

ON - TRAC

Transport Action Coalition Newsletter - March 2004

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✱ TRAC is a community group which formed to find sustainable solutions to regional traffic problems ✱

KEEP ON TRAC'ing

Delete the Bypass ?! Since the Labour Government was elected in Feb 2001 things have moved at snails pace (apologies to snails). First no action at all, then in 2002 the Freight Review (even though the FEB was not an issue), then the advertising for comment on the bypass deletion, (extended twice), then the WAPC hearings in June last year.

Finally, the FEB deletion was debated and passed in the Legislative Assembly in early December 2003. The deletion now has to go to the Upper House. If the deletion had been tabled one week earlier the FEB would have been removed from the Metropolitan Regional Scheme already. Unfortunately, this will not happen until the first week of April 2004.

The sale of land could have already started but the Planning Minister has sat on this issue. The Fremantle Council has already approved the change of land use from road to residential along the bypass route. So get your chequebook ready (to buy a block of land together with plans to build a home along the former highway route) and give the slow Minister a push. Wouldn't it be nice to have a group of like-minded people living along the former bypass route who continue to make a contribution to the local area? (Well, we all have our dreams)

The next state election is due in Feb 2005 so blocks need to be sold before then. There are a few more nails to go in the dreaded FEB coffin before we can hold the wake and be free of the 'mad roads lobby'.

Pro-Highway Rhetoric Reloaded

You are probably aware of the wild claims being made by the pro-highway lobby about the deletion of the Fremantle Highway reserve. The pro-highway lobby made similar claims about traffic and planning issues when the proposed Roe Highway extension through South Fremantle and the West End was deleted in 1991 and when the Swan River Highway reserve was deleted in 1988.

Today, there are few people around who would say that deleting those proposed highways was a mistake.

Perhaps current 'ultra conservative' Parliamentary Liberal Party MP's dream of bringing back those two highway plans as well.

What the WA Planning Commission said on recommending the deletion of the Fremantle 'bypass'.

The WAPC recommended that the amendment to the MRS to delete the FEB should proceed. The WAPC in forming a different view from the Hearings Committee took into consideration a broader range of issues. The Commission also felt that the Hearing Committee may not have presented an accurate view of safety conditions on Leach Highway

What the WAPC found:

- The WA Government has initiated demand management strategies for general traffic. This is essential as the usual 'predict and provide' approach to traffic demand is economically, environmentally and socially unsustainable. The report noted that Perth had 10.7metres of road per person while the Australian average was only 8.3m/person. Even the USA has only 6.9m/person.
- The community needs to make a paradigm shift towards sustainable transport solutions. The deletion of road reserves will facilitate this.
- Retention of the FEB reservation does not provide the catalyst for change, it retains the status quo of uncertainty. The retention of the FEB and Roe 8 can be regarded as impediments to achieving a shift in transport and land use planning.
- The WAPC has reduced numerous road reservations highlighting the fact that there is a need to place a cap on traffic capacity.
- Better use of the existing road system provides a more sustainable outcome.
- The view that FEB-Roe 8 is a better freight solution does not weigh the environmental and social costs.
- The experience in the USA indicates that the highest levels of congestion are in cities where expenditure on road provision has been highest.
- Constructing the FEB will have little impact on road safety on Leach H'Way.
- \$250M+ would be required to build the Fremantle-Rockingham H'Way and FEB & Roe 8.
- The FEB does not work without Roe 8, which is unlikely to be built and together they do not serve the longer-term traffic needs for the region.
- The implementation of the Freight Network Review and the 'Six Point Plan' will improve the efficiency of the network in the South-west metropolitan area.
- A new internodal facility in Kewdale will better manage the impact of trucks.

- The EPA has assessed that building Roe 8 through the Beeliar Regional Park in an environmentally sustainable way would be extremely difficult.
- Future development of the coastal strip south of Fremantle will shift traffic demand towards the south west.
- The Commission is of the view that it is now time to change planning from car-dominated suburbs to ones with reduced need for private automobile travel.

Community Faces \$100 000 Highway Campaign

Our best estimate on what the pro-highway lobby has spent in the southern suburbs pushing their polluting highway plan is at least \$100 000. The money has been spent on a withering array of misinformation and glossy leaflets. The more their campaign fails the more outrageous their claims are becoming.

During the previous Liberal Government, people were subject to regular propaganda leaflets from Main Roads telling us that more traffic and pollution was good. During the Fremantle Highway/Roe Highway 'debate' guess how many information leaflets have been put out by the new department, Planning & Infrastructure, explaining the benefits of a new sustainable transport policy? The Dept has responded with one confusing leaflet.

Allocations to the pro-highway campaign include-

Melville Council – \$60 000*

Canning Council - \$20 000*

(These councils can find large sums for this misinformation campaign while neglecting public facilities.)

SLTP - \$20 000 (approx) (This secretive 'group' distributed 95 000 leaflets to the south metro area and received back ~ 950 supporting Roe Highway. A 1% support rate)

(*This does not take into account the substantial amount of staff time council officers were directed to put into the campaign.)

Chamber of Commerce Survey Flop

The Cockburn Herald (November 16) carried an article about a WA Chamber of Commerce Fremantle Bypass survey. The Chamber was hailing it as support for its position endorsing bulldozing the Fremantle and Roe Highways through established homes and important wetlands.

Analysis of the distribution and return rate indicates that the Chamber's claim is unjustified. The figures presented from this survey show that the Chamber only received back a 17.5% support for its position. As was to be expected, the Chamber only took into consideration returns, not the total distribution.

The 'survey' was held after the area was saturated with pro-highway leaflets and associated misinformation. The ethics of this type of push polling or marketing has been widely recognised as questionable.

One wonders just how 'business' orientated the Chamber of Commerce is. The WA Planning Commission report on the Fremantle and Roe Highways found that deleting the Roe and Fremantle Highways and creating sustainable alternatives was far more economically beneficial than building them.

Perhaps the Chamber is putting the highway builder's agenda ahead of the best interests of its members. The poor response rate to its 'survey' is probably an indication of that.

'Local' Newspapers??

Not seen much of TRAC in the local papers recently? It is not as though we have not been producing media releases, we have.

It seems the local papers are not so community minded. They have not printed any of our media releases for some time. They are happy to reproduce endless misinformation from the Liberal Party, its front group SOS and associated stooges, while giving us no opportunity to respond.

Want balance on the transport debate? Check out our website for the latest news and research on local transport issues.

Get Ready to Party

The bypass will finally – finally get debated in the Upper House of parliament sometime during the first week of April. Labor and the Greens combined have the numbers to ensure the deletion. It would be useful to have some TRAC'ers along to support the government's position. If you would like to come and see the end of the bypass phone Kathy 9336 2131 or Rose 9572 3884 and we'll let you know the exact time.

Of Mice and Money

Of the \$60 000 allocated by Melville, \$40 000 came from the CEOs 'discretionary fund' while \$20 000 came from general council coffers. Councillor Russell Aubrey, Melville mayoral candidate in 2003 and leading figure in the Liberal Party front group SoS, made the 'bypass' one of his main issues. It was coincidental that Russell Aubrey was one of the chief supporters of an increase in remuneration for the Melville CEO in 2003 and opposed having the Melville CEO's position advertised for general applicants in 2003.

New Highways Herald Traffic Overload

The \$600 million Graham Farmer Freeway system has added significantly to the air pollution problems facing the Perth metropolitan region. The most recent traffic assessment has revealed that the freeway has resulted in an extra 20 000 + vehicles per day using the road system to either access Perth or areas to the west or east.

The principle of induced or generated traffic says that building new highways leads to changes in travel behaviour. One of these changes is that it induces new and more travel. That is, it generates completely new trips that did not occur before and encourages longer or additional mileage for travel that previously occurred.

Main Roads engineers and some 'planners' refuse to recognise this principle. Main Roads' argument that new highways only cater for normal traffic increases was never valid and is even less so today especially when yet another example shows that it is incorrect. The new freeway caused 'unforeseen' traffic problems on local roads in Belmont and Maylands. While the freeway initially led to reduced traffic at the Causeway, traffic volumes are now building up along that section at twice the average.

The sad truth is new highways in established urban areas only dump traffic somewhere else, traffic does not vanish. However, as new highways create more extra induced traffic, general noise and pollution levels, not to forget resource use or greenhouse gases, are much higher for the whole community.

Unfortunately, Planning Minister MacTiernan still has a lot of bureaucrats in her department that subscribe to the Main Roads false belief. Incredibly, bureaucrats who are working on the deletion of the Fremantle Highway were the ones who were defending and promoting the Fremantle Highway a few years ago. Any wonder that the deletion is 18 months behind schedule.

The full report on the Farmer Freeway can be found at:

<http://www.mp.wa.gov.au/jscott/trac/PerthFarmersInduced.pdf>

Fremantle Councillor Keen on more Roads

Fremantle Councillor Helen Hewitt wants to put a road through Fremantle Mall and she is also keen to put a road between Myers and Kings Square. With councillors such as Hewitt, the ideal of Fremantle as a pleasant walking and cycle friendly city will never be realised. Is it really possible, (as stated by Hewitt) that people who want to shop in Fremantle are put off spending their \$'s here only because they can't drive through every part of Fremantle no matter how small?

We reckon that to provide something different to the 'big box' shops like Garden City might be a better place to start. The traffic calming changes made to Fremantle have provided some good outcomes. The Fremantle Mall never has vacant shops and is always filled with people, buskers, old blokes catching up every morning, people with toddlers (who can't go to the Cappuccino strip 'cos of the danger caused by cars).

It's true that the West End isn't as vibrant as it was in the 50's. That's mainly caused by the change in employment at the wharf. No longer are there hundreds of wharfies lumping goods around. And like it or not Notre Dame University is here to stay. So instead of hankering back to the 50's, some councillors could better spend their time working with what we have and finding new solutions.

What About Fremantle's East End?

Fascinated by Fremantle Council's myopia over the viability of the West End? Many people also ask about the commercial environment of the East End of town and why there is no rescue plan for it.

A quick examination of shopfronts in this area in mid-March found:

Queens St – 6 empty shops

Point St - 3 empty shops

Adelaide St (Point to Queen) – 4 empty shops

Westgate Mall – 2 empty shops

Johnston Court - 2 empty shops

Collie Street Carpark Shopfronts - 11 out of 11 empty (We include Collie Street Carpark for a little fun).

Empty office space was not included.

All these shops have easy car access, ample street parking and have large carparks nearby, some directly adjacent or above. Remember Councillor Hewitt arguing that more car access was essential for business and that malls were bad for business? Councillor Hewitt is also Chair of the Development Assessment Committee and on the South-West Councils Transport Committee. With this searing logic what can the council do wrong. Why let reality get in the way of ideology? Cr Hewitt is so desperate she even used a 'turn survey' to try to justify her point of view. Read a critique of the 'turn survey' <http://www.mp.wa.gov.au/jscott/trac/turnsurvey.pdf>

So Cr Hewitt and Co, do Garden City & Phoenix Park Shopping Centres a favour, get rid of all shopper malls in Fremantle.

(Helen Hewitt once had a bookshop in the West End. The introduction of the GST was blamed on its demise. Now it appears that the High Street Mall was to blame. What will it be tomorrow?)