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FYFE CALLS FOR CAR PARK

REGULATION REVIEW

State Government plans to reduce car dependency and increase public transport in Greater Adelaide are “pie-in-the-sky” unless major changes are made to local Council building regulations, an Adelaide town planner said today.

Mr Nathan Grainger, the chief planner for surveying and engineering firm Fyfe, said targets in the State Government’s 30 year plan for Greater Adelaide to reduce traffic congestion were sound, but did not take into account building regulations which had been designed with the car “front of mind”.

“Current regulations essentially require new commercial buildings to provide one car park for every 25 square metres of total office space, including entrance ways and wet areas,” he said.

“This means that new commercial buildings often require two or three levels of underground parking, even when there may be a bus stop virtually on the front step or adequate off-site parking in nearby streets.

“The effect of this on-site parking is to encourage tenants to drive to work rather than consider public transport, worsening congestion and exacerbating an already growing problem.

“The regulations also substantially increase building costs for developers, meaning the rejuvenation or replacement of office buildings that may have passed their use-by date is being delayed or simply is not taking place.

“So not only do the current regulations encourage traffic dependency, they also slow rejuvenation of the city.”

However, Mr Grainger said the State Government’s 30-year plan for Greater Adelaide released recently anticipated a target of reducing car dependency and increasing public transport to 10% of all transport use by 2018.

It also highlighted the impact of traffic congestion on economic performance, stating that it could have “negative impact on labour productivity, city liveability and the ability to attract a skilled workforce.”

“The Government’s targets are welcome and can be achieved, but it will require a rethink on the part of Councils and Government when it comes to new commercial developments and the importance placed on parking,” Mr Grainger said.

“If there is no change, then the targets are pie-in-the-sky.”

He said he was not surprised by a recent RAA finding that average travel times in Adelaide had worsened in the past 10 years from 20 to 22 minutes to around 30 minutes.

The RAA blamed growing population and stretched infrastructure for slowing traffic in most areas.

Mr Grainger said changes to the parking requirements would also boost redevelopment in the city by lowering building costs.

He said he was aware of a number of potential developments on the Adelaide fringe that had been delayed indefinitely because of the high cost of providing on-site parking.

“The increased costs mean that the redevelopment of old buildings that are no longer suitable for office accommodation or any other use is not taking place,” he said.

“At a time when people are being encouraged to look at other forms of transport, these parking requirements need to be re-examined.

“Maybe 10 or 15 years ago this would not seem like a problem. However in this day and age it is unrealistic to assume as many people want take their cars to work each day.

“Many people are also taking positive steps to try and reduce their carbon footprint, so regulations that force companies to build extensive car parks on new developments seem like a waste of time and resources.”

Further Information:

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