Legislative Council Select Committee

Greater Hobart Traffic Congestion

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A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step

Introduction

This submission has been written over an extremely short time period, which has limited my ability to cite and confirm references. Any factual errors are mine alone and I apologise in advance for any such errors.

I freely admit that I have no direct experience in traffic management and my comments are those of a concerned Hobart Resident of long standing.

Obviously not all the suggestions presented can be implemented but **it is imperative** that whatever suggestions are adopted are fully integrated and not developed in isolation.

Therefore if ferries are implemented, buses must be rerouted to deliver passengers to the ferries in a timely manner to ensure quick transport to the CBD. Likewise, if light rail is deployed, buses must feed passengers to selected light rail stops to allow passengers to catch the light rail and arrive at their destination quickly and so on.

Background

Where we are now

- Enhancing the road network in and around Hobart has been neglected for over 30 years and in that time the increasing population and higher level of car ownership has saturated the existing road network at peak times. Any accident on a major access road is now more than capable of causing gridlock (pertinent example Sandy Bay Road 20 November 2019).

- The improvement in traffic flow during school holidays shows that the trend towards parents ferrying children to school is a significant contributor to

congestion at peak hours. Conversely, this also shows that a small decrease (of the order of 10%) in the number of cars on the road can result in dramatic improvements in the flow of traffic on the roads.

- In the past few years, the Hobart City Council has undertaken an active campaign to turn Hobart into a pedestrian and cyclist friendly environment by actively discouraging motor vehicles.

- Examples include:-

    - Reduction of Collins Street to 1 Lane (pushes additional traffic into Macquarie Street).

    - Reduction of Liverpool Street to 1 Lane (pushes additional traffic on to Davey Street).

    - Reduction of Morrison Street to 1 lane (was a useful route to bypass the city centre on the way from Sandy Bay to the Northern Suburbs)

    - Loss of lanes in multiple streets to accommodate painted bike paths which suddenly disappear. This pushes traffic onto alternative streets which then become more congested. **Bike lanes offer no value unless they offer a safe continuous path from origin to destination**.

    - Mooted permanent reduction of Campbell Street to 2 lanes (see comments above)

  While this may be a laudable aim, I contend that it is and will be ineffective in Hobart for a variety of reasons.

  I was lucky enough to live in Amsterdam for over 2 years and enjoyed the pedestrian and cyclist friendly, car adverse environment (I rode a bike 7km to work each day). Amsterdam has the following features which make such an environment possible (contrasted with the Hobart reality in brackets). Amsterdam:-

    - is a very Compact City (Hobart is spread out along the banks of the Derwent and extends for a great distance along that river)

    - is extremely flat (Hobart by contrast is extremely hilly)

    - has a comprehensive network of fully Separated Bike Paths (Hobart bike paths are on major roads, way too narrow in places and come into/go out of existence when least expected and most needed)

    - has a high quality, low cost fully integrated public transport network of trains, light rail, trams and buses offering high frequency reliable

services (Hobart has buses only and they are of insufficient frequency and reliability to encourage car drivers to switch).

Why it is going to get much worse

- As a result of the improving economy, the population of Hobart (and Tasmania) is now growing faster than it has over the last 30 years. This results in more traffic on a daily basis resulting in congestion.

- Our population is aging rapidly which means a larger percentage of the population are elderly, frail or handicapped. A significant number of these residents cannot use bicycles, find walking any distance difficult and thus have to resort to cars to transport them directly to their destination.

- The University of Tasmania is intending to relocate to the CBD. This will result in a large number of students (with cars) living in the inner city and additional vehicles terminating in the CBD to allow students to attend lectures. This will obviously result in a higher density of vehicles on the roads thus exacerbating the congestion.

- It is anticipated that in the future there will be a significant growth in Inner city living, which, with attendant cars, may well make the congestion worse. As a counter indication, a significant number of inner city dwellers may well forgo their cars and hence not increase the number of vehicles in the CBD to any great extent.

- There is a high concentration of Government/Business offices in the CBD. As the number of office workers in the CBD increases (as they will) they all need transport into the CBD to get to work. The number of such office workers is only going to increase.

Where to from Here

A large number of reports are already available to the Government to inform their decisions (from memory 11 Reports since 2000). Commissioning another report is just an excuse to delay making decisions. Actions need to be made immediately and consistently over the next 10-15 years in order to equip our city for the second half of the 21st century.

I believe that the following represent common sense ideas and are worthy of consideration. I have divided the options into Short, Medium and Long term based on the speed with which the suggestion can be implemented and ranked by the associated capital cost (low to high).

Short Term

- Police to blitz intersections in and around the CBD to prevent cars entering intersections when they are clearly unable to exit said intersection and hence cause significant delays. From personal experience this is a substantial problem.

- Implement free inbound buses between 7:00-9:00 am. While this will cost the Metro some revenue, it will act as a major encouragement for office workers and school students to use public transport and hence reduce the number of cars on the road at morning peak.

- Implement free outbound buses between 4:00- 6:00pm. (See above). Due to the early finish time of most schools, this may, admittedly, be of limited use, but it will encourage patronage of the Metro.

- Implement staggered start/finish times for schools. Given the impact that parents ferrying their children to school have on traffic congestion, this will spread the load over a longer period of time and should reduce peak congestion, particularly in the morning.

- Implement priority lanes for buses & passenger vehicles with 3 or more occupants during peak hours. This will increase the timeliness/reliability of buses and, if 3 occupant cars are taken up as an option (by carpooling), reduce the number of vehicles on the road during peak hours

Medium Term

- Implement Park and Ride Centres in the Outer suburbs (say for example Claremont, Howrah/Tranmere, Brighton, Sorrell, and Kingston/Blackmans Bay), with peak hour express buses operating between these Park and Ride locations and the CBD.

- Revisit the plans for the Bridgewater Bridge. Infrastructure Australia has raised significant doubts over the value for money of the proposed new Bridgewater Bridge. An alternative proposal, widening the causeway to 4 lanes and building a lower bridge is costed at $200 million less. What is missing in both these proposals, is provision for a rail line over the bridge.

  Given that there is a current proposal to implement a light rail service to the northern suburbs it would be extremely short sighted to remove the option of extending light rail to Brighton for the next 50 years (the lifetime of the proposed bridge)

- Restore Liverpool and Morrison Streets to 2 lanes.

- Implement Light Rail in the existing Northern Suburbs Rail Corridor (extending to Brighton as a minimum). This should be undertaken as a matter of urgency

as it will significantly reduce the number of cars on the Northern Approaches to Hobart and hence reduce congestion within the CBD.

- Implement a full ferry service on the Derwent on the lines of that proposed by Bob Clifford. Bob Clifford is one of the most experienced builders/operators of ferries in the world and to ignore his proposal seems extremely short sighted. He has a large number of ferries operating around the world, both large and small, and it makes sense to utilise his undoubted expertise.

  He has made a generous offer to build the ferries and allow the government to lease them ("I'll Build the Ferries" – The Mercury 3 April 2019). This minimises the initial outlay required to implement the service. He also commented that commencing with a single route as currently proposed by the government would be doomed to failure.

  I would suggest that Bob Clifford be employed to implement the network of ferries as envisaged by him and that the service be implemented as quickly as possible. Integrated with the ferry service would be buses to deposit/pick up passengers at the ferry terminals. This has the capability of significantly reducing traffic density during peak hours.

  As a resident of the Eastern Shore when the Bridge collapsed in 1975, I can categorically state that, once the initial capacity issues were addressed, commuting to work by ferry was a much superior experience to commuting by car.

- Implement Pedestrian Underpasses at critical intersections (e.g. Murray & Davey and Macquarie & Harrington) with a view to allowing more cars to turn at the intersection rather than waiting for pedestrians to cross the road

- Disperse Government offices out of the CBD & Encourage Private companies to do likewise. Relocating government and business office out of the CBD and into the suburbs will significantly reduce the number of cars entering and leaving the CBD at peak times.

- Implement short vehicular underpasses at important intersections (e.g. Davey St & Southern Outlet, Harrington & Davey).

  By way of explanation, in 1999 I was employed on a Y2K project in Brussels Belgium. This is an old city with narrow roads, a large population and is heavily congested. In order to facilitate traffic movement Brussels is surrounded by 2 ring roads. At the intersection of the ring road and other (radial) major roads, through traffic is directed through a short underpass ensuring continuous vehicle movement, while traffic turning off the ring road is kept at the same level as the intersecting road. Please see Appendix A.

Long Term

- Implement a Road (overpass or tunnel) from the end of the Southern Outlet connecting to Glenorchy would become part of a ring road which would allow cars currently needing to travel through the CBD to totally avoid the area thus reducing congestion. This was first mooted in 1962

  This suggestion is long term only because of the extremely high level of capital expenditure required to implement.

Appendix A. - Brussels Ring Road Underpass