

## Submission - Hunter City

15 Bimbae Close  
Dudley 2290  
16<sup>th</sup> March 2016  
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Dear Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity to put forward suggestions for this regions improvements through the Hunter Regional/Growing Hunter City Plan. The area where I live, Dudley is now a suburb of Lake Macquarie about 10kms south of Newcastle but it was just a village based on a coal mine at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was served by a rail line built in 1892 as an extension from a much longer line, called the Fernleigh track, that connected other mines in the area. The Dudley mine was closed in 1939 and the rail lines lifted in 1941 but fortunately most of the the rail corridor remains with all its historic interest and more importantly, a safe transport option for local residents.

After the rail closure transport into Dudley was largely restricted to one road, Ocean St. which is narrow and does not have continuous footpaths for pedestrians. This means that wheel chairs and prams are forced to travel on the road that can be congested and dangerous. There is a primary school that abuts Ocean St. and parents are often to nervous to let their children walk or ride to school and instead drive them, consequently the area outside the school becomes very crowded at school times. This problem extends to the next suburb, Whitebridge where there are large scale housings projects under way that will add to traffic problems as there is very little public transport.

In 1977 a Newcastle residents group was formed with the aim of ensuring that these rail lines would not suffer the same fate as the many other rail links that had been submerged by urban development. The group became known as the Newcastle Cycleways movement and they lobbied local and State governments to not only preserve the corridors but to create a shared cycleway along their entire length.

Work commenced on the Fernleigh cycleway as a joint venture between Newcastle and Lake Macquarie City councils. The original draft plan detailed all the routes, including the one into Dudley along the rail corridor. The Fernleigh track now extends for 15 kms from Adamstown to Belmont and is very popular largely due to the almost unspoilt natural environment of the track where wildlife, including snakes, water dragons and a myriad of bird life abounds. Unfortunately the branch line into Dudley has not been started.

The LMCC conducted a survey in 2012 that showed overwhelming support for extending the track along the old line into Dudley. It was recognized that this would provide a safe and easy path for school kids to access Whitebridge High as well as for primary kids to reach Dudley school. This in turn would promote greater numbers walking or riding with flow on health effects as well as reduced traffic congestion at both schools. Head masters at both schools were supportive and a Dudley landcare group has commenced work cleaning up the council land adjacent to the track, removing the accumulated rubbish and planting several hundred plants. Completing the track into Dudley will require about 2kms of road base to be laid, a tunnel under Burwood Rd which has been costed at \$300,000 and a foot bridge across one of the cuttings. We believe that the track surface could be made from recycled road base rather than the more expensive concrete or bitumen at a total cost of around \$2m. Completion of this section will add significantly to the tourist appeal of the Fernleigh track as well as to the safety and convenience for local residents.

The economics of cycleways.

Because of the limited public transport both Lake Macquarie and Newcastle are highly car dependent, more so than Sydney and one of the worst areas is in Charlestown which is the main shopping center for this region. Car transport has lead to congestion problems that in Sydney are estimated to cost \$12b\* by 2030 and a similar situation will occur here as the population increase outstrips parking and road capacities. The parking shortage has been compounded by recent housing developments that have very limited car parking spaces causing visitors to use street parking. Cars caught up in slow traffic create more pollutants that not only add to GHG emissions but are a health hazard. Lake Macquarie council will be forced to widen roads where possible as well as build more car parking both in Charlestown and Whitebridge. To do this it will need to acquire more land, possibly by resuming existing dwellings. Using that approach a parking space will cost in the region of \$5k or more per car as well as creating an unattractive space that could be better used for business purposes.

I have included as an attachment a photo map of the proposed route including an extension that would go into Charlestown. Should you have any questions on this proposal I would be happy to provide further information either by phone or email.

Yours faithfully,

Don Owers

\* [Congestion costs \\$16 billion a year | www ...](#)

*<https://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/.../congestion-costs-16-billion-year>*

A great opportunity to have a say: Here is the link to the Hunter  
Regional/Growing Hunter City Plan <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-Your-Area/Regional-Plans/Hunter>