

Exchange between the Minister, Jim Cox + advisers from DIER with Kim Booth MHA, Tasmanian Greens, from Wednesday this week in Parliament.

Some history: DIER, Transport has always resisted actually writing down a Departmental policy on bicycle promotion and infrastructure, preferring instead to hide behind vague "motherhood style" promises and nebulous and ambiguous links with local government "transport strategies". The result is that provisions for bicycles in road plans seem to be dependant in reality on the personal attitude and inclinations of the particular DIER officer involved in a given project and unless local political pressure is brought to bear in each and every separate case bicycles generally go unconsidered. DIER do fund wages for part time bicycle planning people but refuse to set aside regular funds to pay for the infrastructure they plan.

The exchange detailed below would seem to confirm to me that Mr. Cox sees nothing wrong with this disappointing situation, but you make up your own minds. BT web editor

Budget Estimates Scrutiny Committee - Hansard 20th June 2007 - approx 12.05pm

Mr BOOTH - In regard to your strategy, Minister, for pushbike lanes on the road networks -

Mr COX - So are we talking about one specific area?

Mr BOOTH - No, no statewide just in terms of whether you have a strategy for providing pushbike lanes.

Mr COX - Is that it?

We do it in conjunction with councils. A lot of the roads that we put in have pushbike lanes. There is one that has drawn a lot of attention in recent weeks and I guess that is the one you were probably alluding to, but maybe not. There is a wider shoulder than normal on that road. There is a pushbike lane in existence I think - I will get you the details for that. We do consider pushbike lanes but it is not always possible as it depends on the width and what is available to work with. There was one instance recently where we were asked to look at a cycle lane and I think the cost of constructing the cycle lane was almost more than constructing the highway. The one that has received a considerable amount of publicity lately is South Arm, Shoreline Drive to Oceania Drive. That is the one I referred to. There is a shoulder that is suitable for a cycle lane but there is -

Mr TODD - It is a separate facility, Minister. As the minister said, the South Arm Road between Oceania Drive and the Shoreline roundabout which is to be duplicated commencing next financial year -

Mr COX - Can I interrupt there? I think we received a lot of questions about this and I am assuming that this is one of the reasons that you raised this question.

Mr BOOTH - Already in this overview, do you mean, previously?

Mr COX - No, now this minute why you raised it, because it did not show on the original plan, did it? The people out that way did not realise there was a cycle lane there or it was not shown on the original plan?

Mr TODD - Minister, there is a separate cycling facility that is being enhanced by bringing it up to the junction at Oceania, which also links across to any cycle facilities,

footpaths and so on on the other side of the road where Merindah Street meets the highway.

Mr COX - And the other question that Mr Booth asked was whether we would take into consideration cycleways in other areas.

Mr TODD - We certainly do, and where there is a demand for cycleways, in conjunction with the councils, we do take that into account and incorporate it where it is appropriate.

Mr BOOTH - I am actually interested in whether or not you have a policy position within your department where you develop policies about analysing the merits of bicycle lanes and so forth for all sorts of reasons but, in your case, of course, alleviating traffic congestion and enabling people to get into the city - you spoke about park and ride and so forth - so I am interested to know what your department's policy is for this, whether it is something that you encourage, whether it is part of the design parameters if you are designing a new piece of State road that you will include bicycle tracks or pathways.

Mr COX - As Mr Todd said, where possible we certainly do that.

Mr BOOTH - Where would one find this as part of your policy? Could you give us a document that shows that you have a policy on including this?

Mr SPENCE - It would be covered in the integrated transport plans that are done for each of the regions. I cannot tell you now whether it is definitely -

Mr COX - It is not a book that sits up there and reads, 'This is the cycle policy' if that is what you are asking.

Mr SPENCE - We look at it as part of the planning process.

Mr BOOTH - So it is a dot point in some sort of standard pro forma, is it?

Mr SPENCE - No, in terms of the integrated transport plans that have been put together in each of the regions. My recollection on reviewing the areas is that it is addressed in those plans.

Mr BOOTH - Are you able to indicate whether you have plans in place at the moment to create bicycle lanes -

Mr COX - For which roadworks?

Mr BOOTH - On all roadworks.

Mr COX - The one I just told you about, the South Arm Road, yes. Are there any other roadworks that we are currently looking at?

Mr TODD - We have done that work on the north-west coast through Cooe. We worked there on the West Tamar Highway duplication, so on those projects where it is appropriate but clearly on every road project it is not appropriate.

Mr BOOTH - Is the decision to provide a bike path driven from the department or does it come from the community up or the council up normally?

Mr COX - It is a combination, Kim.

Mr TODD - That is right. We have been meeting with the southern councils and they are preparing a cycling strategy at the moment. I personally have met with Cycling South and we are liaising with them on that and how we might be able to integrate with them in terms of the outcomes they are looking for and particularly with some of the cycling facilities on the local roads.

Mr BOOTH - I am not trying to make a particular point about a particular road.

Mr COX - I thought you were initially but now I understand where you are coming from.

Mr BOOTH - I am interested more that it become part of a policy of the department, that you do have some priority of needs, just like people would expect if you build a road that it is going to have a footpath. You would not expect a council to lobby for that or the community to be concerned it is not there. But if it does not appear in a plan then it indicates that perhaps it does not have enough priority in the department. That is what I am getting at.

Mr COX - There would be some instances where you would agree, I am sure, that it is just not feasible to do that.

Mr BOOTH - Of course.

Mr COX - And the other aspect is, of course, do you always want cyclists sitting beside a major highway? Perhaps that is not a good -

Mr BOOTH - That is why I am asking what your policy is on it, what the policy position is because there are also other very good reasons you might want to put it in - for congestion reasons or health reasons.

Mr COX - To answer your question, we are practical, yes we do, and we do so in consultation with both community and council.

Mr BOOTH - You would seek the community -

Mr COX - They usually come forward fairly quickly from my recollection.

Mr ADDIS - The most effective way of getting cycle paths and provisions for cyclists uppermost in the minds of any of those people doing the work is, as David Spence indicated earlier, through the regional transport plans. These plans are designed to work with the community, a whole range of stakeholders, to address transport needs. Cycle paths are just one of the modes or means that need to be gone through and looked at in order to come up with a tailored solution, I suppose is the way to put it, for those regional needs. Cycle ways, along with other mechanisms, are standard factors in regional planning. After that, it is dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Mr BOOTH - I am not sure whether this falls within this particular output, minister, but in regard to transport demand - the number of cars using designated road lanes set aside for certain times when only vehicles carrying a minimum number of passengers, three people for example, are allowed to use these lanes. Express lanes in New South Wales, for example, where if you have three or more passengers in the car you are allowed in that lane and you get priority through the traffic to reduce the peak hour bubble. Have you got any strategies in this line? Is that part of this output group?

Mr COX - No.

Mr BOOTH - Does it fall within the department's bailiwick?

Mr COX - It is not something we have. I am sorry, it is part of this output group.

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