

RY-20070829-01

29 August 2007

David Webster
Transurban

Dear David,

Re: Cyclists and the M2

I am writing on behalf of cyclists in relation to the M2. I'm sure you will recall the series of long meetings at which we debated the safe means by which Transurban and the RTA could remove cyclists to allow a third M2 lane to operate westbound. The main reason was to reduce the risk of cars queuing back to the Lane Cove Tunnel, although Transurban wanted to increase motorway capacity for obvious reasons. Despite the accidents due to narrow lanes, and delays caused by the lack of a breakdown lane, we can only presume that Transurban are happy with the outcome and are gaining extra revenue.

Cyclists on the other hand are languishing on an alternate route which was never satisfactory and which was supposed to be upgraded in three stages, with a final return to the shoulders of the M2. Through difficulties and delays, "Stage 1" has been completed. This work is characterised by painted logos, painted road lines and painted signs with short connecting paths at each end. This work was cheap and quick, but does not meet requirements.

Stage 2 is still not completed, nor even started on the ground, despite being five months since we left the M2 westbound! This is just one seventh of the total time we are to be off the M2. Although the RTA has offered \$500k for Stage 2, this covers only half of the required work. Under the agreement for the widening, which we discussed several times, Transurban is liable to pay for the works which, due to the RTA contribution, has been reduced to just \$500k.

Previously the Lane Cove Tunnel opening was the deadline imposed on solving the "cyclist's problem". Due to an inadequate project timeline by Transurban it was not possible to finish all the required work before we left, so we agreed to a staged solution, on the basis of promises - so far unfulfilled promises - by TU and the RTA. We would like to renew the trust between Transurban and cyclists but we need some action first. Are we forgotten?

- o **Can you confirm that TU will cover the remaining costs of the Stage 2 works?**
- o **Can you provide a date on which all the works will be completed?**

Stage 3 is the bridge across Terrys Creek which was promised to be funded, designed and built solely by the RTA (in addition to the \$500k). We need to ask the RTA the current status, to request to see the designs, and to check on the delivery date.

We met a while ago with Garrett O'Connor who is now planning the widening of the entire M2 both eastbound and westbound to three lanes. This is in response to the increase in demand for road space by users. We all know that the widening of motorways will not solve any transport problems or reduce travel times in the long term. The induced traffic will build up and clog the road as quickly as the capacity increases. Bigger roads just fuel everyone's expectation that individual car transport is the answer and that our current travel patterns are acceptable.

As you know, alternate solutions are much cheaper, more effective and more profitable. At the recent Transurban Stakeholders meeting items such as differential time-based tolling and HOT lanes were discussed. These projects should be pushed ahead rather than increasing the

physical capacity (to solve the 15% of the day the lanes are clogged). Public transport aspects must also be fully explored. Where is TU up to on these issues?

Garrett indicated that he had an engineering design solution to the entire motorway except the Beecroft Road overpass and the North Epping tunnel, and he asked us for suggestions. We remind TU of the need for the designs to meet the regional cycling parameters of distance, speed, gradients and safety in the various publications. Cyclists will not accept any reduction in these measures compared to the baseline M2 shoulder facility. This may mean expensive civil works to widen/duplicate the tunnel and to widen/tunnel/skirt the Beecroft Road area. These aspects should be part of the TU plans and budgets from day one.

Of equal or greater concern for us is the probable loss of the cycle lane during construction. Can the M2 be widened without losing the breakdown lane to construction? The M4 experience shows us what to expect. Nothing!! If the M2 continuity for cyclists in the breakdown lane is interrupted, then alternatives must be provided. To ban cyclists from the M2 motorway is impossible and completely unacceptable for many reasons.

We can see two likely solutions to this dilemma. The first is to provide for dedicated cycle space on the M2 during construction, by reducing the number, or reducing the width, of the car travel lanes. The second solution, the preferred one for cyclists, involves building a separate but parallel cycle facility along full width of the M2 prior to works. This facility should meet regional cycle facility parameters and not be interrupted nor contain deviations.

Perhaps the best parallel cycle way solution is to build a lightweight cycling platform structure about 6 metres above one side of the M2 for the entire length of the M2. Although there would need to be regular links back to the local communities the structure should provide grade separation at all road intersections. There may be a viable on-ground parallel path solution, but the facility must meet all the parameters and must not be disrupted during M2 widening.

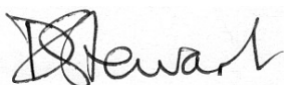
We are aware of growing pressure on Transurban by motorists to solve the eastbound congestion on the M2. We know that Transurban are planning changes as evidenced by Garrett's project, but we don't know anything about times or stages. We are very concerned about further changes that may result in the denial of the cycle/breakdown lane anywhere eastbound or westbound or any other changes in cyclists access. We seek your urgent assurance that the consultation processes for any changes will be open and timely.

- o **What plans, even preliminary, does Transurban have to make any further changes?**
- o **When does Transurban plan to make these changes?**

During the planning for the westbound lane project over last Christmas there was no consultation before decisions were locked in, which resulted in an extremely under-resourced and unworkable project plan. We request an assurance from you that TU will engage in timely and complete consultation for all future works on the M2 which affect cycle access on the M2. We also request that TU allocates a realistic project budget for the widening which is sufficient to meet the needs of a major regional cycling facility.

To discuss all these issues we request a conference at a senior level in the next month involving Transurban, the RTA, local Councils and Bike North.

Yours Faithfully,



Doug Stewart
Bike North Inc.

cc: RTA, Ryde Council, Hornsby Council, Bike North