

Sarah and Odette
Transport for NSW
futuretransport@transport.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sarah and Odette,

RE: Future Transport 2056 Strategy Review

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the review being undertaken of the Future Transport 2056 Strategy¹. 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.

Bicycle NSW has provided direct responses to the seven topic areas focused on under the review:

- Freight,
- Funding our future networks and operations,
- How we travel,
- Parking in cities,
- Resilient transport,
- Sustainable infrastructure, and
- Sustainable transport.

Review process

However, for the review to be effective it must evaluate performance against the aims and objective set by the strategy. Under the strategy six key principles were identified:

- Customer focused,
- Successful places,
- A strong economy,
- Safety and performance,
- Accessible services, and
- Sustainability.

Bicycle NSW recommends: this review clearly evaluate what has happened to date against these principles, set delivery targets and measure against them annually.

Original expectations vs reality

The original strategy also set goals under ‘Customer Outcome 3: Ensure walking or cycling is the most convenient option for short trips around centres and local areas...’

These included:

“...to make walking or cycling the transport choice for quick trips under two kilometres and grow the share of cycling for trips up to 10 kilometres to support access to centres and public transport [by] working with stakeholders to:

- Provide attractive spaces for people to walk or cycle and to sit and take a break
- Enable efficient and reliable journey times by prioritising pedestrian or cycling movement on certain corridors...

- Keep pedestrians and cyclists safe by implementing critical safety measures and ensuring speed limits are aligned to the road environment (e.g. Lower in centres where there is high pedestrian activity) consistent with the Movement and Place Framework
- Invest in the Principal Bicycle Network and improve cycling access within ten kilometres of Metropolitan City Centres or Clusters and five kilometres of Strategic Centres.”ⁱⁱ

As part of the stakeholder presentation for Future Transport 2056 Bicycle NSW Transport for NSW acknowledged that:

“More than 11 million weekday car trips in Greater Sydney are less than 10km. Two in five bus trips are less than 5km in length. These short trips contribute to congestion... Lack of access to safe cycling paths is currently a barrier for the 70 per cent of customers who tell us they would like to cycle more for short trips and would do so if they felt safer and more confident.”

Bicycle NSW was told as part of a presentation on the original planⁱⁱⁱ that:

“Connected cycling networks surrounding 10kms of Metropolitan City Centres and 5kms of Strategic Centres will improve the access to cycling for short trips. Many of these connections will also form part of the Principal Bicycle Network, allowing cycling customers to travel between centres across Greater Sydney... This will result in healthier lifestyles, improve the liveability and sustainability of the city and improve access to public transport... Customers will be able to ride to school, work, and access public transport on a connected cycling network which is easy to use, safe, legible and connected. This network will form part of Greater Sydney’s Green Grid - connecting open spaces with centres and residential areas.”

Bicycle NSW agreed, and has acted to support and advocate for these infrastructure and network plans. We have recently been informed that there is no longer a commitment to deliver the Principal Bicycle Network. We fail to see how Future Transport 2056 can operate to reduce congestion on the roads and public transport networks without delivering safe cycling infrastructure as a matter of urgency.

More recent documentation^{iv} has said the strategy will deliver a:

“...connected metropolitan bicycle network, which will provide a safe, connected cycling network and grow the cycling mode share in the Greater Sydney area from 1 per cent in 2016 to 5 per cent in 2056. This network is also a step towards creating around 6,000 kilometres of cycling routes across Greater Sydney, Newcastle, Gosford and Wollongong, with a mix of cycleway types appropriate to the location, including protected cycleways, shared paths, and bicycle boulevards (low-speed, local-traffic only local streets that prioritise bicycle access).”

Whilst mode shift targets are important, taking 40 years to shift from 1% to 5% lacks ambition, especially when compared with the actual increase in bike riding reflected in the National Walking and Cycling Participation Survey^v. This showed that national weekly participation increased from 13.8% in 2019 to 18.2% in 2021. In the NSW sub-set of this report^{vi} weekly bike riding rose by 2.5% in two years, with Sydney participation numbers rising 8%. Worse still, long delays in mode-shift reduce the benefits to everyone of reducing congestion, pollution and health costs. Bicycle NSW recommends bringing forward the 5% mode shift target to 2024 and aiming for 10% by 2030.

The previous strategy listed the following:

“Committed initiatives:

- Western City - Priority Cycleway links connecting Liverpool, Blacktown and Penrith, including the Nepean River Green Bridge
- Central City - Priority Cycleway links to Greater Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park including through Carlingford and Parramatta North
- Eastern City - Priority Cycleway links near the Harbour CBD including the Inner West Greenway and Sydney Harbour Bridge cycleway connections
- Council partnership program to improve local walking and cycling connections.”

Some parts of these initiatives have been delivered, and the pop-up cycleways were not planned for but have been built, and many will become part of ordinary cycling infrastructure. A commitment to an initiative with a 40 year timeline risks being delayed indefinitely or undermined as we have seen with the Double Bay to Rose Bay or Rose Bay to Bondi cycleways, planned and funded pop-ups for Bayside Council, Manly and North Sydney, or the Sydney Harbour Bridge cycleway connections that have been delayed for generations.

Another lesson learned from the pop-ups is that when you prioritise and deliver safe cycling infrastructure it is well used, and transforms travel behaviour. Planning and completing infrastructure at scale, rather than in fragments, also allows for economies of scale and improved budget efficiency for taxpayers.

Bicycle NSW recommends: renewing the commitment to deliver the Principle Bike Network, connected cycling networks surrounding 10kms of Metropolitan City Centres and 5kms of Strategic Centres, to delivery within the next 10 years and to transparent annual reporting on cycleway completion and usage data.

Changing funding models to improve delivery

Bicycle NSW agrees with and supports the priorities of the walking and cycling program^{vii}, but in order to apply for funding under the current process Councils need to submit 'shovel ready' projects. The process of preparing plans for a funding bid can often absorb most, if not all, of the active transport budget for smaller or regional Councils. If their bid fails, that leaves no funds for the year to actually build anything, and this acts as a deterrent to future applications by that Council. Piecemeal funding processes also mean that Councils cannot procure at the best prices or achieve economies of scale.

Bicycle NSW recommends: reviewing this process to reduce uncertainty and improve efficiency in the funding of future bike infrastructure.

Law, regulation and policy

The NSW Government has excellent law policy, regulation and guidelines that should function to keep bike riders safe and provide high quality infrastructure for their use. Bicycle NSW has curated these on our website, and has provided visual examples to help people understand^{viii}. Bicycle NSW has worked consistently over the last three years to try to ensure people designing and building in the road related environment follow them uphold the government's Safe Systems Approach that underpins Road Safety in NSW.

We have had considerable difficulty getting any of these followed on State projects, in spite of submissions, detailed work and advocacy we have undertaken with Transport for NSW and its contractors. This year we were informed by the Director of Walking and Cycling that once a project is underway it cannot be changed. The difficulty is that, whilst major projects are obliged to consult with Bicycle NSW, they do not have to produce walking and cycling plans until a year after commencement. This undermines the effectiveness of consultation, as the sequence means we cannot provide meaningful advice at the correct time, to ensure issues are rectified and hazards avoided.

Bicycle NSW recommends: altering project sequencing to enable walking and cycling plans to be developed at a stage that allows for the provision of advice such that it can be followed to support the policies, laws, guidelines of the NSW Government.

Cost

Bicycle NSW appreciates the financial challenge that building a connected network of bicycle infrastructure represents, especially in situations where the State funds infrastructure construction but this becomes a Council asset unable to be depreciated or tolled like a motorway. As part of the work we undertook with the government on plans for the Principle Bike network back in 2018, we were informed a full costing model would be developed, and that this could then be used in order to determine the savings to the Government in terms of health and congestion, should the network be built.

We applaud the commitment of this government to a low carbon economy, as articulated by the Hon. Matt Keane MP, Treasurer and Minister for Energy and the Environment. Given the potential of cycling to contribute to de-carbonising NSW Transport, and the current ability to count cycling trips on established infrastructure, could a safe cycling network be 'priced' as a carbon reducing asset?

Bicycle NSW recommends: developing a costed infrastructure plan for bike riding, and also a model of the carbon pollution and health costs saved per kilometre ridden, in order to understand the returns on investing in bike riding infrastructure.

Yours faithfully,
 Bastien Wallace – BA LLB
 General Manager of Public Affairs
 Bicycle NSW

ⁱ NSW Government, Future Transport 2056 [Online 3/11/2021] <https://future.transport.nsw.gov.au/>

ⁱⁱ NSW Government, Future Transport 2056 Cycling Stakeholders Presentation 10 minutes

ⁱⁱⁱ NSW Government, Future Transport 2056 Cycling Stakeholders Presentation 10 minutes

^{iv} NSW Government, Future Transport 2056 [Online 3/11/2021] <https://future.transport.nsw.gov.au/future-transport-strategy/future-network>

^v Cycling and Walking Australia and New Zealand, National Walking and Cycling Participation Survey 2021, [Online as at 4/11/2021] https://www.cwanz.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/NWCPS_2021_report_v2.0.pdf

^{vi} Cycling and Walking Australia and New Zealand, National Walking and Cycling Participation Survey 2021 New South Wales, [Online as at 4/11/2021] <https://www.cwanz.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/NWCPS-NSW-2021-v2.0.pdf>

^{vii} Transport for NSW, Walking & Cycling Program [online as at 4/11/2021]

<https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/programs/walking-and-cycling-program>

^{viii} Bicycle NSW [Online as at 4/11/2021] <https://bicyclensw.org.au/rays-corner/>