



Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group

CBD BUG

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Coordinator-General

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Significant Projects Coordination

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Via email to: northernlink@dip.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir or Madam

This letter is to convey the CBD BUG's concerns with respect to the proposed Northern Link project. The background to this letter is the discussion on the project between members at the CBD BUG's 27 October 2010 General Meeting.

As a matter of policy the issues the CBD BUG raises in this letter have been limited to those having a direct impact on cyclists. This should not be interpreted as in any way condoning the project from any other perspectives.

Marginal cost-benefit of Northern Link project

The Northern Link project's cost to Brisbane ratepayers of \$1.5 billion represents very poor value for money. This can be clearly seen from the project's cost-benefit ratio of approximately 1.2, indicating it will be a marginally beneficial project from an economic perspective. This poor value for money is even further evident when it is compared to the cost-benefit ratios that can be achieved for investments in off-road bike paths in the range of 1:2.94 to 1:3.88.

Brisbane cyclists are concerned that not only is this huge expenditure going to be a very poor investment, but it is also going to lock Brisbane ratepayers into decades of debt that will inhibit expenditure on more productive services and infrastructure. The CBD BUG has noted that the additional costs of paying off the debt required to fund this and other car-focused road project have been raised by the Queensland Treasury Corporation in its most recent credit review of the BCC as impacting on other service areas through the need to make cuts to operational expenditure in other service areas.

In view of this information the CBD BUG calls for the abandonment of the Northern Link Project.

Futility of building more roads to address traffic congestion

While it is acknowledged that the BCC's current commitment to invest \$100 million over four years in cycling infrastructure has been the largest commitment of its type, this pales beside the colossal expenditure already made and intended to be made by Council on expanding Brisbane's road network.

The BCC's Northern Link project is part of an inner ring-road strategy first planned for Brisbane in the late 1960's by the then Queensland Department of Main Roads. This ring-road strategy was similar to that implemented in subsequent decades in many overseas cities, that now can now be seen as part of the mistaken notion prevailing transport planning during these decades that the future of urban personal transport would be the car.

This strategy has now been discredited, as can be seen in cities such as Amsterdam, Basel, Bogota, Denmark, Montreal and Portland where the prioritisation of major transport investment has been directed towards active transport modes, resulting in these municipalities now reaping the benefits of elevated improved health levels, cleaner environments, higher energy security, stronger community development, better livability and greater prosperity.

While increasing road space to address traffic congestion can provide some short term relief from traffic congestion, the longer term effect is invariably an increase private car utilisation. Cyclists are particularly concerned at the BCC's approach of trying to address traffic congestion by increasing road space via the Northern Link, as this will lead to still further motor traffic – in turn meaning increased risks for cyclists.

In view of this information the CBD BUG calls for the abandonment of the Northern Link Project.

Appropriate provision for cyclists during the tunnel works

The experience of Brisbane cyclists with other major transport infrastructure projects has generally been very poor, with significant disadvantages being experienced during works due to limited consultation on changes to existing pathways, inadequate provision of detours, and after-the-fact "consultation" on restored pathways.

This has resulted in significantly decreased numbers of cyclists during works, as many people cycle only because of the availability of off-road cycling facilities. Even after works have been completed and off-road routes re-instated it has been observed that cyclist numbers tend to not return to their former levels for many months, largely because people have settled into new routines after they stopped riding and because of the lack of information that routes have been restored.

In light of this information the CBD BUG calls for the tunnel building firm to be required to establish formal consultative arrangements with relevant bicycle user groups (BUGs) and that all plans for detours and restoring bike paths are provided to BUGs prior to their lodgment with the Brisbane City Council for approval.

Tunnel Control Centre (TCC)

It has been proposed that the Northern Link TCC be located on Mt Coot-tha Rd directly opposite the Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens.

The CBD BUG opposes this proposed location as Mt Coot-tha Rd is heavily used by the many cyclists who ride this route to reach the summit of Mt Coot-tha for commuting, training and/or recreational purposes. Apart from the additional motor vehicle traffic resulting from the TCC being sited at this location, it is also expected that there will be a large amount of additional on-street parking along Mt Coot-tha Rd during the tunnel construction process and on an ongoing basis after the tunnel's completion with the removal of the Botanic Garden's overflow car park.

Furthermore, even after the Northern Link's completion there will be an ongoing additional risk to cyclists riding along Mt Coot-tha Rd due to the extra driveway crossings.

Accordingly, the CBD BUG calls for the TCC to be located in another site where it will not create additional risk for cyclists. Additionally, should the TCC be located in the currently proposed site that the tunnel building firm be required to provide sufficient off-street parking for employees and contractors to reduce the risk to cyclists, and that they are regularly informed by the firm to be aware of the likelihood of cyclists being in this area.

Centenary Motorway off-ramps cycle overpass and other safety matters

CBD BUG members were very pleased to hear the only recently opened Centenary Motorway cyclist overpass will not need to be removed to accommodate the Northern Link project. However, the proposal for a large temporary car park to be constructed in ANZAC Park on the southern/eastern side of the Centenary Motorway from Mt Coot-tha is concerning for the CBD BUG, due to the increased risk of contests for space between the expected large increase in pedestrians walking across the overpass between this car park and the TCC.

The CBD BUG sees the potentially large flows of pedestrians walking across this overpass from this car park as un-safe, as and calls for the abandonment of this approach, with the recommended alternative, being staff taking public transport or company-provided shuttle buses to the works site. If the car park does go ahead there will then be a need to inform staff of the need to "share the path" with cyclists, and for additional warning and directional signage to be installed to reduce the risk of collisions between cyclists and pedestrians.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this project.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on 0423 974 825 if you or your staff wish to discuss the issues raised in this letter.

Yours faithfully



Paul French
Co-convenor
Brisbane CDB BUG
19 November 2010