



Ashfield Council Environment Committee – 20 October 2009

Summary of concerns from EcoTransit Sydney with regard to the final version of the GreenWay Masterplan & Co-ordination Strategy

This note outlines several areas of concern from EcoTransit Sydney relating to Item CM10.5 “Cooks River to Iron Cove GreenWay Masterplan & Co-ordination Strategy” (the “Masterplan”). Items on the business papers of Ashfield, Marrickville and Leichhardt councils recommend “adoption” of the Masterplan.

Having commented on the draft Masterplan and reviewed the final version of the Masterplan, EcoTransit Sydney is firmly of the view that it is a flawed document and the responsible course of action at the present time is to defer adoption of the Masterplan, in whole or in part.

There are several reasons for this course of action, and they can be summarised as:

- In approving the Masterplan, Council would be committing itself to an outcome requiring the re-tasking of the *formation* (ie the tracks) of the Rozelle rail freight line, a valuable grade separated urban rail transport corridor, to one intended for cyclists and pedestrians. This is made clear on p.4 in sections 2.3 (*The Transport Network Concept*), 2.4 (*Key points in relation to the GreenWay Transport Objective*), and 2.5 (*Creating a greater transport network*).
 - It represents a prioritisation of recreation over (public) transport in keeping with the philosophy of the rail trails movement.
 - The scope of benefit to the community would be largely limited to the physically capable, that is only those able to engage in active transport.
 - Instead of considering the needs of light rail (ie public transport users) and active transport in an integrated manner, the Masterplan disingenuously claims that this is beyond its remit while unilaterally imposing conditions on a potential light rail service that would limit its usefulness for the broader community and, likely, its viability. This is poor planning practice and is unlikely to yield a good community outcome.
- The adoption of the Masterplan as council policy will have direct policy implications for NSWIT's recently announced Light Rail Extension Assessment study.
 - The Masterplan's preferred configurations and outcomes would, of necessity, inform the positions of the council representatives on the study's Steering Committee with regard to the scope and nature of studies into light rail options for the corridor. This is made clear in the “Discussion” section of the business papers for item CM10.5, p. 152 which states:

The Strategy recognises that the appropriate studies that should provide the necessary information to allow for selection of a preferred option are the NSWIT's *Light Rail Feasibility Study* and the RTA's *GreenWay Trail Strategies Concepts Study*. The *Coordination Strategy* will assist progress of the other two studies by providing important information on the broad range of opportunities possible within the corridor. It is this

appropriate and timely that Council endorse the Strategy so it can inform the forthcoming NSW Government studies.

- This purpose, and the secondary nature of the light rail option in comparison to other GreenWay priorities, are explicitly stated in Action Item, 3.10¹ (p. 24) which states: *“Support extension of light rail from Lilyfield using the Rozelle freight rail corridor, and inform the design process so the project complements the implementation and operation of the GreenWay Trail.”*
- Many of the non-attributed concerns relating to the use of the rail corridor in the Appendix (pp. 27-29) were not addressed in a sound or comprehensive manner. This undermines confidence in the legitimacy of the process by which the Masterplan has been developed.
 - The failure to identify the source of each issue raised in the Appendix is a practice EcoTransit Sydney cannot endorse, particularly in a document which will become a council policy². Councillors and the public should have been made aware as to which state agency, group or individual raised particular issues.
 - The list of state agencies, groups and individuals who responded to the public call for submissions has not been included in the Masterplan or the business paper.
 - As far as EcoTransit Sydney is aware, the submissions themselves have not been released. In particular, the views of state agencies who have legislative responsibility for the lands of the GreenWay corridor, particularly the Rozelle rail freight line, have not been made available to the community. This is despite those views being directly relevant to the feasibility and viability of the outcomes sought by the Masterplan.
 - The land use decisions inherent in the Masterplan’s preferred single track configuration contradict claims in the associated business papers and in the Appendix that it was never intended that the Masterplan would consider transport options in sufficient detail to arrive at a firm preferred option.
 - We note that the Appendix asserts (p. 28): *“Using the corridor for the GreenWay does not necessarily preclude light rail. The light rail and Greenway could share the formation in the southern section.”* However, no evidence is presented from state transport agencies and regulatory authorities, or the operator of the existing light rail service to support this claim.
 - The Masterplan fails to explain the basis on which alternatives were rejected that would maintain a double track configuration while preserving corridor access, as opposed to *formation (ie rail track) access*, for active transport.
- The Masterplan’s preference for a single rail track does not appear to have been reached on the basis of any professional public transport-based input on the operational requirements of light rail within the corridor.
 - This is demonstrated in the Appendix (p. 28) in response to the (non-attributed) concern raised by EcoTransit Sydney that *“The Masterplan does not offer the same level of support for light rail as it does for active transport in the corridor.”* The response was *“This Masterplan is for the Cooks River and Iron Cover GreenWay. Its remit is not to look at the other options for corridor use.”*
 - The Rozelle rail freight line is the central element, the *spine* if you will, of the corridor.

1 Only one out of 11 Action Items listed on pp. 23-24 relate to public transport matters. The remainder relate to cycling and walking. Nor is public transport or light rail referenced in the section 3.26 “Performance Targets”.

2 In speaking with Ashfield Council officers, EcoTransit Sydney understands that this reflects the policies of Marrickville Council which took the lead role in coordinating and preparing the MasterPlan.

Prudence and good planning practice would dictate that a plan for a corridor this important should have looked beyond active transport issues to the broader transport needs of the communities along the length of the corridor. The Masterplan is not one of them.

- **This indicates that the author(s) of the Masterplan see light rail as an “optional”, competing, corridor use rather than a complementary green transport mode with a legitimate role in the corridor.**

- The Masterplan is predicated on a scheme for a single rail track only between Summer Hill/Lewisham and Dulwich Hill, as outlined in section 3.6 “Concepts and options for constructing a GreenWay Trail” (p. 10).
 - The concept map on p. 8 of the Masterplan also indicates a preference for removal of one rail track from north of Marion Street Leichhardt to Lilyfield.
 - The preference for the removal of one rail track in these sections is flawed because it did not objectively consider any alternate design scheme that would place a walking/cycling track next to the two rail tracks within the rail corridor rather than closing one track and substituting a cycleway and walking path in its place.
 - This is in spite of the fact that a walking/cycling track alongside the rail tracks is, technically, entirely feasible, is consistent with the GreenWay objectives and may be cheaper to implement.

- If a single rail track only remains between Summer Hill/Lewisham and Dulwich Hill (let alone if track were removed north of Marion Street) light rail could only run at 15 minute frequencies³ whereas it is already running at 10 minute frequencies or less in peak periods.
 - A single track would therefore render light rail operations south of Summer Hill/Lewisham, and possibly beyond Lilyfield, nonviable.
 - The assertion in the Appendix that single track configurations are successfully used overseas overlooks the fact that, wherever they are available, double track configurations are preferred for sound operational and safety reasons (as was outlined in the submission from EcoTransit Sydney).
 - The unwillingness of the Masterplan to investigate how it could achieve its aims while maintaining a twin track configuration is a serious flaw of the plan. A proposal from EcoTransit Sydney for an *Enquiry by Design* as an inclusive, technically sound means of investigating precisely this outcome was not supported by the Masterplan.

- We note the reference in the Appendix (p. 30) to “*Comments on the proposed route and potential inadequacy of infrastructure have been noted and shared by the RTA consultant who is drawing up the GreenWay Trail concept.*”
 - The consultant is Mr Bruce Ashley who is also listed as a community representative on the GreenWay Coordination Strategy Working Group. This appears to be a conflict of interest. It is our understanding that the RTA's GreenWay Trail Strategic Concepts Study has been completed but not publicly released. It would be beneficial to councillors and the community to see the recommendations of the RTA study and the extent to which they correspond to the single rail track scheme as described in the Masterplan (as noted in section 3.4 “Pathway Design”, p. 9).

3 Murrumbidgee Council business papers for L 1009 Item 14 “GreenWay Masterplan and Coordination Strategy and Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill Light Rail Feasibility Study,” October 13, 2009, p 205.