



To the General Manager

SUBJECT: Extension of the Trial Young Street Plaza

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DESCRIPTION/SUBJECT MATTER:

At its meeting of 28 September 2020, Council awarded the construction works of the Young Street, Neutral Bay trial plaza to Regal Innovations. Young Street, between Military Road and Grosvenor Lane, has been temporarily closed since 2 November 2020 to trial a new pedestrian plaza and road closure. On 23 December 2020 Young Street Plaza opened to the public.

On 2 November 2020, Council released the project community consultation website at Have Your Say HQ and has been welcoming community feedback via survey and email.

Council received concurrence for the temporary trial closure of Young Street from Transport for NSW on 28 November 2019 for a trial period of three (3) months. After which a traffic assessment is required to be submitted to TfNSW for review to determine if the closure can be implemented permanently. The three (3) month trial period is due to expire on 23 March 2021.

Traffic counts have been undertaken and a traffic impact assessment is being prepared by Council's traffic consultant. This report summarises some of the preliminary findings of the traffic counts undertaken in the road network around Young Street Closure.

This report also outlines the partial results of the survey and summarises some of the findings of the traffic counts done in the road network around Young Street Closures, and subsequent recommendations.

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement to extend the trial closure of Young Street for a further three (3) months to the 30 June 2021 while the traffic assessment and design details are being finalised. It is anticipated that a further report will be provided to Council in June 2021 as to whether a permanent closure of Young Street will be pursued, and also what the permanent closure will look like when it proceeds.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the Traffic Committee endorse the extension of the Trial Young Street Plaza for a further three (3) months to 30 June 2021, and the extension of the trial be approved under the Special COVID-19 Traffic Regulation Delegation to Council.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Consultation has been undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Protocol

Relates to ECM No:

Standard or Guideline Used: AS1742.3

Signs & Lines Priority: N/A

Precinct and Ward: Parks and Brightmore, Tunks Ward, Willoughby Electorate.

Impact on Bicycles: Shared paths and removal of vehicle traffic in the plaza make it safer for bicycles to travel around Young Street Plaza – Neutral Bay.

Impact on Pedestrians: Closure of Young Street increases available open space making it safer for pedestrians to walk around Neutral Bay Village.

Impact on Parking: Proposal resulted in the loss of approximately 10 on-street carparks.

DETAIL

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of 29 October 2018, Council considered a report regarding a funding deed with Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW) covering a range of public domain works proposed to improve amenity and access in the Neutral Bay Village and complement the Northern Beaches B-Line Bus Service. Council resolved at the meeting to execute the funding deed.

One project identified in the funding deed was the proposal to create a Public Plaza in Young Street, Neutral Bay (between Military Road and Grosvenor Lane). The closure of Young Street was proposed by TfNSW to assist bus movements down Military Road and was originally identified as part of the B-Line project. The closure of Young Street was seen as a preferred alternative to the State Government's original proposal to impose a left turn ban onto Ben Boyd Road. Closing Young Street had the added benefits of delivering new community/open space and improving pedestrian accessibility in the Neutral Shopping Bay Village.

Consultation on a concept design for the proposed Public Plaza in Young Street, Neutral Bay (between Military Road and Grosvenor Lane), took place from 31 May to 5 July 2019, the outcome of which was reported to Council at the 26 August 2019 meeting. Council at this meeting also resolved to implement a three (3) months trial closure and undertake further community consultation and traffic impact assessments during the trial. The outcomes of community feedback during the trial to be reported to Council.

During initial consultation about the road closure and plaza aspects, the community had mixed views on whether they wanted it to happen. Council agreed to trial the closure to give the community an opportunity to see how it would work in practice before making a final decision. The trial is helping to assess the traffic effects of the closure, and assist decision making for the permanent road closure and plaza implementation.

At its meeting of 28 September 2020, Council awarded the construction works of the Young Street trial plaza to Regal Innovations. Young Street in Neutral Bay, between Military Road and Grosvenor Lane, has been temporarily closed since 2 November 2020 to trial a new plaza and road closure. Young Street trial plaza was opened to the public on 23 December 2020.

Since opening to the public Young Street Trial Plaza has been used by the community at different times of the day. Additionally, to activate the space Council is running a series of entertainment events including acoustic music performances and Storytime with the Stanton Library which have been very successful in attendance.



Photo 1 - Overall view of the plaza



Photo 2 - Cyclist using the shared space of the plaza



Photo 3 - Plaza at night-time 1

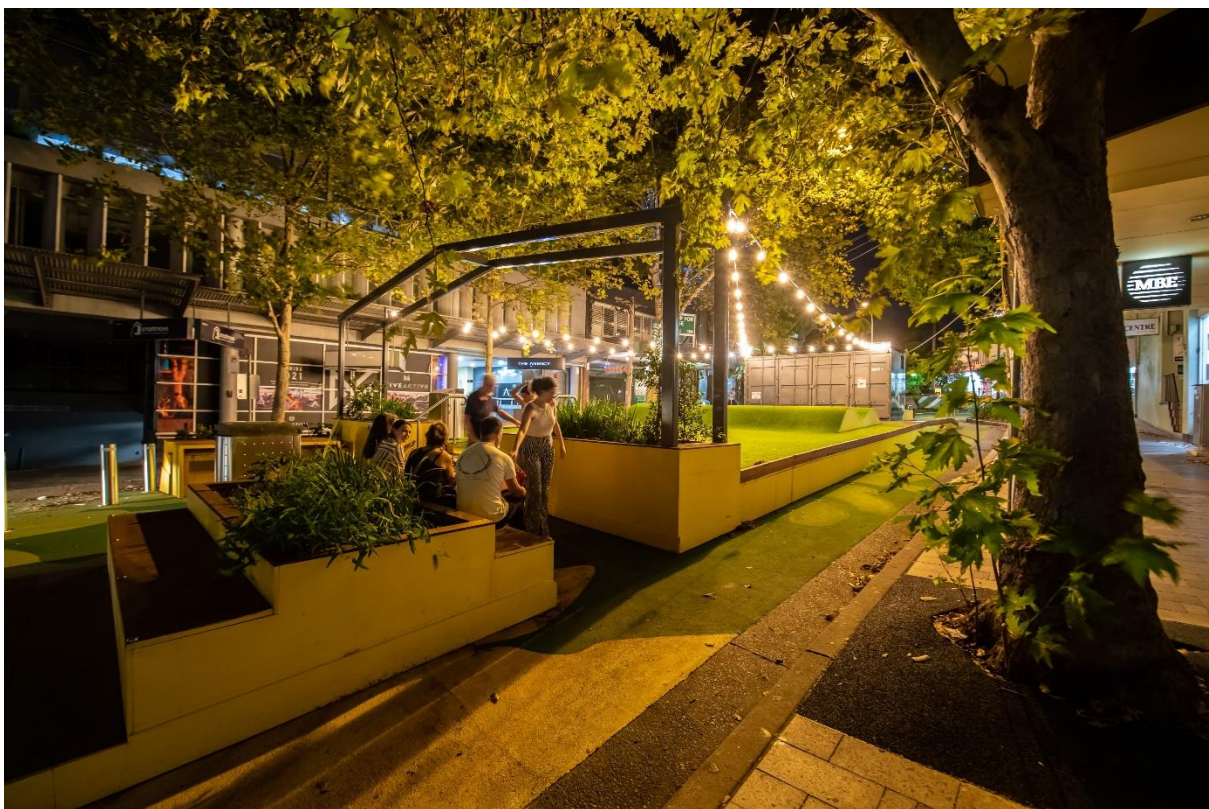


Photo 4 - Plaza at night-time 2



Photo 5 - Event Music Performance



Photo 6 - Event StoryTime with the Stanton Library

As part of the activation Council also invited interested businesses located in Young St between Military Rd and Grosvenor St to submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) to utilise and activate the Young Street Plaza Pavilion. One expression of Interest was received from Neutral Bay Newsagency and Council approved 3 months occupancy for Pop-up newsagency/beverage and food outlet including espresso bar.

On 2 November 2020, Council released the project community consultation website at Have Your Say HQ and has been welcoming community feedback via survey and email. This report also outlines the partial results of the survey and subsequent recommendations.

TRAFFIC IMPACTS

Tube counts were installed in October 2020 prior to the trial closure of Young Street, and during the trial closure, in February 2021 to gauge the changes in traffic volumes on the surrounding road network resulting from the closure. The results of the tube counts are presented in Figure 1.

As expected, there were increases in traffic volumes on Ben Boyd Road between Military Road and Grosvenor Street (+21%); on Waters Road between Grosvenor Lane and Military Road (+71%) and between Grosvenor Street and Grosvenor Lane (+27%). Grosvenor Street between Young Street and Waters Road experienced moderate increases in traffic (17%), as did Waters Road between Grosvenor Street and Belgrave Street (+8%); and Grosvenor Lane between Young Street and Waters Road (+8%).

Traffic on Grosvenor Lane between Ben Boyd Road and Young Street increased by 29% which represents an increase of approximately 363 vehicles per day, or 49 vehicles in the peak hour which equates to one additional vehicle every 73 seconds.

Intersection queuing

Four critical intersections were identified from the 2018 WSP Traffic Impact Assessment which may experience adverse impacts from increased traffic as a result of the closure of Young Street. Intersection queue surveys were conducted prior to and during the trial closure and are compared in Figures 2-5.

The results revealed slight increases in the 95th percentile queues for southbound traffic on Ben Boyd Road at Military Road in the weekday AM peak and the weekend peak. There was a significant increase in the 95th percentile queue in the weekend peak from 15 vehicles to 23 vehicles, however the average queue only increased by 3 vehicles.

There was an increase in the southbound 95th percentile queue at Ben Boyd Road/Grosvenor Lane in the AM peak and Saturday peak. This queue likely includes vehicles queuing at the Ben Boyd Road/ Military Road signals. There was no significant change to northbound queues on Ben Boyd Road at Grosvenor Lane.

There was no significant change in queues on Ben Boyd Road at Grosvenor Street, and the westbound 95th percentile queue on Grosvenor Street exiting to Ben Boyd Road increased from 10.85 vehicles to 21.7 vehicles during the weekend peak; the average increased from 3.44 to 7.25 vehicles.

There was no significant change to southbound queues on Waters Road at Military Road.

While there have been some increases to traffic on the surrounding road network the preliminary review found that these impacts are minimal and do not have an adverse impact on traffic operation.

Figure 1 Traffic count data - before and during trial closure of Young Street Plaza

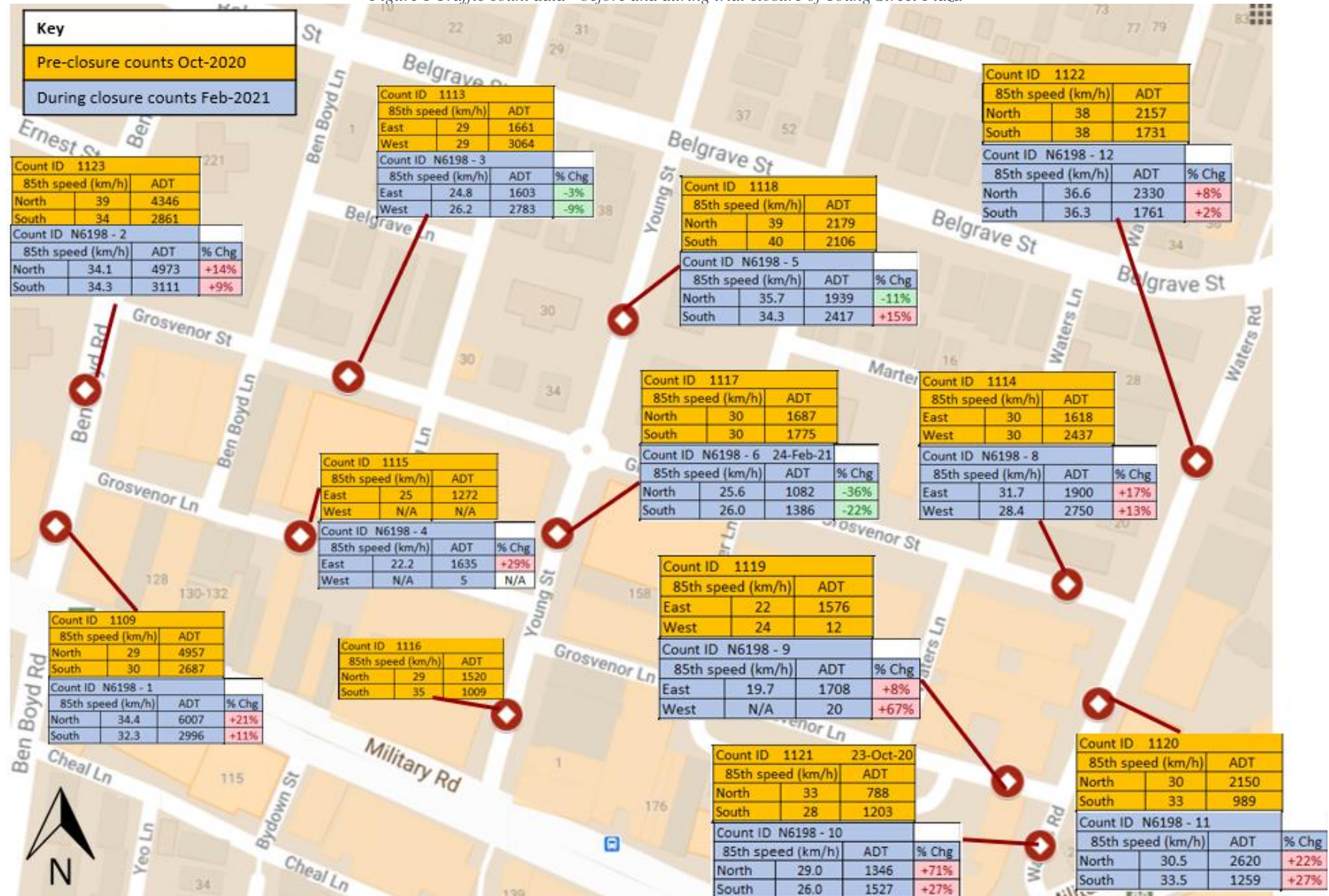


Figure 2 Site 1 - Ben Boyd Road/Military Road Intersection Queues

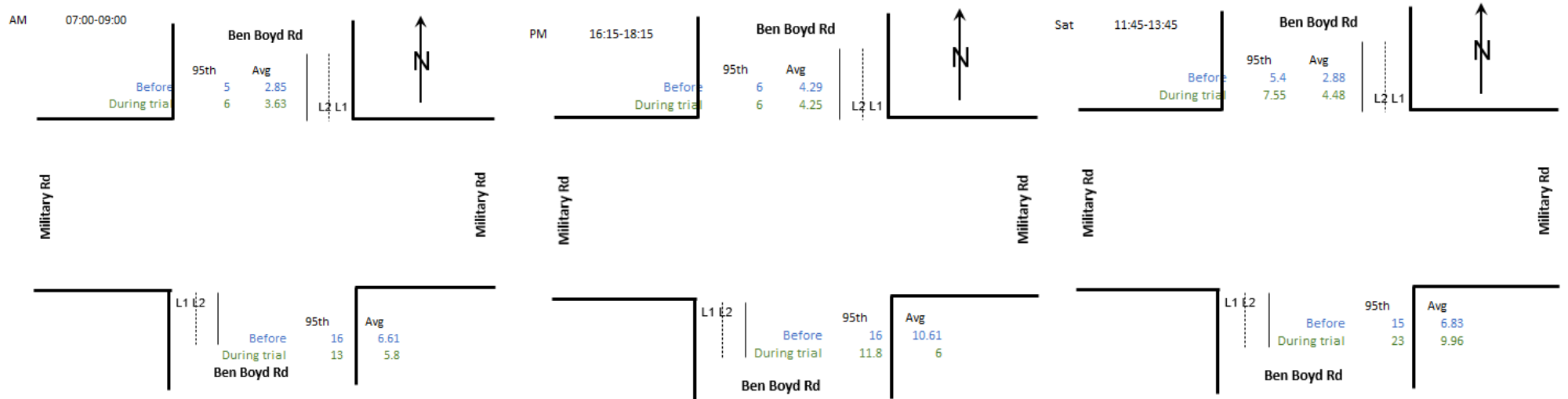


Figure 3 Site 2 - Ben Boyd Road/Grosvenor Lane Intersection Queues

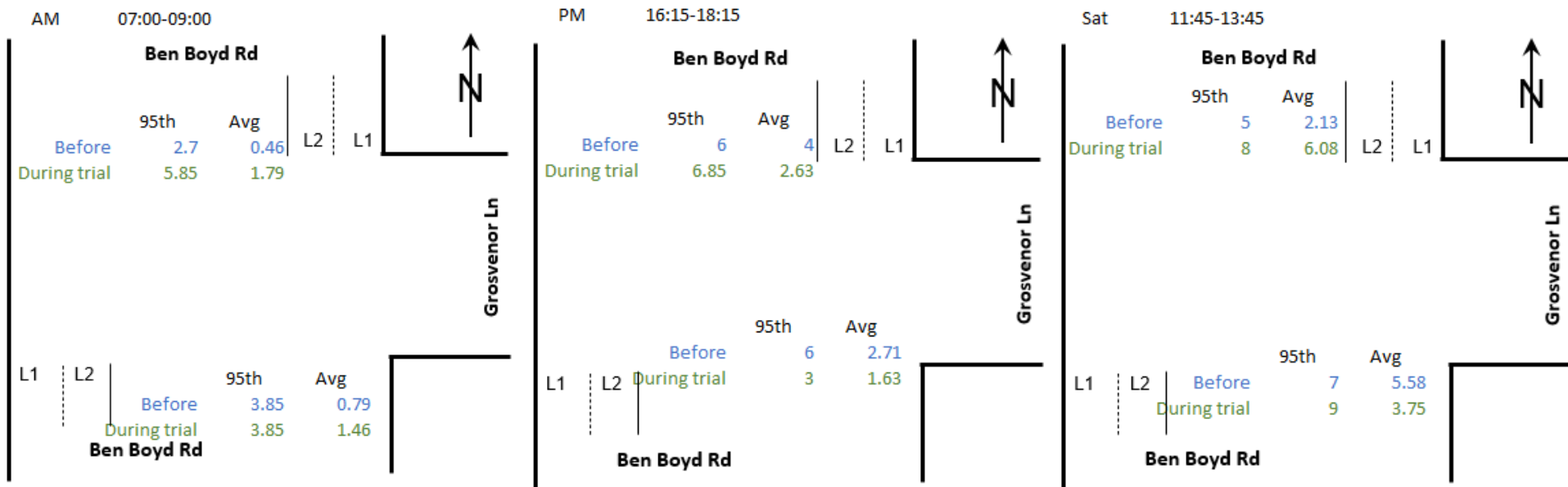


Figure 4 Site 3 - Ben Boyd Road/ Grosvenor Street Intersection Queues

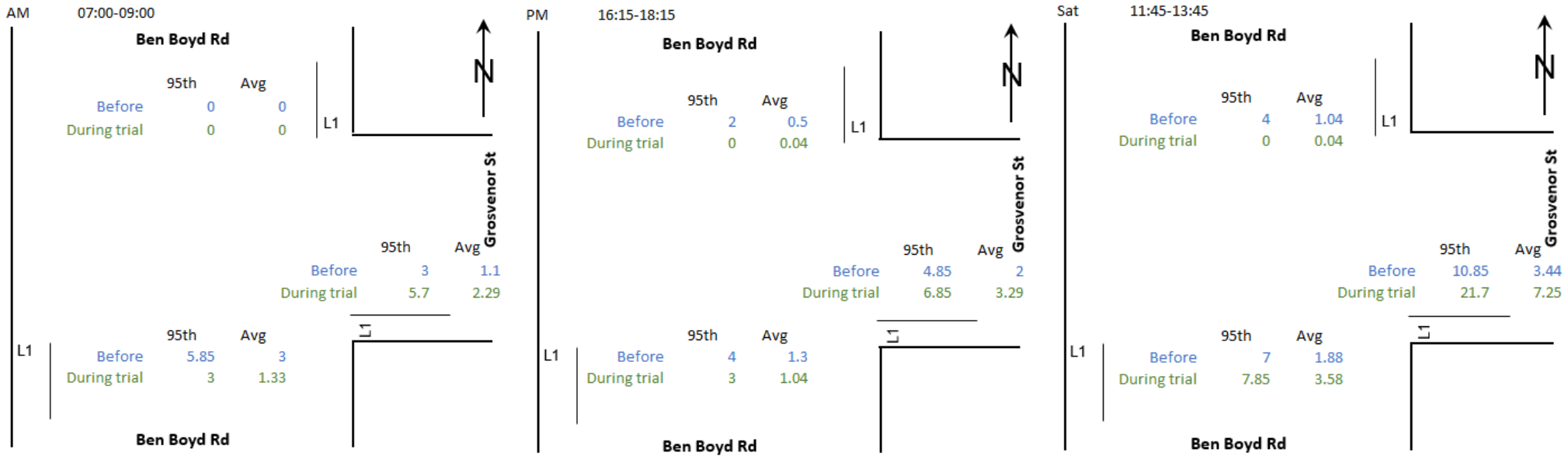
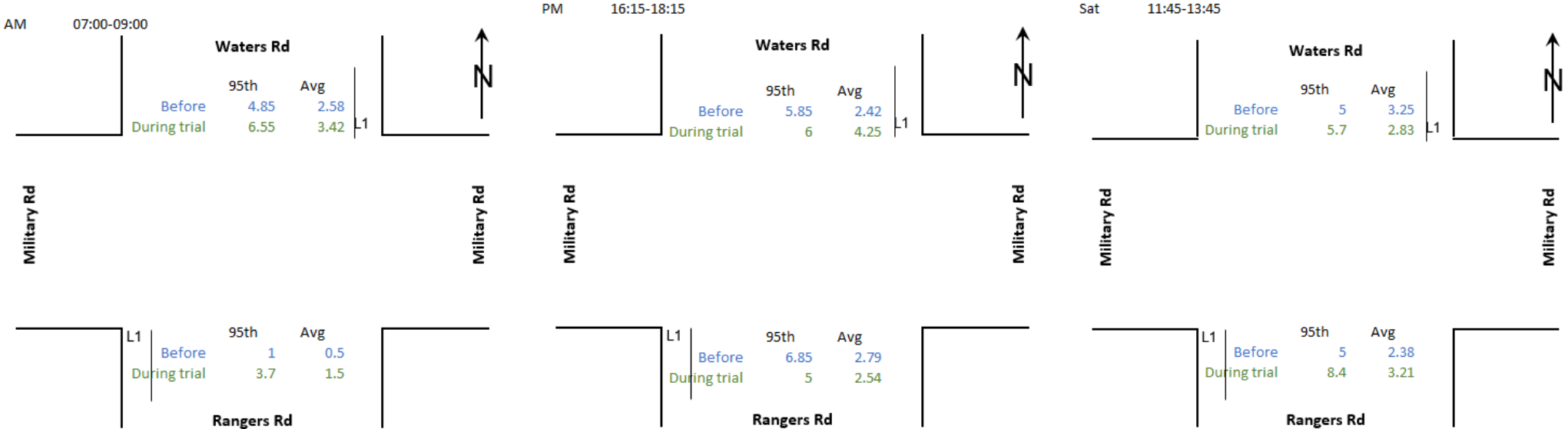


Figure 5 Site 4 - Waters Road/ Military Road Intersection Queues



PARTIAL CONSULTATION RESULTS

a. Public Exhibition:

In accordance with the Community Engagement Strategy, the public consultation began 2 November 2020 and is ongoing. To spread awareness and encourage stakeholders to have their say during trial the project is being promoted using following means:

- Letterbox drop of 4000 full colour A4 letter were distributed to all properties within Neutral Bay north of Military road and some properties south of Military Road in near proximity to the street closure. The letter notified residents and business owners about the road closure and detours and invited all receipts to look for extra information in Council's website (including link).
- Letterbox drop of 300 full colour A4 letter were distributed to all properties in near proximity to the construction works. The letter notified residents and business owners about the construction works details and invited all receipts to look for extra information in Council's website (including link).
- Memo with Notice of Road closure and Commencement of Construction works was distributed to all Councillors and active Precinct Committees.
- Council's E-newsletters including Council E-news, Precincts E-news and Business E-news.
- Published article in Mosman daily, on Thursday 29 October 2020, advising about road closure and detour options.
- Posters with QR code to project website and key dates were also installed in key thoroughfares in the plaza to promote and encourage the community to have their say during the consultation period.
- Several publications on Council's social media accounts.
- Have your say website released 2 November 2020 to allow community access to all the project information and to provide online feedback at any time, during the consultation period there has been 2,090-page views. This consultation is still on-going and survey and website is still available.

b. Submissions Analysis:

The submissions received so far were collated, analysed and summarised below. Detailed submissions summary will be provided after the consultation is closed.

In Summary:

- Council has received a total of 232 submissions. Comprising 63 written submissions and 169 online submission forms.
- Majority of submissions (58%) support the trial plaza.
- Submissions were received as follows:
 - ✓ 169 Online survey responses
 - ✓ 63 Free format submissions

c. Free format submissions summary:

The 63 written submissions, 40 submissions do not support the road closure and plaza. 23 submissions support the permanent closure of Young Street and the implementation of new permanent pedestrian plaza.

During the Neutral Bay Streetscape committee meeting held 9 February 2021, Neutral Bay Chamber of Commerce expressed support for the permanent plaza implementation and for the extension of the trial period.

Brightmore Precinct at its meeting held 10 February 2021 questioned the timing of the trial, suggesting that summer and school holidays period is not ideal time to measure the real effects and usage of the space.

d. Survey details - on-line submissions:

The online submission form includes a series of questions. The results are summarised below:

Question 1 - What did you like the most about Young Street Trial Plaza?

Respondents were to describe in few words what were the features they like the most about Young Street Trial Plaza, some of the answers below:

- ✓ *Increased village feel and less traffic*
- ✓ *Kids love it*
- ✓ *Nothing*
- ✓ *Quality of plants and designated area for a much needed plaza*
- ✓ *Finally, somewhere to sit if you grab lunch in Neutral Bay, which we regularly do when working from home. Good to be able to enjoy it outside.*
- ✓ *As a resident of upper young street (right in front of the plaza) it significantly helps the volume of traffic coming through our street and Grosvenor lane (Woolworths side) this means significantly less noise for me and not to mention a great spot to sit*
- ✓ *That the council was open to innovation and change.*
- ✓ *I don't like it at all.*
- ✓ *IT'S HIDEOUS.*
- ✓ *None, it look ugly and lost the traditional look of neutral bay*
- ✓ *I do not like anything about the Young Street Trial Plaza. I do agree that more open space is needed and important to the community but this was the wrong place to do this.*
- ✓ *It's only a trial*

Question 2 - What did you like the least about Young Street Trial Plaza?

Respondents were to describe in few words what were the features they like the least about Young Street Trial Plaza, some of the answers below:

- ✓ *interruption to traffic, lost parking spaces. non-events, no people attending events.*
- ✓ *Nothing. It was great*
- ✓ *The closure of access to Young St from Military rd means that traffic is now diverted into various suburban streets*
- ✓ *lack of car access*

- ✓ *I think the design needs a little more work but ultimately I don't dislike anything about the plaza concept*
- ✓ *No negatives*
- ✓ *I think it is hideous and cheapens the look of the area.*
- ✓ *Nothing- it is great*
- ✓ *IT BLOCKS TRAFFIC*
- ✓ *That's it's not permanent (yet!)*
- ✓ *It looks and feels like a playzone for toddlers. We have enough playgrounds.*
- ✓ *The fact it takes away scarce parking resources in the street*
- ✓ *I dont really understand the rolling hills part - seats or play area? But even that is not bother I dont care I just like seeing the green it looks lovely*
- ✓ *The coloring is not all that attractive - maybe some local street artists could make something brighter (not greens)*

Question 3 - How many times did you use the plaza?

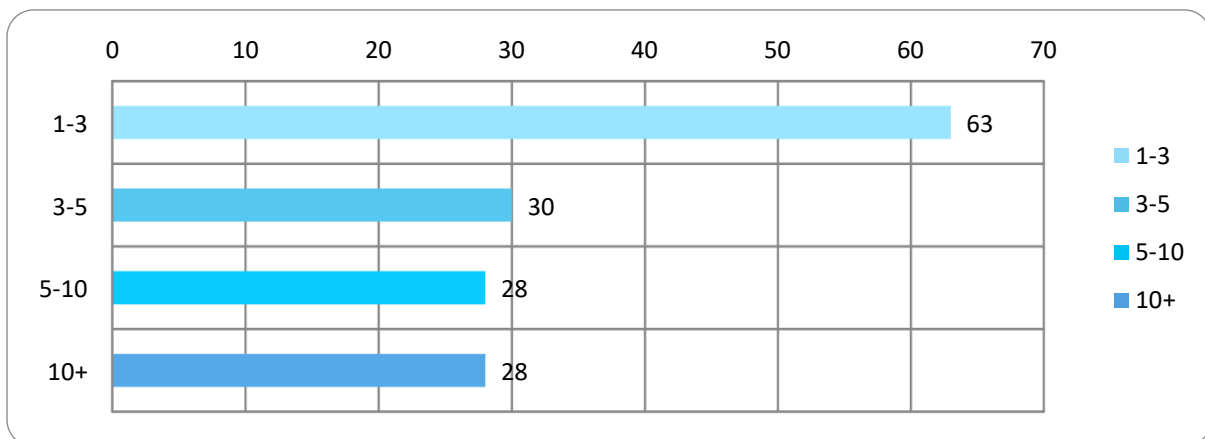


Figure 6 - Question 3 Survey Responses Graph

Figure 6 shows how many times the respondents visited the plaza, 63 respondents visited the place between 1-3 times, and 86 respondents visited more than 3 times.

Question 4 - What activities did you enjoy while visiting Young Street Trial Plaza? (tick all that apply)

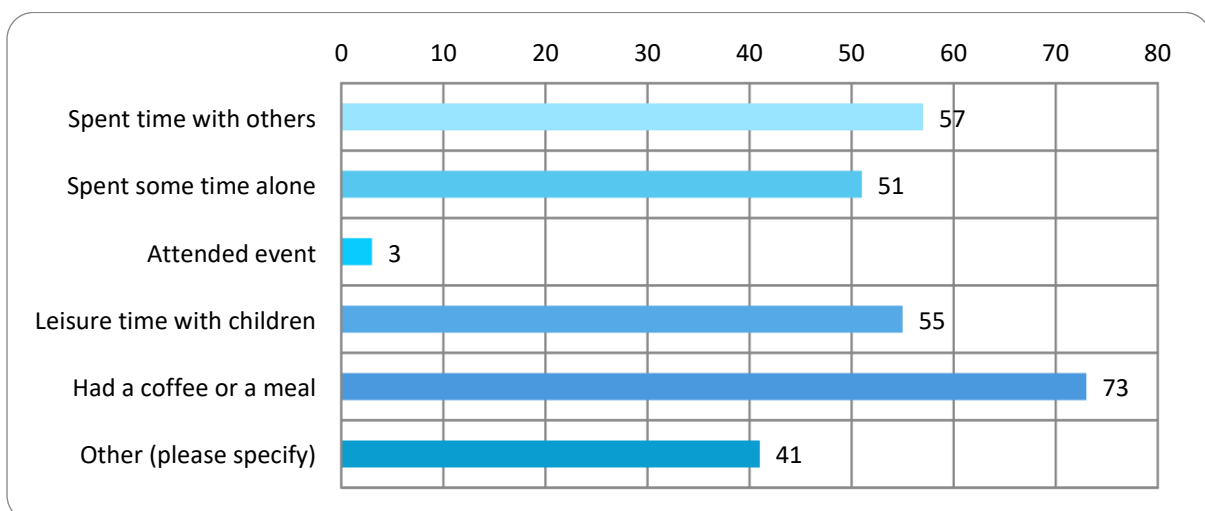


Figure 7 - Question 3 Survey Responses Graph

Figure 7 shows the different activities that the respondents did during their time of their visit. Some of the respondents that selected Other specified that they just walked and did not stay in the plaza.

Question 5 - Do you support the permanent closure and implementation of Young Street Plaza? (Final Design of permanent plaza subject to Community Consultation)

Respondents were asked to indicate a preference for this question being Support, Neither support nor oppose, Oppose. A summary of the results to this survey question is below.

1. Support – 65%
2. Neither support nor oppose – 6.5%
3. Oppose – 28.5%

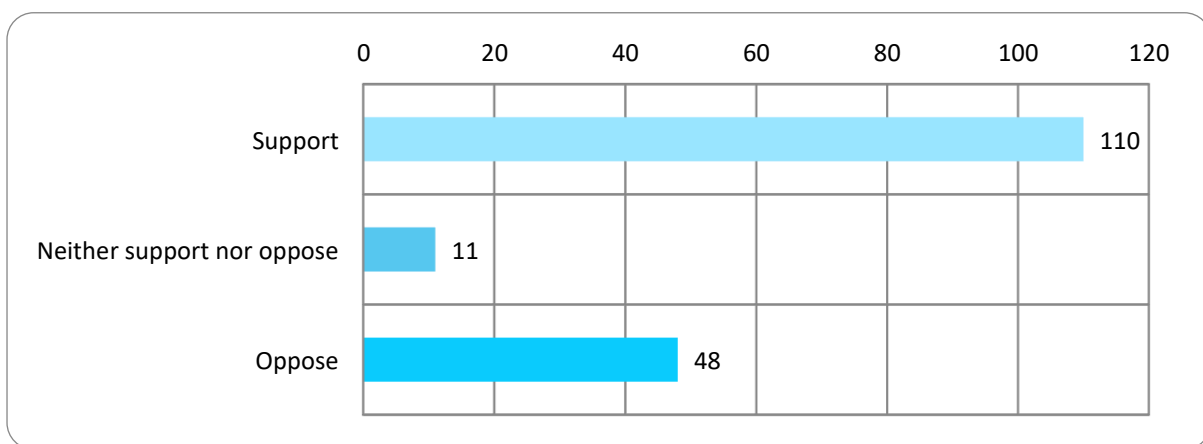


Figure 8 - Question 3 Survey Responses Graph

Figure 8 shows that the majority of the respondents perceive that the proposal has a positive impact to the area.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the partial consultation results show that there is appreciation of the temporary trial plaza and support for the implementation of the permanent plaza.

CONCLUSION

Given that there is majority support for the implementation of the permanent plaza, and that the traffic impacts during the trial to date have been minimal, it is recommended that Council extends the trial period to June 2021 to allow time for design development and full traffic impact assessment to be evaluated.

It is also recommended that the Community Consultation period is extended to 30 April 2021, to be able to collect feedback from the community about the use of the plaza in colder months.