

The M12 Motorway team
Transport for NSW
PO Box 973
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

25th November 2021

Dear Sir or Madam,

RE: M12 Motorway Place, Design and Landscape Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Place, Design and Landscape Plan (PDLP) for the M12 Motorway project. 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 NSW better for all bicycle riders'*, and we support improvements to facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. We advocate for new cycling routes that incorporate dedicated paths within both green corridors and the road environment, to provide connections to jobs, schools and services for daily transport and recreation trips. Cycling provides a healthy, congestion-reducing, quiet, low-carbon form of travel that is efficient and attractive for all ages with the correct infrastructure design.

It has been a pleasure to review the plans for the urban design and landscaping along the M12 corridor. The proposal for the shared path (SUP) is well-conceived and we congratulate Transport for NSW for showing real intent to create and strengthen green corridors as the foundation for future development of the Western Parkland City. Sydney's parks, reserves and waterways are integral to the city's lifestyle and character. Preserving and enhancing green and blue infrastructure is essential to ensure liveability as population increases.

The PDLP has an overarching vision of Connecting to Country. The integration of art, Indigenous stories and the native flora of the Cumberland Plain into the landscape and urban design of the M12 corridor has great potential to create distinctive experiences for users of the shared path.

The SUP will contribute to the Principal Bicycle Network and connect the Western Sydney International Airport with the Aerotropolis, the Western Sydney Parklands and new residential developments. High-quality active travel infrastructure will provide enormous benefit to the residents and workers attracted to the Western Parkland City over the coming decades, allowing access to school, homes and workplaces using a healthy, sustainable mode of transport. This will reduce pressure on roads, parking and public transport infrastructure and leave capacity on the networks for those needing to travel from further afield. In addition, the SUP will support transport resilience for both airport workers and travellers, who will be able to reach the terminals regardless of shock to the transport systems and the inevitable disruptions of construction.

Bicycle NSW would like to make the following recommendations for the SUP:

1. Future-proof all active transport infrastructure

The status quo of walking and cycling activity in Western Sydney is likely to change rapidly. The density of walkers will increase when new housing, educational precincts and technology parks are delivered as proposed. An upswing in travel by bikes has occurred recently due to COVID-19, 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:

- The shared paths should be wide, with a minimum width of 3m plus a 0.5m buffer to each side.
- The SUP corridor must allow for future separation of cyclists from pedestrians
- The rest areas should be spacious with plenty of seating and additional bike racks.

Providing significant extra space for active travel could be achieved by very small changes to the enormous area of asphalt dedicated to vehicles. NSW Government has recently published two important policies to support the delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure:

- Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000ⁱ establishes a road user hierarchy that considers pedestrians first and private cars last.
- Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy CP21001ⁱⁱ requires every transport project funded by Transport for NSW to include provision for walking and cycling, which must be delivered from the outset of the project. The policy applies to anyone planning, designing, delivering, building or managing a transport project or asset for, or on behalf of, Transport for NSW.

Final detailed design for the M12 project must be undertaken with these policies in mind. Multiple environmental and health benefits will flow from increased walking, cycling and public transport use. Mobility will be more equitable for Sydney-siders of all ages, incomes and abilities.

2. Create connections to the regional cycling network from the outset

It is essential that the SUP forms a central role in the regional network, contributing to the Sydney's Green Grid and the Principal Bicycle Network. Careful design and consultation work is required at all intersections to maximise possible future links to the wider network. Bicycle NSW will support this work, and looks forward to regular stakeholder engagement in the future. The project offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity for significant mode shift and behaviour change, and its influence must reach far into the Western Parkland City.

3. Ensure that cycle infrastructure is inclusive

The cycling infrastructure should accommodate all types of bikes, including cargo bikes and tricycles. Again, the width of the paths is critical and it is important to consider turning radii, dropped kerbs, ramps and the design of modal filters to ensure that non-standard bikes not excluded from the SUP. Cargo bikes will increasingly be used for deliveries and have huge potential to play a key role in a sustainable transport system. Non-standard bikes such as hand-cycles, recumbents and wheelchair bikes offer disabled people independent mobility but are a rare sight due to barriers caused by poor urban design. Any measures enabling cycling by disabled people will support a growth in cycling by novice cyclists, children and older people, and improve conditions for those using mobility scootersⁱⁱⁱ.

4. Maximise tree canopy cover over the shared paths

It is well-documented that climate change is causing an increase in the number of days above 35 degrees Celsius in Western Sydney. A dense tree canopy over the SUP will help ensure that the facility is comfortable to use in the warmer months, allowing opportunities for exercise and mitigating the health impacts of inactivity, such as diabetes and heart disease. Of course, it is essential to select the correct trees for the climate, soil and topography. Excellent research into heat resilient trees is underway at Western Sydney University through the Which Plant Where? project. We suggest that Transport for NSW keeps a close eye on this research and incorporates the recommendations into the detailed landscape design plans for the M12 corridor.

5. Mitigate construction impacts and maintain access to safe active travel

It is essential to maintain safe walking and cycling along the M12 corridor during future construction work. The SUP will quickly become an important part of many journeys and removing it from the network, even temporarily, would be a backward step for the mode shift to cycling. Please refer to Austroads Guide to Temporary Traffic Management^{iv} and adhere to the principles of coherence, equivalence, directness and safety during construction. Bicycle NSW asks to be kept informed of all diversions and given the opportunity to provide feedback on behalf of our members.

6. Don't lose sight of the all-important details.

Great paving, high-quality material, mature landscaping, attractive street furniture, drinking fountains, signage and bike racks all need to be considered carefully to ensure a place is created where people will want to linger.

- Paint treatments, when applied to the surface of shared paths, must meet friction standards to prevent crashes
- Provide identifying codes at regular intervals on balustrades or walls to enable emergency services staff to find people if they have a medical incident. This has been done very successfully on the M7 cycleway.
- Lighting and signage should not clutter the paths.

The urban design proposals in the PDLP are admirable but only dedicated effort from all members of the project team will ensure the final outcome meets the vision sold to the community. The cheap fencing and dismal landscaping at St Peters Interchange are a salient lesson in what can go wrong.

The SUP, if delivered as promised, will be a fantastic addition to Sydney's slowly-developing cycle network. There is a huge appetite for public and active mobility and if the correct infrastructure is provided, many people will happily drive less, benefiting the entire community with less pollution and congestion.

We look forward to working with Transport for NSW to develop active travel infrastructure that connects every corner of the Western Parkland City.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Bickford

Bike Planner
Bicycle NSW

ⁱ 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

ⁱⁱ NSW Government, Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy CP21001, <https://s23705.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/providing-for-walking-and-cycling-in-transport-projects-policy.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Wheel for Wellbeing. 2020. A Guide to inclusive cycling. https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FC_WfW-Inclusive-Guide_FINAL_V03.pdf

^{iv} Austroads Guide to Temporary Traffic Management (2019) [Online 1/4/2020] <https://austroads.com.au/publications/temporary-traffic-management/agtmm-set>