



**Submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs  
and Transport Committee Inquiry on**

**The investment of Commonwealth and State funds in  
public passenger transport infrastructure and services**

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# Table of Contents

Introduction and Scope .....	3
About BikeSydney .....	3
Who we are .....	3
Geographic focus of our activities .....	3
What we stand for .....	3
What we do .....	3
City of Sydney Cycling Strategy .....	4
The Scope of BikeSydney's Submission .....	4
Summary of Recommendations .....	5
Addressing the Terms of Reference .....	7
a - an audit of the state of public passenger transport in Australia .....	7
Light Rail .....	7
Ferries .....	7
Rail .....	7
Buses .....	9
Levels of cycling in the City of Sydney .....	9
b - current and historical levels of public investment in private vehicle and public passenger transport services and infrastructure .....	10
Transport Connectedness .....	10
BikeSydney Recommendations .....	11
c - an assessment of the benefits of public passenger transport, including integration with bicycle and pedestrian initiatives .....	12
The Need for Integration .....	12
Benefits of Integrating Walking and Cycling .....	12
d - measures by which the Commonwealth Government could facilitate improvement in public passenger transport services and infrastructure .....	14
Recommendations .....	14
Sustainability Considerations .....	14
e - the role of Commonwealth Government legislation, taxation, subsidies, policies and other mechanisms that either discourage or encourage public passenger transport .....	15
Institutional Mechanisms that Discourage Walking and Cycling .....	15
Energy-related Mechanisms that Discourage Walking and Cycling .....	15
Taxation Mechanisms that Discourage Walking and Cycling .....	15
The Need for New Mechanisms .....	16
f - best practice international examples of public passenger transport services and infrastructure .....	17
References .....	17
Appendix – Terms of Reference .....	18

## **Introduction and Scope**

BikeSydney is pleased to offer our submission to the Senate Inquiry.

We take a human and social perspective on how people can get around. Our aim is for people to move safely and enjoyably by cycling and public transport as well as walking and where necessary by bus, or even a rail bus.

## **About BikeSydney**

### **Who we are**

BikeSydney is an incorporated local Bicycle User Group (BUG) formed in 2000 to work on behalf of cyclists living and working in the City of Sydney local government area and has more than 250 members. We are affiliated with BicycleNSW, whose mission is to promote cycling through engagement with governments, business, and the community to achieve more people on bikes, more often.

BikeSydney collaborates with neighbouring BUGs to pressure governments to take action to improve cycling facilities. BUGs that we work with are BikeEast (the BUG for the eastern suburbs), the Marrickville and South Sydney Bicycle User Group (Massbug) and the Leichhardt Bicycle User Group (LBUG).

### **Geographic focus of our activities**

The City of Sydney LGA is large and has 167,000 residents (increased by over 50% in the last 10 years) and many more people coming into the area for work, entertainment, education.

### **What we stand for**

BikeSydney supports development that is focused on existing public transport and cycling infrastructure and served by car sharing, as this encourages the greater use of more sustainable transport.

### **What we do**

BikeSydney sees its role as an enabler and advocate and works to create a safer, more liveable Sydney for our members who prefer to ride bicycles rather than drive cars. We aim to help ensure that everyone can safely enjoy bicycling in Sydney, that streets in every part of town are bike-friendly, that bike parking and showers greet us where we work, and that bike paths throughout our city are improved and extended.

BikeSydney's activities are to:

- work in partnerships to encourage the development of safe, direct cycling routes in a network that connects the villages within the City area, public transport and the CBD
- participate in the City of Sydney's Bicycle Steering Committee to implement the Cycling Strategy
- advocate to decision-makers, asset managers and developers to include safe physical conditions for cycling at the planning stage

- promote the value of cycling as a means of personal transport
- organise and lead regular social rides
- provide services to the City, including bicycle-valet parking at City events and the auditing of street poles for bicycle-parking ring suitability
- produce a newsletter, distributed to local bike shops, gyms and cafes.

For more information about BikeSydney, our activities and a copy of our annual report, visit [bikesydney.org/](http://bikesydney.org/)

## **City of Sydney Cycling Strategy**

The City, with input from BikeSydney, has developed the substantial City of Sydney Cycling Strategy and Action Plan 2007-2017 and an overall policy direction expressed in Sustainable Sydney 2030<sup>1</sup>. The City aims to make cycling an attractive a choice of transport as walking or using public transport that have been starved of investment in physical, safe facilities and services. The Cycling Strategy has adopted a number of targets, including to raise the number of bicycle trips made in the City. In 2006, fewer than 2% of all trips made in the City were made by bicycle. The City aims to raise this 5% by 2011 and to 10% in 2016. It is a credible approach by government<sup>2</sup>. To achieve its target, the City has allocated \$70 million over the next four years to build an effective cycle network across the City.

These strategies are both very different and welcome directions. They provide a shining light, particularly to inner Sydney residents and existing cyclists. To help achieve the five-fold increase in cycling trips, the City, along with 15 surrounding councils, has initiated an Inner Sydney Bike Plan that we expect will lead to proposals to Infrastructure Australia/Building Australia Fund for funding as priorities and for green collar jobs.

BikeSydney, along with neighbouring BUGs and Bicycle New South Wales, has worked tirelessly for this major shift in strategic direction and investment.

## **The Scope of BikeSydney's Submission**

BikeSydney welcomes the explicit inclusion of walking and cycling under Term of Reference C.

We have taken that as a cue to provide information and make recommendations under each Term because while walking and cycling are intrinsic to the use of public transport, there has been a tendency to omit them from planning and budgets.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/2030/>

<sup>2</sup> In contrast to our recent history, under both the Sartor and Turnbull Mayoralty and the Carr Government's Action for Air Quality Management Plan: a 25-year plan that recorded the need to increase the level of safe cycling but withdrew funding to councils for bike plans on the basis that cycling was only 2% of trips (Treasurer Costa).

## Summary of Recommendations

BikeSydney makes the following recommendations:

1. that the Senate Committee include of walking and cycling for each term of reference because of their intrinsic relation to:
  - a. public transport use and future investments that are more accessible to people by walking and cycling, not driving
  - b. the inclusion of everyone
  - c. health and environmental benefits and costs
  - d. measures and investments the Commonwealth can take to enable a shift toward more sustainable transport, reduced oil consumption and health.
2. in assessing proposals for public transport infrastructure to serve an urban region, the capability of the mode to carry bicycles be applied, thereby giving actual support to realising connectivity and 'seamless travel' for people
3. for Sydney, the expansion of the light rail service owing to its superior compatibility with bicycles over the further intensification of bus, as well as for other benefits to users, e.g. ride quality
4. existing rail rolling stock be retrofitted to carry bicycles with passengers and all new rolling stock be fitted with bicycle hooks and the exterior marked for ease of access by passengers, as practised in other countries
5. high quality bicycle parking at rail stations and other transport hubs be installed and provided at no cost to the user to support the use of cycling and deter car driving
6. that road authorities devise and erect signage to indicate rail stations and interchanges, as practised in other countries
7. on the basis of sustainability and a more efficient transport sector, the Senate Committee considers and supports the proposal by the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors to Infrastructure Australia for Investing in Cycleways (Submission 6/08, December 2008).
8. that the many multi-dimensional benefits of cycling and walking in combination with public transport be taken into account in an urgent review of Commonwealth instruments and processes for strategic planning, assessing and funding transport proposals/projects (and noting the current review of the National Transport Commission)
9. that a Federal Ombudsman for Active Travel is appointed to hear and mediate conflicts to ensure that walking, cycling and public transport is given greater value and precedence in decision-making

10. As well investing in physical infrastructure, funding needs to be provided for educating transport and traffic staff and their consultants in urban sustainable mobility.
11. funding be provided now to undertake short-term repairs to broken and outmoded infrastructure, for example installing pram ramps on walking routes and cycling routes to rail stations and interchanges (i.e. within the station/interchange catchment)
12. that the Commonwealth provide leadership and funding to improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists travelling to rail stations/interchanges. For example, major intersections pose serious problems to pedestrians and cyclists and are difficult to rectify because of the layers of agencies involved (e.g. LGAs and the RTA). Another problem is that these intersections often occur at LGA boundaries and deters one or the other council from taking ownership of the issue.
13. that Commonwealth funds be managed by the Commonwealth, not merely allocated to the state and local governments, thereby ensuring delivery of services as intended and on-time.
14. that Commonwealth be involved in local government asset management practices, such as asset management and funding, to ensure that funds and works are allocated to reverse the past neglect of pedestrian and cycling facilities relative to facilities for motor vehicles.
15. that the Commonwealth support practical cycling proficiency training for adults.

## **Addressing the Terms of Reference**

### **a - an audit of the state of public passenger transport in Australia**

BikeSydney doubts the usefulness of an audit of public transport unless it includes how people access it.

We believe that getting to public transport by bicycle will become easier as the implementation of the City of Sydney's Cycling Strategy continues.

Our assessment of cycling access to the public transport system can be summarised as follows:

#### **Light Rail**

We believe that the light rail is good. People can travel with their bicycle free of charge unless the tram is very crowded. The service is frequent and reliable.

On the downside, bicycle parking was not installed at tram stops when this short light rail service was built.

#### **Ferries**

The Sydney Harbour ferries have always allowed bicycles to travel free and this is a benefit for commuters and tourists (both domestic and international).

On the other hand, the quality of on board bicycle stowage varies from service to service. For example, the Manly Ferry provides for up to 20 bicycles on board while the now superseded Jet Cat was limited to six bicycles per trip and its poor rack design on the rear deck exposed bicycles to salt spray. The new fast ferry, operated now by Bass and Flinders, accepts bicycles but there is neither suitable racking nor a dedicated storage area.

#### **Rail**

Generally speaking, facilities for cyclists using the rail system are not good enough.


















##### **CityRail**

Cyclists taking bicycles on trains in peak times must buy an additional ticket for the bicycle. We see this as discouraging people to ride to the station, catch the train and then ride to their final destination.

Secure bicycle lockers are only available at some stations and cost \$50 per quarter while car parking is free. There is no secure bicycle parking at City Rail stations in the City of Sydney area, including Green Square station which has plenty of surrounding area for either lockers and U-rail bike parking.

The following is taken from the CityRail web site. Note the lack of bicycle parking facilities at Central Station in Sydney– the premier rail station in New South Wales.

**Facilities available at Central (Sydney):**

	Stairs	✓		Bike racks / Bike lockers	✗
	Ramp (gradient)	✗		<a href="#">Ticket office hearing loop</a>	✓
	Escalator	✓		Warning tactile tiles (platform edge)	✓
	Lift	✓		Portable platform to train boarding ramp	✓
	Bus stop close by	✓		Toilet	✓
	Ferry wharf close by	✗		Wheelchair accessible toilet	✓
	Taxi rank close by	✓		Payphone	✓
	Car park close by	✗		Wheelchair accessible payphone	✗
	Wheelchair accessible car space(s)	✗			

Source: [www.cityrail.info](http://www.cityrail.info)[at 1 March 2009]

Funds for upgrading the station bicycle facilities could be drawn from revenue collected through the NSW Parking Space Levy that is being used in preference to construct of car parking areas at stations where cars can be parked for free.

This situation may be the responsibility of RailCorp and the lack of adequate services at rail stations has been repeatedly presented to the regulator, IPART and reflects the values and funding priorities that were expressed in the Parry Report and implemented by NSW Treasury.

### CountryLink

CountryLink operates services from Sydney to Canberra and New South Wales regional centres. Taking bicycles on CountryLink services is:

- expensive
- inconvenient because bicycles are required to be packaged in a box
- impractical due to limited number of bicycles that can be carried on any one train.

International practice allows for bicycles to be carried on trains for free and easily wheeled on and off without having to be boxed. This includes UK train services, generally regarded unfavourably when compared to Europe and North America.



### **Trackwork Issues**

The situation deteriorates when buses replace trains during track work. Rail buses allow up to two bicycles only to be carried on board at the discretion of the driver, severely limiting reliability of service to passengers carrying bicycles.

This is a regular problem at weekends because it deters domestic tourism by public transport. For example, the Blue Mountains is popular among mountain bikers but because there are often buses replacing trains on weekends, it is really only accessible to cyclists with cars.

BikeSydney questions whether the replacement of rail services with buses is really needed for purposes of OH&S of rail workers and minimising the time of rail maintenance. Having experience in living and travelling in many cities in other countries, BikeSydney recommends that this practice be reviewed; it should be compared to other international rail practices. We foresee the possibility of a proposal to quickly reduce the frequency of replacing rail services with buses and work toward international best practice, and communicate improvements in the reinstatement of rail services to the public.

### **Buses**

Buses in Sydney have been required to occupy narrow lane widths with the object of increasing road capacity for private motor vehicles.

BikeSydney has worked with the City and the RTA to ensure that on Oxford Street, Darlinghurst the bus lanes were widened to provide extra road space for bicycles.

BikeSydney is also concerned at the bus ticket structure and the decrease in discount for multi-trip tickets. We consider this shows that the government is more concerned with revenue collection than increasing the use of public transport and its lack of appreciation of the symbolic, signalling role of pricing. Details of these arguments are in the public domain in submissions to the regulator in Treasury, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

### **Levels of cycling in the City of Sydney**

Cycling provides an alternative and a complement to public transport and should be encouraged. The Cycling Strategy has adopted a number of targets, (e.g. to raise the proportion of bicycle trips made in the City of Sydney, as a percentage of total trips from less than 2% in 2006 to 5% by 2011, and to 10% in 2016.)

In the City and surrounding inner local government areas, the levels of cycling have increased quite dramatically between the last two ABS Census counts of journey to work by bicycle, from 1996-200 and 2001-2006 (New & Rissel, 2008).

BikeSydney will be participating in the annual March count of cyclists on the roads in the weekday morning and afternoons and these results will be available soon after.

BikeSydney is confident that given the strategic planning, building new routes will achieve their purpose of attracting more people to cycle.

## **b - current and historical levels of public investment in private vehicle and public passenger transport services and infrastructure**

Our observations and comparison of conditions leaves us in no doubt that provisioning for public transport and walking and cycling is grossly inferior when compared to the provision for private motor vehicles.

We see a number of possible reasons:

- lack of clarity about transport policy objectives by all levels of government (the NSW Government CBD Mobility Forum, notwithstanding)
- fragmentation of agencies
- massive shortage of a skilled workforce in sustainable transport planning
- in smaller councils in Sydney, car-dominant thinking prevails because there is insufficient capacity or interest in shifting some resources to improve conditions for walking and cycling

### **Transport Connectedness**

The House of Representatives Committee, through the Sustainable Cities Report, recognised the role of walking and cycling in transport connectedness and this needs to be taken into account when budgeting and planning for new or upgraded public transport infrastructure. This is best illustrated with the following quote from the report:

*5.43 The committee believes that the way in which transport infrastructure is currently budgeted for undermines the type of transport interconnectedness that is necessary for sustainability. The PIA draws attention to the fact that there are still separate budgets for roads, public transport, airports and pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, leading to a 'rather narrow vision'.*

BikeSydney shares this view and considers this bi-partisan Report to have much valuable content on urban settlements and transport. We support the approach in Recommendation 6 below:

*the Australian Government significantly boost its funding commitment for public transport systems, particularly light and heavy rail, in the major cities.*

BikeSydney goes further in that we recommend that walking and cycling be budgeted as part of the Commonwealth's funding commitment.

## **BikeSydney Recommendations**

1. As well investing in physical infrastructure, funding needs to be provided for educating transport and traffic staff and their consultants in urban sustainable mobility.
2. Provide funding now to undertake short-term repairs to broken and outmoded infrastructure, for example installing pram ramps on walking routes.
3. That Senate Committee support the submission by the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors to Infrastructure Australia for investment in cycleways.
4. The Commonwealth provide leadership and funding to improve the safety of people accessing other modes of transport. For example, major intersections pose serious problems to pedestrians and cyclists and are difficult to rectify because of the layers of agencies involved (e.g. LGAs and the RTA). Another problem is that these intersections often occur at LGA boundaries and deters one or the other council from taking ownership of the issue.

## **c - an assessment of the benefits of public passenger transport, including integration with bicycle and pedestrian initiatives**

### **The Need for Integration**

BikeSydney welcomes this direct reference to integrating walking and cycling with public transport.

We observe that connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists is generally not adequate in transport projects:

Some examples:

- access to Green Square station which is via a traffic island in the intersection of major roads
- access to Pyrmont Bay Park from Pyrmont Bay light rail station which is inadequate for pedestrians.

The lack of integration planning is set to continue for the CBD Metro as it has no budget for upgrading pedestrian and cycling facilities in each of the station catchments. This project claims to provide 'seamless travel', however their intent is to form a memorandum of understanding with the local councils. This is inadequate because budget and project planning for opening new rail stations has not been designed to secure the necessary upgrades so that they will be ready for people to use by the time the stations open.

This lack of holistic approach to transport planning and project development must be addressed.

The new rail link to Macquarie University illustrates the current ad hoc approach to transport integration in that while the new rail link provides good service, the pedestrian links are unfinished and are causing frustration for commuters, including new public transport users.

### **Benefits of Integrating Walking and Cycling**

Benefits of walking and cycling with public transport, often called active travel, are multi-dimensional and very considerable as illustrated by the following list from the City of Sydney's web site:

Key benefits provided through this plan are:

- reduced road costs;
- reduced overcrowding on public transport;
- lower greenhouse gas emissions;
- lower air pollution;
- reduced accidents; and,
- reduced health costs from increasing physical activity.

As cyclists, we agree with these benefits, but we would also add the benefits of physical and mental well-being, reduced weight, affordability and improved travel time reliability. Contrast this with the frustrations expressed by motorists who are either too early or too late for appointments despite the huge public investment in the road system.

A further benefit of cycling is that it can enable households to become and remain car-free, particularly with the availability of car sharing services within short walking distance. In some precincts, over 40% households are car-free and this metric should be one of the aims for sustainable urban mobility.

The benefits are very well documented. For example, the IPCC concerned with reduced greenhouse gas emissions, recognises that in the transport sector the co-benefits are very significant indeed.

We note however that the generic infrastructure legislation (e.g. the Infrastructure Australia Act 2008) that encompasses transport does not make any provision for assessment of these co-benefits in its priority assessments and we believe this omission needs review.

## **d - measures by which the Commonwealth Government could facilitate improvement in public passenger transport services and infrastructure**

### **Recommendations**

BikeSydney recommends the Senate committee consider:

1. Commonwealth funding of urban public transport, including funds to upgrade walking and cycling facilities in the catchments of stations and interchanges.
2. Commonwealth funds be managed by the Commonwealth, not merely allocated to the state local governments, thereby ensuring delivery of services as intended and on-time.
3. Commonwealth involvement in local government asset management practices to ensure that funds and works are allocated to reverse the past neglect of pedestrian and cycling facilities relative to facilities for motor vehicles.
4. Commonwealth to support practical cycling proficiency training for adults.

### **Sustainability Considerations**

Bike Sydney supports the principle of Sustainable Cities Recommendation 2 – integration of sustainability in assessment of policy:

*The committee recommends that all new relevant Australian Government policy proposals be evaluated as to whether they would impact on urban sustainability and if so, be assessed against the Australian Sustainability Charter and the COAG agreed sustainability targets.*

The COAG Reform Council needs to include sustainability as an indicator of performance for accountability of results. It is unfortunate that there is no mention of this in the recent advertisements Sydney Morning Herald on 28 February 2009.

## **e - the role of Commonwealth Government legislation, taxation, subsidies, policies and other mechanisms that either discourage or encourage public passenger transport**

BikeSydney can report a number of mechanisms that operate to discourage cycling in relation to public transport.

### **Institutional Mechanisms that Discourage Walking and Cycling**

1. Hostile road conditions.
2. The priority given to private motor vehicles by institutions and their professional traffic staff at the expense of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. The Sydney metropolitan area desperately needs a program of affirmative action for walking and cycling and an Ombudsman for active travel.
3. The complexity of institutional arrangements, exacerbated in Sydney by small councils without sub-regional or a metropolitan authority. There are few institutions with an appreciation of regional networks and connectivity.
4. The dominance of the roads authority whose position still appears to be about giving priority to vehicle movement rather than people movement. Evidence from the Gehl study of pedestrian movement in the Sydney CBD demonstrates the problem at traffic lights. The RTA interacts with stakeholders through specialists in traffic (i.e. motorised vehicle) movements and rules without adequate skills in retrofitting the road reservation for modern needs. The challenge for the Commonwealth is to formulate accountability measures that help shift the RTA toward becoming more people-friendly to achieve more sustainable transport outcomes.

### **Energy-related Mechanisms that Discourage Walking and Cycling**

Bike Sydney supports recommendation 2 from the previous Senate Committee in the Oil Report:

*- reduce Australia's dependence on imported oil and oil use, energy policy needs to be consistent with environmental goals, particularly the need to do more to reduce fossil fuel carbon dioxide emissions. (Rec2)*

It would be logical for changes to be made to the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme to support more investment in human-powered transport facilities and public transport with better designed cities.

### **Taxation Mechanisms that Discourage Walking and Cycling**

BikeSydney notes that the Recommendation 8 from Sustainable Cities is insufficient:

*The committee recommends that the Australian Government review the current FBT concessions for car use with a view to removing incentives for greater car use and extending incentives to other modes of transport.*

Our concern is that the meaning of incentives is ambiguous in this context; it may refer only to the formula that increases the level of concession as distance travelled increases. This is not the only perverse aspect: the very entitlement runs counter to claims for sustainability and exerts a powerful influence in workplace culture and car use. It is a deterrent to workplace-based car-sharing and workplace-based Bicycle User Groups and undermines travel plans.

In the context of the Henry review of taxation, BikeSydney recommends that the Senate Committee support:

- a thorough review and progressive removal of the FBT for cars, fuel and parking as a massive tax expenditure of over \$1 billion per annum that is out of step with practices internationally
- the removal of the FBT concession for cars and no extension of this concession to public transport or cycling but the redirection of funds to well-planned improvements in accessibility by walking and cycling and in combination with public transport.

Our view is that the scale of benefit to cars is so much greater than the mere extension of the concession to other modes that it would be far better to take a ‘root and branch’ reform approach.

This issue also shapes the culture and prestige about car travel relative to other forms that is expressed in workplaces in many ways – it is not merely an economic issue.

## **The Need for New Mechanisms**

The many multi-dimensional benefits of cycling and walking in combination with public transport needs to be taken into account and there needs to be an urgent review of Commonwealth instruments and processes for strategic planning, assessing and funding of transport proposals and projects.

On the basis of the complexity of institutional arrangements, a Federal Ombudsman for Active Travel is needed to hear and mediate conflicts to ensure that walking, cycling and public transport is given greater value and precedence in decision-making

BikeSydney draws attention and supports the previous observations:

*5.47 Decisions on infrastructure that are made now will have an impact on future sustainability. The committee reiterates that it is important for decision-makers to understand the interconnectedness of the urban environment settlement and transport environment.*

*5.94 Bicycle NSW is also in favour of an integrated transport system that would include bicycle lockers at bus and train stations and making bicycles free of charge on trains. This would aid in ‘reducing the amount of car dependence’ and would optimise ‘the access and liveability of urban communities’*



BikeSydney also supports measures in Recommendation 9 to reduce the use of four wheel drive vehicles in urban areas because of their excessive size. They consume road space needed for construction of safe cycleways so that cyclists are not expected to ride in the door-opening zone, and to reduce injuries from vehicle doors being opened in front of cyclists.

The committee recommends that the Australian Government review the tariff policy on four wheel drive vehicles with a view to increasing the tariff rate on four wheel drive vehicles, except for primary producers and others who have a legitimate need for four wheel drive capability.

## **f - best practice international examples of public passenger transport services and infrastructure.**

Many cities in the world are changing toward favouring walking, cycling and public transport and looking to reduce car use in the city, and are working much harder than we seem to be in Sydney. It seems that the city governments overseas are not so constrained by state governments, and many countries have independent transport planning authorities.

Specific examples include:

- In several European countries, taking bicycles on trains is easy and convenient. People can go anywhere on their bike. Some Australian cities, including, Canberra and Brisbane, have provision for their buses to carry bikes - and do so for free. There is no reason why some long-haul (intra-city) bus services cannot accommodate bicycles.
- Switzerland and Germany have multi-disciplinary teams with some shared training in urban and transport planning.
- Access to airports by bicycle can be provided with bike storage facilities. Manchester Airport Cycle Centre is a good example.

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## **Appendix – Terms of Reference**

Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services

[http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/rrat\\_ctte/public\\_transport/tor.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/rrat_ctte/public_transport/tor.htm)

On 4 December 2008 the Senate referred the following matter to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee for inquiry and report by 18 June 2009:

The investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services, with reference to

- the August 2005 report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage, Sustainable Cities, and
- the February 2007 report of the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Australia's future oil supply and alternative transport fuels, including:
  - a) an audit of the state of public passenger transport in Australia;
  - b) current and historical levels of public investment in private vehicle and public passenger transport services and infrastructure;
  - c) an assessment of the benefits of public passenger transport, including integration with bicycle and pedestrian initiatives;
  - d) measures by which the Commonwealth Government could facilitate improvement in public passenger transport services and infrastructure;
  - e) the role of Commonwealth Government legislation, taxation, subsidies, policies and other mechanisms that either discourage or encourage public passenger transport; and
  - f) best practice international examples of public passenger transport services and infrastructure.

The inquiry will be advertised in the Australian on 17 December 2008 and the committee has invited submissions by Friday 27 February 2009. No dates for hearings have been set as yet.

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