
Summary of BayBUG's Safe-Street Neighbourhoods submission to Canada Bay Council dated 6 October 2016

1. Introduction

Everyone wants their local streets to be made safer, friendlier and more attractive.

We believe that to change neighbourhood streets¹ for the better that we need to reshape them in ways that slow traffic and help change behaviours of motorists and other users of road related areas. Doing so we'll discourage through traffic and make local streets safer for everyone to use and enjoy.

2. The case for safe-street neighbourhoods

2.1 Safety considerations

Safety considerations are the main deterrent to cycling. Many people and most non-regular cyclists, perceive our streets and bike facilities as too dangerous or risky to use². This may be readily addressed for neighbourhood streets by lowering speed limits and using traffic-calming measures to gain compliance, with street-space re-assigned and re-landscaped over the longer-term.

2.2 Reduce motoring danger

Motoring danger needs to be reduced to protect vulnerable users of our streets – pedestrians and cyclists. How? Slow the traffic and redesign streets in ways to ensure reasonable compliance with the speed limit and minimise through traffic.

Statistics show that for 40km/h the risk of fatalities is still about 20- 25% for accidents between a motor vehicle and a pedestrian or cyclist, while for 30km/h it is well below 5- 10%. It is now less than 2% in Denmark, Holland and Switzerland, where 30km/h speed limits apply in residential neighbourhoods and through village centres as well, after introduction over the past 40 years.

When governments introduced 50km/h and 40km/h speed limits there was significant opposition to these lower speeds, but now these limits are now widely accepted. It has saved lives and pain, as fatality and injury statistics over the last two decades show.

2.3 Perceptions matter

Driving everywhere is an established attitude that locks-in behaviour posing an additional hurdle to residents' choice of transport. This is despite the health and other benefits of walking and riding that are increasingly recognised by the public.

2.4 Local streets need to appear, feel and be safe and comfortable to use and enjoy by everyone.

Local streets should be first for residents who need to drive, service providers, cyclists and people getting around on their legs and using mobility aids, and their dogs. And people means people of all ages and all abilities. Motorists who want to get through quickly should rank second.

2.5 Travel time, benefits and costs

Motorists' door to door travel-times increase by only seconds, not even minutes, for the average car trip to work, school, shops, parks etc., if 30km/h speed zones are introduced. Travel time increases likely average only 9 seconds for each kilometer travelled. And that "cost" buys many benefits. Fewer fatalities and injuries means a very high potential monetary saving for the community, as well as avoiding suffering and personal

losses. A key consideration in establishing safe and comfortable 30km/h neighbourhoods is to select a network of higher speed roads that is no further than 500m, or so, from most residents. With respect to cycling, low speed local streets may provide an alternative to having to provide costly separated bicycling facilities.

2.6 Social & environmental benefits

- More social interaction
- Fuel savings
- Less exposure to vehicle noise and exhaust fumes
- Street space that was dedicated to vehicles now available for residents
- The right environment for car-sharing and automated vehicles

3. The way forward

Introduce 30km/h speed zoning for neighbourhood streets and alleviate the problem of compliance by creating street designs that slow motor traffic while still permitting vehicular movements (e.g. service vehicles) that are appropriate in a residential setting.

Apply urban design, landscaping and traffic management best-practice that has a focus on high residential amenity with safety being a fundamental aspect of amenity. Where provision for vehicle traffic is subservient to residents' needs for quality and amenity.

An audit and mapping of the local streets suitable for inclusion as low-speed neighbourhood streets needs to be undertaken. Streets that are already narrow or are narrowed by parked cars may need no work other than at junctions with faster roads. A key element is to establish a "road hierarchy" where most residents live within 500m from a higher speed road and a safe "trunk" bicycle route, separated from higher speed vehicles.

4. Conclusion & Recommendation

The recommendations to Council are to:

- a) Include in its next or updated **Community Strategy Plans (currently the FuturesPlan20)** – clear aims, objectives and policies for implementing the Safe-street Neighbourhoods approach
- b) Include in its next or updated **Delivery Programs and Operational Plans** – provisions and specific actions and funding for the planning, development and implementation of Safe-street Neighbourhoods, including for the introduction of 30km/h speed zones and 10km/h Pedestrian Priority zones

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¹ A simple definition of a neighbourhood street is a road that presently provides vehicle access primarily to serve residential properties. Under the NSW Bicycle Guidelines these are defined as Local roads and Mixed traffic streets (but not all such streets). Inclusion should be limited to streets where the volume of motor vehicles is less than 5,000 vehicles per day. This task should be left to the Council's professional staff to determine, after consultation with community groups.

² Taverner Research, Research Report: Active Transport Social Research. City of Sydney, April 2015, (Project Ref: 4940).