



Committee Secretary  
Transport and Resources Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000  
Via email to: [trc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:trc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir or Madam,

On behalf of Brisbane West Bicycle User Group (West BUG), part of the Space4Cycling Brisbane campaign, please accept this submission regarding the inquiry into Sumners Road Interchange Project. West BUG is a grassroots group representing bicycle users for transport and recreation in the western suburbs of Brisbane. The Sumners Road Interchange Project included significant upgrades to the Centenary Cycleway as well as improvements for cycling and walking on the adjacent Sumners Road corridor that were of interest to our members.

### 1.0 Summary

West BUG had taken interest in the Sumners Road Interchange Project since our inception in 2015. The plans proposed in 2011 were in our view inadequate for cycling, with the Centenary Cycleway required to cross at least a three-phase crossing of Sumners Road to proceed. The previous alignment was also poor with a 500m detour to the Dandenong Road intersection.

We advocated to the Department of Transport and Main Roads via consecutive Members of Parliament for Mount Ommaney to adjust the design to ensure an uninterrupted path for the cycleway. We were pleased to see this was included in the final design, with a tunnel providing direct and grade separated cycling travel underneath Sumners Road.

While we acknowledge that incorporating this solution into the project would have added to the project cost, we note that the previous detour and unsafe crossing of Sumners Road acted as a deterrent to people choosing cycling for transport. The new cycleway tunnel and additional improved connections encourage more people to choose to cycle or walk instead of drive, reducing demand on the road network and increasing return on investment for the project.

Department of Transport and Main Roads notes that cycling infrastructure returns almost \$5 in benefits to the Queensland economy for every \$1 invested<sup>1</sup>.

There are additional benefits to motorists from this solution or the cycleway, having eliminated all potential conflicts between drivers and cyclists at intersections on the main Centenary Cycleway, and ensuring fewer light phases and crossings which would delay both cyclists and motorists.

Our submission will focus on the following specific areas of the Terms of Reference for this inquiry:

h. the performance of—

(i) the constructing authority for the works; and



(ii) the consultants and contractors for the works;

with particular regard to the time taken for finishing the works and the cost and quality of the works; and

i. the actual suitability of the works in meeting the needs and in achieving the stated purpose of the works.

## **2.0 Performance of Construction Authority, Contractors and Consultants**

Throughout the project from design to completion, West BUG had regular contact with and from the project team within the Department of Transport and Main Roads and head contractor BMD.

During construction there was inevitable impact on the existing cycleway and shared paths. From our perspective these were managed well throughout the duration of the project.

There were specific times where the path conditions left open for cyclists was inadequate – be it too narrow to safely allow two-way travel, or rough and unmarked deviations in the surface which could have resulted in a crash and injuries. On all occasions, we found BMD and the TMR contacts extremely responsive and addressed our concerns promptly. Where traffic control was required, it was managed professionally.

The speed with which the project was completed was impressive, and we understand it was completed several months ahead of schedule.

Our members expressed very few concerns regarding the performance of the project team and contractors delivering the works.

West BUG received regular project updates and alerts about upcoming activities that might impact the cycleway, allowing us to communicate with our members and ensure minimal disruption to those continuing to cycle.

The delivered project is very high quality. The landscaping adjacent to the cycleway and shared paths is attractive, with a good array of native planting which will improve the shade, sound absorption, air quality and amenity of the area in coming years. The quality of cycleway surface is outstanding, and lighting in the tunnel is a very high standard which provides a feeling of safety and confidence and there have been no reports of miscreant behaviour.

The new shared path adjacent to the southern or westbound bridge is very high quality, with barriers from the traffic providing a sense of safe separation, and the high fence facing the motorway deterring misbehaviour such as throwing projectiles, while still enabling users to enjoy the view south and west towards Flinders Peak and the Teviot Range.

## **3.0 Suitability of the works and achieving the stated purpose**

While much of the stated purpose of the project surrounded the performance of moving motor vehicles, the following benefits were listed which are influenced by the cycling and walking infrastructure delivered:

1. Improves safety
2. Improves network efficiency
3. Better active transport

It is our view that these have been achieved by this project.



### 3.1 Safety

While we have not analysed crash data at this location before or since the project, we note that crash data is notoriously incomplete in regard to cycling and pedestrian incidents. For that reason, our comments are based on perceived safety expressed by our members prior to and after project completion.

#### Centenary Cycleway Tunnel

Unanimously our members have expressed that being able to proceed straight through the Centenary Cycleway tunnel under Sumners Road has greatly improved safety compared with crossing at the Dandenong Road intersection. Prior to the project this crossing was necessary and, for reasons of traffic flow, it was possible for left turning vehicles out of Dandenong Road into Sumners Road to not have a red arrow despite the pedestrian crossing light still being active. Our members recount occurrences where people in cars have turned across them, causing them to take evasive action, and one member was seriously injured by a turning heavy goods vehicle.

Being able to wholly avoid this intersection if travelling north or south along the Centenary Cycleway is without question a significant improvement for safety.

#### Shared Path on Sumners Road

The new shared path on the southern bridge along Sumners Road is a huge improvement for safety. Prior to the project, the only foot passage along Sumners Road was a narrow footpath on the northern side of the bridge, which required pedestrians to cross two slip lanes from the Centenary Motorway on ramps without any explicit priority beyond poorly understood or practiced Section 73(5) of the Transport Operations (Road Use Management – Road Rules) Regulation 2009.

With the new shared path delivered as part of the Sumners Road Interchange Project, there is a physically separated, wide, safe passage east-west across the Motorway, with traffic light controlled crossings at all points.

The only criticisms we have of this shared path relate to the traffic light timings and number of crossing stages. To progress from Sumners Road at Jamboree Heights to the Monier Road footpath requires 4 intersection crossings. There are significantly long waits for pedestrians or cyclists doing so, and the pedestrian lights are not automated to go green in line with the relevant traffic phase. This means if you arrive at the intersection after the traffic phase has turned green, the pedestrian light is red and pressing the button does not immediately change it.

This impacts safety because unnecessary delays result in non-compliance with the do-not-cross light signage.

“Frustration in the amount of travel delay may lead to pedestrians crossing on a red phase which results in a higher level of non-compliance and safety risks. Any additional delay to pedestrians, such as extended cycle times, staged crossings, or crossing multiple legs to reach the desired destination, can lead to further non-compliance”<sup>ii</sup>

**We recommend the timings and automation of these staged crossings of the Sumners Road Interchange Project be subject to review and amendment.**

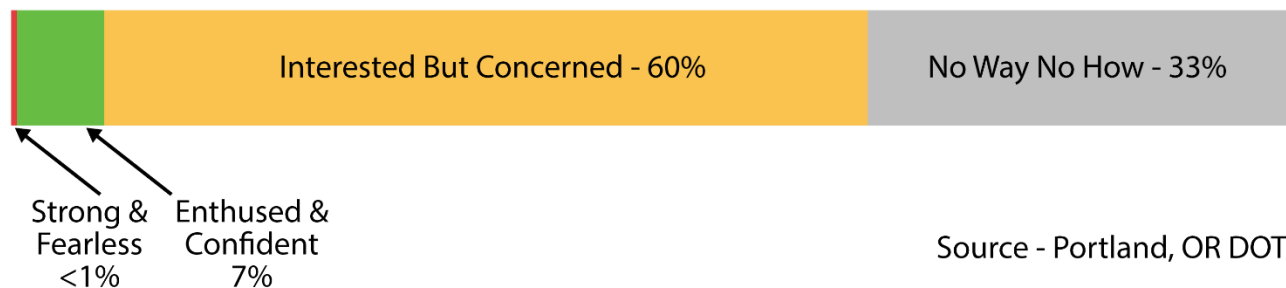
#### Bike Lanes on Sumners Road

In addition to the east-west shared path, the Sumners Road Interchange Project delivered on road, painted bike lanes. These lanes are 2m wide and travel the extent of the project.



In terms of safety, painted bike lanes are the least effective form of cycling infrastructure, particularly on high traffic, high speed (60kph+) roads like this, and are really designed for the minority “strong and fearless” cyclists who will tolerate a higher Level of Traffic Stress, rather than “interested but concerned” majority who tolerate a much lower Level of Traffic Stress. <sup>iii</sup>

## Four Types of Cyclists By Proportion of Population



Specifically, there are safety concerns regarding the on road bike lane heading east from Jamboree Heights towards Darra, where the bike lane twice crosses left turn slip lanes, requiring fast moving and often heavy vehicle traffic to merge across the bike lane. Some motorists feel they “must get in front” of cyclists, resulting in sharp and fast turns across cyclists’ paths, perhaps underestimating the speed at which a bicycle may be travelling, when it would be safer and just as efficient to merge in behind the cyclist.

However, while this doesn’t detract greatly from the safety achievements for active transport achieved with this project, **we recommend TMR pays closer attention to its Guideline on Selection of Cycle Tracks and Austroads guidelines that don’t recommend on road bike lanes on roads like Sumners Road for future projects.**

Given the painted bike lanes are each 2m wide, making up 4m road space on the new bridges, physically separated bike lanes and protected intersections could have been delivered within the same scope of work.

### 3.2 Improves Network Efficiency

We note all that every person who chooses to walk or cycle instead of drive has an immediate and positive impact on road network capacity when the road is at capacity. Therefore, the improvement to the Centenary Cycleway, and provision of the Shared Path and wider on road bike lanes as part of the Sumners Road Interchange Project represent “induced demand” for active transport, encouraging more modal shift away from private cars, and will have a demonstrated positive impact on network efficiency.

The Centenary Cycleway tunnel removed a 500 metre detour to the Dandenong Road intersection, and associated wait time at traffic lights, saving up to 4 minutes on each cycling trip heading north or south. **This is a significant network efficiency improvement** and encourages far more local and commuter cycling trips.

However, as noted regarding the shared path in 3.1, the **long delays in pedestrian traffic light cycles on the shared path** has a **negative effect** on network efficiency for those choosing walking or cycling while travelling east or west along Sumners Road. We stated that this will lead to non-compliance, but may also deter some people from choosing to walk or cycle instead of drive for local trips using this corridor in the first place.



For example, if a resident in Jamboree Heights was wishing to travel the short distance to the shopping centre at Monier Road, Darra, the delays caused by the four (4) traffic light crossings and associated wait time of up to 5 minutes would potentially be enough to deter them from cycling or walking rather than drive. This is particularly true when, as a motorist, in my experience you rarely have to wait more than one minute to proceed through this interchange no matter what your direction of travel.

**Making walking and cycling as efficient as possible with minimal delays is critical to shift local trips from car to active transport means.** This in turn improves network efficiency.

In the efforts to minimize delays for motor vehicles, **the Sumners Road Interchange Project may in fact be worsening local network efficiency by further entrenching dependence and dominance of motor vehicles for short, local trips.** The more people who continue to drive, the less efficient the network will be, particularly at busy peak periods. This will, over time, reduce the return on investment from this project.

### 3.3 Better Active Transport

The benefit of Better Active Transport has, without qualification, been realised with the Sumners Road Interchange Project.

1. Centenary Cycleway running unimpeded north-south saves commuters and local cyclists up to 4 minutes per trip
2. The shared path along Sumners Road, with controlled crossings is a significant improvement on the narrow, unprotected footpath and slip lane crossing that existed prior
3. On road bike lanes provide indicative space for stronger, confident road cyclists that did not exist prior to this project

### 4.0 Conclusion

The Sumners Road Interchange Project has delivered a significant, and desperately needed improvement to the local active transport network, and especially the crucial Centenary Cycleway. Commuter and local cyclists benefit from a much improved, quicker, and safer ride heading north-south. Local pedestrians and cyclists benefit from the provision of a quality shared path heading east-west along Sumners Road which didn't exist previously.

The project is an excellent example of a major road project designed primarily for motor vehicle traffic delivering improvements to the active transport network simultaneously. This is a far more efficient use of public funds for transport projects, and with the average return to the Queensland economy of \$5 for every \$1 spent on active transport infrastructure, the additional cost to projects of doing so is strongly justified.

We believe there are useful lessons to learn to maximise benefits and return for active transport provision in road projects like this such as:

1. Focus on minimizing pedestrian and cyclist delays at road crossings
  - a. Automate pedestrian lights with traffic phases without needing to press a button
  - b. Shorten traffic phases to minimize pedestrian wait time
  - c. Coordinate phases to enable pedestrians and cyclists to make efficient multi-stage crossings
2. Do not use uncontrolled slip lanes in any situation where they cross bicycle lanes or footpaths
3. Reconsider provision of unprotected (paint only) on road bike lanes on fast ( $\geq 50$ kph), high traffic roads, particularly where interaction with slip lanes is involved.



We commend the project team, both within the Department of Transport and Main Roads, design contractors and construction contractors for delivering an outstanding project, and doing so ahead of schedule and with well managed and minimal impacts on local cycling and walking connections during construction. The Sumners Road Interchange Project has proven to be an outstanding success for cyclists in the western suburbs.

Sincerely,

Chris Cox  
Convenor – Brisbane West Bicycle User Group  
Phone: [REDACTED]  
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<sup>i</sup> Cycling Investment in Queensland - [Cycling investment in Queensland \(Department of Transport and Main Roads\)](https://www.tmr.qld.gov.au) ([tmr.qld.gov.au](https://www.tmr.qld.gov.au))

<sup>ii</sup> Guideline Options for reducing pedestrian delays at traffic signals August 2021 – Department of Transport and Main Roads – p8 - <https://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/-/media/busind/techstdpubs/Cycling/Guideline-Options-for-reducing-pedestrian-delays-at-traffic-signals-.pdf?la=en>

<sup>iii</sup> Stressed Out, May 2015 - [Stressed Out? - Howard Stein Hudson: \(hshassoc.com\)](https://www.hshassoc.com)