

City Strategy Department
Penrith City Council
PO Box 60
PENRITH
NSW 2751

30th July 2021

Dear Penrith City Council,

RE: Penrith Green Grid Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Penrith Green Grid Strategy. Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group now in NSW for over forty-five years, and has over 30 affiliated local Bicycle User Groups.

Our mission is to make cycling better for everyone in NSW, and we support improvements to the pedestrian environment and advocate for new cycling routes that incorporate dedicated paths within the road environment and in green corridors, providing connections to jobs, schools and services for daily transport and recreation trips.

The Green Grid Strategy sets out **an excellent vision** for the development of important active transport connections in the Penrith area, utilising the open space networks to create a diverse, vibrant, healthy and resilient city. The Green Grid will establish blue and green biodiversity corridors, offer multiple recreational opportunities and act as a focal point for community and culture.

We have reviewed the masterplan alongside other relevant plans that relate to the Penrith and found it aligns well with the high-level ambitions outlined in:

Transport for NSW Future Transport 2056 Planⁱ, which commits to providing a regional cycle network in Greater Sydney, known as the Principle Bike Network (PBN).

Greater Sydney Region Plan, A Metropolis of Three Cities (2018) which locates Penrith in the Western Parkland City. Penrith is identified as a Metropolitan Cluster and St Marys is a Strategic Centre.

West District Plan (2018) includes Penrith and set outs how integrated land use and transport planning can help achieve the 30-minute city through increasing development density near public transit corridors. The need for better accessibility, connectivity and amenity for pedestrian and cyclists is emphasised. In addition to the major centres of Penrith and St Marys, local centres are identified at Kingswood, Cranebrook, Jordan Springs, Cambridge Gardens, Werrington, Emu Plains, South Penrith and Glenmore Park.

Sydney Green Gridⁱⁱ, developed by the NSW Government Architect in 2017 and reflected in the district and region plans, proposes an interconnecting network of open spaces that support walking and cycling. The Principal Bicycle Network will integrate the Sydney Green Grid to create important links between activity centres and support active recreation. The Penrith area is covered by the West District documents which highlight key Green Grid opportunities shown in Figure 1.

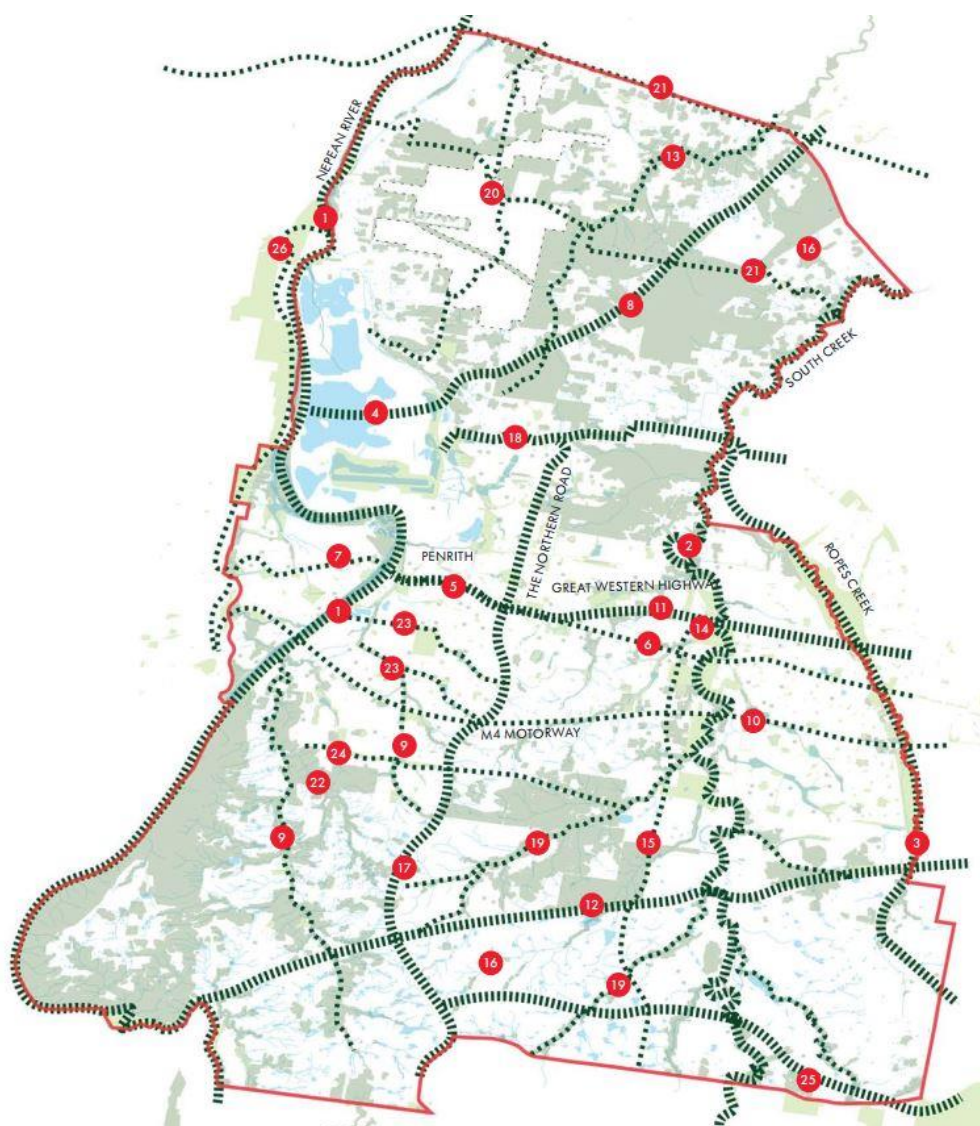


Figure 1:
Extract from the Green Grid
showing project opportunities in the
Penrith area
(Source: Tyrrell Studio / NSW
Government Architect)

Penrith Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020ⁱⁱⁱ, sets out the 20-year vision for land-use in the local area, the special character and values that are to be preserved and how change will be managed into the future. Several planning priorities are related to the delivery of a connected green grid to enhance biodiversity health, community, urban cooling and tourism.

The **walking and cycling network forms an essential key layer of the Green Grid Strategy**. A network of high quality, high-priority bike corridors across Penrith will facilitate safe and direct connections to centres in addition to supporting longer distance cycling journeys. Walking is a fundamental part of active living providing health and social benefits. Pleasant and safe environments for walking and cycling contribute to great places. Walking is also a fundamental component of the transport system and most journeys start and end with walking.

The **health** outcomes from increased cycling infrastructure are particularly important in Western Sydney, where research shows that 50% of residents are at risk of developing diabetes^{iv}. Western Sydney is described as a *diabetogenic* environment where the local economy and built environment make it difficult for the residents to engage in a healthy lifestyle. There is an urgent need to change the environment in which people live, work and play to address the social determinants of poor health in Western Sydney.

Another critical benefit of more active travel infrastructure is the mitigation of the **urban heat island** effect. Western Sydney is particularly susceptible to extreme heat events which affect residents' ability to work, study, sleep and exercise^v. We support the efforts of WSROC to increase city resilience by planning and designing to reduce urban heat and help people adapt to a hotter climate. Bicycle NSW endorses WSROC's Urban Heat Planning Toolkit.^{vi} Shifting travel mode-share to cycling and walking can help achieve low carbon cities,^{vii} but increased tree cover will be needed to provide shade and make cycling cooler. By focusing development on parks, open spaces and tree-lined shared paths rather than roads and car parks, Penrith will contribute to creating cooler cities and healthy environment for all citizens

However, as the map in Figure 2 exposes, the existing infrastructure for safe bike riding is disjointed. Many existing shared paths do not have tree coverage or space for trees, therefore contributing to urban heat and making these routes uninviting for walking and recreational purposes.

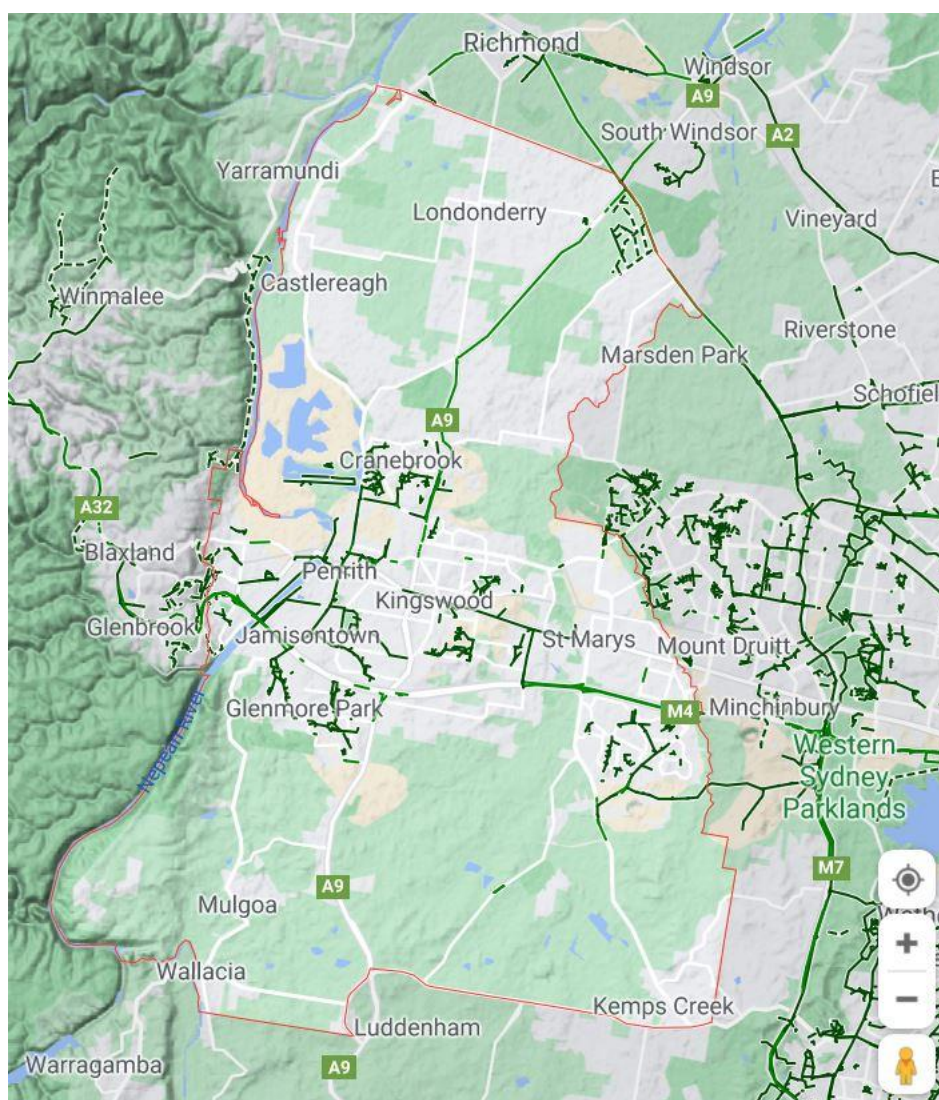


Figure 2:
The existing cycling network in Penrith.
(Source: Google Maps)

One of the three guiding policy themes at Bicycle NSW is 'Build it for Everyone'^{viii} and we advocate for safe connected infrastructure that is suitable for riders from 8 to 80 years of age to use independently. It is clear that **a sustained effort** will be required by Penrith Council and Transport for NSW to develop an adequate network of cycling routes that will allow **all** residents to consider trips by bicycle, reducing noise, pollution and congestion and increasing health and well-being.

Recommendations:

1. Deliver an active transport network as soon as possible

There has never been a better time to build for bike riding and active transport, as evidenced in the new Transport for NSW policies that require State projects to prioritize road space for active transport:

- Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy CP21001^{ix}
- Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000^x

Order of Road User Space Considerations



Figure 3:
Diagram expressing Transport for NSW's
road user priority.
(Source: Transport for NSW)

As discussed, NSW Government has committed to provide a regional cycle network in Greater Sydney, as outlined in the Future Transport 2056 Plan^{xi}. The Principle Bike Network (PBN) is being finalised by Transport for NSW and will align with the Green Grid priorities.

2. Future proof the active transport network

The status quo of walking and cycling activity in the Penrith area is likely to change rapidly. The density of walkers will increase when new housing and retail is delivered as proposed. An upswing in travel by bikes has occurred recently due to Covid, individual reactions to climate change, a surge in local delivery services and the growing popularity of e-bikes. In addition, State policies to address climate change and urban liveability will add to pressures on councils to secure a much bigger travel share for walking and cycling. It is important to future proof the cycle network by allowing for increased demand at the outset.

Another growing trend is cycling tourism. By providing waymarked touring circuits through the LGA and links to neighbouring areas such as the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury, Penrith will attract people from other parts of Sydney and expand its visitor economy.

3. Provide segregated infrastructure rather than shared paths in most locations

Our preferred infrastructure is always completely separated paths that cater for all riders of all ages and abilities. According to the best practice 'cycling segmentation' model, developed in Portland USA to identify the type and needs of existing and potential bike riders^{xii}, such cycle paths will allow 70% of local residents to consider journeys by bike (Figure 4).



Figure 4:
Four general categories of comfort levels for cycling as transportation.
Source: North Sydney Council

The provision of properly segregated infrastructure on key commuter routes with space to accommodate future demand must be a key policy position of Penrith Council. Shared paths are not suitable for areas with high pedestrian and cycling activity and will not lead to an acceptable level of amenity and safety for either walkers or riders with conflict occurring between different users. Any small increase in inconvenience to car drivers created by reducing road space for driving and parking private vehicles will incentivise the mode-shift that Transport for NSW and Penrith Council seek, benefitting local residents with quieter streets, and less pollution, noise and through-traffic.

It is important to refer to the new Cycleway Design Toolbox^{xiii} to ensure that the paths are constructed to current best practice.

4. Reduce speed limits to 30km/h on local streets with on-road cycle routes

30 km/h limit streets reduce the need for separate bicycle infrastructure on local residential roads. 30 km/h has been shown as an optimal speed limit to allow people driving and cycling to share the road safely^{xiv} and is becoming a standard speed limit in many parts of the world. All single lane roads in Spain have been under a 30km/h limit since May 2021 and 30% of UK residents live in 20mph areas^{xv}.

Lower speed limits are an important building block for Vision Zero, an approach to road safety that was launched in Sweden in 1994 with the simple premise that no loss of life is acceptable. The Vision Zero approach has been highly successful and has spread to many other countries. The key policies include prioritizing low urban speed limits, pedestrian zones, physical separation between bicycle and car traffic, data-based traffic enforcement and behaviour-change education^{xvi}.

5. Maintain a focus on the important details of the cycle network

While the draft Green Grid Strategy aspires to an excellent future network, it is the **detailed design** of cycle routes, end of trip facilities and wayfinding that will encourage the uptake of cycling and reduce dependence on private vehicles.

It is essential to ensure that popular daily destinations such as town centres, schools and stations are easy to reach by bicycle for all residents of all ages and abilities. In particular, safe connections with all education facilities along the routes must be incorporated. Cycling infrastructure needs to be safe and continuous to increase the mode share of cycling and reduce congestion associated with school journeys.

Prioritising safe cycling for short trips to centres, transport interchanges and local services such as schools and health services will free capacity for people who need to travel further by road and public transport.

Integration of the routes with train stations and bus stops is essential to ensure easy access by bike and foot. All public transport journeys start and finish with a walk or cycle. By providing high-quality, safe conditions for walking to the station, residents will be encouraged to use mass transit. If safe cycling is facilitated, the catchment for the train station increases, breaking down the first/last mile barrier which can inhibit take-up of public transport.

Parking and other end of trip facilities should be provided at journey end locations to further support riders and encourage participation. Wayfinding supports visitors to vibrant centres by clearly articulating and communicating the most efficient and safest route. Signage style for wayfinding should be consistent throughout Penrith.

Conclusion:

Bicycle NSW supports the game-changing upgrades to the active transport network outlined in the Penrith Green Grid Strategy. Now is the time to develop an inspirational vision for allocating space for active travel and integrating transport modes based on desired future outcomes. Safe infrastructure to support walking and cycling will benefit everyone in the community, reducing congestion and pollution while improving public health and providing more equitable access to employment, services and public transport.

Cycle paths offer the greatest mode-shift potential when riders are able to complete a whole journey safely. The City of Parramatta and City of Sydney have demonstrated that building safe, well-connected cycleways works to induce mode-shift to active transport.

We look forward to working with Penrith to progress the delivery of bicycle infrastructure in the area.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Bickford

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Bicycle NSW

ⁱNSW Government, Future Transport 2056 [Online 1/4/2020] <https://future.transport.nsw.gov.au/plans/future-transport-strategy/future-transport-greater-sydney>, Points 3-5

ⁱⁱ Sydney Green Grid, West District. Tyrrell Studio, 2017.

<https://www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/resources/ga/media/files/ga/plans/sydney-green-grid-plan-7-west-district-2017.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Planning for a Brighter Future, Penrith LSPS. Penrith City Council. 2020, March.

<https://ntropy.blob.core.windows.net/file-uploads/ntpyausPCC30/midwayfiles/4ac347da-d770-4968-899c-8ee7ca67e482.pdf>

^{iv} Western Sydney Diabetes. Taking the heat out of our diabetes hotspot.

https://www.westernsydneydiabetes.com.au/themes/default/basemedia/content/files/WSLHD_Diabetes_Hotspot.pdf

^v Climate Council. (2021, Jan 28). Untouchable playgrounds: urban heat and the future of Western Sydney.

<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/urban-heat-island-effect-western-sydney/>

^{vi}WSROC (2021) Urban Heat Planning Toolkit <https://wsroc.com.au/projects/project-turn-down-the-heat/turn-down-the-heat-resources-2>

vii WSROC (2021) Urban Heat Planning Toolkit <https://wsroc.com.au/projects/project-turn-down-the-heat/turn-down-the-heat-resources-2> (p16)

viii Bicycle NSW, Policy Framework. [Online as at 19/7/2021] <https://bicyclensw.org.au/our-policy/>

ix NSW Government, Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy CP21001, [Online as at 19/2/2021] www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2021/providing-for-walking-and-cycling-in-transport-projects-policy.pdf

x NSW Government, Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000, [Online as at 19/2/2021] www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2021/road-user-space-allocation-policy.pdf

xi NSW Government, Future Transport 2056 [Online 1/4/2020] <https://future.transport.nsw.gov.au/plans/future-transport-strategy/future-transport-greater-sydney>, Points 3-5

xii Roger Geller. (2009). Four types of cyclists. Portland Bureau of Transportation. <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/264746>

xiii Cycleway Design Toolbox: designing for cycling and micromobility. Transport for NSW. <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2021/Cycleway-Design-Toolbox-Web.pdf>

xiv City of Yarra - 30km/h speed limit: pre-trial final report, 2017. <https://thanksfor30.com.au/sites/default/files/2018-08/City-of-Yarra-Pre-Trial-Report-Aug-2017-FINAL%5B1%5D.pdf>

xv O'Sullivan, F. (2020, November). Why Europe is slowing down. Bloomberg CityLab. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-11-18/speed-limits-are-dropping-in-europe-and-the-u-k>

xvi Vision Zero Network. (2015, April 13). European Cities Lead the Way Toward Vision Zero. <https://visionzeronetwork.org/european-cities-lead-the-way-toward-vision-zero/>