

Submission No. 26
9.11.05



Mr Rob Hansen
Research Director
Impact of Petrol Pricing Select Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

7/11/2005

IMPACT OF PETROL PRICING SUBMISSION TO COMMITTEE

Dear Mr Hansen and Committee members,

I wish to provide the following submission to the committee on behalf of PedBikeTrans. Our Institute is a networking and educational association for professionals involved in pedestrian and bicycle planning in Australasia, seeking to improve outcomes for cyclist and pedestrians by educating, networking and equipping those professionals who are primarily responsible for the activities that affect these modes.

Petrol price increases

1. While there may be short-term fluctuations, there is a growing consensus in academia and in government that oil prices are unlikely to return to the levels experienced in the period 1985-2005 again. There is some debate as to exactly when the demand for oil will overtake the available supply of oil ('Peak Oil' or 'Hubbert's Peak') but there are very few researchers willing to suggest this is beyond 2020, with most predictions being for dates closer to the present time.
2. Increases in petrol prices are already having significant impacts on urban, regional and remote populations, evidenced by increases in recent public transport patronage in Brisbane (as well as cities as diverse as Dallas and Jakarta). The longer-term implications are, however, difficult to predict as Western cities have not recently experienced long-term periods of high or very high petrol prices, though European cities have had higher retail fuel prices for many decades.

Technological fixes

3. There are unfortunately no immediately identifiable technological fixes that will allow Western populations to continue current rates of motor vehicle usage via the vehicle fleets that currently exist in Queensland.
4. We are already seeing small shifts in consumer behaviour towards smaller vehicles and there is likely to be an increase in the sale and use of hybrid engine vehicles, however these are considered by most experts to be unlikely to provide more than a slowing in overall oil consumption growth globally. This suggests that those communities with viable alternative modes of transportation (i.e. walking, cycling, public transport) are those least vulnerable to a longer-term increase in fuel prices.

A legacy of land use planning for automobile-oriented cities and regions

5. Queensland's cities and regions have experienced significant population growth since the 1960s. Much of the structure and form of urban areas is car-oriented, low-density, homogenous and difficult to service by public transport. Whereas urban populations of the 1950s made significant numbers of trips by walking, cycling and public transport, the use of these modes has declined as the environments of urban areas have been designed more and more for the storage and use of motor vehicles, with greater distances between residences and land use destinations.
6. As a result, many of Queensland's outer metropolitan and regional areas are *particularly vulnerable* to increases in petrol prices. The goods and services that households need are often only accessible by private motor vehicle transportation, with only a small proportion of the population being within walking distance of local shopping services in many recent developments. There are also specific industry-occupation issues in that persons seeking employment in industrial areas are nowadays almost wholly reliant on motor vehicles.
7. Specific Queensland regions - especially the Gold and Sunshine Coasts - are especially vulnerable due to a lack of a high-quality public transport spine along their main coastal population centres. These large settlements are almost unique in Australia in terms of their lack of rail or busway services within their urban cores. It is considered highly desirable in the light of the recent fuel increases to investigate bringing forward the proposed dates for the construction and development of the already planned and preserved public transport corridors for the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast.

Walking and cycling

8. The impacts of late 20th century land use planning and transport investment decisions has seen walking and cycling use decline as a proportion of trips. It is now increasingly recognised that this is a critical element in the decline in physical activity in Queensland's population, with resultant health costs now being borne by the health sector from the rise in obesity and overweight in the population. We saw a doubling in obesity rates in Australia in the period 1980-1995 (Pucher 2005). Recent research on trips to school suggests that we have reversed the previous healthy situation where 75% of students walked, cycled or took public transport to school in Queensland in 1980, with only 25% using these modes and 75% of students being driven to school in the year 2005 (Davies 2005). Commentators have suggested that recent land use planning has created the 'Toxic City', particularly for children (Tranter and Malone 2003).
9. Despite this, the availability of walking and cycling as a form of transport is high. All but the most seriously disabled are able to walk (though many individuals have specific

barriers to walking that need to be overcome - see no. 17, below) and bicycle ownership rates are at around 50% across Queensland (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). The most recent bicycle sales figures from the Retail Cycle Traders Association show a significant increase in bicycle sales in 2004, with more than 1.1 million bicycles sold - outstripping sales of motor vehicles. It is expected that bicycle sales are likely to increase further in 2005 due to recent anecdotal evidence that sales have increased marginally due to petrol price increases.

10. Walking and cycling presently provide for more than one-sixth (17%) of all trips (if measured accurately) - with every other mode of transport dependent on walking. Yet walking and cycling receive approximately 2 to 3% of current transport funding.
11. Many regional Queensland cities and towns have relatively high rates of walking and cycling compared to urban centres - data that directly refutes the general perception that heat and humidity is a barrier to cycling. Census journey-to-work data and a survey of bicycle usage in Queensland by the ABS in 2003 both show higher rates of cycle use (and ownership) in regional areas than in the South East. Cyclists in regions such as Far North Queensland are also more likely to ride more often than those in South East Queensland, and are more likely to ride to shops or to work (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003).
12. Unfortunately, outer metropolitan areas in South East Queensland have lower rates of walking and cycling, partly due to the transport and land use arrangements in these locations, which are highly automobile-oriented. Combined with lower public transport availability, this means that populations in these areas have fewer alternatives to private motor vehicle use and are more vulnerable to increases in fuel prices.
13. Recent investments by local governments, changes to land use planning practices, and some limited state government investments, have seen a proliferation of new shared paths and other infrastructure for walking and cycling in recent years. This has led to a 'bottoming out' in the historical decline in walking and cycling in these areas, though many local governments are laggard in this respect. Local government cordon surveys (especially by Brisbane City Council) demonstrate significant increases in cycling participation in inner-city neighbourhoods and in locations where investments have been made.
14. The development of the *Integrated Regional Cycle Network Plan for SEQ* and the recent state government commitment to provide direct funds for the development of this primary network is applauded by PedBikeTrans and is a small start towards improving the transportation alternatives for the urban areas of that region. However, only an infinitesimally small percentage of the *South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program* funds are directed towards walking and cycling.
15. The *Queensland Cycle Strategy* is a useful tool to stimulate whole-of-government activity in cycling, however there is a low level of interest in active transportation across government (including the health, education and transport sectors). A State Pedestrian Strategy should be prepared and the actions contained in the *Queensland Cycle Strategy* should be revised in the near future so as to identify whether there are additional activities that could stimulate alternative transportation options for those affected most by fuel price increases. The actions within the existing cycle strategy should also be implemented in a more than piece-meal fashion, as is occurring with a number of items at present.
16. Other jurisdictions are looking at ways to stimulate local governments to increase investments in cycle infrastructure with both the UK and Denmark using small central government grants to match funds with local governments that wish to make a significant investment in cycling. Queensland could use this mechanism to stimulate further activity in the regions to encourage the development of transportation alternatives.
17. In terms of walking promotion, there is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the benefits of targeted promotion schemes to overcome specific barriers to walking (i.e. see Brisbane City Council 1996; Brog, Ehl and Mense 2002; Garber et al. 2001; Giles-Corti

2001; Staunton, Hubsmith and Kallins 2003). One specific scheme in Queensland is the Heart Foundation's *Just Walk It* program, which targets many of the specific groups with low participation rates and which has had a marked success in building a targeted, low-cost model for health promotion. Sport and Recreation Queensland has just determined to cease funding of this program in 2006, a remarkable decision in the context of the State's health crisis. The program has encouraged many women, elderly and persons in lower socio-economic groups to begin walking again, using a supportive approach that overcomes many of the barriers to walking these groups possess.

Recommendations

18. **That government act to take the significant opportunities that arise due to recent petrol price increases. Alternative modes should be prioritised to reduce the vulnerability of outer metropolitan and regional Queensland to fuel price increases** [and improve existing vulnerability for people who are unable to drive]. There is the potential to revive the use of active modes of transportation if government acts responsibly during this period, with potential cost savings to government through the health sector.
19. With increases in public transport use, walking and cycling likely to be stimulated by rising fuel costs, **state government expenditures in the transport sector should be amended to directly reflect these changing priorities**. At its simplest this means less investment in road projects, especially new corridors, and more investment in the modes that provide for alternative transportation options.
20. **The transport investments in the *South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program* should be reassessed within the context of the new energy situation**, perhaps with scenario tests used to identify the possible impacts of higher fuel prices on our transport systems.
21. Most importantly, **the investment years for key public transport corridors, such as the Sunshine Coast CAMCOS corridor, should be brought forward**.
22. **Regional cycle network plans should be prepared for the remaining priority regions in Queensland**, where coverage under existing arrangements is insufficient. Funds should also be made available to kick-start the development of these networks in priority locations.
23. **Government should examine ways to stimulate increased cycle investment by local authorities in regional Queensland**, possibly through replication of the UK 'Cycling Demonstration Towns' initiative.
24. **Government should examine ways to further stimulate land use planning in new developments that is conducive to transportation modes that are not reliant on cheap petrol**, such as public transport, walking and cycling, by examining sustainability rating schemes or by mandating guidelines such as the Western Australian 'Liveable Neighbourhoods' design guide. This includes codes for the provision of end-of-trip facilities for bicycles at key destinations such as workplaces.
25. **Government should prioritise and ramp up current efforts to allocate mixed land uses and higher densities within walking distance of major public transport nodes and interchanges to encourage transit-oriented-development (TOD)**. Consideration should also be given to prioritising bicycle routes that link to TODs.
26. **The decision of Sport and Recreation Queensland to cease funding the Health Foundation's *Just Walk It* program should be immediately reversed**, as it is one of the few schemes targeted at overcoming the barriers to walking that many in the community face. **Government should consider the expansion of educational, informational and behaviour change programs such as TravelSmart** to overcome the barriers to the use of alternative modes of transportation, place an emphasis on personal responsibility and

change, and decrease the expectations of government to be able to deliver decreases in fuel prices in an era of decreasing supply.

Thank you very much for considering this submission. Should you wish to discuss the above points further, or seek further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the details below.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Burke', is positioned above a thin vertical red line.

Matthew Burke
President
PedBikeTrans

References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2003. "Bicycle usage, Queensland." Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Brisbane City Council. 1996. *TravelSmart: a traffic reduction strategy for Brisbane*. Brisbane: BCC.
- Brog, W., E. Ehl, and N. Mense. 2002. "Individualised Marketing: changing travel behaviour for a better environment." Presented at OECD Workshop: Environmentally Sustainable Transport, 5 June 2002, Berlin.
- Davies, R. 2005. "Think Walking." Presented at Connecting Cycling 2005: planning for healthy communities, 5-8 October 2005, Brisbane, Australia.
- Garber, C., I. Lazar, K. Lapane, J. Hall, K. Greene, S. Rose, B. Marcus, and R. Carleton. 2001. "Sli Path to Health Walking Routes in Rhode Island: evaluation of a community-based physical activity environmental change program: preliminary work." Presented at Australia: Walking the 21st Century, 20-22 February 2001, Perth, Australia.
- Giles-Corti, B. 2001. "Walk This Way for Health." Presented at Australia: Walking the 21st Century, 20-22 February 2001, Perth, Australia.
- Pucher, J. 2005. "Public Health and Urban Transport: a broader view of sustainability and how to make it publicly and politically acceptable." Presented at The 28th Australasian Transport Research Forum, 28-30 September 2005, Sydney, Australia.
- Staunton, C.E., D. Hubsmith, and W. Kallins. 2003. "Promoting Safe Walking and Biking to School: the Marin County success story." *American Journal of Public Health* 93(9):1431.
- Tranter, P. and K. Malone. 2003. "Out of Bounds: insights from children to support a cultural shift towards sustainable and child-friendly cities." Presented at State of Australian Cities National Conference, 3-5 December 2003, Parramatta, NSW.