22 August 2008

CBD Mobility Forum
Department of Premier and Cabinet
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

mobilityforum@dpc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sirs

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the call to identify practical and sustainable ideas to improve mobility to, from and within Sydney’s CBD using existing infrastructure and resources.

The Planning Institute of Australia represents in the vicinity of 4,500 urban and regional planners and associated professionals working in Australia and internationally. Around half of our members work in local government, thirty percent in the private sector and the remainder in state/commonwealth government and academia. The NSW Division of PIA represents over 1300 members.

The attached submission has been prepared by NSW Members of the Institute.

We would welcome discussions regarding our submission and how we might collaboratively progress the proposals outlined in the submission.

Yours sincerely

Julie Bindon
President
NSW Division
CBD MOBILITY FORUM

Comments from the NSW Division of the Planning Institute of Australia.

Traffic Management

PIA does not approve of more or extended times for clearways through established strip shopping centres as these are the ‘kiss of death’ – example Parramatta Road Annandale to Leichhardt.

Improved traffic light sequencing, if not already at their optimum, would be beneficial.

Right hand turns from arterial roads to be discouraged, rather gyrations to be encouraged where possible.

Street directional changes, where possible, are encouraged.

Public Transport Management

There is a mismatch between services from the CBD where the financial centre workers do not leave at 5pm, rather closer to 7pm and often later than that. Bus and train timetables are still geared to the days when people worked 9-5. There is a need to survey working times in the CBD and adjust timetables and capacities of services.

A rationalisation of private vehicle usage around bus terminals such as Wynyard is required. Buses are disadvantaged as they compete with cars turning left down Grosvenor St as buses queue to reach their Wynyard destination. Cars should be diverted across the Cahill Expressway if they are heading east from the Harbour Bridge or across the Western Distributor if they are heading south – not through the city centre.

Similarly, buses leaving Wynyard should not need to compete with cars in the PM peak as they try to exit Carrington St in to Margaret St. Private vehicles should be banned from the southern lanes of Margaret St between George and York Streets in peak period.

Management of bus services across the Harbour Bridge requires increased priority for the buses along the bus lane. A bus only lane needs to be provided on the western lanes of the Harbour Bridge to match that on the eastern side.
Buses entering the bus lane at the northern approach to the bridge are delayed by cars crossing the bus lane attempting to access the bridge lanes for the City and Western Distributor. These vehicles end up blocking the bus lane as they wait for the opportunity to merge right causing the buses to either queue up behind them or to divert, somewhat dangerously, into the adjoining lane (for access to the Cahill Expressway) and then back in to the bus lane further south.

The single bus lane exit from the southern end of the bridge also causes delays. The buses are often forced to queue back to the toll gates and across the bridge while adjoining traffic lanes flow freely. The solution is for an additional bus lane to be provided from the southern toll gates through to York St. The car lane which currently crosses the bus lane to turn left in to Grosvenor Street should be restricted during the peak. Private vehicle entry to York St should also be restricted during the peak hours.

**Non-price Demand Management**

Delivery times should be limited to non-business hours thereby allowing more city streets to be closed during business hours (not having to cater for deliveries during the day). Working hours are currently quite flexible and there is little that can change here. For instance, working parents have to fit in with child care and school hours.

Public parking should be concentrated at the edges of the CBD and people walk or catch a shuttle bus which services the peripheral car parks, as is the case in Perth.

Improvements by industry, including the introduction and optimisation of vehicle booking systems to better match resource allocation, greater use of electronic processes to replace paperwork, new equipment and improved operational procedures, play an important role in providing mechanisms for non-price demand management. The availability of road infrastructure and the level of traffic congestion across the network during commuter peak periods also influences freight movements.

The major road network, such as the M4, M5 and M7 Motorways, is used by general traffic and heavy vehicles. However, the heavy traffic conditions occurring on the road network during the commuter peak periods influences truck movements across Sydney. The proportion of traffic attributable to trucks is very low when compared to general traffic on the road network (less than 10%). Proposals to restrict trucks movements during commuter peak times will have a negligible impact on the road network, as existing traffic congestion and management practices by the
freight industry are successfully constraining the majority of truck movements during the AM and PM peak periods.

Management of freight movements within the Sydney CBD and major town centres is supported. Any decisions on these movements must consider the needs of the freight industry and the ability of wholesale and retail customers to have the ability to receive goods outside of regular hours.

**Price-based Demand Management**

A London or Singapore style congestion tax could be counter-productive for the Sydney CBD. The modal share to public transport is already high which suggests that only the executives drive to work, possibly because the transport system is not geared to their long working hours. If the executives – decision makers, are discouraged from driving in to their offices, they could find a good excuse to relocate to a business park where they will have no problems parking but their workers will switch from public transport to cars, reversing the modal split to 75% cars, 25% public transport – not a good idea.

Should working hours in the CBD be so flexible that business efficiency suffers to fight congestion? There are more than management measures needed. There is an urgent need to catch up on infrastructure such as diverting traffic out of the CBD when it is not the destination, in particular providing more bridges across the Parramatta River. These routes could be toll free to encourage people away from the CBD.

**Summary**

Management of existing infrastructure should not substitute for planning and providing new infrastructure as expeditiously as possible.

Then Institute would welcome the opportunity for further engagement on these important issues.