



NEWCASTLE CYCLEWAYS MOVEMENT INCORPORATED

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Submitted by email to urbanrenewal@planning.nsw.gov.au
17th March 2013

Newcastle Cycleways Movement is a bicycle advocacy group based in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie LGAs, and has the vision of cycling as a safe and attractive form of transport that has widespread health, social and environmental benefits. The urban renewal strategy has been discussed by our members and views summarised in this submission.

We applaud the inclusion of cycleways as a prominent part of the renewal process. A “dedicated” cycleway along the length of Newcastle will be a great community asset, however it should be built to a standard that primary school age children could be safely let ride along it unaccompanied, ie physically separated from vehicular traffic. A bidirectional cycleway on one side of the street, as has been built in parts of Sydney makes intersections complex and is not as safe for cyclists as a unidirectional cycleway on each side of the street. Luckily Newcastle streets are wide enough to accommodate a unidirectional cycleway on each side, which is the standard treatment in European cities. A CBD cycleway could be on either Hunter or King St, although the SEP proposal seems to consider only Hunter St without ever considering the other option.

The problem of a bidirectional cycleway is illustrated in figure 4.11 page 79, in which a car driving left across the map and turning into the side street marked 3 will be focused on avoiding cars and cyclists coming from the left of the drawing, but will not know to look to the right of the page for cyclists. This is likely to cause more collisions than if cycles travel in the same direction as cars on that side of the road, which is where motorists would expect to look for them.

The proposal for cycleways to be implemented promptly on a trial or temporary basis is somewhat alarming, as if a cycleway does not have to be properly planned. To be safe and effective it at least has to have connections to Hamilton, to the Corlette St coastal cycleway route, to the East-West cycleway at the sports stadium, and to the Throsby Creek cycleway near the marina. The construction of a cycleway along Hunter St without these connections is not going to entice people out of their cars. Cycleways should be designed to enhance connectivity of the entire cycleway network, and the NURS at section 4.5.2 currently seems ignorant of the cycleway network outside the study area. Treating cycleways as an attractive urban feature rather than a functional part of a transport network is a serious mistake.

The existing Cycling Strategy and Action Plan is referenced, but some of its key messages have been misunderstood. The cycling strategy specifically states that the cycleway shared with car parking is no longer regarded as acceptable. This treatment puts cyclists at risk of death from hitting an opening car door, yet figure 5.52 shows the King St car door death lanes as being an existing commuter cycle lane. These lanes are worse than useless and both council and the RMS have agreed to remove them. There is a high level of need for a separated space cycleway along the length of Newcastle, and it will become the commuter route, whichever road it is on.

The proposal for Newcastle City Council to build a cycle parking centre similar to that at King George Square in Brisbane is not supported. It should be pointed out that the Brisbane facility was built and is run on a fully commercial basis, without council or state funding and costs \$6.50 per day to use. Many people have access to secure parking, showers and lockers at their



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workplace so the remaining demand may be low. Improving the cycleway network would be a better use of council funds.

The intention to reduce the number of cars coming into the city centre is applauded, however it is difficult to see how this will be achieved while also removing rail services. The public health benefit of increased exercise from active transport, walking, cycling, or even from increasing the walking distance to carparks is a benefit that will become increasingly important as the obesity epidemic progresses. The proposed Wickham interchange will increase traffic congestion around the intersection of Hunter St and Stewart Ave, which is one of the problems it is supposed to relieve. The intention to encourage a mode shift to public transport is admirable, but the requirement for passengers to leave the train and board a bus will increase travel times, reduce reliability, and cause inconvenience. This is hardly the way to make public transport more attractive. It is good to see a reduction in vehicle Km travelled claimed as an economic benefit of good planning, and we would like to see a target set for this reduction.

The plan for expansion of the CBD campus of the University around Civic is a good basis for increased residential and retail demand, however it will be difficult to move 10,000 students in and out each day without a Civic rail station. A rail station was recently constructed for Macquarie University at considerable expense, and it is unclear to our members why the Newcastle university Civic campus should not also have a rail station, particularly as the train from Warrabrook to Civic connects the two campuses. The distance from the Civic campus to the main Callaghan campus is an easy 8Km on a bicycle, but the current route 6 is not direct, which would be fixed by connecting the Hunter St cycleway to Fern St near Hamilton station. This points to the larger problem that the Newcastle urban renewal strategy looks only to the space in the CBD area without any consideration of how it relates to the surrounding region. As the intention is for Newcastle to function as the capital of the Hunter this is a large gap in the plan. What will distinguish Newcastle CBD from Charlestown, Kotara, or Cardiff? How will the CBD serve these adjacent centres or does it merely compete with them?

The illustration on Page XVIII suggests the planners know nothing about cycling, although bikes feature as frequently as cars in all the illustrations. In figure B the cyclist has inadequate protection from only a white painted line. If the cyclist was travelling the opposite direction the white line would put her in the danger zone from opening car doors as she passes the two parked cars. Design faults like this should be excluded early in the process.

The factor most likely to deter people from driving to the CBD is the cost and availability of parking. We consider that parking has been provided at below cost for many years, with the council parking stations effectively providing a subsidy from rate payers to car parkers. Regulations that enforced that all parking was provided on a full cost recovery basis, even at supermarkets, would ensure a level playing field between cars and alternate forms of transport.

Summary

The revitalisation of Newcastle CBD is welcome and needed. Revitalisation can be achieved with the rail service remaining, which would allow the money for a Wickham interchange to be spent more productively. Rail services at least as far as Civic should be a key element of the urban renewal.

There is sufficient space on Hunter St for the proposed cycleway to be built to world's best practice, with space protected from vehicles, on both sides of the road. This will only be successful if it is connected to adjacent elements of the cycleway network, which lie outside the urban renewal planning area.