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Dear Russell

Comments on *Cycling & Pedestrian Network Review* – December 2009 draft report

## Principal findings and recommendations

- Canberrans need a complete, continuous, safe and accessible pedestrian network that brings everyday destinations within walking distance.
- Our walking infrastructure determines the extent to which walking can contribute to our mobility, health and environment, and to our Sustainable Transport Plan, Road Safety Strategy, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health strategies, Chronic Disease Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and Social Plan.
- The information used for the draft report is sufficient to allow 226 projects to be ranked according to their cost-effectiveness.
- The Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) ranking is biased towards large projects, and is not an adequate basis for funding decisions.
- The Review's Terms of reference confine it to a quarter of the Canberra's walking infrastructure, and bias it towards (1) walking trips that **supplement** car trips, at the expense of walking trips that **replace** car trips and (2) **adult** cycling at the expense of **child** cycling – hence, it does not address the **one third decline in child cycling**.
- At current funding levels, it will be **more than a century** before there is a footpath on at least one side of every residential street in Canberra.
- The draft report focuses on *physical* infrastructure, at the expense of *behavioural* measures to improve the utility of the physical infrastructure.
- The entire 226 projects will cost less than twice as much as the Canberra Hospital car park.
- The Canberra Pedestrian Forum recommends that:
  - As recommended by the **ACT Greens**, "*The Government should sign up to the International Charter of Walking.*"
  - The 226 projects be ranked for cost-effectiveness;
  - The ACT Government implement three low-cost *behavioural* projects, identified below, that will improve the utility of existing physical walking infrastructure, and avoid the need to retrofit footpaths on streets that are yet to be built;
  - The ACT Government expand the review's Terms of Reference to include both *behavioural* measures, and all of Canberra's pedestrian network.

- The ACT Government review the prospects for accommodating population growth without new greenfields development.

## Findings

### **Canberrans need a complete, continuous, safe and accessible pedestrian network that brings everyday destinations within walking distance.**

Distance is the most significant factor affecting Canberrans' ability to walk. Canberra's population density of around 430 persons per square kilometre can support only a limited number of services within walking distance of a home. In comparison, Copenhagen's population density of people per square kilometre can support **thirteen times** as many schools, shops, jobs and bus services within walking distance of a home. To access the same services, Canberrans must currently walk or cycle more than three times as far as Copenhageners.

Canberra's walking routes do not form a true network because they are continually interrupted by street crossings where pedestrians must give way to motor vehicles – either because they are legally required to do so, or because they cannot rely on drivers to observe the Road Rules that require them to give way to pedestrians.

An estimated 600 km of Canberra streets have no footpaths. On many of these streets pedestrians must walk along the road – into the face of oncoming motor vehicles that often exceed the speed limit – either because it is impractical for them to use the nature strip or because the nature strip is obstructed by illegally parked cars or by illegal landscaping.

The mobility of children who live on these streets is severely constrained, because Canberra's drivers are not trained to safely share the road with children. Kidsafe ACT recommends that children under nine should be supervised *"at all times near traffic,"* and *"should not ride on the road without an accompanying adult to supervise."*

### **Our walking infrastructure determines the extent to which walking can contribute to our mobility, health and environment.**

We endorse the **Heart Foundation's** comments about Australia's health issues and their potential costs to the community, and the role that walking – in particular, walking for transport – can play in addressing these issues.

Canberrans' ability to walk – to shops, to schools, to bus stops, to work, for work, from car parks and for recreation – is crucial to our health, to our environment, and to our ability to live fulfilling lives in a future that is overshadowed by the spectres of peak oil and of the need to reduce greenhouse emissions.

We note that increased walking can contribute significantly to achieving the objectives of a range of ACT Strategies and Plans including the:

- Sustainable Transport plan
- Road Safety Strategy
- Various Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Health strategies
- Chronic Disease Strategy
- Climate Change Strategy
- Canberra Social Plan

**The information used for the draft report is sufficient to allow 226 projects to be ranked according to their cost-effectiveness.**

**The Multi-Criteria Analysis ranking is biased towards large projects, and is not an adequate basis for funding decisions.**

Funding for cycling and pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is limited. It is essential that we allocate pedestrian and cycling funding to projects will be most cost-effective.

This objective is commonly achieved by ranking projects according to their cost-effectiveness. Cost-effectiveness is calculated by summing the "effectiveness" or benefits of a project, and dividing this by the sum of its costs.

In the Multi Criteria Analysis, cost-effectiveness is calculated only for the number of people served by each route, and this factor counts for only ten per cent of the project score.

Ninety per cent of the MCA score for a project is assessed independent of cost. Factors assessed independent of cost include the diversity of attractors served along a route, the number of residents and jobs near the route, the proportion of the total corridor that the project will complete and the project's strategic importance. All of these factors tend to increase with the size (and hence the cost) of a project, without necessarily increasing its cost-effectiveness. This leads to the anomalous results such as:

- If the cost of the Marcus Clarke link (from Allara St to Bunda Street) increases from \$69,000 to \$69 million, its cost-effectiveness falls by 99.9% but its MCA ranking falls only from first to equal eighth.
- If the cost of the Molonglo link 6 project falls from \$951,638 to \$1, its cost-effectiveness will far exceed that of any other listed project, but its MCA ranking will rise from equal 224<sup>th</sup> only to equal 148<sup>th</sup>.

**The Review's Terms of reference limit it to considering only a quarter of the Canberra's walking infrastructure, and bias it towards walking trips that supplement car trips, at the expense of walking trips that replace car trips.**

According to the Terms of Reference for this report, it "*will review the Main Routes network and develop walking, cycling and disabled access routes in the town centres and major employment nodes.*" Even if the report were extended to cover a radius of 2km around each town centre, employment node, it would cover less than a quarter of Canberra.

Data on walking in Canberra are currently quite limited. As the **ACT Greens** submission points out, "*benchmarking requires the collection of data. Traffic management agencies need to have full data on cyclist and pedestrian numbers.*"

However Dutch data<sup>1</sup> are available, and they indicate that walking and cycling are essentially local. 34% of Dutch journeys up to 7.5 km are made by bicycle, but this falls to 15% for journeys from 7.5 to 15 km, and 2% for journeys over 15 km.

Nineteen per cent of all Dutch journeys are walked, but virtually none of these are over 7.5 km. Comparison with cycling trends indicates that most walking journeys would be less than 2.5 km.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2009, *Cycling in the Netherlands*.

Most Canberrans live beyond 2.5 km walking distance from the locations covered by the study (see figure at right).

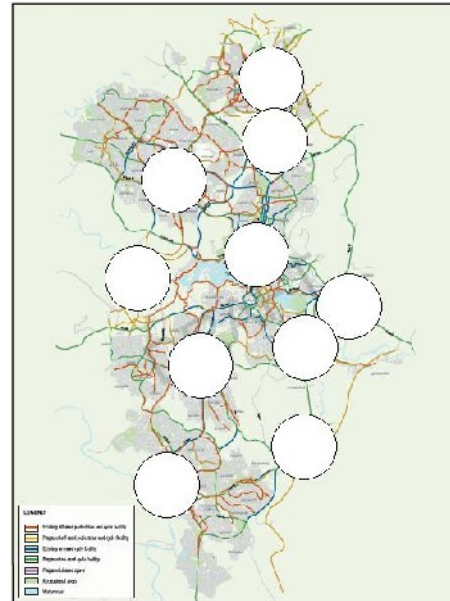
Unlike walking trips that supplement car trips, walking trips that substitute for car trips reduce congestion, transport costs and pollution.

Most walking trips that **substitute** for car trips occur within walking distance of home.

Most walking trips in the Town Centres and major employment nodes are conducted by people who have driven to those places, and thus **supplement** car trips.

It should also be noted that:

1. the proportion of children cycling in the ACT declined 14% between 2000 and 2009<sup>2</sup>;
2. In the same period, the amount of time child cyclists spent cycling declined nationally by 24%; combined with the reduction in the proportion of children cycling, this indicates a 35% decline in child cycling;
3. one third of Canberra's cyclists are children;
4. most cycling opportunities for children are outside the scope of the current report – i.e. they are within their own suburb (e.g. to and from school), rather than along trunk routes or in Town Centres; and
5. the President of Pedal Power has confirmed that Pedal Power supports the building of footpaths, as they are places for people to cycle.



**At current funding levels, it will be more than a century before there is a footpath on at least one side of every residential street in Canberra.**

The Chief Minister advised on 6 November 2009 that, “No information is available on the length of urban roads where no footpaths have been provided,” and “The Department has an annual program providing new footpaths with some \$1.16 million allocated in 2009-10 specifically for this purpose.”

The Canberra Pedestrian Forum estimates that Canberra has 600 km of footpath-free streets. At \$200,000 per km of footpath, it will cost \$120 million to construct footpaths along one side of all of these streets. At the current annual funding level, this will take 104 years.

**The draft report focuses on physical measures, at the expense of behavioural measures, to improve the utility of the physical infrastructure.**

Issues that can be addressed by *behavioural* measures include:

- nature strips that are obstructed by illegally parked cars or by illegal landscaping – especially on footpath-free streets. This can be addressed by the ACT Government ensuring that residents are aware of their obligations, and comply with them;

<sup>2</sup> ABS 4901.0: *Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, Australia.*

- walking and cycling routes that cannot be safely used by children, because Canberra's drivers are not trained to share the road safely with children;
- walking routes that are interrupted because pedestrians cannot rely on drivers to comply with road rules that require them to give way to pedestrians;
- Road Rules that discriminate against pedestrians; and
- Traffic light programming that imposes unwarranted delays on pedestrians, thus leading to worse traffic congestion and road safety outcomes. Many pedestrian traffic lights are poor indicators of whether or not it is safe to cross – they show red at times when pedestrians have adequate time to cross without facing conflicting traffic. As a result, many pedestrians either cross against red, or save time by driving instead of walking.

**The entire 226 projects will cost less than twice as much as the Canberra Hospital car park.**

The amount that the ACT Government allocates to the cycling and walking network reflects the priority that it places on cycling and walking. The "top 50" listed projects will cost only \$13.6 million, and the entire 226 listed projects will cost only \$50 million.

These projects will increase cycling and walking, thus improving health and reducing health costs, pollution and congestion.

In contrast, the \$30 million-plus Canberra Hospital car park will encourage people to drive rather than walk or cycle, thus adding to our future health and transport costs, pollution and traffic congestion.

## **Recommendations**

The Canberra Pedestrian Forum recommends that:

1. as recommended by the **ACT Greens**, "*The Government should sign up to the International Charter of Walking.*"
2. the data used for the Multi Criteria Analysis be used to rank the cost-effectiveness of the 226 projects, in order to identify priority projects for funding;
3. the ACT Government implement the following three low-cost *behavioural* projects, that will improve the utility of existing physical walking infrastructure, and avoid the need to retrofit footpaths on streets that are yet to be built:
  - Ensure that residents comply with their requirements to maintain a clear walking space on their nature strips, on streets that do not have footpaths;
  - Ensure that all ACT drivers understand and observe the Road Rules that require them to give way to pedestrians, and are trained to safely share the road with children;
  - Modify the *Future Urban Area Residential Subdivision Development Code* to ensure that all new streets form part of a complete, continuous, safe and accessible pedestrian network.
4. the ACT Government expand the Terms of Reference for the review to include the whole of Canberra's pedestrian and cycling networks, including our estimated 600 km of footpath-free residential streets, and prioritising:

- the places where Canberrans actually walk, as identified from existing data such as travel survey data from TravelSmart projects. The **ACT Greens** point out that *"Benchmarking requires the collection of data. Traffic management agencies need to have full data on cyclist and pedestrian numbers. The Chief Minister's Department now has a traffic simulation model which is being used by all government agencies and private sector developers. This modelling also needs to include cycle and pedestrian counts ... The Government's traffic simulation model should include counting of cycling and pedestrian numbers."*
  - routes where cycling and walking **substitute** for car travel (e.g. travel from home to school, shops and bust stops), as distinct from **supplementing** car travel (e.g. travel within Town Centres and major employment nodes);
  - routes that serve children and other people who do not have ready access to the alternative of car travel (e.g. routes between home and school) noting the **ACT Greens'** point that *"the ACT Government has also committed to instituting 'child friendly planning principles' into ACT planning guidelines."*
5. the ACT Government expand the Terms of Reference for the review to include behavioural issues including:
- Road Rules that discriminate against pedestrians – for example, Rule 236 (1): *"A pedestrian must not cause a traffic hazard by moving into the path of a driver,"* for which there is no equivalent that applies to drivers;
  - Traffic light programming that imposes unwarranted delays on pedestrians, thus leading to worse traffic congestion and road safety outcomes and encouraging people to drive rather than walk – thus further adding to health and transport costs, pollution and traffic congestion.
6. the ACT Government review the prospects for accommodating population growth without new greenfield developments.
- Compared with urban infill, greenfield developments increase the distances that people must travel to shops, schools, employment and recreation, thus encouraging driving and discouraging walking and cycling. They also reduce the number of people who live within walking distance of any given bus stop, thus making it more expensive (and less effective) to provide an adequate frequency of bus services.
  - This review should note the Melbourne City Council study, that concludes that Melbourne can house an additional 1 million people along its transit corridors, leaving 94% of its urban space unaffected.
7. the review also consider cycling and walking issues for the proposed centre of Molonglo, including that:
- Molonglo's proposed location is three hours' walk from adjacent employment centres, and
  - on the proposed 70 metre wide arterial road, the walk from an inwards bus stop to the corresponding outwards bus stop will require crossing six lanes of motor traffic.
8. ACT funding for repair and construction of footpaths be increased to a level so that all Canberra residential streets with speed limits exceeding 30 km/h will have footpaths by the year 2020.

9. the review address the difficulty of walking across arterial roads (such as Northbourne Avenue in Civic) that either bisect shopping or employment precincts or separate these precincts from nearby residential areas. This arises in part from the width of the central reserve, which makes it difficult to provide traffic light sequences that allow people to walk across the street in less than two traffic light sequences.
10. the review address construction practices that make roads pedestrian-unfriendly – for example, large-radius corners that increase cornering speed, and at the same time increase pedestrian crossing distances by up to – or in some cases more than – 100%.
11. the review address the danger and difficulty of crossing to and from bus stops, where they are not adjacent to safe crossing points such as zebra crossings or traffic lights.
12. the Government reject Pedal Power's policy of not supporting lighting of bicycle paths, noting that:
  - the Sullivan's Creek path is Canberra's most heavily used cycle path;
  - several sections of the path are so dark that they cannot be safely ridden without bicycle lighting that significantly exceeds legal requirements;
  - several people have been assaulted on that path, by assailants who used the cover of darkness;
  - some pedestrians who use this route have taken to the use of flashing LED lights, to make themselves visible to cyclists with low-powered headlights;
  - costs can be minimised by restricting lighting to the darkest sections of the path that do not receive "light spill" from nearby street lighting - for example, Haig Park and the section between Macarthur Avenue and Wattle Street;
  - additional initial cost savings may be achieved by using existing lighting on nearby sporting fields, without needing to install dedicated path lighting.

With my best regards

Leon Arundell  
Convenor

31 January 2010