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John McCartney
Manager Engineering Services
City of Greater Geelong
PO Box 104,
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Dear Mr McCartney

Re: Submission on the revised Geelong Transport Strategy

We write to submit the Geelong Branch of the PTUA's comments on the Geelong Transport Strategy.

A number of the issues in this brief submission were raised at our meeting on 10 July 2002 with the City's General Manager of Development, Stuart Walker.

Positive Additions to the Strategy

We were pleased to discover that the revised Geelong Transport Strategy contains some useful Strategy Actions for walking, cycling and public transport.

With regards to public transport, this included a recognition of the need for a detailed, municipal-wide bus route network review (*Public Transport Strategic Action 15.*) Providing bus services as development occurs, not after, (*PT SA 33*) is commendable, as was the recognition of the importance of staffed stations.

Strategy Actions including improving bus shelters with lighting and transparent sides (*PT SA 1*), accommodating bicycles on buses and trains (*PT SA 23*), providing bicycle parking and storage near public transport (*Bicycles SA 5*) and ensuring good pedestrian access to public transport stops (*Pedestrians SA 2*) are all welcome.

There were also a number of worthwhile actions included in the Chapter on *Land Use* to encourage sustainable transport-friendly development. The addition of a chapter on Travel Demand Management also indicates a welcome step in the right direction.

However, we also have some serious concerns that go to the heart of the strategy's claim to promote a transport system based on ecologically sustainable development principles:

Need for Travel Mode Targets

There are still no measurable targets set for decreased car use and dependence. A clear target for reduced car use is needed to make this commitment more than an empty ‘motherhood’ statement. **Such an addition must be clearly linked to the Geelong Transport Strategy.**

There is an urgent need for a detailed travel study, to gather more data on household travel patterns and see how they can be influenced. The journey-to-work data used in the strategy is helpful, but represents a minority of trips and is insufficient on its own.

Such a study would allow the identification of **clear, modal-share targets for** (an increase in the use of) **walking, cycling and public transport**, as well as for (a reduction in the use of) **private motor vehicles**. It should also establish strategic planning processes and clear timeframes for their achievement.

We suggest that this study could be performed as part of the Public Transport Action Plan that we have previously proposed.

Inconsistency between Travel Demand Management and Parking and Roads Sections

There is a lack of integration of demand management and sustainable transport concerns into the roads and parking sections. For example:

- There is an emphasis on reducing long-term street parking to ‘free up’ additional spaces for short-term car parks on the streets, and build extra off-street car parking near Deakin University and the Geelong Hospital. The strategy also proposes even more additional parking on the fringe of the CBD.

The effect of increasing overall car parking on travel demand- ie actively encouraging car use - has not been acknowledged or tackled. Restricting parking (with planning controls to focus development on central areas) is accepted throughout the world as an important measure to encourage the use of more sustainable transport.

In particular, as in other cities, visitors, staff and students travelling to hospitals and university campuses should be encouraged to use sustainable transport, not just supplied with extra car parking.

- In the roads section, an artificial distinction is made between local roads, where traffic is to be discouraged, and arterial roads where traffic flow is to be facilitated. There is a dense network of arterial roads (including secondary arterials.) Opportunities for reduced speed limits, especially on secondary arterials and near schools, as well as many more pedestrian crossings to link areas bounded by arterial roads, have not been considered and need to be identified by the community.

Unsubstantiated Assumptions about Car Use

There appears to be a worrying list of assumptions about the need to use cars (or “quick and convenient transport”) on page x of the Executive Summary, yet few of these have been substantiated in the document. While we do not dispute the prediction

that the car will remain the main mode of transport in Geelong for at least the next ten years, we are concerned that several assertions are made for which there is little or no evidence presented.

- As shown in other cities, “higher disposal incomes” do not by themselves lead to high car usage. Rather, this is heavily influenced by the alternatives available.
- “Increases in the number of activities involving children” do not automatically lead to more “mum’s taxi” car trips, particularly if children can move about independently.
- The “increasing participation of women in the workforce” does not automatically lead to greater car use.
- The growth of flexible working hours and part-time, casual jobs can actually help to support a comprehensive public transport service, by providing patronage outside peak times.

Similarly, “demographic” factors are given as a reason for the car remaining the predominant mode of travel. Yet the Strategy identifies a clear ageing of the population, with the highest predicted increases in the 60-69 and 70-84 age groups- currently some of the largest users of public transport in the region.

Inadequate Minimum Frequency for Buses

The minimum recommended off-peak local bus frequency of 40 minutes is far too low and must be changed to *at least* every 30 minutes. While this is still a poor service, it would at least allow bus services to meet with the existing hourly off-peak train services, which is **critical for an integrated public transport system**. It would also allow services to run on regular “clock face” timetables. Targets for extended hours of service for buses are also desperately needed.

Need for More Frequent Rail Services

The strategy does not acknowledge the importance or desirability of better train frequency or more competitive fares, and focuses excessively on speed. The *Public Transport Strategy Action 16*, “Undertake a review of rail service frequency and hours of service,” is disappointing in failing to suggest the need to investigate more frequent trains or extended hours of service.

Poor Public Transport Patronage in Geelong

It needs to be acknowledged that bus patronage in Geelong is not “high” compared to other regional centres (p 44); on the Geelong’s GTS urban bus system, patronage is actually the same or slightly lower than Ballarat, a city half Geelong’s size. (Indeed, patronage is half to a quarter of that *already* achieved in comparably sized cities like Wollongong and Canberra.)

Figures showing that the already low bus patronage declined over 1996-2001 are alarming.

Other Issues

- The Public Transport Coordination Group still fails to include any user or community representation. This is extremely disappointing given that we raised this issue in our original submission.
- The dismantled South Geelong-Queenscliff railway line is shown throughout the document as part of the rail system. The reservation needs to be protected (particularly from memorial tree planting) so that the rail trail and revegetation efforts can coexist with any future transport development.
- Getting (particularly heavy) freight off roads and onto rail would take pressure off roads within Geelong and make it easier for traffic-calming measures to be taken. Yet the Strategy contains no plans or reservations for intermodal freight facilities outside the northern suburbs in either of the industrial areas of South Geelong and Moolap/Point Henry. This should be rectified immediately.

Vague Implementation Process

The implementation process is unclear.

There need to be clear budgets and timelines for the implementation of strategy actions. There should be priority for sustainable transport strategy actions.

There also needs to be more than token representation for users of alternative and sustainable transport. There should be a focus on representing sections of the community that are marginalised by ‘mainstream’ transport interests.

An Alternative and Sustainable Transport Strategy for the Geelong region

We have already proposed a Geelong Region Alternative and Sustainable Transport (GRAST) Strategy, which could flesh out the detail needed to implement some of the alternative and sustainable transport Strategy Actions. Through the Public Transport Action Plan, the GRAST Strategy would also:

- Undertake detailed travel analysis
- Set modal targets
- Undertake detailed planning for public transport and recommend supportive urban planning.
- Assist the city in appointing a Sustainable Transport Officer (perhaps instead of the Road Safety Liaison/Transport Strategy officer as mentioned in the Briefing to Council 28/5/02.)

For example, the City of Port Phillip has a similar officer, supported by additional staff, whose activities are funded by parking meter revenue.

A similar arrangement in Geelong would help to show that the city is serious about encouraging the use of alternative and sustainable transport.

Please refer to Cycling Geelong’s submission for more detailed responses on cycling issues.

Conclusion

The strategy contains a number of good ideas for walking, cycling and public transport, which if further developed and implemented, could produce some positive outcomes. However, the Strategy's stated aim to reduce car use and encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport is not reflected throughout the document. It lacks commitment to the frequent services that would allow public transport to be a real alternative to the car in Geelong. Meanwhile, its roads and parking sections aim to provide for greater car use.

At the very least, clear targets for a reduction in car use and an increase in walking, cycling and use of public transport must be set and regularly monitored. Strategy Actions that might be inconsistent with this overriding goal should be seriously reviewed.

Yours sincerely

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