

LEURA

GARDEN VILLAGE

Leura Village Association
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Dear Sir / Madam

Re. Blue Mountains City Council Draft Leura Area Traffic Management Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft Plan. The Leura Village Association (LVA) committee is pleased to see the work that has gone into the Plan and support many of the proposed traffic management adjustments. However, we feel there is a lack of substantial "big picture" changes that are needed beyond the short term.

It is our view that the Council needs to:

- (1) expand parking at strategically located positions on the edge of the town centre through the acquisition or re-purposing of land
- (2) establish a dedicated coach parking layover between Katoomba and Leura that does not require coaches to pass through the town centres or residential areas, ie. on the northern side of the highway.
- (3) give prompt and serious attention to Wentworth Falls-Leura-Katoomba active transport network that attracts and facilitates use by local and visitors with a wide range of fitness levels.

In the interest of immediate solutions to the pressing issues in Leura in regard to parking, traffic flow, tourism coaches and amenity, we offer this response to the LATMP proposals.

COACHES

The LVA supports provision for tourism coaches that minimises their negative impacts on amenity and maximises the benefits to the local businesses.

The LVA therefore supports the provision of access for coaches that:

- provides walkable access to the village centre (in the current absence of a dedicated coach layover and shuttle service)
- minimises pollution, congestion, noise and visual impacts on Leura
- does not reduce any further the already oversubscribed car parking
- is funded by metered coach parking or an annual fee paid by the coach companies.

Short-term:

Option A outside the former Ritz requires an unacceptably high loss of 14 car parking spaces and will direct the coaches through the Mall adding to congestion, noise and emissions. Passengers disembarking here will increase congestion on the roundabout as they cross Megalong Street and Leura Mall. This is therefore not supported.

Option B is a marginally better solution for the coaches as it keeps them out of the Mall in the town centre and uses Railway Parade and the highway for the dropoff-layover-dropoff circle. However, even with the introduction of a one-way system on Railway Parade between the Mall and Grose Street, the proposed drop-off point in that block is likely to congest the nearby Mall roundabout. Moreover, a bank of coaches is not our preferred first impression for visitors and residents as they enter the historic garden village. This is therefore not supported in this form.

It appears that the current use by coaches of the bus stop on Megalong Street near the car park entrance/exits is not part of future options. This is supported due to the unsafe conditions created for pedestrians and cars.

Proposed alternative hybrid

The first block of Grose Street between Railway Parade and Megalong is a wide street mostly constituted of non-retail services along with Greystanes Disability Services, aged care facilities, an under-used park and the Teapot Museum.

It is our view that, while not ideal, this street is the most suited of the proposed options for coach drop-off. We propose that all the coach drop-off/pick up facilities be in the first block of Grose Street on the eastern side at the top near Railway Parade and toward the bottom approaching Megalong Street. This will allow passengers to disembark and walk one block up Railway Parade to the top of the Mall retail precinct or one block along Megalong Street to the bottom of the precinct.

The coaches could then be directed to the layover further down Railway Parade that is proposed in Option B. We suggest considering restrictions that prevent Coaches using the Mall for this manoeuvre. It is acknowledged the Coaches would therefore be using one or two residential streets, Hartley Esplanade and Blackheath Street, and this would require investigation and consultation.

Lost parking would need to be made up by angled parking on the western side of Grose Street, if necessary with a slight narrowing of the footpath.

Alternative drop-offs: We support the investigation of a drop-off outside the Spires which has been proposed as a possibility to investigate by Ron Powell.

Alternative layovers: We support the investigation of other options for the layovers proposed by Ron Powell including Margery Anderson Park or the road in the Katoomba Showground.

Longterm solution: We have been advised that the Gateway site on the corner of Leura Mall and Den Hogan Drive just north of the highway/rail line is for sale again. If so, we urge the Council to borrow the money to purchase it. This site could accommodate a cutaway parking station into the hillside to serve as drop-off and layover for buses within easy walking distance of the village as well as longer-stay car parking. It would be transformative.

The same opportunity could be explored with the Waterhouse-owned 'Chateau Napier' site on the opposite corner which has been vacant and noxious-weed ridden for years.

As a second preference to these nearby options, we would like to see the solutions that have been talked about for years actively investigated and developed, notably an out-of-town layover for coaches and shuttle services that would ferry visitors to Leura and Katoomba town centres.

PARKING

Paid parking: The Leura Village Association does not support paid parking.

The argument that it will benefit businesses has no clear foundation. On the contrary, it seems obvious that it will encourage visitors and locals to go to Wentworth Falls, Katoomba or Blackheath where there is no paid parking.

We believe it will infuriate and alienate residents. The proposal that locals would have a residents' pass for the western side of the Mall would not be sufficient parking. One of the few benefits of the malaise in tourism during and after the 2019-20 bushfires and in the subsequent COVID lockdowns is that locals have returned to their village centre. We do not want to lose them again as they are the bedrock of the local economy.

Increased parking: We encourage the Council to look for opportunities to increase available parking spaces by identifying opportunities for angled parking. As noted in our coaches section above, we suggest that the feasibility of angled parking be investigated for the western side of Grose Street between Railway Parade and Megalong Street.

The suggestion of a one-way system between the Mall and Grose Street on Railway Parade could also be investigated for the possibility of creating angled parking on the southern side of the road.

Medium and long term

More land and/or better use of land is needed to increase parking. The suggestions by Ron Powell of investigating a cutaway multi-level car park into one of our hillsides – beside the Alex Hotel under the Bunker/ Madame Wangs

or under the former Ritz is supported. We understand that the new owners of the Ritz proposed this to the Council. We would like to know why it was not taken up or at least investigated.

As noted above, it is also our view that should either the Gateway site or the Waterhouse property on the northern side of the highway come up for sale, the Council should take purchase the land with the intention of a well designed cutaway parking for cars and possibly also buses.

CROSSINGS

The proposed new crossings are generally supported to give greater priority to pedestrians over vehicles, improve pedestrian safety and calm traffic.

All crossings, both current and new, should be raised for greater safety and traffic calming.

We note that the crossing to the railway station outside the Spires on the Mall is now so faded as to be almost ineligible. It is our understanding the Council secured funding to raise this crossing some time ago (years?) and we ask that this be done as a matter of urgency.

RAILWAY PARADE WEST and ACTIVE TRANSPORT

We whole-heartedly support the request of residents of Railway Parade West and surrounding streets for safe walking access along Railway Parade West.

To this end, a one-way system to Clarence or Govett Street (depending on residents' preference) combined with walking and cycling facilities is supported, as is the exploration of a shared zone.

We ask that this be made a Priority One in the BMCC Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan-- as it once was -- and that Council allocate funds from its own budget or actively pursue one of the many grants that would be available for active transport. This must go beyond being a 'future plan'.

Leura-Katoomba walk-cycle link

We strongly support the intention of the Council to expand active transport links. The single most effective link likely to have the greatest use of residents and visitors would be an easy-grade Katoomba-Leura path that follows Railway Parade all the way through Leura with walking-cycling facilities, and continues along the Railway Corridor from the top of Govett Street and re-joins Railway Parade in Katoomba.

This route has been used informally since the earliest days of the two townships and continued even after the fence was erected by the Railway. The easy grade 2km walk avoids the arduous down and up between Katoomba and Leura and offers spectacular views across the towns to the Jamison Valley. It would be suitable for many people's walking and cycling capability, a significant tourism attraction that would contribute economically

to Leura and Katoomba businesses and would help alleviate traffic congestion between the two towns.

Resident Michael Maclaurin has discovered that there is still a gazetted road behind the railway fence. We urge the Council to explore this possibility. Combined with Leura Mall, the Grand Cliff-top Walk and Greater Blue Mountains Trail along Cliff Drive and the Treeline Lurline Project, this railway corridor link along the top would create a spectacular walking-cycling loop for Leura-Katoomba with far-reaching benefits.

SCOTT AVENUE and HIGHWAY JUNCTION TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Traffic lights at this junction is supported as a priority.

We also ask that in conjunction with this request to Transport for NSW, the Council proactively pursue construction of a footpath from Scott Avenue Leura to West Street in Wentworth Falls where the highway footpath currently starts. There is no footpath on the highway between the two towns and the verge in this stretch is so overgrown and rough that any day of the week, people can be seen walking on the highway itself. Eventually someone will be killed. This matter has been raised repeatedly including in a council resolution and we ask that it now be given full attention.

Thank you for your consideration of our submission.

Leura Village Association Committee
5 July 2022