



NRMA Motoring & Services

Sydney City Centre Access Strategy

SUBMISSION TO TRANSPORT FOR NSW

December 2013

About NRMA Motoring & Services

NRMA Motoring and Services (NRMA) comprises almost 2.4 million members in NSW and the ACT. For more than 90 years, NRMA has represented the interests of its Members in relation to traffic congestion, road safety and other relevant public policy issues.

NRMA began in 1920 when there were 20,000 motor vehicles on the road. One of the first services NRMA offered was car minding in the centre of Sydney in 1924, when it was against the law to leave a motor vehicle unattended.

Today NRMA has grown and in addition to providing roadside assistance, it has diversified to offer a range of motoring, travel, lifestyle and advocacy services. However NRMA remains a Membership organisation with its key focus being on Member benefits.

NRMA's Members use all our transport networks including roads, public transport and walking and cycling networks and that's why we fight for both better roads and better public transport facilities. Our advocacy for improved public transport was recently highlighted through our Seeing Red on Rail campaign which attracted over 11,000 respondents.

Comments and Queries

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NRMA's Submission

NRMA is pleased to provide this submission to Transport for NSW on the City Centre Access Strategy.

We recognise the growing need to improve transport to, from and within the Sydney CBD and we commend the NSW Government and Transport for NSW (TfNSW) for seeking feedback on its current proposals. This latest submission by NRMA to TfNSW on CBD transport issues focuses on the following:

1. Traffic and community impacts
2. The Cross City Tunnel
3. Priority traffic routes
4. Parking issues
 - (a) Park and ride located near major roads
 - (b) Dynamic parking signs
 - (c) Drop off and pick up zones
5. Speed limits

1. Traffic and community impacts

Our primary concern with the current Strategy is that it contains very little detail on how the proposed changes will impact on private and commercial motorists, or details of how these impacts will be managed.

Since the Strategy does not identify these impacts, we expect there will be many people right across Sydney who will be unaware of the full extent of the TfNSW proposals to significantly reduce the numbers of traffic lanes, and increase the number of turn bans at intersections.

This approach carries significant risks, not least since the decision to implement these changes will then be carried forward into the environmental assessment stage of the project. There are generally very limited opportunities for major changes by this stage in the lifecycle of a project of this magnitude.

We strongly recommend that TfNSW publish for public consultation an easy to read diagram showing **both the existing and proposed changes** for all intersections and mid-block locations where changes are proposed. The diagrams should highlight any changes in both the number and types of lanes, and also any changes to turn restrictions.

2. Cross City Tunnel

The Cross City Tunnel project is a very pertinent example of how the wider community was largely unaware of the associated changes to the surface streets in and around the CBD, either during the environmental assessment or the construction phases of the project.

It was not until these changes were physically implemented on the ground that the impact

of the changes became apparent to this wider community. This resulted in significant public criticism for the former State government, for the former Roads and Traffic Authority, the Cross City Motorway company and for the construction contractor. It also led to significant criticism of traffic modelling. Ultimately many of the contentious traffic changes, such as those on Druiitt Street were reversed. TfNSW now appears to have included similar traffic changes for Druiitt Street but also for multiple additional streets within its Sydney City Centre Access Strategy.

The Strategy states that drivers travelling from one side of the city to the other will be encouraged to use the Cross City Tunnel as a bypass route, however, it makes no further comment on how this will be achieved.

The Strategy makes no mention of any toll reduction as a way of encouraging a change in driver behaviour. Instead it appears that TfNSW will use the changes to the CBD surface streets as a way of channelling traffic into the tunnel.

It should also be recognised that there are underlying issues with access / egress to the Cross City Tunnel that unfortunately tend to restrict its ability to function as an alternative route for many motorists with origins / destinations within the CBD, or from further afield, such as Bondi Junction, making its catchment relatively constrained.

3. Priority traffic routes

The Strategy is silent on what amount of private car traffic will need to be displaced from the CBD in order to facilitate the proposed changes to CBD streets.

The Strategy proposes to prioritise buses on Hickson, Kent, Clarence, York, Castlereagh Elizabeth and College Streets (between Oxford Street and Park Street) and on Park / Druiitt Streets. Various traffic lanes will be replaced with bus lanes.

The Strategy proposes to install cycle lanes on King, Park, Liverpool, Broadway, Kent and Castlereagh / Pitt Streets.

In terms of general traffic, the Strategy is largely silent on how it intends to prioritise general traffic on particular routes. It is unclear why the Strategy proposes to route general traffic with cyclists on what it refers to as “important traffic links”, such as King and Kent Streets.

This approach introduces conflict points, particularly at intersections and impacts on intersection capacity by introducing bicycle priority. It misses the opportunity to provide additional traffic capacity through parking reductions to partly compensate for the reduction in traffic lanes on other CBD streets. As an alternative, the proposed changes to George Street and other streets present an opportunity to revisit these routes to both minimise conflict between motor vehicles and cyclists on important traffic routes and to provide traffic capacity improvements.

We are concerned that the Strategy makes no mention of TfNSW proposals to remove traffic lanes from important east / west links such as Hunter, Margaret and Bridge Streets. These are all important routes associated with the Eastern Distributor, and Harbour Bridge and will become increasingly important when the major new activity generator at Barangaroo is completed.

Similarly the Strategy makes no mention of reintroducing traffic capacity in Margaret Street that was removed to facilitate the construction phase of Wynyard Walk.

Given the extent of the proposed changes, it will be imperative that CBD traffic signals are actively managed by the Transport Management Centre. NRMA continues to recommend that TfNSW utilise wireless detectors positioned in the road pavement both

upstream and downstream of signalised intersections to help the computerised traffic signal system (SCATS) determine and prioritise the traffic demands.

The SCATS traffic signal system has a number of blind spots that could be addressed by the installation of new wireless detectors in the road pavement both upstream and downstream of the traffic signals. More details on these initiatives and on a further recommendation for CBD traffic signals to incorporate a battery back-up system and linked to the CBD emergency warning system, are contained within NRMA's Decongestion Strategy. Copies of the Decongestion Strategy have previously been provided to TfNSW and are available online:

http://www.mynrma.com.au/media/NRMA_Decongestion_Strategy.pdf

4. Parking

(a) Park and ride located near major roads

The Strategy does not consider how park and ride associated with the new light rail expansion along Anzac Parade, for example at Randwick Racecourse, and / or at Centennial Park / Moore Park, could be used to encourage a multi-modal approach to transport in the city.

Both of these sites are potential examples that could be used to facilitate travel not just from the Eastern Suburbs, but also from further afield, particularly for those people who may have no option but to use cars for at least part of their journey. They are strategically located close to major roads such as Anzac Parade, the Eastern Distributor and South Dowling Street. The view that motorists should instead interchange at suburban railway stations, ignores a large section of the motoring public.

Overseas cities such as Bristol in the United Kingdom have successfully located 'park and ride' in close proximity to major roads, as a way of encouraging motorists to switch modes and as a necessary pre-requisite to reducing the number of cars entering a CBD.

(b) Dynamic parking signs

NRMA has previously recommended to TfNSW that it considers dynamic parking signs on the periphery to and within the CBD as a way of guiding traffic towards available parking and reduce the amount of traffic circulating within the CBD. The Strategy is silent on these issues.

(c) Drop off and pick up zones

The need for drop off and pick up zones within the CBD for general traffic is not addressed by the Strategy. For example, the NRMA was opposed to the removal of the zone from York Street outside Wynyard railway station and daily evidence shows that there is clearly a strong demand for a zone in this location which would help to facilitate 'trip chaining'.

The legacy of NSW replacing 'No Standing' parking restrictions with 'No Stopping' restrictions at intersections (as a result of adopting the Australian Road Rules) dramatically reduced the number of potential drop off and pick up locations and the Strategy does not appear to address this and other transport mobility issues associated with an ageing population.

5. Speed limits

The challenge NRMA sees for TfNSW is to accommodate the flow of traffic, whilst achieving the public transport and urban design benefits and without making the city a no-go zone for motorists.

Whilst a blanket 40km/h CBD speed limit has been proposed, it is unclear what design speed is being adopted for each road. The design speed will lead to spaces being created with certain speed profiles and TfNSW will need to find the right compromise between getting the traffic moving through and allowing for all the pedestrian movements and interactions at the junctions.

NRMA continues to advocate for greater use of Gateways to highlight where a change in driver behaviour is required and to highlight a change of scale where the CBD begins. This is particularly important where high speed roads enter the CBD.