

Keeping Melbourne Moving
VicRoads
60 Denmark Street
Kew VIC

Submission re: Keeping Melbourne Moving

Prepared by the Moreland Bicycle Users Group
14/07/08



Moreland Bicycle Users Group submission to 'Keeping Melbourne Moving'

Introduction

The Moreland Bicycle Users Group (BUG) is a community group that advocates for improvements in cycling conditions in the city of Moreland. Moreland BUG has a diverse membership of more than 160 people. This submission addresses the concerns Moreland cyclists have raised in relation to the proposal to extend clearway times on Sydney Road, Nicholson Street, Holmes Road and Melville Road in Brunswick and Coburg. The submission focuses on Sydney Road as it is the major carriageway in the municipality; however, our comments also generally apply to the other affected carriageways.

Cycling in Moreland

The extension of clearway times on Sydney Road in Brunswick and Coburg poses a serious threat to the safety of cyclists. There has been a boom in cycling in Moreland over the past 5 years. The 2006 Census indicates cycling to the City of Melbourne from Moreland has increased 80 percent since 2001¹.

As a result of this massive increase, the number of cyclists using Sydney Road is rapidly increasing as the Upfield Shared Path has reached capacity during peak times. The Upfield path is Moreland's major north-south bike route. There are no alternative safe routes allowing cyclists to travel directly from Moreland's north to the key north-south routes through the City of Melbourne.

Safety and Clearways

Sydney Road is the major north-south carriageway for Moreland cyclists but it can be a dangerous and unpleasant route, particularly during clearway times. Moreland BUG believes that extending clearway times will create an even more unsafe environment for cyclists on major carriageways such as Sydney Road.

The safety concerns for cyclists include:

1. **Increased traffic speed** – it is well known that higher speed limits make roads more dangerous for cyclists, and studies from around the globe have consistently found that speed is the single most important determinant of the number of road fatalities generally².
2. **Positioning on road** – fast-moving traffic during clearways forces cyclists to the edge of the outer lane. This often forces cyclists into the gutter and places them at the periphery of drivers' view. Further, car doors and people stepping into the traffic lane are a constant hazard outside of clearway hours; however, there is generally enough room between parked cars and the inner traffic lane to ride clear of doors most of the time. When clearways are operating the space for cyclists becomes very small unless they are willing to "take a lane", which most cyclists simply will not due to safety concerns (largely caused by the negative reaction of motorists).
3. **Road condition** – as mentioned above, cyclists are often forced into the gutter during clearway hours. The condition of the Sydney road gutter and edge is very poor, especially between Union Street and Albion Street.
4. **Driver behaviour** – motorists often accelerate quickly and drive erratically in order to pass trams both during and outside of clearway hours, which can be intimidating and dangerous for cyclists.
5. **Road permeability** – during clearway the road becomes less permeable hours for cyclists and pedestrians, meaning that it is more difficult and dangerous to cross the road and to make right hand turns at non-signalised intersections.

¹ Bicycle Victoria 'Quick Easy Cheap: The bicycle commuter solution to congestion'
www.bv.com.au/change-the-world/41226/

² Victoria Public Transport Institute (2007) 'Speed Reductions: Strategies that Reduce Traffic Speeds', *Online TDM Encyclopedia*.
www.vpti.org/tdm/tdm105.htm

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With the Upfield Shared Path at capacity during peak times Moreland's growing number of cyclists need better options for north-south travel. Outside of clearway times Sydney Road is a more acceptable cycling route due to a lower volume of traffic moving at slower speeds. Moreland BUG is strongly opposed to any extension of clearway hours in light of the issues described above.

Transport and the Environment

In the context of climate change and the peaking of oil production, providing more road space for motor vehicles is an irresponsible policy. Furthermore, Australian and international studies have repeatedly demonstrated that providing more road space only succeeds in inducing greater demand. A study of empirical evidence on induced traffic, published in the Netherlands' *Transportation* journal, reported that:

Disparate evidence indicates that the provision of extra road capacity results in a greater volume of traffic... an average road improvement has induced an additional 10% of base traffic in the short term and 20% in the long term: individual schemes with induced traffic at double this level may not be very unusual, especially for peak periods³.

It is clear that extending clearway operating times in the inner city will merely perpetuate traffic congestion. Rather, all levels of government need to invest in sustainable transport infrastructure such as making cycling safe and easy. While extending clearways may be one way of temporarily reducing congestion along tram routes, there are better, more permanent ways to achieve this without increasing overall car traffic or creating spin-off negative impacts for tram passengers and for other sustainable modes of transport. In simple terms, congestion issues can only be resolved by achieving a significant reduction in car dependence.

Planning context: Melbourne 2030 and Meeting Our Transport Challenges

The Victorian Government's Melbourne 2030 Strategy sets out a range of objectives to make Melbourne's streets more liveable and attractive. This is a key element supporting the broader aims of the strategy of achieving a more sustainable city by improving residential densities and providing more sustainable transport. In particular M2030's Direction 5 'A great place to be' sets a number of policies which the BUG believes will be undermined by extending clearway times, including:

- Improving urban design to make the urban environment more liveable and attractive
- Improving community safety and encourage neighbourhood design that makes people feel safe
- Promote excellent neighbourhood design to create attractive, walkable and diverse communities.

Creating four lanes of higher speed traffic along Sydney Road for a greater proportion of the day undermines any efforts to improve the amenity of the area through urban and neighbourhood design.

The decision to extend clearways also contradicts the Victorian Government's Meeting Our Transport Challenges (MOTC) plan. There is a fundamental conflict between the objectives of MOTC and M2030 and a policy of providing additional road space for cars. The following objectives are of particular significance:

- Improving the operation of the existing public transport network with faster, more reliable and efficient on-road and rail public transport
- Coordinating the development of all transport modes to provide a comprehensive transport system
- Managing the road system to achieve integration, choice and balance by developing an efficient and safe network and making the most of existing infrastructure are all undermined by clearway extensions.

³ Goodwin, P. (1996) 'Empirical evidence on induced traffic' in *Transportation* (2004), Springer Netherlands <http://www.springerlink.com/content/ng13163x76p13081/>

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Extending clearway times and providing additional road space directly undermines M2030 objectives to review transport practices to reduce environmental impacts and to give more priority to cycling and walking in planning urban development and in managing our road system and neighbourhoods. By reducing the safety of Moreland's key north-south arterial for cyclists, extended clearways operating hours directly contradict the Government's efforts to promote the use of sustainable personal transport options.

Further, the ongoing efforts of Moreland City Council to implement M2030 will be severely constrained by the proposed clearway extensions. Structure plans for the Coburg Principle Activity Centre and the Brunswick Major Activity Centre have now been completed. Both of these plans place improving the amenity of Sydney road at the fore of efforts to develop vibrant and sustainable, higher density neighbourhoods. These plans will be comprehensively undermined by providing more road space through these activity centres.

Moreland BUG's vision for Sydney Road

The Moreland Bicycle Users Group (BUG) has a strong preference for removing clearways along Sydney Road altogether. We have a vision for Sydney Road as Moreland's key transport corridor and activity centre that balances the needs of all users, including cyclists, pedestrians, traders, shoppers, tram users and drivers. This vision is based on Sydney Road being the heart of a vibrant community, rather than a four lane highway.

The elements of the BUG's vision for Sydney Road include:

- 40km/h speed limits
- A permanent separated lane for cyclists
- No clearways for motorised traffic
- Improved "walkability" and pedestrian facilities

During a recent protest rally against the clearway extensions on Sydney Road the Mayor of Moreland, Cr Joe Caputo, warned that extending clearway operating hours is the worst thing that could happen to Sydney Road. Moreland BUG endorses this position and calls on VicRoads to adopt a more progressive and sustainable vision for our major carriageways.

Conclusion

While the Moreland BUG is very strongly opposed to the extension of clearway operating times, we recommend a reduced speed limit and the installation of traffic treatments to ensure a safer cycling environment should the extension proceed.

We have articulated a vision for Sydney Road as Moreland's key transport corridor and activity centre that balances the needs of all residents, including cyclists, pedestrians, traders, tram users and drivers. We advocate separated cycle lanes or traffic treatments to ensure a safe cycling environment; reduced speed limits; improved pedestrian amenity, and improved access to trams. This vision is based on Sydney Road becoming the heart of a livable community, rather than a four lane highway. Importantly, this vision matches that articulated for Coburg and Brunswick as part of Melbourne 2030's activity centre planning.

Further to the points raised above, Moreland BUG is very disappointed at the lack of consultation preceding the announcement of this plan. It comes across as knee-jerk policy that has not been properly thought through or tested with the community, and we look forward to an improved consultation process with all stakeholders as the policy moves closer to the mooted implementation date. In particular, Moreland BUG is particularly keen to be consulted regarding the installation of traffic treatments should the clearway extension for Sydney Road proceed.

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