

ITEM 13 GEORGE STREET, THE ROCKS - TRIAL TRANSIT MALL REVIEW

FILE NO: S035293

SUMMARY

The Council meeting of 22 August 2005 resolved that:

- (A) *Council agree to a three-month trial of a Transit Mall along George Street between Alfred Street and Hickson Road, The Rocks, to operate between 10pm Friday to 4am Saturday and 10pm Saturday to 4am Sunday with standard traffic signposting and police presence to enforce these restrictions;*
- (B) *a further report be referred to Council after the trial is finished to advise on the outcome of the trial; and*
- (C) *the revised signposting scheme, as attached to the Memo dated 22 August 2005 and circulated at the meeting of Council, be adopted as the Signage Plan for the proposed Transit Mall for George Street, The Rocks.*

This report advises Council on the outcome of the 3-month trial of the transit mall in George Street The Rocks which started on 4 November 2005. During the trial Police were unable to effectively deal with the car enthusiast problem. Police advised that problems affecting enforcement of the transit mall included the number and placement of signs and inability to stop further offenders when Police were issuing infringements.

This report recommends the installation of speed humps in and around Hickson Road, Millers Point to discourage Car Enthusiasts from congregating near where residents live, together with changes to Hickson Road. However the problem of Car Enthusiasts making circuits through George Street remains unresolved and this report recommends the consideration of legislative changes to tackle the problem.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note the three-month trial Transit Mall did not achieve the objective of stopping "Car Enthusiasts" accessing George Street The Rocks and congregating in various streets in Millers Point;
- (B) The trial Transit Mall be discontinued because it is ineffective to resolve the car enthusiast problem in George Street, The Rocks and the subsequent adverse impact on residents in The Rocks and Millers Point;
- (C) Council agree to the installation of bus-friendly removable speed humps to discourage car enthusiasts in the following locations subject to the satisfactory outcome of public consultation:
 - (i) Hickson Road:
 - (a) North of Napoleon Street;
 - (b) South of Towns Place near the Argyle Street bridge;

- (c) Underneath the Sydney Harbour Bridge;
- (ii) Towns Place – west of Hickson Road;
- (iii) Pottinger Street (if it is reopened to through-traffic) - south of Hickson Road;
- (D) Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to determine the final location and design of speed humps;
- (E) Council consider the crime prevention options recently suggested by The Rocks Police for Hickson, Road Millers Point between Napoleon Street and Towns Place which include:
 - (i) Increased street lighting in Hickson Road near Patricks opposite High Street;
 - (ii) Linemarking, access control, median strip and traffic islands to discourage “doughnuts” etc;
 - (iii) Footway widening and angle parking on the east side (below High Street), bike lanes, etc, to reduce the amount of road space available for anti-social activity;
 - (iv) Landscaped islands at regular spacings to discourage car enthusiasts from congregating; and
- (F) Council request the State Government to consider appropriate legislative changes to allow the police to effectively deal with anti-social activity by groups of motorists.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Location diagram

Attachment B: Example of a bus friendly speed hump used in metropolitan Sydney.

Attachment C: Police crime prevention issues and options.

BACKGROUND

1. The Council meeting of 22 August 2005 agreed to a three-month trial of a Transit Mall in George Street between Alfred Street and Hickson Road, The Rocks.
2. The trial Transit Mall was intended to help solve anti-social problems associated with so called "car enthusiasts" who drive in large numbers through George Street late on Friday and Saturday nights as part of a "circuit" of The Rocks.
3. The Transit Mall restricted use of George Street to buses, taxis and hire cars etc from 10pm to 4am on both Friday and Saturday nights when anti-social activity occurs.
4. The Transit Mall was developed by representatives of the City of Sydney, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, The Rocks Police, Roads and Traffic Authority, State Transit Authority, the Member for Port Jackson, The Rocks Chamber of Commerce, Millers Point Residents Group and Resnet (CBD residents).
5. The Minister for Police agreed for Police to enforce the trial Transit Mall.
6. The Roads and Traffic Authority gave its written agreement to the trial Transit Mall on 19 October 2005.
7. The City signposted the trial Transit Mall and Police enforcement of the new restrictions started on 4 November 2005, in conjunction with parking enforcement of the after-hours "No Stopping" restrictions in Hickson Road, Towns Place and Dalgety Road.
8. Residents have raised concerns about threats to elderly citizens by so called car enthusiasts, and there has been an incident involving a confrontation between residents and car enthusiasts.
9. The City's Rangers attempting to issue parking fines have been threatened by car enthusiasts.
10. Under the Police guidelines, User-pay Police would not infringe motorists but direct them away from the Transit Mall area. This action might be effective, but would only prevent illegal use when User-pay Police were in attendance and so it is unsustainable in the long-term.

Transit Mall Trial – Outcome

11. Police resources during the trial were limited because of other operational commitments such as the Cronulla Riots response plus Christmas, New Year and school holiday operations.
12. Police have undertaken a number of enforcement operations of the Transit Mall particularly at the Alfred and George Streets intersection. While this reduced car enthusiast activity, it did not stop them entering the area on enforcement nights.
13. The Police have been unable to effectively enforce the transit mall for the following reasons:

- (a) Problems with the placement and number of signs raised concerns that legal action would not withstand the requirements of the courts;
 - (b) The high volume of traffic meant illegal use of the transit mall occurred during the time police were issuing an infringement to an offender; and
 - (c) The above problems resulted in unnecessary and unsatisfactory conflict between Police and the general public.
14. The City's Rangers enforced the after-hours "No Stopping" restrictions in Hickson Road as part of the trial, but this has been unsuccessful in preventing car enthusiasts from congregating.
15. The Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority wanted Police to be stationed at the entrances to the Transit Mall to "turn-away" general traffic during the trial. City staff opposed this strategy because:
- (a) it requires ongoing resourcing which is not sustainable as a long-term solution;
 - (b) the excessive ongoing costs; and
 - (c) disruption to legitimate access needs and public transport services.

PROPOSAL

16. Bus friendly speed humps are proposed for Hickson Road and selected adjoining streets. The design of these speed humps discourages car enthusiasts who often have modified vehicles.
17. The speed humps along Hickson Road are to be removable so that they can be taken out for special events such as the "Oz 10K Wheelchair Race" which is held each year on Australia Day.
18. Hickson Road should be redesigned between Napoleon Street and Towns Place to physically reduce the opportunity and potential for car enthusiasts to congregate.
19. The problem of car enthusiasts is a public law and order issue which has occurred in various suburbs around the Sydney Basin for a number of years now (eg, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Brighton, Cronulla, Bondi etc). Traffic management solutions tend to merely relocate the problem somewhere else rather than solving it. Therefore appropriate legislative changes to allow Police to effectively deal with this problem are the only realistic means of solving the problem.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

20. Residents and businesses in Millers Point have complained that the parking restrictions are ineffective and also adversely affect their amenity and visitors.
21. Traffic management and parking enforcement strategies have clearly been ineffective in dealing with what is a public law and order issue.
22. Anti-social activity such as the car enthusiast problem is a public law and order issue which is best handled by the NSW Police.

23. The proposed speed humps may discourage car enthusiasts from congregating in Hickson Road but may not stop them from using George Street The Rocks.
24. The type of speed humps proposed are effective at slowing vehicles but are unattractive.
25. Speed humps may result in additional noise as vehicles travel over the humps and may also have problems from some drivers performing "wheelies".
26. The City previously suggested a temporary closure of George Street between Alfred and Argyle Streets to discourage the circuit of The Rocks. However this was opposed by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and others, consequently the problem of the George Street "circuit" remains unresolved.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

27. The proposed speed humps are estimated to cost about \$40,000 and will be funded from the Sydney Traffic Committee Capital Works (Project C14409).
28. While the area under the jurisdiction of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and their tenants would benefit from resolution of this problem, they declined to help with funding of any of the proposals.
29. Other long-term physical changes to Hickson Road have not been costed at this stage and need further investigation.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

30. Road Transport (Traffic Safety and Management) (Road Rules) 1999
31. Roads Act 1993
32. Transport Administration Act 1988.

OPTIONS

33. The Rocks Chamber of Commerce and Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA) have asked for temporary traffic management arrangements to be used to control access through George Street, The Rocks. This is estimated to cost about \$30,000 each month which is unsustainable for Council to fund. While The Rocks Chamber and SHFA both benefit from resolution of the problem, neither organisation has shown a willingness to contribute funds towards this option.
34. To provide a full complement of User-pay Police at the intersections of George Street/Alfred Street, George Street/Argyle Street and Hickson Road at Pier One has been estimated at around \$60,000 for two months. Based on this information, the annual cost would be about \$360,000 which is considered unsustainable in both the short and long-term.
35. The Rocks Police previously suggested a temporary Road closure of George Street through The Rocks. However, this was opposed by The Rocks Chamber of Commerce, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, State Transit Authority and others.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

36. Local residents, businesses, the Millers Point Residents Action Group and public transport service providers need to be consulted on the proposal to install speed humps on local streets in Millers Point.
37. The Millers Point/The Rocks Traffic Management Working Group which includes representatives of Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and Council's Traffic Committee (City, Police, RTA) has previously agreed that speed humps would be considered if other options failed.

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