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Submission on Issues Paper – Forum 5
Transport, Planning and the Built Environment

Questions for consideration

What are the key barriers to the adoption of cost-effective and low-emissions mode use in the passenger transport sector? How might these be addressed effectively and efficiently by government policy?

What policies would be suitable to address barriers the uptake of more fuel efficient passenger vehicles?

Response

Key barriers

1. Perceptions:

It is cheaper, easier and quicker to drive a car than catch a bus or train

Driving a car is not limited to external timetables

Public transport is not as safe, fast, reliable, clean or comfortable as a car

The motor vehicle traffic makes it too dangerous to ride a bicycle

A car with a bigger engine has more status than smaller, slower, quieter vehicles

Cars are included in salary packages as an incentive

Increased housing density close to centres is the solution and built and natural heritage values are unimportant by comparison

The roads are better than ever – let's drive

I have a right to be able to drive

My fuel tax is not being spent on improving roads or public transport

2. Policy constraints:

Government departments and politicians are reluctant to make major policy changes despite a willing public (see Warren Centre reports)

Tax structures favour car use eg the fringe benefits tax for company cars

Tax structures fail to recognise or encourage cycling and walking as modes of transport

Registration of vehicles is not costed equitably. Vehicle damage to roads, air and noise pollution (including CO₂, NO_X and SO_X emissions), fuel efficiency, etc are not taken into account in registration charges

Company car policy requires minimum use of the car (eg a minimum 25,000km per annum must be achieved before an additional levy is charged by the company on the employee)

State government policies belittle the importance of the natural and heritage values of the urban environment in Sydney

3. Physical constraints:

Public transport options are too distant or infrequent

Rail links have been closed in regional and rural areas

There are no footpaths or the paths are not continuous for pedestrians or cyclists between desired destination and home or work place

Road shoulders and paths are inadequately maintained by local and state governments

Solutions

Immediately stop the company car tax benefits schemes

Give tax benefits to companies for employees that use public transport, walking or cycling (leading to a healthier workforce, increased productivity, reduced absenteeism)

Allow individuals tax credits for walking shoes, bicycles, public transport tickets (the cost will be recouped in a healthier population)

Consider hypothecation as a 'sweetener' so that fuel prices can be further increased in major cities to assist improved public transport, walking and cycling opportunities (especially to schools)

Through tax incentives encourage investment in rail rather than road

Base the ongoing costs of cars on use, not ownership – establish a clear user pays principle for fuel and road use

Use technology embedded in the registration sticker for road pricing points – not just on motorways but also on state and local roads – so that funds for road use can go directly to the responsible level of government (ie state or local)

Change Australian road rules to impose 30kph maximum traffic speeds in all residential areas; 50kph in other urban areas to advantage public transport using bus lanes, light rail, heavy rail, and to increase safety for cyclists and pedestrians

Change Australian road rules to require bus lanes on all multi lane roads – not only 6 lane roads and motorways

Campaign for decreased car use using the same messages as for smoking

Simplify urban bus and rail timetables to every 2 minutes, 10 minutes, 20 minutes

Ensure compliance with consistent minimum public transport standards

Increase funding for rail throughout Australia for freight and passengers – we are an ageing population that still wants to travel; in 30 years there will be many who should not be driving and will need public transport options

Re-establish railways – bus substitutes for rail do not suit those with physical problems eg bad backs

Increase funding for cycling and walking routes

Decrease requirements for minimum lane widths on roads to enable room for retrofitting for cycling and walking

Increase research and development funding for electric vehicles including buses, bikes, taxis, and cars (increase R&D funding for solar thermal and geothermal generated electricity);

Change Australian road rules so that the onus is on the car driver to prove that they were not at fault in the event of a motor vehicle crash with a cyclist (as in The Netherlands)

Allow power assisted bikes on all paths and roads to help keep older and mobility impaired people more independent

Retrofit public transport into existing urban areas so that it is within 400m of most dwellings

Reduce car access, impose congestion charges and remove carparking at key destinations (especially urban cities)

Reverse the fuel charges – fuel is more expensive in country areas where there are no public transport options; and cheapest in the major cities where there is public transport

Market cycling and walking tourism in Australia with high speed rail links (not 'fly and drive' holidays but 'rail and trail')