

ITEM MAYORAL MINUTE: RAIL UNDERPASS - CONCORD WEST & LIBERTY GROVE

Department Executive Services

Author Initials: AT

REPORT

I have been advised that RailCorp are currently reviewing the use of the two underpasses from Queen St to Concord West, one near Liberty Grove and one near Concord West Station.

This is of great concern. There are over 3,000 residents living in Liberty Grove, which is an area land locked between Homebush Bay Drive and the Railway. Liberty Grove is a high density community which relies on this underpass for connections to the adjoining suburbs.

Whilst I welcome the recent announcement of an upgrade at the Concord West station by the NSW State government, which is being funded by the Federal Government as part of the Freight Line Upgrade. This lift upgrade will improve access for the aged, people with mobility impairments, and parents with young children. The current underpasses are heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists particularly early in the morning period as they access Sydney Olympic Park for training rides.

The City of Canada Bay has a large cycling community who attend club racing at Sydney Olympic Park on weekends. One local club has almost 500 members, with in excess of 150 riders in attendance at the morning training rides, many of whom come from the Mortlake, Concord Cabarita areas. Other riding groups such as the Canada Bay Bicycle User Group (BayBUG), Lidcombe Auburn Cycle Club, Waratahs Cycling Club and Bike North, which has more than 1,500 members also use SOP. If these access points were to close, it would result in countless cyclists (wearing cleats, very dangerous on stairs) mixing with commuters to get across the rail line. This would represent a serious safety risk.

Also of great concern is the possible closure of the access way between the Liberty Grove community and Queen Street Concord West. This access point is used by parents and children attending the nearby Concord Public School as well as people travelling to Concord Hospital and the bus stops on Concord Road.

The Child and Family Needs study consultations highlighted the importance of safe pedestrian and cycle routes for children and their families to travel to school. This not only reduces congestion on our roads at peak school times but also promotes a healthy lifestyle by encouraging physical activity.

Over many years, RailCorp has been removing access between communities across all its rail lines because of risk. This is being done by the installation of

fences and the removal of road level crossings and at grade pedestrian access points. However, this has now reached a critical point where the closure of the tunnels under the rail lines will significantly divide this community.

If there is a closure of these two access points, we will see further, and unnecessary, increase cars in our roads as people will have no choice other than drive to local destinations rather than walk or ride as they do now.

I call on Council to write to RailCorp and the relevant Ministers to consider more appropriate solutions to ensure continued and safe access from Liberty Grove for pedestrians and cyclists.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council write to RailCorp and the relevant Ministers to seek commitment to the retention of safe, convenient and appropriate connections between Liberty Grove and Concord West.
2. That Council write to the State Member to seek his support in retaining these vital pedestrian and cyclist links.
3. That the community being advised of Council's actions to support the retention of their access across the rail corridor.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Aerial map of railway tunnels

Concord West Rail underpass