

Comments on the Central Fremantle Turn Analysis (2003)

The 'turn survey' was carried out by Malcolm Mackay who was until recently with the Dept of Planning and Infrastructure. Mackay is an advocate of the 'new urbanism' theory which among other things advocates reintroducing direct car access to all points of the urban fabric. ie, cars must have primacy over other forms of transport. Mackay has also been selective when referring to the WAPC's Liveable Neighbourhoods policy. That document includes;

- support and better access to public transport; and
- a sense of community focussed on safe and attractive walkable neighbourhoods and towns.

Space Syntax principles are also mentioned. This is a very useful tool if used properly. However, the 'turn survey' uses it simply in relation to the car. Industry-leading techniques include pedestrian movement forecasting, spatial layout and use, safety and social and economic factors during analysis.

What does the 'turn analysis' tell us? Very little. The maps just show us the number of turns we have to make in a car to get to a place in the West End from two particular streets. There is no analysis or qualitative studies on who wants to go there, whether we need to go there, what is there to drive to or whether we want to drive there or prefer to use other forms of transport. The study notes Perth's addiction to the car: very true at a general level. But a very significant proportion of visitors to the West End actually come to central Fremantle by non-car modes: train, bus or walk/cycle, (A 1999 UWA Survey of 400 CBD visitors found that nearly 40% used non-car modes; the figure is even higher on weekend days)

The West End is a peninsula and transportation in such cases is always a problem. Fremantle, including the West End, has been through many economic boom and bust periods. Many of these economic busts occurred when there was greater access to the West End than today. For example, it was noted in the 1955 Stephenson Report that retailing in the western end of High Street was in 'the doldrums' –at that time the centre of gravity of Fremantle's CBD retailing was already moving east beyond Market Street.

Major flaws in the 'turn survey';

- It simply focuses on the primacy and maximum use of the car. Other forms of transport, esp cycling and walking, are minimised or excluded. The survey ignores factors like what type of businesses exist, or the commercial mix, in the target area or what alternatives/competitors are nearby.
- The 'turn survey' findability factor has been solely based on car use and how many turns a car does. There is no analysis of the impacts on other forms of transport or on shopper amenity by encouraging increased vehicle use, potential congestion or what mix of transport modes will best suit the West End.

- The turn study ignores vehicle entries to the West End from important southern primary feeders such as South Terrace and Marine Terrace.
- The 'turn analysis' only provides an indication of a place's ability to sustain retail/commercial business if there is absolutely no other form of transportation apart from the car. The study ignores the nature of Fremantle, its walk-ability, cycle access and well connected public transport..
- The survey conclusion that the West End is relatively poorly connected to the primary movement network and therefore is not well suited to sustaining commercial activity is hardly surprising given that it relies on the simplistic theory of car primacy.

To imply that encouraging more vehicles through parts of Fremantle, to the exclusion of pedestrians, will solve specific economic problems is naive. Economic problems require a multi-factor approach, not a simplistic one based on promoting cars. They also require recognition of the market realities of land ownership and businesses in the West End.

There is no substitute for an integrated analysis that looks at social, environmental economic and amenity issues. A 'how many turns survey' does not fulfil this. It may suit the misguided campaign to re-open High Street Mall to cars, but it does not help planning for the future of Fremantle.

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