres that generate much traffic congestion and pollution.

SKYLINK

Travelling from the Sydney Harbour Bridge to the top of the Warringah Freeway is a major climb, as many motorists are aware of. However, the cyclist must not only expend considerable energy to accomplish this feat, but must also ride through the North Sydney CBD, if not the most hostile cycling environment in metropolitan Sydney, certainly one of the worst. Detractors such as the hills, the limited route options exacerbated by the severance of North Sydney by the Warringah Freeway, the high traffic volumes and its pollution are the major concerns.

NSBG has suggested to the RTA our SKYLINK proposal, an elevated shared pathway from the Sydney Harbour Bridge, crossing above the Pacific Highway, High and Mount Streets, the Berry Street on-ramp, then beneath the pedestrian bridge near the top of the Warringah Freeway to St Leonards Park, all at a grade of just 3%. We have been informed this facility would cost of the order of $15 million ..... massive money given the very limited bicycle funding but minuscule in transport terms.

CYCLING IN THE REGION

The Federal ABS Census shows that between 1996 and 2001, the number of people cycling to work increased by 119% in North Sydney, despite the hostile cycling environment. With another census to be undertaken in August, observation suggests the trend is expected to continue, assisted by the steadily rising world oil price, increasing recognition of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and the fast travel times offered by the bicycle in congested suburbs.

CONVERTS TO CYCLING

Having been vice-president of the Bicycle NSW for 17 years (1983/2001), I met with many RTA and council engineers, often up to three to four times a week. From those initial meetings, I can't recall one engineer who cycled, however by the late 1980's to early 1990's, increasing numbers took up cycling due to an appreciation of the benefits. In more recent times, I'm aware of an RTA CEO, a NSW Roads Minister and Federal politicians becoming frequent cyclists, yet commitment to State and Federal funding for the essential infrastructure is minimal.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

No serious alternative routes to this corridor are available as massive detours would be involved on heavily trafficked roads:

1. via Hunters Hill and the very limited facilities on the Gladesville Bridge, and
2. the Pacific Highway with its narrow kerbside lanes and close to 20 extremely hazardous 'S' lanes (where the kerbside lane tapers to the kerb) between Hornsby and North Sydney. A number of these 'S' lanes implemented since 1988 have been transformed into 'bike-safe' 'S' lane designs, where the kerbside lane tapers to a metre wide bicycle lane through the intersection.
3. via indirect, hilly backstreets having speed humps whose designs are 'bicycle- unfriendly' and poorly designed access through road closures affecting safety and convenience.

With these large transport projects, the RTA and the project's consortium are required to consult with many organisations and local groups. These tend to be dominated by motorists, with access to cars not infrequently funded by the employer and subsidised by the Federal Government. In our experience, public transport commuters and pedestrians may have some effective input, but cycling is often challenged and largely influenced by the varying attitudes of the local councils to cycling.

Inspection of the series of RTA's bicycle route maps for metropolitan Sydney show the markedly varying attitudes, even between adjoining municipalities.

With the LCTP, when it comes to cycling the opinion of Lane Cove Council is the determining

factor in the design decision.

ROAD TRAUMA

Of the 504 fatalities on NSW roads last year, 100 were pedestrians and in metropolitan Sydney, usually there are more pedestrians killed than motorists each year, yet the $2.8 billion RTA annual budget is almost totally spent on road infrastructure for motor vehicles and the safety of motorists. A far better balance would be appropriate.

Having been fortunate to cycletour in Europe on 15 occasions between 1986 to 2000, the crucial difference is the stark contrast in attitudes. Motorists in central and northern Europe know that a nearby cyclist might be their wife, husband, father, mother, son or daughter. They drive accordingly, and would be subjected to very significant sentences were they to collide with a pedestrian or cyclist. The driver is required to prove their innocence. Here, unfortunately, the authorities usually give little consideration to cyclist's safety, even hit-and-runs, often depending on the attitude of the officer involved.

STAYSAFE

In October 1988, the NSW Parliamentary Staysafe Committee released 'Staysafe 12 -- Bicycle Safety', a blueprint on cycling. The report's foreword stated:

'This Inquiry by STAYSAFE already appears to have raised the priority of bicycling on the road safety agenda. I hope that this report, and its recommendations will carry the impetus through to widespread worthwhile improvements to bicyclist safety in New South Wales, **and look forward to a follow-up by STAYSAFE in a little over 1 year's time.'**

Incredibly, this has never occurred, apart from a specific report on city couriers.

MAJOR PROJECTS & TOLLS

Major projects constructed in the region during the last decade of so include the Gore Hill Freeway, the Sydney Harbour Tunnel, the Eastern and Western Distributors, the Cross City Tunnel and now the LCTP.

These projects are designed to a very high safety standard, such as grade separation at intersections and median barriers separating opposing traffic flows. Yet tolls, particularly if high, such as the Eastern Distributor with a northbound only toll of around $4.50, results in to a significant proportion of traffic avoiding the toll and instead using the very streets that are supposed to be protected by the new motorway. Such traffic is primarily focused on negotiating the local streets with their limited safety design standards as quickly as possible. These are the very streets that pedestrians and cyclists want to use for the living, including going to the shops and schools, meeting friends and travelling to work.

All motorists that cross the SHB from the north must pay a $3 toll, but northbound, only those motorists using the Eastern Distributor pay the $4.50 toll. Those travelling from or through the city do not pay a toll. This is absurd. With the soon-to-be opened Lane Cove Tunnel requiring payment only by E-Tag, tolls in the region could all be paid by this system in the near future. The tolls should be re-evaluated, with the Eastern Distributor toll being lowered to a more reasonable level, thereby encouraging motorists travelling from the east and south to stay on a route having by far the highest safety standards (motorway), while reducing traffic on inner suburban streets to the benefit of the community, including pedestrians and cyclists. The reduction in the Eastern Distributor toll could be compensated for by tolling all northbound trips through a single one-off toll whether using the SHB or the Eastern Distributor. Also, the $3 toll for the southbound trip across the SH Bridge or the SH Tunnel would be reduced. Revenues would be the same, but achieved through a far more equitable revenue collection, while benefitting road safety in the very streets that are supposedly to benefit from these massively costly projects.

SUMMARY

The corridor performs a crucial transport function as is evidenced by the construction of the M2

(opened May 1997), Gore Hill Freeway (August 1992), the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Sydney Harbour Tunnel (August 1992), the Eastern Distributor (December 1999) and now the Lane Cove Tunnel. Five of these projects have been constructed in the decade and a half, costing multi-billions of dollars. By comparison, the cost of the cycleway and pedestrian facilities will be minuscule in comparison with the above projects.

The consultative process unfortunately significantly favours the continuation of the focus on providing evermore road space and priority for motor vehicles, despite world oil prices starting to take off due to increased demand, particularly from China and India, and the peaking of production of easily extracted oil. This submission has highlighted concerns where cyclists' safety should have been given much greater emphasis, but has been compromised due to pressures from community members whose transport focuses on the use of motor vehicles. Far too often, cyclist safety is being compromised, while facilities are negligible or non-existent.

It is crucial that sustainable transport be provided along this vital corridor that is currently so appalling for cyclists and even pedestrians. The cycleway and pedestrian facilities will play a vital role in providing the community with a choice of healthy active transport and a recreational facility with the added benefit of linking to preferred bicycle routes throughout the municipalities.

Thanking you for this opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully,

Russ Webber
President
North Shore Bicycle Group
PO Box 100
Lane Cove

(community representative CCLG2, inaugural member East Ward Traffic Management Working Party, Bicycle New South Wales - vice-president 1983-2001, president 1995/1996, BNSW representative on State Bicycle Committee 1983-1992, member of NSW Helmet Task Force, member of North Sydney, Willoughby and Lane Cove bicycle committees, retired meteorologist – Bureau of Meteorology 1970/2001)).
