

projects@transport.nsw.gov.au

13th December, 2021

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: Active Transport Link - Sutherland Shire

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Active Transport Link – Sutherland Shire. 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.

Opportunities

This project provides a once in a generation chance to deliver bike riding infrastructure that the local community has wanted for many years, and that was part of 2019 election promises. It provides an opportunity to deliver against the State Government’s:

- Future Transport 2056 Planⁱ including the Principal Bicycle Network
- Disability Inclusion Planⁱⁱ
- Older Persons Transport and Mobility Plan 2018-2022ⁱⁱⁱ

The plan as originally conceived, aligned to the rail corridor, would have provided a ‘spine’ for bike riders in the Sutherland Shire, enabling the Council to then develop a network of supporting local connections, delivering the Principal Bicycle Network in their LGA.

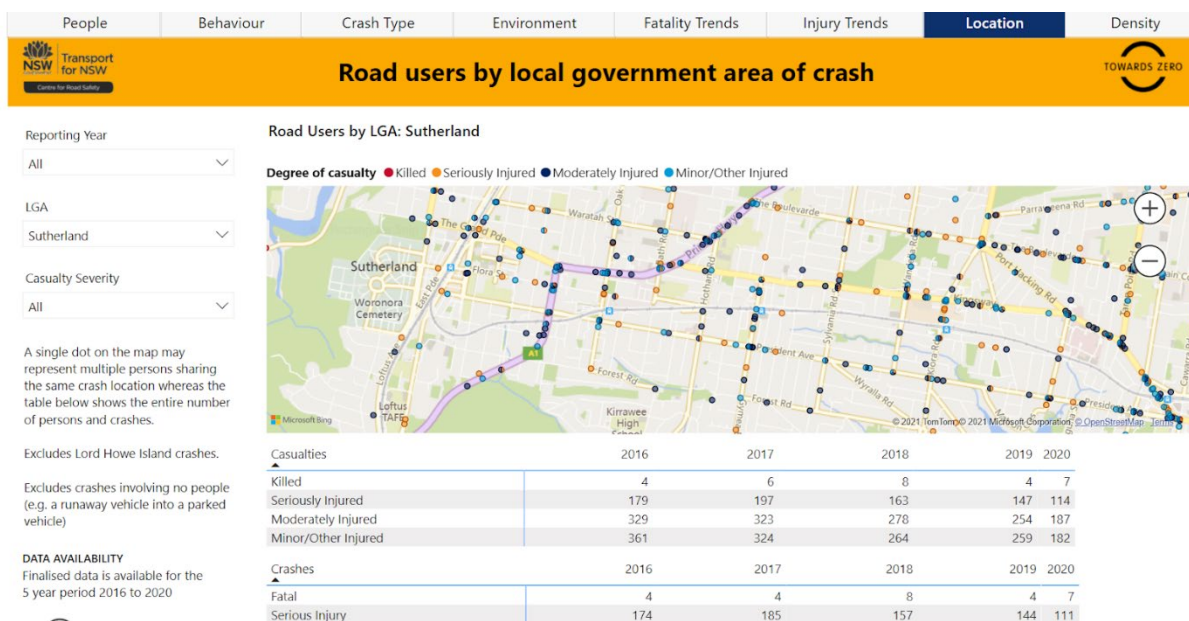


Sutherland Shire Bicycle Network Map^{iv}

We understand that a strong level of community need and engagement led to a Ministerial commitment in 2015 to deliver over half of the project in the rail corridor.^v It is evident from the fact the revised plan received 400 responses, that there is a strong community interest although only 11% supported the revised alignment outside the rail corridor. It is rare that communities engage so strongly on active transport, but so far, a community petition has garnered 578 signatures in support of returning the route to the rail corridor. There is an opportunity to develop bike and active transport infrastructure that is wanted by the community, much needed and that supports the plans and infrastructure of Council.

Issues

Safety: The most pressing issue that respondents and the Sutherland Council have identified is safety. Of the 400 responses to the recent consultation, 54% raised safety concerns over the Transport for NSW 'preferred option' and only 11% supported it. Assurances that safety will be a priority do not properly account for the need of vehicles entering and leaving the Kingsway will do so at speed. This is highly likely to result in crashes and Transport for NSW mapped data makes it abundantly clear which roads are the most hazardous



Transport for NSW casualty data^{vi}

It is also highly likely that owners of driveways will strongly object to being made to give-way to bike riders, and that drivers will be reluctant to give way at side streets, especially once traffic banks up and driver frustration levels rise. A dual direction cycleway poses the risk to riders that car drivers will not look for them in the direction that is contraflow to the driving alignment. Rather than use the 'personal safety' of women as an excuse for dismissing genuine community concerns over fatal crashes, we recommend completing and making public an independent safety evaluation of the in and out of rail corridor option.

Connectivity: One of the arguments for the Transport for NSW 'preferred option' is that it will provide more direct connections to key destinations including schools and higher education centres, town centres, hospitals, employment centres, commercial and retail precincts, and parks and recreational facilities. However, this appears to forget that people can still connect to these destinations by footpath, which school children up to the age of 16 can cycle on as well if needed.

Sutherland Council's existing and proposed cycling network would provide safe connections between these destinations and the 'spine' aligned within the rail corridor, and appears to provide better, safer connectivity for bike riders. The planned Council network would also enable users of the railway alignment to enter and leave in order to access local destinations, whilst also enabling more riders to travel safely for longer journeys that would help reduce car dependence and rail congestion. Finally, the Transport for NSW 'preferred option' also does not go all the way to Cronulla, something the community have identified as an issue.

Parking and driveways: Under the Transport for NSW 'preferred option' the community and businesses will lose parking and are already objecting to this and the crossing of driveways by this route. Local businesses will resent bike riders crossing their driveways and will campaign against parking loss. In other LGAs, Bicycle NSW has seen these issues and objections result in lengthy delays, court cases and even the cancellation of projects. By contrast, the rail corridor alignment has no impact on parking or driveways, and was strongly supported by the community.

Amenity: The information booklet claims customers will have a more enjoyable journey along 'leafy suburban streets', but appears to forget that riding adjacent to high speed, 6 lane roadways is noisy, stressful and far from enjoyable. The community and Sutherland Council have a deep understanding of local needs and conditions, and the feedback provided to date provides clear guidance on what is needed to persuade people to cycle in the currently car-dominated LGA. The unfortunate impact of building the Transport for NSW 'preferred alignment' is that it will be poorly used and add fuel to the anti-cyclist lobby's arguments that bike riding infrastructure is a wasted investment.

Unfortunately, the Transport for NSW 'preferred alignment' will not deliver the path widths or space required to accommodate a population increase of around 41,000 people over the next 20 years.^{vii} Instead providing a cycleway along the railway alignment, separated from pedestrians, and upgrading local pedestrian infrastructure, offers a more 'future-proof' treatment for the planned population increases. Separating bike riders from pedestrians provides better amenity for people walking, and better conforms with Transport for NSW Policy.^{viii}

Cost: In documentation and our meetings related to this project it has been suggested that the cost of building the cycleway in the rail corridor is the real reason for the Transport for NSW 'preferred alignment'. However, a cost argument is not persuasive without transparency. Bicycle NSW recommends making transparent the actual costs of construction in the rail corridor, with a breakdown of key line items. This may enable solutions to be found to deliver the project in the way the community supports, or it will provide a clear rationale for refusing to do so. Failing to provide a transparent business case will only contribute to community mistrust and objections in the face of a broken election promise.

The Active Transport Link for the Sutherland Shire is a project that had great potential for bike riders and the community. Unfortunately the current iteration risks creating infrastructure that is dangerous, falls well short of Transport for NSW Policy standards, fails to connect properly with Sutherland Council's network plan and the Principal Bicycle Network. Bicycle NSW urges Transport for NSW to reconsider the design and return it to the rail corridor alignment favoured by the community and Sutherland Council.

Yours faithfully,
Bastien Wallace – BA LLB
General Manager of Public Affairs
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 NSW Government, Disability Inclusion Plan (2015) [Online 1/4/2020] <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=313495>

ⁱⁱⁱNSW Government, Older Persons Transport and Mobility Plan 2018-2022 (2018) [Online 1/4/2020] https://future.transport.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/media/documents/2018/Older%20Persons%20Transport%20and%20Mobility%20Plan_0.pdf

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- iv Sutherland Council, Sutherland Shire Bicycle Network Map [Online as at 8/12/2021]
http://www.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/website/document-library/land-use-and-planning/planning/draftdcp15_bicyclenetwork_v2.pdf
- v Murray Trembath, Sutherland to Cronulla cycle-walk link: more than half will be in rail corridor, The Leader, 2/6/2015 [online as at 8/12/2021] <https://www.theleader.com.au/story/3118871/sutherland-to-cronulla-cycle-walk-link-more-than-half-will-be-in-rail-corridor/?fbclid=IwAR0Zyon5nYgJd8CF4KvAyXJ6YMnDIFtRWYu2ZHAnKC6-Zuc4MVNwMYoDQSA>
- vi <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/statistics/interactivecrashstats/nsw.html?r=eyJrIjojN2FhNGI3NTgtMmJhMC00MmUwLTlmZDgtYWU1MDA4YWJmM2VlIiwidCI6ImNiMzU2NzgyLWFkOWEtNDdmYi04NzhiLTdlYmNlYjg1Yjg2YyJ9&pageName=ReportSection0f272d127961b9e4d07e>
- vii Sutherland Shire Council 2019 population projections [Online as at 13/12/2021]
<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/-/media/Files/DPE/Factsheets-and-faqs/Research-and-demography/Population-projections/2019-Sutherland.pdf>
- viii Road User Space Allocation Policy
<https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2021/road-user-space-allocation-policy.pdf>
Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy
<https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2021/providing-for-walking-and-cycling-in-transport-projects-policy.pdf>