



Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group – CBD BUG

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The Right Honourable Campbell Newman
Lord Mayor of Brisbane
GPO Box 2287
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Lord Mayor

Submission to the Review of Brisbane Central Business District (CBD) speed limit

This submission is to communicate the CBD BUG's strong support for reducing the speed limit on all Brisbane CBD streets to 40 km/h.

Being vulnerable road users, CBD cyclists are exposed to the risk of injury and death arising from collisions with motor vehicles. There is a large body of evidence clearly showing that even small reductions in vehicle speed can significantly reduce the number of deaths and the severity of injuries to vulnerable road users as a result of road crashes.

Because traffic planners have previously given priority to motorised traffic over all other forms of mobility, CBD pedestrian journeys of even a couple of blocks are made unacceptably long by prolonged waits at lights controlled intersections. At the same time city footpaths commonly exceed capacity, a situation that is only going to increase as the CBD resident and visitor population continues to rapidly increase.

CBD cyclists currently occupy an uncomfortable middle ground between pedestrians and motorised traffic. With only a couple of exceptions, CBD streets do not have bike lanes or shoulders enabling cyclists to ride out of the flow of motor traffic. Those cyclists who are prepared to still ride on-road are obliged to adopt a defensive position and fully occupy a lane. Under the CBD's 50 km/h speed limit this can be difficult, particularly as motorists routinely exceed the speed limit.

However, when less confident or inexperienced cyclists ride on CBD footpaths to obtain refuge from motor traffic this inherently brings them into conflict with pedestrians over the severely limited space available, exacerbated by many pedestrians being unaware of this option being legally-sanctioned.

Accordingly, during the 2008 Brisbane City Council election the CBD BUG wrote to the Mayoralty candidates from the major political parties to obtain their views on reducing the CBD speed limit to 40km/h.

From a moral perspective alone there is a clear case for a higher priority to be given to ensuring the safety of vulnerable road users in the CBD. From a social cost perspective the focus must be switched from focusing on enabling motorists to moving around quickly, to one of protecting vulnerable road users and reducing the terrible impacts these collisions have on the individuals involved and their families. Then there are the economic costs of these collisions, which can easily run into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

It is essential that the speed limits for Turbot Street and Ann Street are also reduced to 40/km/h. If the reason for reducing the CBD speed limit is the safety of vulnerable users, then there should be no room to compromise this safety for the sake of the thirty-plus seconds it will take a motorist to travel the full length of these two streets under the reduced speed limit.

The following reasons further underpin the need to apply a consistent 40 kph speed limit throughout the CBD.

- It will be confusing for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians to have different speed limits applying within the same area.
- Both these streets routinely carry very large volumes of vulnerable roads users. Central Station fronts on to Ann Street, leading to thousands of train commuters walking along Ann Street every day, while both streets experience huge pedestrian volumes when events occur at Lang Park.
- The new King George Square Cycle Centre fronts on to Ann Street, meaning it is a key thoroughfare for cyclists accessing or departing this facility.
- A cycle lane has only recently been installed on Turbot Street, meaning this street is now attracting additional cyclist volumes.
- The predicted increase in the CBD's working and resident population and the resulting additional vulnerable road user traffic will inevitably lead to a higher rate of injuries from collisions with motor vehicles unless vehicle speeds are reduced.
- The introduction of the BCC's bicycle hire scheme is expected to introduce an additional 2,000 bicycles into the CBD.
- The results of last June's police "crackdown" on speeding on CBD streets showed traffic traveling well above the limit. This suggests a strong and consistent message must be sent to motorists that the CBD is not the place for speeding.
- Maintain the higher speed limit on these two streets will reinforce the rat running by the motorists who comprise the 43% of traffic traveling through Brisbane's CBD that does not need to go through the central city.

One of the arguments which will no doubt be put forward in opposition to this proposal is that reducing the CBD speed limit will negatively affect business in the CBD. However, it is clear the exact opposite will occur. Through a reduced speed limit, the rat runners who do not stop in the city to conduct business will either reduce their speed or be provided with a (slight) incentive to utilise routes other than CBD streets. Slower and/or reduced traffic will make the CBD a more people friendly place, attracting additional people who want to window-shop, browse, meet friends for coffee / lunch, watch movies and other activities that CBD businesses provide.

In closing CBD BUG members firmly believe it is time Brisbane's centre is taken back from the fast flowing rivers of lethal metal that successive councils and state government have fostered through their focus on motorist interests, to the disadvantage of pedestrians and cyclists.

We look forward to the early implementation of this very welcome proposal, and congratulate you for its advocacy.

Yours faithfully



Paul French
Co-convenor
Central Business District Bicycle User Group
31 October 2008

Cc. Cr Jane Prentice, Chairperson, Public and Active Transport and Economic
Development Committee
Cr David Hinchliffe, Central Ward