

**World Road Association**  
**TCB.3 Improved Mobility in Urban Areas**  
**Anita Curnow, VicRoads**  
**Fifth and Sixth meetings, June and November 2010**

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**Executive Summary:**

The fifth meeting of TCB.3 was held in Paris in June 2010, and the sixth meeting in Bucharest in November 2010. TCB.3 focuses on Improved Mobility in Urban Areas. Anita Curnow is the English-speaking secretary.

Progress was made at the meetings on some of the key analysis and report writing. At neither meeting was the convenor of Working Group 1 (Anita's group) present, as a result, Anita played a more significant leadership role within the working group to ensure progress occurred.

There was no technical visit as part of the Paris meeting (it had been relocated from the original venue of Ifrane, Morocco at relatively short notice). At the Bucharest meeting, there was a technical visit to the new Bucharest traffic control centre.

**Background:**

TCB.3 is part of the "B" strategic theme of committees on improving provision of services. The focus on services causes the group to think from the perspective of the end-user.

Working groups are:

B.3.1: Integration of the different modes of transport – study strategies for balancing the share of urban transport modes to reduce congestion and improve mobility – by reviewing case studies leading to guidance for road administrations

B.3.2: Land use planning and road transport – investigate transport requirements and policies associated with planning of new developments in large cities – by reviewing case studies leading to guidance for road administrations for countries in a range of stages of development

B.3.3: Non-motorised mobility – investigate how non-motorised mobility is being assessed and encouraged in planning transport schemes in urban areas – by a sample survey to arrive at realistic data for future transport planning

All working groups will prepare papers for the Mexico City World Road Congress in September 2011, and write technical reports to accompany the paper.

**Work Program:**

The work program of Working Group 1 (TCB.3.1) has been developed, based around the preparation of the final report chapters. Work is generally progressing to schedule, although with a smaller number of case studies than originally envisaged.

Across the whole committee, work has progressed (in Bucharest) on reviewing abstracts for the World Congress, with approximately 60 abstracts reviewed for the Keeping Cities Moving session. Anita reviewed approximately 10 of these. The committee has confirmed its selection of accepted abstracts, and identified some "papers to watch" for potential presentation at the congress. This has been done keeping in mind the desirability of a spread across continents and through non English speaking nations.

The committee remains committed to meeting WRA deadlines for reports, papers, reviews for the World Congress in September 2011.

### **Meeting outputs:**

Working Group 1:

- At the Paris meeting, the group prepared descriptions of all of the “types of actions” to be included in the final report, and agreed on the “strategies” to be included in the report.
- At the Bucharest meeting, the group undertook a status review of all material previously prepared for the report, and reconsidered the issue of the fundamental objective of the paper – reducing congestion or improving mobility. There was also a mapping of all case studies against strategies and types of action, enabling a picture of the coverage of the case studies across these areas. There was also a review of the wording of the strategies and agreement to some changes. There was also discussion about draft conclusions from the material collated and analysed to date.

The plenary session resulted in:

- Agreement to certain papers being identified as promising for presentation, subject to the quality of the final paper
- Understanding (a little more) of the likely requirements for the Santiago de Chile seminar in April 2011, which TCB.3 is co-hosting with TCB.4 and the Chilean road association and discussion about possible presentations for the seminar.
- Work on the introductory report for the session at the World Congress Keeping Cities Moving (session 12), and clarification of further requirements for completing the report.

### **Emerging issues:**

The Working Group convener for WG1 has been incapacitated by severe injury, as a result he has been off work. This occurred after several months of uncertainty over the working group convener for WG1 being able to continue in the role. He was not at the Paris or Bucharest meetings. The issue of convener into the future needs to be resolved.

### **Learnings for Australia and/or New Zealand:**

No further learnings at this stage – awaiting final analysis of the working group and discussion about the other two working groups’ outcomes.

There were some interesting abstracts for the World Congress that will provide further learnings. A note has been made about these and if the papers are submitted, will be followed up/passed on at that time.

### **Dissemination:**

Dissemination will include:

- Austroads Network Taskforce
- Corresponding members
- Individuals within VicRoads.

### **Benefits from other associated activities:**

From the visit to the Traffic Control Centre and general moving around the city, the following observations are made:

- The Traffic Control Centre, built in 2008, is exceptional, and cost 18 million Euro. As well as video wall and consoles, it is designed around five fibre optic comms rings. It provides adaptive control of traffic signals for the first time, based on an algorithm from the University of Crete. It currently only controls 100 intersections, but has the capacity to expand considerably. Delay savings of about 30 per cent were experienced upon switch on, according to the private firm running the TCC. One disadvantage is that although buses, trams and trolleybuses can be afforded priority (including selective late-running priority), only 10 per cent of the bus fleet is equipped with detectors (GPS) and the benefits have not been realised. There are some institutional issues underpinning this.
- On the ground, despite the existence of the TCC and its benefits, traffic is truly chaotic in Bucharest. The locals readily agree that they have unique driving techniques, but the greatest contrast with Australia was parking. Vehicles were parked on the footpaths almost everywhere, in some cases completely blocking them. This is a recognised issue, but with growing car ownership and very little, if any, off street parking available, it is hard to see the solution. During the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceauşescu, many concrete apartment blocks were built, in areas just outside the central area (notably, the highest densities are in areas to the south of the city where these apartments area, while the inner and north (lakes) parts are much less densely populated). Without parking, and with inadequate maintenance, the apartments are quite a liability for the city!
- While the issue on the surface is parking, the actual resulting issue is pedestrian access. As well as parked cars, there are very high drop pram crossings, poorly maintained footpaths (often pavers with many missing, or poorly replaced strips of bitumen after conduit works presenting a trip hazard. It would be impossible to navigate most footpaths with a wheelchair. Cyclists are very few and have very few facilities. Some shared paths exist along boulevards, at times, the wide shared paths become great parking facilities. Green footprints show pedestrians where to walk while yellow lines indicate bicycle designated “lanes”.
- To add to this, the public transport systems appear to be plentiful but are marked by some particular issues. For a start, the relatively limited metro system (by European standards) has its stations at 2km intervals. This means there are gaps in the walking catchments to the metro, making it impractical for access to a significant number of land uses. Visitors are not readily able to “read” the system – information in not accessible in many languages, ticket sellers by the side of the road don’t speak English (for tram and bus tickets), and with separate under and above-ground operators, there is minimal “single system” features. An electronic purse system covering both systems has recently been introduced but it appears to be the exception rather than the norm. The tram and bus stops are confusingly designated with very small, often rusty signs, and the tram system is highly ambiguous in terms of separated versus shared road space. Some of the Melbourne treatments using rubber kerbing would suit the Bucharest environment, and some exists but mostly between the tracks, not stopping blocking of trams, just U turns, etc. Platform stops exist, they are very narrow and often don’t have fencing, so waiting passengers have to face the traffic to ensure their safety. On the positive side, taxis are extremely affordable (\$4 for a 30 minute journey (in congestion)) and hotel staff assume all of their visitors will use taxis, and this becomes a self fulfilling prophesy.

## **Conclusions and recommendations:**

With declining numbers attending the meeting from working group 1, a few committed members have emerged and are allowing work to proceed generally to schedule. Visiting cities with fewer resources and historic planning issues helps to appreciate the level of service offered to people in Australia and New Zealand for day to day mobility!

It is recommended that this report be noted.