

GAB/INQ/ITO 19

25 Kingston Heights
KINGSTON BEACH
Tas 7050

Mr Stuart Wright
Committee Secretary
Legislative Council
Parliament House
HOBART Tas 7000
stuart.wright@parliament.tas.gov.au



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Dear Mr Wright,

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY
INTEGRATED TRANSPORT OPTIONS FOR AN INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC
TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN SOUTHERN TASMANIA, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
TO:**

- (1) the public bus transport system currently operated by Metro Tasmania;
- (2) any other appropriate and innovative transport systems

Preamble

This submission describes some of the difficulties, mechanisms and possible solutions for more sustainable transport from my perspective as a participant of the Kingborough Bicycle Users Group, a town planner and a traveller predominantly by bus, bicycle and on foot.

National Charter of Integrated Land Use and Transport Planning 2003

To be integrated and sustainable, public transport has to be integrated between all modes, and all modes of transport need to be integrated with land use. The *National Charter of Integrated Land Use and Transport Planning 2003* was prepared by planning and transport professionals from all States and Territories. The impetus for the national approach came from the need to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions from transport are a high proportion of Tasmania's greenhouse emissions. The end of cheap oil and the switch to non-fossil fuels will increase the costs of car use. Integration of land use and transport will support more transport options.

Among other things, the National Charter aims for planning decisions that:

- (i) ensure more compact urban development;
- (ii) link the location, type and density of activities to accessibility;
- (iii) consider future land use and transport options;
- (iv) consider safe routes to schools, shops and public transport stops;
- (v) support the provision of public transport services;
- (vi) integrate fringe development with existing and new public transport routes; and
- (vii) promote more healthy communities and lifestyles¹.

¹ *Planning Advisory Note 11 Integration of Land Use and Transport in Planning Schemes* Tasmanian Planning Commission Sept 2009.

The Tasmanian Framework for Action on Climate Change 2008

The Tasmanian Framework for Action on Climate Change 2008 recognises that planning can ameliorate the effects of climate change by managing the form and density of urban growth, and facilitating more efficient uses of energy, transport and land. It anticipates that regional land use strategies will provide direction on this. Three regional land use strategies covering the State were approved by the Minister in 2011. The three regional land use strategies seek higher densities along public transport routes and focused on a hierarchy of centres as key components for integrating land use and transport and supporting public transport. They are intended to be implemented through planning schemes and by better coordination of government plans.

Planning Schemes

New planning schemes are being prepared across the State in accordance with the three regional strategies. Planning schemes regulate use and development of land and control the height, setbacks and size of buildings, road widths and car parking requirements. New planning schemes should mandate as well as allow higher densities, less car parking or narrower streets where appropriate. They should always have requirements for bicycle parking and end of trip facilities, and for considering cycling, pedestrian and bus routes in subdivision plans. Planning schemes can only regulate, not initiate, development.

Government Plans

Government at all 3 levels can initiate development. Implementation of the regional land use strategies depends to a large degree on coordination of government actions and positive development strategies for public infrastructure and community facilities, including housing. The *H.30 Capital City Plan* is a strategic plan for the greater Hobart area involving the 3 levels of government. The *Residential Development Strategy 2011* (RDS) is a State strategy for provision of public housing of the right type in the right location. It is intended to apply to private housing at a later stage. Like the regional strategies, both H30 and the RDS aim for higher densities and concentrated development to support public transport, walking and cycling.

Cars and parking

Tasmania has come through a period of relative prosperity. Most people who go to work, as well as many on welfare or retired, have cars. As settlements have spread out to accommodate the car and to access more space for living, it has become more necessary to have access to a car. Lower densities have increased costs of providing roads and public services, including public transport. Cars are much more convenient and comfortable than other forms of travel for most journeys. They are also perceived as cheaper than public transport. Once the fixed costs of owning a car are paid there is a financial incentive to use it for all or most journeys. Parking costs, if any, are often lower than public transport costs. It is estimated that each car needs about 6 parking spaces in a city. Most development increases the number of parking spaces or road space, and the amount of such space per person is continually increasing. Is this sustainable? The cost of providing ever more road and parking space is shared by everybody². We have to learn to share road space with buses, bikes and pedestrians to make travel by those modes safer and more socially desirable and enjoyable.

² *Whose Roads? Evaluating Bicyclists' and Pedestrians' Rights to Use Public Roadways* VictoriaTransport Policy Institute May 2012

Public Transport

Mass car ownership, lower densities and a dispersed pattern of settlement have reduced the attractiveness and effectiveness of public transport. Those without cars are mostly those incapable of owning or driving one by virtue of age, infirmity or poverty. Many of these people may be driven by others, such as children to school (which adds noticeably to morning traffic peaks). To be able to travel far without a vehicle these people otherwise form the bulk of public transport users (or users of school buses, which add to the size of the bus fleet and congestion and danger at schools). These are the captive public transport ridership, plus peak period commuters and those at other times who choose to travel by bus for reasons such as parking costs, or environmental or social concerns. A large proportion of the population (over 90%) never or seldom use buses but we all pay for bus services whether we use them or not. There might be less need for subsidies if land use supported public transport and made walking and cycling easier and safer, and if bus travel were promoted as a transport of choice to the city centre and regional centres. The ease of access by bus into the city and regional centres, and no parking worries or costs should be a competitive advantage. Park and ride into the city from regional centres could shift parking spaces to where they can be provided more cheaply, or hopefully cars can be left at home. Businesses and customers need to be convinced that travelling on foot, bicycle or bus costs less and leads to less congestion and a more attractive environment for shoppers. This can happen if we make the built environment more attractive and supportive for these modes. The Jan Gehl plan for Hobart and integrating land use and transport planning through the Capital City Plan aim to do this.

The Transport Task

In responding to travel needs created by dispersed settlement and mass car ownership, the transport task has been skewed towards building roads and increasing road capacity for peak traffic flows. Roads have become dominated by cars. Increased distances have reduced the practicality of walking, and traffic has reduced the attractiveness and safety of cycling, particularly to schools. Where cycle and pedestrian paths have been planned they are mainly of a recreational nature such as foreshore trails, and not for journeys to schools, work or shops. Footpaths and cycle paths along roads are often more direct but less attractive and usually have to give way to the smooth flow of traffic. If travel time is a factor cars are usually the first choice and travel time by car is usually given priority over travel time by other modes. However over reliance on cars leads to congestion and it is costly and eventually impossible to build a way out. Roads are a two-way street: improved access into the city is also improved access out of the city. New roads aid dispersion and spawn new centres both of which are harder to serve by all other modes. In Tasmania these roads are called outlets, perhaps because of eagerness to get out of the city, or to open up new land on the fringe for development. Planners blame engineers for encouraging sprawl with new outlet roads, and engineers blame planners for allowing sprawl which eventually requires new roads. They need to work together to prepare integrated land use and transport plans, and ensure that transport decisions reinforce planning ones and vice versa, rather than undermining each other. Congestion is part of cities and needs to be managed to ensure we don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. For public transport and other modes to play their proper role a shift of resources from road planning to integrated land use and transport planning is required. This would help to reinforce the move away from new greenfield lots and large houses, towards better use of urban land to accommodate the growing number of 1 and 2 person households and an ageing population. The Residential Development Strategy is intended to create more attractive urban residential and mixed use environments in order to reduce the transport task and overall costs to government.

Bus Priority

'Give way' to buses and bus-only lanes are useful devices. Bus priority signals at junctions would be even better, rather than linked signals which favour cars. These devices all help to increase the status as well as the speed of public transport. Travel by bus between regional centres could be as fast as car at peak times, or faster if you don't have to walk from a car park. Public transport could also be cheaper if charges apply for parking, or to key transport links, at least for those travelling alone which many do at peak periods. The topography and Y- shape of the metropolitan area provide 'choke points' or 'gateways' such as the Southern Outlet, Tasman Bridge or Brooker Highway where traffic flow can be managed. For example, a bus lane is being trialled on the Southern Outlet, and it should continue onto Macquarie Street (as being investigated). The non-stop running on the Southern Outlet between Macquarie Street and Kingston could provide a service like the O-Bahn in Adelaide. The railway line from the other end of Macquarie Street could provide for a similar service. Both would help to give public transport a higher profile. Running of bus services through the Hobart CBD from Kingston to Glenorchy and Rosny Park would assist commuters working beyond the CBD. Local services focussed on the city centre and regional interchanges with comfortable waiting facilities and real time bus information would promote bus travel to and between these centres. Buses would have to run on time to meet connections which will require priority through possible congestion points.

Kingston Experience

Since the Southern Outlet was opened in 1969 Kingborough has been the fastest growing municipality. Metro finally took over from a private bus operator only in 2007. Development has been largely car based and has spread out, as has the Kingston centre. Several plans have been prepared for the town centre, but until recently the actual centre has been slow to develop. The Kingston Shopping Town (big box, big car park) half a mile up the road in the 1970s was both cause and effect of this. So also was the peripheral (drive in) sales area in the 1990s for McDonalds. This contributed towards a new roundabout junction at the black spot crossroads between Channel Highway, Summerleas Road and the original Kingston Bypass. These two shopping areas delayed development of the Channel Court centre until the 2000s. Kingston now has a new Coles Plaza, Kingston Gateway (across Beach Road) and the John Street health centres all with their own car parks that encourage driving rather than walking. The McDonalds roundabout has a pedestrian underpass but this is a tight squeeze for cyclists. The roundabout eventually became a bottleneck for traffic at peak periods.

Kingborough Planning Scheme 2000 (KPS)

One of the principles of the KPS is to achieve better integration of land use and transport strategies by ensuring that e) *new use enhances and is integrated with public transport*, f) *major traffic generating development is located in the most accessible locations for multiple modes of transport*, and g) *public transport and other means of movement beyond private cars are given greater consideration in decision making*. The planning scheme supports a hierarchy of centres and is particularly designed to protect the investment in central Kingston, given the previous history. Major traffic generating development (MTGD) outside central Kingston is discretionary and requires a Location Decision Report. The report must include an accessibility profile of the site, a mobility profile of the development, an assessment of the likely effect of the MTGD on the viability of Central Kingston, and consideration of alternative sites.

Kingston and Environs Transport Study 2006 (KETS)

KETS was mainly a study of the current road system and traffic problems. It included a count of vehicles as they crossed into or out of the area, but not of the number of people in them or on bike or foot. The focus was on modelling car movements in a new computer model which displayed images of smooth flowing traffic on the new bypass and connecting roads, based on projections of current flows. KETS did not study how many car journeys might have been undertaken by other modes eg if there were better bus services or safer pedestrian and cycle routes for the journey to school. The effects of the possibility of the high school moving to the Kingborough Sports Centre site were not calculated, although it is obvious that school traffic has a considerable affect on morning traffic flows. KETS recommended that the school move, from a central to an off-centre location, should be modelled if it were to eventuate. The computer model was intended to become an ongoing tool for DIER.

Kingston Central Area Masterplan Review 2008

The Review was to include the high school site and was prepared with government funding and considerable community input. It replaced early plans for central Kingston which had not been incorporated into the planning scheme. It provided for extension of retail onto the site with a major store as an anchor. In turn the 2008 masterplan was not incorporated into the planning scheme either. This allowed the less than coordinated development in John Street and at Coles Plaza. These to some extent compromised the masterplan, and a 2009 review by Council found that demand for shopping would be accommodated in the Channel Court development. The 2009 review proposed a different road layout for the site. None of the plans have given much weight to existing and potential pedestrian and cycle routes into central Kingston from surrounding residential areas. These could be made much more attractive for walking, cycling, skateboarding, wheelchair and pram access to the centre and its frequent bus services.

New Kingston High School

The high school relocated in 2011 before the bypass was completed. Clearly it could no longer be served to the same extent by bicycle, footpath and public transport networks (such as they are) focussed on the town centre. A near miss involving students crossing the Huon Outlet to get to the new school was headlines in The Mercury of 17th May 2012. Such a situation was highly unlikely at the old site. No traffic modelling was done of the changes in traffic flow as far as I am aware.

The Kingston Bicycle Users Group (KBUG) gave consideration from 2007 onwards to pedestrian and cycle routes to the new high school. A number of suggestions were made by KBUG in 2010 and incorporated into the Kingborough (Council) Bicycle Action Plan 2011-2013 (KBUG is now a Council committee). The safety and security of cycling to schools is a vexed one, with some schools making little or no provision for bikes. The new high school does at least have bike racks. The application for a planning permit for the new high school was not referred to KBUG.

Kingston Bypass

The planning scheme did not protect the route for the Kingston Bypass but zoned it residential, business and open space, perhaps in the hope of alternative solutions to peak period travel. Much of the route had been purchased by DIER but more land was required at the southern end when the plans were adapted to provide for 'the biggest roundabout in Tasmania' and priority for Margate traffic. The original plans were primarily to connect to Algona Road for access to Blackmans Bay. Blackmans Bay is now almost fully developed and well served by Metro, so the original need for the bypass had passed (much as the need to replace the Tasman Bridge, as was being planned in the 1990s). A permit application rather than a rezoning application was submitted to the Council.

The permit application was referred to KBUG which successfully lobbied for an underpass at the Algona roundabout. KBUG also raised concerns about the new roundabout in Summerleas Road, which cuts through the shared pathway to the Sports Centre and high school. This is only a short distance from the pedestrian underpass at the McDonalds (now KFC) roundabout, but has no priority for pedestrians and bikes to cross. In addition the reinstated shared path on the new overbridge is barely wide enough, and a white centre line on the path was resisted until KBUG lobbied for it. The Spring Farm overbridge constructed subsequently has a slightly wider shared path. The Bypass has provided a new shared path along Whitewater Creek, but primarily as a recreational route. An underpass suggested by the Council midway between the two overbridges was rejected by DIER. It could have provided a connection from the Channel Highway to the Whitewater Creek open space and between Queens Park residential area and Kingston Shopping Town. Funding has recently been secured for a safe footpath and cycle link between the Spring Farm overbridge and the Algona pedestrian underpass after further lobbying by Cycling South³.

The bypass itself was the result of successful lobbying by KBAG (Kingston Bypass Action Group). It was not a State or Council planning priority, a strategic route or built for road safety reasons. It may in fact lead to traffic and safety problems on the Channel Highway and through Margate. Three councillors voted against the bypass, and an appeal was lodged by a citizen. His main concern was the KETS process, which he was a party to, and the lack of assessment of greenhouse emissions by either the Council or the Government. (The bypass escaped a Cabinet commitment for all major projects to be accompanied by a Climate Change Impact Statement, phased in from April 2009 and to be rigorously enforced after 1 July 2009). The appellant was up against both the Council and State Government and without public funding (as available in UK in such public interest cases) could not afford to pursue the appeal. He would have been heard if the bypass had been dealt with as a planning scheme amendment, or a project of regional significance.

Decisions made under the Resource Management and Planning System of Tasmania are required to further the objective of sustainable development. Time will tell whether the bypass is sustainable. No one can foresee the future, but every decision produces it, ie less attention to other modes of transport brings pressure for more roads. DIER now acknowledges that 'providing new roads induces new demand for private travel, which is ultimately counter-productive because the original level of congestion or higher will return in the longer term'⁴.

³ See http://www.cyclingsouth.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=34&Itemid=63

⁴ The *Glenorchy to Hobart CBD Transit Corridor Assessment Report – Stage one Problem identification – Metropolitan Level* DIER July 2012

Spring Farm Market Shopping Centre

A year before the bypass had opened the Council received an application for a new shopping centre including a large supermarket and discount department store (Coles and Target) on land reserved for expansion of the Antarctic Division or related business development. The site is opposite the Spring Farm bridge over the bypass, which will connect to the Sports Centre/High School area in future, ie a nodal location for accessibility by car. The Spring Farm Market aimed to serve the recent growth at Margate and more greenfield development (public and private) proposed in Spring Farm and Huntingfield.

KBUG was invited to comment and expressed concerns that the proposed access via a possible new roundabout (if approved by DIER) could create problems for cyclists and at the lack of access from the adjacent housing area to the shops which were located at the back of the deep site behind a large car park. More car parking was proposed than required by the planning scheme, and much more than would have been required for the same development in central Kingston. The proposal was similar to the Kmart at New Town except with one road frontage rather than three. A service station and fast food restaurant was proposed on the frontage. It was overly large to fit with the established centres hierarchy and not in the best location to serve the local shopping catchment. Local shops could be appropriate if a roundabout is required as part of the road network serving the adjacent housing area. Nevertheless Council planners recommended approval. The Council however refused the application and it was refused on appeal as being contrary to the intention for the land in the planning scheme. In other respects the Appeal Tribunal found in favour of the proponent's expert witnesses, who successfully argued that there would be a better bus service in future and the high school site was not available to accommodate the proposed development.

Kingborough Integrated Transport Strategy 2010 (KITS)

KITS states that improvements to existing transport infrastructure will focus on changing travel behaviour and removing barriers to more sustainable transport modes. Principles of KITS include a requirement for new development to contribute to a safe, attractive and comfortable pedestrian and cycling environment. The Council Strategic Plan 2010-2020 duly refers to a network of linked people friendly walking and cycling tracks, to school and work, in order to reducing dependence on private cars. There is very little budget for such things and a separate bicycle has only recently been established, at the behest of KBUG, and so far the Council appears to have done little or nothing to change travel behaviour or require green travel plans.

However, because KITS advocated an improved bus service to Margate it was called up to support the Spring Farm Market shopping centre proposal. Margate is currently not within the Metro urban service area but a new trial bus services has just been announced.⁵ The site would still have only about a quarter of the level of services to Kingston. If the new shopping centre does materialise there will be less scope for another major store in central Kingston. There is an obvious need for integrated land use and transport planning in this metropolitan growth corridor if the 2nd stage of the Kingston Bypass ie a full dual carriageway (earthworks already in place) with a grade separated intersection at the Algona roundabout is not to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

⁵ Kingborough Chronicle 7 August 2012

Park & Ride

KETS considered that park and ride could not assist much. However as a result of KITS and a Minister for Sustainable Transport the bypass plans included a park & ride location at the southern end of the bypass at the entrance to Huntingfield. This now has bus shelters, that will be used by the new trial services. Park and ride is also being trialled from a new car park and bus shelters in Denison Street Kingston. This is not a particularly good location and does not appear to be well supported. Many bus services in and outside peak times appear to run nearly empty, at public expense. Park & ride would undoubtedly be better supported if there were no bypass and some form of bus priority had been constructed instead. They have not been promoted in the same way as the bypass. The bus stops in central Kingston are hardly designed to promote bus travel. They still await the next stage of Council's town centre road and footpath improvements. It is impressive to see up to 4 buses trying to get onto the double bus bay southbound stop at 4.30pm on weekdays, but frustrating not to be able to catch school buses. Real time bus information would be a boon for the centre, allowing last minute shopping instead of a frustrating wait for a late bus which might have gone through early. A cultural change is required, and more could be done to lead from the top, by example – a further cut in use of government cars for commuting perhaps, or more polities on bikes and buses. This may help government advisers and decision makers to make decisions from a different perspective.

Former Kingston High School Site

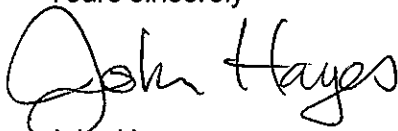
The State Government decided (after a consultants' report to Treasury) to sell the high school site to the Council. But first it proposed to build a health centre and car park next to the old school buildings in the area designated for higher density commercial, community and residential under the 2008 masterplan. The application for the health centre was withdrawn the day before a community rally to lobby for a delay until a new plan is prepared for the high school site (with Liveable Cities funding recently approved). The new plan will review the previous plans and hopefully realise the strategic importance of the site to the metropolitan public transport system and for promoting a more urban form of residential and mixed use development.

The *Residential Development Strategy*, like the Central Area Masterplan, seeks to encourage higher density mixed development on centrally located sites, and refers to redevelopment of surplus school sites as a demonstration and joint ventures with private developers to achieve this. A mix of community and private housing on a suitable part of the high school site in conjunction with the health centre could be the first concrete action to implement the residential development strategy and support public transport. Such a development would also achieve similar aims in the *Urban Passenger Transport Framework*, the *Walking and Cycling Strategy* and the *Tasmanian Infrastructure Strategy*. Could the Government overlook such an opportunity?

In Conclusion

Effective public transport and sustainable development depends on having robust and integrated planning and decision making to address the economic, social and environmental challenges ahead. If the government is serious about a better urban environment and a better fit between transport and land use it needs to not only provide direction and certainty to developers, the community and to Councils but to act in accordance with that direction.

Yours sincerely



John Hayes