

Bin the Bike Ban Meeting, Ceres, 3pm Saturday 12 January 2008

Present: Chris Star (convenor and chairperson), Steve Barnett, Frank Kinnersley, Graeme ?, Dallas ?, John Parker, Iain Palmer, Trisha Couch, Avril Cooke, Brianna Laugher, Julia Blunden, ? ? ?

Those present began by introducing themselves and stating their views about the ban. There was general agreement on a number of points:

- The ban has been imposed by the Minister, Lynne Kosky, rather than by the private operators. Along with the new move towards even more staggered working hours, it is intended to show the government acting to reduce crowding on public transport. The real problem is inadequate planning for increased patronage, the inevitable result of privatisation of public transport. Train frequency needs to be increased. However as well as the shortage of rolling stock and drivers, Melbourne has the problem of a high number of level crossings and VicRoads has imposed limits on the number of times boom gates can be closed on some of these.
- The ban will have a minimal effect on crowding but seriously disadvantages the relatively small group who combine bike and train travel and will lead to greater car use.
- Most Connex rolling stock is poorly designed for the carriage of bikes and other large items such as prams, shopping jeeps and suitcases. Longitudinal seating is preferable and would be better for all commuters. Current seating provides too little leg room and is rarely fully used.
- The V/Line ban is even more serious for commuters using the bike and train combination given the greater distances they have to travel by train. It is also less justifiable given that most V/Line trains can accommodate some bikes in designated luggage areas without reducing space for passengers. A number of new carriages with more luggage space are scheduled to go into service mid year which should make it possible to carry more bikes on these trains.
- Bicycle Victoria has seriously let its members down, both by agreeing to the bans, and by failing to inform members when they first learnt of them. This is in contrast to the Public Transport Users Association which has opposed the bans and acted quickly to inform members.
- Other possible allies in this campaign are: local councils, especially rural councils; Tourism Victoria; Railtrails Australia; and the Opposition Leader, Ted Baillieu.

The following goals were agreed upon:

A Short term goals:

- A reduction of the evening peak ban from 4-7pm to 4.30-6.30pm. This is in line with other states that ban bikes during peak hours.
- A system of permits to be put in place to provide exemption from the ban for those who have a strong case. This should be accompanied by a booking system for bikes on V/Line trains.
- Getting BV to oppose the ban.

B Medium term goals

- Modification of current Connex trains so that there is more space for bikes in the back carriages.
- Input into decisions being made about future rolling stock so that more bike friendly designs are chosen.

C Long term goals

- A complete reversal of the bans.
- Government to take back responsibility for public transport, or at least trains, and get the system working as it could and should.
- A program of grade separation to eliminate problems caused by busy level crossings.

Actions agreed on:

- A week of action beginning on Wednesday 16/1 involving the placing of posters outside selected stations and the handing out of leaflets to commuters during morning peak hour. Brianna's leaflet to be used, possibly with modifications. Chris stressed the need for careful wording designed to keep all commuters on side. All group members to look at the leaflet and consider the need for changes. The web address for the Yahoo group to be included on both posters and leaflets. No decision was reached as to how posters and leaflets would be printed – individuals to organise this themselves? The week of action would culminate on Wednesday 23/1 with a stunt involving the taking of cardboard imitation bikes, or possibly bike boxes onto trains at a busy loop station in morning peak hour. Photos will be taken and media invited. The Surfboard Riders Association to be invited to join in.
- BV to be pressured to become involved in opposition to the ban. Two different approaches were discussed. One was to get up a petition and get individuals to support a call for a Special General Meeting on the issue. This was rejected in favour of writing to BUGs and clubs and urging them to write to both BV and the Minister, Lynne Kosky, and to cc their letters to our group. Chris Star offered to draft the letter and post it to the list for comment.
- A letter to be sent to the Minister, Lynne Kosky, and/or DOI alerting her/them to the existence of the Bin the Bike Ban interest group and stating our case. Chris Star offered to draft this letter and post it to the list for comment.
- Chris to use Survey Monkey to solicit views of cyclists and others.
- Chris and Brianna to alert media to watch our web site, so we all need to avoid making flippant comments on it.
- Next meeting to be at the end of January at Elvira's place.

Notes by Julia Blunden