

Relevant Information for Council

FILE: X020922.016 **DATE:** 14 May 2021

TO: Lord Mayor and Councillors

FROM: Kim Woodbury, Chief Operating Officer

THROUGH: Monica Barone, Chief Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Information Relevant To Item 7.7 – Project Scope - Pitt Street North Walking and Cycling Improvements

For Noting

This memo is for the information of the Lord Mayor and Councillors.

Background

At the meeting of the Environment Committee on 10 May 2021, Council requested further information on the assessment of whether the cycleway on Pitt Street should be on the western side, as proposed, or eastern side as proposed by Urbis on behalf of AMP Capital, Dexus, GPT Group and Charter Hall.

Since receiving the initial submission, City staff have met onsite with representatives from Urbis and undertaken two meetings (via Teams) with Urbis and representatives of the property owners (25 March 2021 and 14 April 2021) and a further meeting with Urbis on the morning of 10 May 2021.

The Urbis submission requests the cycleway be moved to the eastern side of Pitt Street. Their primary contention is that the commercial car park driveways present a safety hazard to people riding when drivers exiting/entering car parks fail to look for bicycle riders. They also raised the following issues: cars queueing across the cycleway, misuse of the cycleway, pedestrian safety, delays in delivery times for businesses, unattractive materials, pedestrians crossing near Bond Street, and lack of bicycle parking.

Issues such as these are regularly raised with new cycleways, are addressed through the detailed design process and over time as people become accustomed to the new infrastructure.

The western side was originally selected after analysis by consultants in 2013, in order to minimise conflicts at major intersections, to avoid the complexity of the Hunter Street intersection, to cater for the bus stop and to provide better cycleway connectivity at the southern end of Pitt Street (at King Street).

Assessment of east side configuration

The City has quickly prepared sketches of a configuration of the road space with an eastern side cycleway. This includes relocating the extra pedestrian area from the western side to the eastern side, and moving the parking on the eastern side to the western side (see Attachment A).

In its assessment, the City focussed on the two aspects of the proposal that have the most material influence on which side of Pitt Street the cycleway should be located, being (a) road safety and (b) efficiency of transport movement.

(a) Road Safety

The Urbis submission raises a valid issue of the safety risks associated with drivers crossing footpath and cycleway when accessing off street parking. Urbis argues that because there are more off-street parking facilities / spaces on the western side than the eastern side of Pitt Street, there will be a greater road safety risk.

Urbis' analysis however fails to make the distinction between probability and severity of collisions.

In focusing on risks of collision at driveways, the Urbis submission does not adequately take into account the risk of collision at intersections. There are large numbers of left turning vehicles from Pitt Street into Bridge Street and Hunter Street. All vehicles turn left from Pitt Street into King Street. These left turning vehicles would need to cross the cyclists' line of travel through the intersection for an eastern side cycleway. This is not the case for a western side cycleway as right turn bans are in place. The severity of vehicles colliding with people riding at intersections is likely to be higher than collisions at driveways. Furthermore, the total number of conflicting intersection movements between vehicles and people riding would be much higher than at the driveway crossings (note: every car exiting a car park later becomes a left turning vehicle when it exits Pitt Street). The number of left turning cars at each intersection in the afternoon peak (4pm to 6pm) is highlighted in Attachment B (supplied by Urbis).

It should be noted that 81 per cent of movements on Pitt Street are pedestrians. The vehicle / pedestrian conflict at driveways needs to be carefully managed regardless of which side the cycleway is on.

The submission's key concern of bicycle rider safety at car park driveways has been tested over the last ten years on the Kent Street cycleway. Drivers in one-way traffic on Kent Street turn right across the cycleway to enter at a number of major use carparks including, Town Hall House car park, Wilson commercial car park at St Andrews, Wilson commercial car park near Margaret Street (in two-way section) and Meriton commercial car park near Liverpool Street. This is the same configuration as the existing pop-up on Pitt Street north. Reported crashes at driveways involving riders are rare, with one per annum on Kent Street over the past ten years, from 350,000 bicycle trips per annum.

The crash analysis by Urbis is consistent with that by City staff, finding that reported driveway crashes are a lesser problem - just one in nine crashes in their study of existing cycleway streets, a fifth of the number of reported crashes happening at signalised intersections. This strongly supports the City's view that the cycleway is best located on the western side to reduce risk of conflict at signalised intersections.

The safety benefit of the cycleway on the western side of Pitt Street is that it removes movement conflicts at the three signalised intersections, at Bridge, Hunter and King Streets, where traffic cannot turn right. The right turn bans enable the same level of signal priority for people riding along Pitt Street as those driving which results in safety from high compliance with signals and cycleway usage.

(b) Efficiency of Transport Movement

The proposed east side cycleway requires left turning vehicles to cross the cycleway (this is not the case for a western side cycleway as right turn bans are in place). This will require reducing the signal time allocated to people riding along Pitt Street, slowing their journeys and resulting in lower levels of compliance and associated increase in road safety risk. Alternatively, Transport for NSW could maintain the signal time allocated to people riding and reduce signal time allocated to vehicles in Pitt Street, which would significantly increase vehicle congestion in peak times. Either outcome is not desirable.

City staff assessment of the Urbis SIDRA analysis indicates that there will be around 25 per cent longer vehicle travel times along Pitt Street during peak times with an eastern cycleway configuration (when compared the current western cycleway configuration). The City believes that this difference results from the provision of separate signal phases which are now needed for Pitt Street vehicles and cyclists, thus reducing the available time allocation for each road user and increasing congestion in Pitt Street during peak times.

(c) Other Considerations

The eastern kerbside is the most suitable for parking to enable drivers to get in and out of vehicles and for tourist coach operations. Although commuter buses are not currently operating in this section of Pitt Street, recent advice from Transport for NSW is that they want to reserve the option to return buses in future. An east side cycleway option would require bus loading islands for coaches and/or buses which will take away from the additional space for people walking (the predominant user) and/or on street loading, and it could necessitate weaving lanes.

The number of driveways is the same (15) on each side though the western side driveways serve a higher number of parking/loading spaces.

The east side cycleway option would result in approximately ten fewer kerbside parking/loading spaces along Pitt Street than the western option (approximately 55 to 45 spaces). Freight delivery is of primary importance to the successful operation and functioning of central Sydney. The east side option would also require the Transport for NSW secure taxi rank near Martin Place to be moved but risks creating a sub-optimum rank due to presence of driveways and intersection at Angel Place.

With the eastern side cycleway, businesses currently benefiting from outdoor dining in the extended pedestrian space on the western side would lose it. That opportunity would pass over to eastern side businesses.

The City has been working with Transport for NSW and other road users to 'tweak' the design of the pop-up cycleway. After discussion with waste operators, for example, the City installed after hours No Parking zones on Pitt Street as space for waste vehicles to pull over to service nearby buildings.

Transport for NSW position

City of Sydney staff have engaged with Transport for NSW on their preferred location of the Pitt Street cycleway. Transport for NSW have advised the City that the current western side is preferred due to minimal traffic impacts, better signal operation and safer movements for cyclists and pedestrians.

City staff, after reviewing the options again, recommend the cycleway should stay on the western side for road safety and efficiency of transport movement, as recommended in the original report to Committee.

Memo from Kim Woodbury, Chief Operating Officer

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Attachments

Attachment A. Sketch of Eastern Side Cycleway Configuration

Attachment B. Intersection Count Diagram - PM Peak, Light Vehicles (Supplied by Urbis)

Approved



MONICA BARONE

Chief Executive Officer