SUBJECT: Northern Beaches B-line Update

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On 9 November 2015, the NSW Government announced the delivery of the Northern Beaches B-line project, a program of works to deliver high capacity express bus services from Mona Vale to the Sydney CBD.

On the 19 November 2015, Council considered a report into the Northern Beaches B-line (BRT) and resolved to provide qualified support for the project and to request the full business case for the project. Council considered that several key issues continued to be of concern. These included the omission of North Sydney as a destination (stop), mode shift away from private transport not being a major driver of the project, parking issues along the Military Road corridor and the missed opportunity of realising a proper Bus Rapid Transit project with its inherent public transport benefits.

Notwithstanding these issues, Council staff have continued to work with TfNSW’s B-Line Team to promote:

1. Improved bus passenger travel times;
2. Increased uptake of public transport between the northern beaches and global Sydney;
3. Reductions in traffic volumes and parking demand in the project corridor;
4. Inclusion of a North Sydney bus stop in the project scope, so that the large number of journeys between the northern beaches and North Sydney are accommodated by the new, premium B-line bus service; and
5. To ensure that any loss of on-street parking on Military Road is off-set by:
   a. increased public transport mode share and associated reductions in parking demand; and/or
   b. provision of appropriate levels of off-street parking in local side streets; and
   c. the creation of alternative footway/shopping environment buffer zones outside of peak travel times.

Whilst it is understood that TfNSW have targeted significant bus travel time savings and associated mode shift, it is not yet clear what initiatives TfNSW will deliver in North Sydney as part of the B-line project. As TfNSW have not yet released the strategic or final business cases there remains no clear case for the project in terms of its public transport mode shift and associated traffic/parking management benefits.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:
Nil


The Guidelines have been considered in the preparation of this report and are not applicable.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** Council continue to encourage the following outcomes for the Northern Beaches B-line project for Neutral Bay and Cremorne via the regular stakeholder meetings with TfNSW:
   
a) improved bus passenger travel times;
   
b) mode shift towards a greater percentage patronage of public transport for trips between the northern beaches and global Sydney;
   
c) Military Road traffic reduction;
   
d) Consideration of a stop in or near the North Sydney Centre in recognition of the Centre’s major employment role; and
   
e) reduced external parking demand.
LINK TO DELIVERY PROGRAM

The relationship with the Delivery Program is as follows:

Direction: 1. Our Living Environment

Outcome:
1.4 Improved environmental footprint and responsible use of natural resources
1.5 Public open space, recreation facilities and services that meet community needs

Direction: 2. Our Built Environment

Outcome:
2.1 Infrastructure, assets and facilities that meet community needs
2.3 Vibrant, connected and well maintained streetscapes and villages that build a sense of community
2.5 Sustainable transport is encouraged
2.6 Improved traffic management

Direction: 3. Our Economic Vitality

Outcome:
3.1 Diverse, strong, sustainable and vibrant local economy
3.2 North Sydney CBD is one of Australia's largest commercial centres

Direction: 4. Our Social Vitality

Outcome:
4.1 Community is connected
4.7 Community is active and healthy
4.8 Enhanced community facilities, information and services
4.9 Enhanced community safety and accessibility

Direction: 5. Our Civic Leadership

Outcome:
5.1 Council leads the strategic direction of North Sydney

BACKGROUND

The NSW Government through TfNSW, has been in the process of planning for the Northern Beaches B Line (previously referred to as the Northern Beaches Bus Rapid Transit project) for over 18 months. According to information provided in its media release, the NSW Government expects the Northern Beaches B-Line project to broadly include:

- nine new B-Line bus stops at Mona Vale, Warriewood, Narrabeen, Collaroy, Dee Why, Brookvale, Manly Vale, Spit Junction (Mosman) and Neutral Bay with real-time information, seating, weather protection and improved facilities for customers;
- six new “commuter” car parks at Mona Vale, Warriewood, Narrabeen, Dee Why, Brookvale and Manly Vale providing approximately 900 new car parking spaces;
- new double-decker buses with improved on-board capacity and comfort;
- on-road improvements, including new bus lanes, signal phasing adjustments, bus bays, and minor lane widening to support bus services; and
- improved pedestrian and bicycle links to connect customers with B-Line stops.

Information provided to Councillors in November 2015 suggested that:

- The proposed bus service will replace existing express services with no increase in bus numbers along the project corridor.
- “Commuter” car parks will be provided within northern beaches commercial centres. This is not typical of “park and ride” facilities, where parking is located away from key trip attractors. Locating new parking in northern beaches shopping centres may result in the use of these car parks for local trips, increasing traffic and congestion in local centres and undermining the potential mode shift and traffic reducing benefits of the project.
- Increased bus capacity on double-decker buses, reduced crowding and improved travel comfort may result in some level of mode shift from private vehicles to BRT services. However, travel time penalties, associated with the loading and unloading of double-decker buses, may undermine any potential mode shift benefits associated with the increase in bus capacity and comfort.
- On-road interventions have been designed to improve travel times for general traffic as well as bus services/customers. This will, again, undermine the travel time, mode shift and traffic reducing benefits of the project.
- Analysis of how the introduction of new traffic signal infrastructure or changes to signal phasing along the route will impact the uptake of walking and cycling to and from Neutral Bay and Cremorne has not been provided.
- Loss of on-street parking will negatively impact walking safety and amenity unless an alternative buffer zone is provided between the footway walking environment and the on-road traffic environment. Reduced walkability will have a generally negative impact on business/commercial activity in the Cremorne and Neutral Bay areas and may affect property prices.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS
The principals of improving walking, cycling and public transport safety and amenity while carefully managing parking supply and associated traffic generation are endorsed within the North Sydney Community Strategic Plan. As such, community engagement is not required to address this issue. However, it is assumed that TfNSW will conduct some level of community consultation or information in the coming period of time as the proposal is better defined.

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT
Ensuring that Northern Beaches B-line advocacy reflects the objectives of the North Sydney Community Strategic Plan will achieve identified Council governance outcomes.

DETAIL
The following issues have been identified at a number of inter-governmental working group meetings during the further development of the B-line project:

1. A clear case for the project, based on modelling of travel time, mode shift and traffic reduction benefits, has not been released to date.
2. A North Sydney CBD BRT Station is not identified as a key deliverable of the project.
3. Preliminary project proposals have included extension of clearways on the North Sydney section of Military Road, with the possibility of 24hr clearways identified.

4. A centrally aligned BRT option, which was identified in the pre-feasibility study and that could address some of the issues above, has not been pursued as part of the further development of the project.

Further discussions with the B-Line project team since April 2016 have not yet been able to address these issues.

Based on the information available, the following outcomes are likely to result from the proposed project:

a) provision of bus infrastructure and services that do not meet BRT best practice standards will result in less travel time benefits, mode shift, reduction in traffic and parking demand;

b) the omission of a North Sydney B Line Station/Stop will result in approximately 1 in 3 commuter trips between the northern beaches and Global Sydney (including North Sydney) not being served by premium B-line services;

c) any extension of clearways and associated removal of on-street parking (clearway extensions or 24hr clearways) will:
   - reduce disabled access to Neutral Bay and Cremorne;
   - remove the pedestrian/traffic buffer zone;
   - bringing more, larger, fast-moving vehicles to the kerb-side;
   - creating an unpleasant walking environment;
   - reducing walking activity;
   - reducing business activity;
   - reducing property values;

d) non-provision of level boarding and alighting will maintain current, poor level of access for bus passengers with particular accessibility needs (mobility impaired, aged, mothers with prams, etc.);

e) mixing more, larger, fast moving vehicles with cyclists in the kerb-side lane will deter existing cyclists and potential future cyclists from cycling through North Sydney and to local centres on Military Road;

f) removing kerb-side loading bays will cause difficulties with daytime deliveries and increase the complexity/costs of deliveries for local businesses; and

g) provision of parking at local centres will make driving more attractive, undermining the mode shift and traffic reducing objectives of this public transport project.

More detail is provided in Attachment 1 of this report.

**Conclusion**

While the delivery of improved public transport services is consistent with the NSCSP transport vision, the information provided to date gives no indication of how these initiatives will contribute to an overarching vision for the project in terms of mode shift and traffic demand management. Nor does it provide any indication of the scale of on-street parking loss involved or how commuters will access the North Sydney Centre.

It is acknowledged that the project is not fully refined. However, concerns must again be raised regarding various aspects of the scope of the B-line project. These include:
1. The lack of information provided regarding the potential for passenger travel time savings, mode shift and traffic/parking demand management associated with this project.

2. The omission of a North Sydney CBD B-Line bus stop resulting in a large number of North Sydney residents and workers not being catered for by premium B-line services despite North Sydney CBD being a major employment hub and forming part of 'Global Sydney' under the Plan for Growing Sydney.

3. The potential for extension of kerb-side clearways (possibly 24hr); loss of on-street parking; and the impact that this may have on walkability, business activity and property values in Cremorne and Neutral Bay.

In its current form, the Northern Beaches B-line BRT project represents a missed opportunity in terms of the provision of improved services between the northern beaches and North Sydney, improved modal splits and traffic demand management, delivering positive walking and cycling outcomes as part of the project and the delivery of BRT services in line with international best practice principals. These should be core objectives of transport infrastructure in a world city that will rely increasingly heavily on public transport for the movement of its rapidly growing population.

It is recommended that Council continues to advocate for the further development of the project to address the concerns identified in this report.
Attachment 1 – Potential Project Outcomes under current B-line Proposals

Bus Passenger Travel Time Benefits, Travel Mode Shift, Traffic and Parking Demand Management

The table below shows mode shift rates of between 5-15% for BRT projects in major Australian cities. This might suggest that realistic mode shift targets of 5-15% could be achieved for the Military Road under a full BRT scenario.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ridership</th>
<th>Adelaide Busway (ANEB)</th>
<th>Sydney Transitway (SLPT)</th>
<th>Brisbane SE Busway (BSEB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Usage per annum</td>
<td>7.0M(^1)</td>
<td>1.9M(^2)</td>
<td>26.0M(^7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Weekday average (^3)</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>6,800</td>
<td>93,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Peak hour</td>
<td>4,500(^4)</td>
<td>d/k</td>
<td>15,000(^6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Immediate Travel Impacts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adelaide Busway (ANEB)</th>
<th>Sydney Transitway (SLPT)</th>
<th>Brisbane SE Busway (BSEB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct corridor</td>
<td>24%(^5)</td>
<td>56%(^6)</td>
<td>56%(^8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridership growth</td>
<td>(47% new journeys)</td>
<td>(17% new journeys)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% new pax who</td>
<td>40%(^5)</td>
<td>9%(^6)</td>
<td>26%(^8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>previously drove</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station Usage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board at stations</td>
<td>20%(^4)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>66%(^9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board off system</td>
<td>80%(^4)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>39%(^9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


However, because the B-line proposals lack many of the key components of a typical BRT service: 24hr central aligned dedicated bus lanes, overtaking opportunities within the bus corridor, off-board ticketing, level boarding and alighting, etc. travel time savings, mode shift and traffic/parking reduction could be significantly less than for the above projects.
North Sydney CBD Station/Stop

ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2011* data suggests that North Sydney is the destination for approximately 1 in 3 (32%) of the commuter trips to Global Sydney (see Metro Strategy) from Northern Beaches, Mosman, and North Sydney Council areas. Warringah (pre-amalgamation) residents are the second largest contributors to the North Sydney workforce (after North Sydney) with approximately 8,000 commuter trips generated daily. Even if internal trips within North Sydney are excluded from consideration**, commuter trips to North Sydney make up 26% of all potential NB BRT corridor commuter trips.

*.id community profile
**due to the variety of destinations within the LGA, existing mode splits and limited potential for mode shift

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin/Destination</th>
<th>North Sydney (number of workers)</th>
<th>Sydney (number of workers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pittwater</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>2801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warringah</td>
<td>3907</td>
<td>10859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manly</td>
<td>1631</td>
<td>6071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosman</td>
<td>1694</td>
<td>4815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Sydney</td>
<td>9657</td>
<td>13907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Commuters travelling btw RBT LGAs and NSyd/Syd | 18,323 = 32% | 38,453 = 68% |
| Total Commuters travelling btw RBT LGAs and NSyd/Syd (excluding NSyd commuters) | 8,666 = 26% | 24,546 = 74% |

ABS Census of Population and Housing journey to work data, 2011

Non-inclusion of a North Sydney B-line Bus Stop* will result in 1 in 3 potential customers being excluded from the proposed premium B-line service.

*potentially nr the junction of Mount Street and Alfred Street as part of bus corridor improvements along Alfred Street
Loss of Parking

There are significant issues with the loss of on-street parking in terms of convenience for drivers parking proximate to their destination, particularly for mobility impaired users. TfNSW have suggested replacing lost parking by increasing on-street parking numbers in local side streets. However, these parking spaces, if found, will not provide the same level of service for customers, particularly less mobile customers as those directly adjacent to property frontages. Further, there may be little opportunity to do this as parking numbers in these side streets have, to a large extent, already been utilised as a result of similar Council initiatives in the past.

There is also the broader and often overlooked positive impact that on-street parking has on walkability. Parked vehicles not only provide a buffer between the footway walking environment and the on-road traffic environment, they also create side friction, which naturally slows traffic speeds. Removing parking/pedestrian buffer zones and, thereby, reducing the walkability of the Cremorne and Neutral Bay precincts has the potential to negatively affect business activity and property values.

Removal of parking will also result in the loss of loading bays servicing businesses on Military Road. Coordinating deliveries/pickups for periods outside of clearway times or from local side streets will increase operational costs for these businesses.