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STRAIGHTTALK

B-LINE PUBLIC MEETING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Report

April 2017



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Document

B-Line Public Meeting -
Community Engagement
Outcomes

Client

North Sydney Council

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1. INTRODUCTION

Transport for New South Wales (TFNSW) announced their plans for a B-Line bus service for the northern beaches in late 2015. According to TFNSW the B-Line will service the Northern Beaches and provide further public transport access to Sydney CBD. The announcement promised that the B-Line will have the following features:

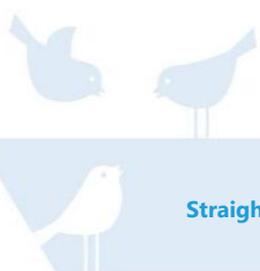
- 👉 Nine B-Line stops at Mona Vale, Warriewood, Narrabeen, Collaroy, Dee Why, Brookvale, Manly Vale, Spit Junction and Neutral Bay
- 👉 Six new commuter car parks at Mona Vale, Warriewood, Narrabeen, Dee Why, Brookvale and Manly Vale providing around 900 spaces and bicycle parking
- 👉 Roadworks to include new bus lanes, bus bays, lane widening, and integrated pedestrian and bicycle links to commuter car parks and B-Line stops
- 👉 Modifications to the bus network
- 👉 A new B-Line double decker bus fleet.

North Sydney Council (Council) has been in discussions with TFNSW to influence the design of the B-Line project. Council raised concerns about how the planning and design of the B-Line service might impact the local area, businesses and residents in letters to the Premier and relevant ministers. These concerns have not been addressed during the further development of the B-Line proposal.

Council at its meeting of 20 February 2017 determined to hold a public meeting to hear community views and present information on those aspects of the proposal they are concerned about. Invitations to attend were extended to Premier, Minister for Transport and TFNSW. Apologies were received from all NSW government representatives.

Straight Talk was engaged by Council as independent consultants to facilitate and record the public meeting on 30 March 2017. Lucy Cole-Edelstein was the meeting facilitator and ensured that all voices, ideas and opinions were heard throughout the night so that not one person or group dominated the conversation.

This report provides an overview of the methodology and a succinct summary of the various issues and comments raised throughout the meeting.



2. METHODOLOGY

Council called for a public meeting to be held on 30 March 2017. The meeting was promoted through the following platforms:

- 🐦 Event listing on Council's website
- 🐦 Event listing on TryBooking
- 🐦 Notice in the Mosman Daily
- 🐦 North Sydney Business E-News weekly electronic newsletter
- 🐦 Precinct E-News weekly electronic newsletter
- 🐦 Transport and Parking Consultation keep-informed-list via email
- 🐦 Precinct Committee Office Bearers via email
- 🐦 Cremorne Streetscape Committee via email
- 🐦 Neutral Bay Streetscape Committee via email
- 🐦 Neutral Bay Chamber of Commerce via email
- 🐦 Neutral Bay Public School via email
- 🐦 Redlands School via email.

Invitations were also extended to:

- 🐦 Gladys Berejiklian MP, Premier of NSW
- 🐦 Andrew Constance MP, Minister for Transport and Infrastructure
- 🐦 Jillian Skinner MP, Member for North Shore
- 🐦 Peter Abelson, Mayor of Mosman
- 🐦 Mosman Councillors.

There were approximately 50 people in attendance, which included Councillors and interested members of the public.

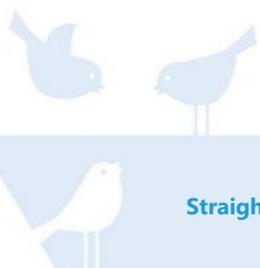
The meeting ran from 7.00 to 8.30pm and had the following format:

- 🐦 Introduction and welcome by Jilly Gibson, North Sydney Mayor and Peter Abelson, Mayor of Mosman
- 🐦 Presentation by Marcelo Occhiuzzi, North Sydney Council Strategic Planning Manager
- 🐦 Speech by Jilly Gibson
- 🐦 Speech by Peter Abelson
- 🐦 Speech by Tom Sherlock, Mosman Councillor
- 🐦 Speech by Carolyn Corrigan, Mosman Councillor
- 🐦 Speech by MaryAnn Beregi, North Sydney Councillor

👉 Questions and concerns from the audience.

During the questions and answer session, Council handed out a feedback form to participants. The form asked participants to indicate whether they support the NSW government's proposed B-Line bus service. 42 participants responded. Out of these 42, 40 participants said that they did not support the B-Line. One participant said that they did support the B-Line, and one did not answer the question.

A copy of the completed form can be found at Appendix B.



3. OUTCOMES

Issues raised by North Sydney Council

Council's Strategic Planning Manager, Marcelo Occhiuzzi delivered a presentation which outlined the B-Line's background, the issues that the B-Line is assumed to be trying to address, what other options may be feasible to resolve these issues, and Council's stance on the project. Council's presentation concluded that the case for the B-Line has not been adequately made in the B-Line REF and that a variety of alternatives should have been further explored as part of the development of the project. These alternatives should have included options identified in the pre-feasibility study as well as non-bus options including a Metro Spur between Dee Why and Chatswood, motorway, etcetera. This kind of options assessment would have given much needed transparency and legitimacy to the further development of the B-Line proposal.

The presentation can be found at Appendix A.

Issues raised by Councillors

Jilly Gibson

In her presentation, Mayor Gibson stated that she was very concerned about the project. She identified that footpaths will feel "hostile" for shoppers should the B-Line go ahead, as it will not feel pleasant with double-decker buses running in the carriageway directly adjacent to the already narrow Neutral Bay and Cremorne footpaths. Mayor Gibson stated that this feeling of pedestrian unease, along with a loss of parking, will cause a decrease in sales for local businesses as people will go elsewhere for their shopping. She said that as a result, this will lead to vacant shops and unwanted businesses (such as massage parlours), increased congestion, and a loss of local business. Overall, Mayor Gibson stated, the lower north shore will pay a high price for something that will benefit northern beaches commuters. Finally, she stated that there needs to be a better, long-term solution to address the issues of population growth and traffic congestion.

Peter Abelson

Mayor Abelson stated that he agreed with Mayor Gibson on the need for a long-term solution. He said that there was a lack of clarity on the NSW government's behalf about what is happening. Mayor Abelson believed that the problems which the B-Line is attempting to resolve have been exaggerated, and that although Mosman will not be as affected as North Sydney, road closures will still negatively affect Mosman and cause problems such as increased traffic. He stated in conclusion that, 'it's a thin end of the wedge, this is just the start of what's about to happen'.

Tom Sherlock

Councillor Sherlock stated that he agreed with the points raised by the two mayors. He made the point that the NSW government cannot spend the money twice and that spending half a billion dollars on marginal benefits will prevent them from spending it elsewhere. Councillor Sherlock also strongly condemned the NSW government for keeping the B-Line's strategy and business case as a secret, calling it 'deplorable' and stating that it leads to solutions that are imposed upon the community without considering the community's suggestions. Councillor Sherlock also stated that, in speaking to colleagues and public

servants, there was broad support for delivering fast and efficient public transport along the east-west corridor between Dee Why and Chatswood in order to incentivise public transport journeys linking with existing North Shore T1 train line and future Sydney Metro services, and to minimise travel within the already over-crowded Military Road corridor.

Carolyn Corrigan

Councillor Corrigan was concerned about the Mona Vale community, stating that they are distressed about the cutting down of trees and the possibility of a plan for a high-density development. She stated that there is growing sentiment that the B-Line project will be privatised because there is so much money being spent on it. Councillor Corrigan said she believes that the state government's approach to community consultation for this project reflected lack of integrity and transparency involved in the delivery of forced council amalgamations. Finally, she raised the point that there has been poorly done community consultation on behalf of the NSW government.

MaryAnn Beregi

Councillor Beregi said that the way the NSW government was treating the community was 'depressing' and that the B-Line was not a solution. She also reiterated the point that community consultation has been poor as the government has been meeting with small interest groups and only addressing their problems, rather than the whole community's. Councillor Beregi also said that the NSW government needs to come up with a holistic, integrated transport study, and a project that considers what the future will require. She concluded by saying that the NSW government is taking the north shore for granted, which was well received by the audience.

Issues raised by the audience

A number of participants raised issues which have been summarised here for ease of reading:

Pedestrian safety

Many members of the audience were concerned about the future of pedestrian safety once the B-Line is implemented. One participant remarked that it will be particularly dangerous for children, the elderly and people with disabilities, who would have a harder time crossing the road to and from the proposed new bus stops. This sentiment was echoed amongst other audience members and Councillors, who feared the repercussions of compromised pedestrian safety.

Effects on local businesses

A major issue raised by audience members was in regards to the negative effects the B-Line will have on local businesses. People were deeply concerned about the degradation of local commerce and livelihood as a direct result of the B-Line. Many felt that the issues of pedestrian safety and increased traffic will make commercial activity dramatically decrease in the area.

Increased traffic

The issue of increased traffic was raised by most participants. People were concerned about increased traffic and congestion as a result of the B-Line and the consequent lack of parking. One audience member was specifically concerned about the effect the project will have on school drop off/pick ups. Another member of the audience raised the issue of the effects the increased traffic and road changes will have on first-responder services.

Waste of money

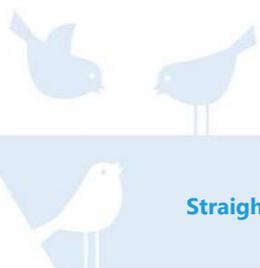
A few audience members remarked that the B-Line project was a serious waste of taxpayers' money. Many felt that this was not a smart way to spend such a large amount of money and that it will not be beneficial for the community. This issue was linked with the lack of transparency as the NSW government has not clarified the value proposition of the project by releasing the project's business case.

Poor community consultation

Various audience members raised the point that there has been poor community consultation on the B-Line project. Audience members felt that there has been a serious lack of integrity and transparency, as the NSW government is not taking the proper steps to inform or consult the public of this project. One audience member stated that he went to a presentation about the B-Line and made a submission on the 'ridiculous' plan which went nowhere. He said that the government pretend to consult the community and seeks feedback which they end up ignoring. Overall, there was negative sentiment amongst the audience regarding the government's community consultation.

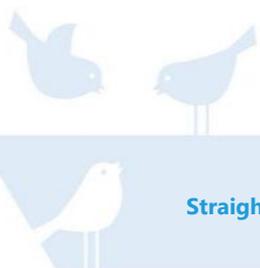
Lack of awareness

A frequently mentioned issue was the lack of awareness within the community about the B-Line. Members of the audience remarked that many people within the community are ignorant and that this lack of awareness is a serious problem. One participant was upset by the fact that she has to spend her weekends trying to gather signatures for a petition against the B-Line and raise awareness. She was frustrated that Council has not been helping the concerned community members enough to get signatures and raise awareness within the broader community. Another member of the audience stated that they would like Council's help and resources to raise awareness to counteract the NSW government's attempt to 'bury' the B-Line's community consultation opportunities. Another audience member suggested that Council work with local schools to raise awareness of the project with demographic groups that are less engaged with Council business. Involvement in Precinct Committees was suggested as another avenue for engaging residents.



4. CONCLUSION

The public meeting held regarding the NSW government's B-Line project allowed North Sydney Council, Councillors and concerned members of the community to share and discuss their opinions, issues and concerns. The meeting made it clear that Council, Councillors and the community shared some common concerns and sentiments about the B-Line. There was a genuine concern for pedestrian safety, increased traffic and the negative effects these will have on local businesses. Another common concern was the quality of the NSW government's community consultation efforts and the lack of integrity and transparency within those processes.



APPENDIX A PRESENTATION



APPENDIX B FEEDBACK FORM



