

**Submission to:**  
**Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Traffic Congestion in The Greater Hobart Area.**

I submit the following views on traffic congestion for consideration by the Select Committee.

**Submitter:**

Rob Nolan is a town planner of over 40 years Tasmanian experience at the State, regional and local levels of planning as well as the NGO National Heart Foundation. Roles have included Planning Director at the Southern Metropolitan Planning Authority, Chief Planning Officer and Deputy Commissioner for Town and Country Planning and full-time Planning delegate at the Tasmanian Planning Commission and the organisations that preceded the Commission.

Rob is a registered planner and Life Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia.

**Disclosure:**

The claims and observations made in this submission are not based on particular empirical evidence or peer review references to supporting studies. Instead the claims and observations are based on many inputs and experiences over my professional career.

**Terms of Reference**

This submission advocates for the inquiry to view traffic congestion in the broad context of travel equity and the principles outlined viewed across the terms of reference rather than any particular term.

**Principles**

I invite the Select Committee to examine and test the following principles through the Committee's deliberations.

1. Congestion is a result of too many vehicles making trips concurrently. Whilst this is a statement of the obvious those in the congestion often don't see that they are the congestion and available alternatives are not being taken, ie change mode of travel, time of travel or allow more time to travel.
2. Congestion experienced in Hobart is often the result of vehicle crashes or vehicle breakdown. This is an accepted proposition as shown by additional tow trucks stationed at peak periods on major traffic routes. Additional road space does not necessarily lead to less vehicle crashes and where increased vehicle speed is the result, the severity of the disruption caused by the crash is magnified. In places where crashes are frequent or there is limited space to remove vehicles out of the traffic stream speed limits should be reduced during peak periods.
3. Reducing congestion is not achieved in the longer term simply through more road space being made available. Increased supply simply allows more vehicles on our roads and land use decisions that reflect the increased supply.
4. Increasing public transport availability on its own won't reduce congestion, the best that can be expected is a shortening of the peak traffic period. Increased patronage of public transport simply allows other vehicles to take the place of vehicles taken out of the traffic stream. In addition, increased public transport capacity, frequency and other enticements would mainly benefit those who are already public transport dependent.
5. Public transport that is road based ie buses is in the same congested environment as all other vehicles. For on-road public transport to have a competitive advantage it needs to benefit from a range of measures including separated bus only lanes and bus activated traffic lights at road intersections.

6. Congestion is a result of many interconnected travel decisions relating to land use. Destinations dispersed across the metropolitan area most often require many single purpose trips.
7. Active travel; walking, riding and public transport should not be viewed simply as a means of reducing traffic congestion. There are essential travel equity requirements for a proper functioning public transport system.
8. Public transport costs should be viewed as essential public infrastructure and not as a 'subsidised' activity.
9. Users of public transport effectively subsidise private car transport where public transport results in reduced or deferred extensions to road infrastructure.
10. The majority of people do not drive and rely on a family member or other means for travel. The non-drivers include those too young, too old, with a disability, too poor or chose not to drive. Provision that supports and facilitates active travel most benefits the non- drivers.
11. Provision for active travel eg safe bike lanes and walking space within road reservations are valid users of road space.
12. Our urban spaces are frequently hostile to active travel. Subdivisions without footpaths, culs de sac without pedestrian links, few connecting lanes to improve permeability of urban spaces and bike lanes that marginally improve rider safety.
13. The Hobart metropolitan area is often viewed as too hilly for bikes. This narrative is somewhat lost with the increased availability and reduced costs of e-bikes.
14. As has often been observed we don't see the same level of traffic congestion during school holidays compared to school terms. It has been estimated that traffic flows on school days can increase between 10% to 20% over holiday traffic, depending on the nature of the road<sup>1</sup>. Alternatives to current travel patterns can ease traffic congestion particularly related to the school journey and defer more difficult measures of increasing road capacity and new roads.

## Projects

Public advocacy tends towards increased road capacity and specific projects. The following provides comment on a Hobart CBD by-pass and active travel.

Hobart CBD by-pass.

On and off there is advocacy for an inner city CBD bypass. Those advocating this usually refer to the proposed Northside Freeway or a tunnel. I'm yet to see offered a current- day and realistic at-grade or above grade alignment for a bypass.

The Northside Freeway along with other major freeway and expressway proposals were first detailed in the Wilbur Smith *Hobart Area Transport Study (1964)* that was sponsored by the then Public Works Department and Transport Commission and the Hobart City Council. For the period post 1964 much property was purchased for the various freeways and expressways. For the Northside Freeway property purchases were made by the State Government and City Council particularly in the Brisbane and Melville Streets corridor. However by 1974 the Northside Freeway was sufficiently discredited for the HCC to abandon the idea. For some period the area suffered planning blight, however the once foreshadowed corridor has been the area of much redevelopment in recent years. It is the area that the University is now proposing its inner city campus. Interestingly the Wilbur Smith HATS 1964 costings for the Northside Freeway referred to reservation cost, that presumably included purchase and compensation. Presumably also for the period the recommended road corridors did not appear to include adverse environmental effects on adjoining properties nor include a list of actual properties required to be purchased. As will be readily seen the corridor proposed for the Northside Freeway is now highly valued property, unlike the situation in the 1960's. it includes the much valued linear park along the Hobart Rivulet.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of State growth 'Hobart Congestion traffic analysis - 2016

Herein lies the main issue for the advocates of a northern city by-pass. What is the proposed corridor, how many properties are required to be purchased and the direct and indirect costs of such a project?

To revisit a version of the Northside Freeway would considerably cut the city centre from its inner residential areas and inflict considerable environmental damage on the residents adversely affected.

The alternative of a below-ground level tunnel forming a by-pass of the city centre is, intuitively, difficult to accept with any sense of realism. Apart from the cost, there is the matter of the location of ventilation shafts and how to arrange entry and exit points in addition to those at either end of the tunnel.

A rational view would likely conclude that for a resident population of Hobart Metropolitan area of some 240,000 an inner-city bypass would be hard to justify even if an acceptable alignment could be defined.

#### Active travel

Active travel (transport) customarily covers travel modes that involve physical activity such as walking and cycling and includes the use of public transport that is accessed via walking or cycling and may allow for integration of multi-modal transport in the course of a day. Active travel proposals can realise real gains in accessibility, improve travel equity, have health benefits and be cost effective. The intercity cycleway is the major transport infrastructure investment and game changer in recent years. It is now timely to link up the various pieces of bike ways and extend these to new locations. Two pieces of infrastructure come to mind. The Battery Point waterfront walkway and provision for cycling on the Southern Outlet. To the Southern Outlet the makings of an off-road track exists outbound to Nelson Saddle. With the advent of e-bikes and the travel needs for Hobart College safer cycling provision would be beneficial to students and traffic pressure.

#### Examples of policy positions from near and far

Examples abound on how others have done transport planning with a focus on active travel. I understand Vancouver City British Columbia offers a good model to review. The topography of metropolitan Vancouver is similar to Hobart. See: <https://www.curbed.com/2016/12/7/13859668/vancouver-walking-biking-transit> and particularly view the video on Vancouver transport planning at: <https://go.redirectingat.com/?id=66960X1516509&xs=1&url=https%3A%2F%2Fvimeo.com%2F193996060&referrer=curbed.com>

And closer to home the City of Hobart Transport Strategy 2018-30 and RACT Greater Hobart Mobility Vision provide frameworks for a focus on active travel in terms of policy and projects.

Rob Nolan RPIA (Life Fellow)

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