

Central West and Orana Transport Plan team
Transport for NSW
PO Box 334
Parkes NSW 2870

28th March 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

RE: Draft Central West and Orana Transport Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Central West and Orana Transport Plan.

Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group 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 provide connections to jobs, schools and services for daily transport and recreation trips. Bike riding provides a healthy, congestion-reducing, low-carbon form of travel that is quiet, efficient and attractive for all ages with the correct infrastructure design.

This submission complements our recent feedback on the [draft Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041](#). The Transport Plan and Regional Plan are closely aligned and aim to deliver initiatives that will benefit the Central West and Orana region into the future. The Transport Plan also responds to the devastating droughts of 2017-2019, wake-up call of the IPCC report of 2021 and the need to support the State's target of achieving a net zero economy by 2050, seeking to develop a low-emission and resilient transport sector.

Opportunities:

The Central West and Orana lies at the heart of NSW. The significant infrastructure investments proposed in the draft Transport Plan have the scale and scope to considerably change the way people and goods move both within and beyond the region.

The key goals for 2041:

- Nearly one in every five trips (18%) will be made by walking, cycling or public transport across the region – a doubling of mode share
- A higher proportion of the region's population will have access to day return services to their nearest regionally significant centre
- Improved multi-modal connectivity between the region, Greater Sydney, Newcastle and Canberra
- Crash rates are reduced in-line with the 'Towards Zero' goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries on the roads by 2056
- Increased access for High Productivity Vehicles (HPVs) across the region to support the principle of 'moving more with less'
- Greater use of technology to support safer, more efficient and accessible transport network

The Plan aspires to adopt an **excellent ‘vision and validate’ approach to transport planning**. Current travel patterns are not sustainable and should not dictate future need. It is recognised that travel behaviours can and will change over time, and this change needs to happen to achieve the transport vision. Critically, the high dependence on private cars, which account for 91% of ‘journey to work’ⁱ trips, must be challenged.

Bicycle NSW is delighted that the headline ambition for the draft Transport Plan is *“to make walking, cycling and public transport an attractive alternative to the private vehicle for more people, more often across the Central West and Orana regardless of age, ability and income”* (stated in Part 1.1).

There has never been a better time to build for active transport, as evidenced in two very significant new Transport for NSW policies that require State projects to prioritise road space for walking and cycling:

- Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000ⁱⁱ establishes a road user hierarchy that considers pedestrians first and private cars last.
- Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy CP21001ⁱⁱⁱ 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.

As the new Minister for Infrastructure, Cities and Active Transport, Rob Stokes MP, set out in a recent speech^{iv}, active travel projects that stitch the suburbs together and enable people of all ages and abilities to get around without a car can be more sustainable than megaprojects. He stressed that the NSW Government will focus on completing missing links in the active transport network. Such smaller projects have big benefits, and not only for reducing pollution and congestion. Active mobility improves public health, activates high streets, helps build social connections and addresses inequality.

Bicycle infrastructure has a low cost per km, offering better value than road projects and supporting Councils’ financial sustainability. Over 100km of bike paths can be delivered for the cost of 1km of new road^v. Studies have shown that 70% of people in NSW either ride a bike now or would start to ride if safe infrastructure was provided^{vi}.

The urban design strategies developed for regional NSW by Government Architect NSW^{vii}, acknowledge that private cars are likely to remain a dominant form of transport in regional areas. However, enabling active transport in town and village centres through good urban design and integrated land use planning will reduce congestion, noise and car parking pressures. Pedestrian and bike riding infrastructure developed through the lens of the Movement and Place Framework will create more space for trees and landscaping, slow traffic and allow a more compact urban form.

High-quality shared paths through towns and villages will reduce dependency on private cars. In a region where 7% of households have no access to a car and many struggle to afford one, transport poverty is a serious issue. 26% of households have a weekly income below \$650, more than the NSW average of 19%^{viii}, and inequality is likely to widen further with rising housing costs and changing employment patterns. If education facilities, workplaces and community facilities can be accessed safely on foot or by bike, families can be released from the financial burden of owning multiple cars.

Of course, bike riding facilities are also proven to attract tourists and support the visitor economy. New businesses will be needed to support eco-, active and adventure tourism while existing businesses benefit from increased passing trade and foot traffic^{ix}. The region already attracts touring cyclists with a surge of activity after the Central West Trail launched in April 2020^x, providing a 400km waymarked loop that has revitalised several country towns and attracted thousands of cyclists to the area for a 5- or 6-day adventure. A focus on this market would bring substantial benefits as the mining and agricultural economies fluctuate over the coming years.

Feedback and recommendations:

The draft Transport Plan has 18 objectives grouped into 6 themes. Bicycle NSW is pleased that several objectives refer to walking and cycling as a means of meeting climate, health and liveability goals. However, we have identified where ambitions for active transport fall short in the draft Plan and take this opportunity to suggest ways to strengthen provision for walking and cycling in the final Transport Plan.

Theme 1 - Connectivity

Objectives 1, 2 and 3 aim to improve multi-modal connectivity within centres, within the region and beyond the region. Ensuring that trains, buses, shared cars, cycling facilities and a high-quality pedestrian realm can be combined for a seamless trip will be key to making walking, cycling and public transport attractive alternatives to the private vehicle for more trips, more often.

A relatively ambitious target of 18% has been set for active and public transport trips as a proportion of all journeys, double the current mode share. However, the draft Transport Plan does not specify how much walking and cycling infrastructure is needed to complete networks and there is no discussion of the type of infrastructure that should be delivered. Although micro-mobility is mentioned as a solution to first and last mile barriers, cycling could make a more significant contribution to multi-modal journeys if bikes were able to be taken on trains and buses, and secure parking facilities were provided at stations and key destinations.

Recommendations:

- **Incorporate numerical targets for new and improved active transport infrastructure**

The Central West and Orana Transport Plan should include specific goals for delivering high-quality shared paths and cycleways, to complete networks and link homes to school, workplaces, stations, sports facilities and shops. Expanding the active transport network in regional cities, centres, towns and villages would reduce reliance on private vehicles and curtail increases in congestion and pollution as the population grows.

- **Work with train and bus operators to allow carriage of cycles**

Although bikes can be wheeled onto the CityRail services to Lithgow, they must be boxed and weigh under 20kg to be accepted onto the faster regional trains. Only a limited number of bikes (usually 5) can be carried on each train. Many bicycles, such as e-bikes and tandems, do not fit within the size and weight limits. This is a serious impediment to bike-related tourism, particularly as e-bikes grow in popularity, opening up cycle touring to a much broader demographic.

In view of the economic, health and environmental benefits of encouraging cycling, Bicycle NSW supports the campaign for new trains currently being procured by the NSW Government to have more space allocated to bicycles, with roll on/roll off storage replacing the requirement to box bikes. Please see <https://bicyclensw.org.au/bikes-on-nsw-trainlink-campaign/> for more information.

We also suggest initiating discussions with bus operators to develop a strategy to allow bikes to be carried on buses, either in the luggage compartment or on a rack mounted on the front of the bus. This will allow one-way trips, help solve 'last mile' barriers to public transport use, open up the cycle network to a wider range of users and provide access to trails and everyday destinations without using a car.

- **Provide cycling infrastructure that is segregated from vehicles**

Bicycle NSW supports bicycle infrastructure that is completely separated from vehicles on main roads to cater for riders of all ages and abilities. Mixed traffic cycle routes are only appropriate where speed limits or traffic volumes are very low.

According to the best practice 'cycling segmentation' model, developed in Portland USA to identify the type and needs of existing and potential bike riders^{xi}. Such segregated cycle paths will allow 70% of local residents to consider journeys by bike.

Where there are few pedestrians, shared paths through parks or on footpaths are a suitable solution. In areas with high levels of pedestrian and cycling activity, standard shared paths will not lead to an acceptable level of amenity and safety for either walkers or riders as conflict occurs between different users. Separated bicycle paths within the road environment should be considered.

Bicycle NSW recommends referring to the new Cycleway Design Toolbox^{xii} and the 2017 Austroads Cycling Aspects of Austroads Guides (AP-G88-17) to ensure that the paths are constructed to current best practice.

Theme 2 – Safe

Objective 4,5 and 6 set out actions required to help NSW achieve its ambitious 'Towards Zero' goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries on the roads by 2056. The fatality rate on country roads is four times the comparative metropolitan rate and although the number of serious injury crashes across the Central West and Orana has reduced year-on-year since 2017, however the number of fatal crashes continues to fluctuate.

Lower speed limits and technological aids such as the 'Speed Advisor' app are suggested. However, there is no discussion of improving safety for bicycle riders on the highways and only a tentative proposal to review vehicle speeds and introduce low speed zones in the CBDs of larger towns.

Recommendations:

- **Improve safety on rural roads linking towns and villages**

Bicycle NSW has consulted with local cycling advocates and a common request is that the main roads connecting urban centres are made safer for cyclists. In the short term, wide shoulders, signage, speed restrictions and intersection improvements are essential. In the longer term, separate bicycle paths should be developed along key routes.

The draft Transport Plan contains a long list of road upgrades that will be delivered by 2041. Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy CP21001^{xiii} will apply to many of these projects, requiring provision for walking and cycling to be delivered from the outset of the project.

Cycle paths and safe intersections should also form part of upgrades to Council-managed roads. It is much easier and more cost effective to provide for walking and cycling during construction work than at a later date.

- **Reduce speed limits to 30km/h in residential roads and town centres**

30 km/h speed limits reduce the need for separate bicycle infrastructure on local streets. 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}.

Theme 3 - Liveable

Objectives 7,8 and 9 focuses on the role of transport in supporting vibrant places and healthy communities. The network needs to be legible and accessible to all customers, regardless of age, ability and income.

However, the accessibility and legibility of the active transport network is not discussed and the contribution of green, shady streets to liveability is ignored.

Recommendations:

- **Ensure that new cycle infrastructure is inclusive**

All types of bikes should be accommodated by the cycling infrastructure, including cargo bikes and tricycles. 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 network. 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 on urban streets 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 scooters^{xvii}.

- **Prioritise pedestrians and cyclists at all intersections**

Traffic light phasing and sensors must favour active modes to encourage more people to walk and cycle. In line with the Road User Space Allocation Policy and other State and local strategies, small delays to vehicle traffic should never prevent the delivery of safer, more efficient and more attractive active transport infrastructure. Raised crossings at unsignalised intersections will slow cars and improve safety. Bicycle paths must continue across the raised crossings so people riding bikes are not required to dismount.

- **Develop physical and digital mapping to highlight walking and cycling routes**

Wayfinding must support visitors by clearly articulating and communicating the most efficient and safest way to reach a destination on foot or bike. Active transport is often inhibited by a lack of knowledge about attractive and convenient routes. Even life-long residents of a town may not realise that a trip could be completed more quickly and efficiently on foot than by car. Signage style for wayfinding should be consistent throughout each town and reflect the diversity of the community.

- **Increase tree canopy cover over the walking and cycling network**

Climate change is causing an increase in hot weather in Country NSW. Much of the Central West experiences 10-20 days each year where the maximum temperature is greater than 35°C. Maximum summer temperatures are predicted to increase by 2.3°C by 2070 when 40 annual hot days over 35°C are likely^{xviii}. It is essential to create a tree canopy over footpaths and shared paths to ensure that they are comfortable to use in the warmer months, allowing opportunities for exercise and mitigating the health impacts of inactivity, such as diabetes and heart disease. The correct trees for the climate, soil and topography must be selected, and an adequate maintenance program instigated. We recommend following the research being undertaken into heat resilient street trees at Western Sydney University through the Which Plant Where? Project.

Theme 4 - Adaptive and sustainable

Objectives 10, 11 and 12 establish how the transport sector can help the Central West and Orana transition to a Net Zero future through a combination of infrastructure improvements, policy interventions and behavioural change. As discussed above, a doubling of the number of trips made by walking, cycling and public transport is a priority, as is a rapid switch to electric and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.

Bicycle NSW is pleased that bike riding will be encouraged by thoughtful place planning, end-of-trip facilities and programmes to support active trips to school. Education, information and events to promote walking and bike riding as a form of transport are an important part of any plan to increase participation in active travel.

The use of technology to reduce the need to travel is a key idea, tried and tested as a response to Covid-19. Travel can also be reduced by locating everyday needs close to housing but unfortunately the draft Transport Plan does not mention the '15-minute region' concept.

Finally, it is exciting that more rail corridors will be considered for conversion to green corridors for active transport. Of course, rail trails are useful for local journeys, but all possibilities for attracting sustainable tourism must also be considered.

Recommendations:

- **Place the concept of a '15-minute region' front and centre of the new Central West and Orana Transport Plan**

The new Regional Plans for the Central Coast and the Hunter^{xix} focus on the development of a sustainable '15-minute region' of vibrant, connected healthy neighbourhoods where every day needs are close to home and can be met with a short walk or bike ride (or a car trip in rural areas). The concept decentralizes the local economy, with each neighbourhood featuring all aspects of urban living, including workspaces, shops, schools, recreation, green areas and housing. '15-minute region' planning provides strategic direction for land-use decisions that place new housing and infrastructure close to jobs and services to encourage active and public transport.

- **Future proof the active transport network**

The status quo of walking and cycling activity in Regional NSW is likely to change rapidly. The density of walkers will increase when new housing and employment is delivered as proposed. An upswing in travel by bikes has occurred recently due to COVID-19, individual reactions to climate change, a surge in online 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.

Paths should be wide enough for overtaking and must accommodate a range of mobility options such as cargo bikes and disability scooters. As discussed above, pedestrians and bike riders should be separated where possible.

- **Develop facilities for cycle tourism**

Cycle tourism has enormous potential to attract visitors to regional areas and provide business opportunities for local residents. Rail trails are gaining momentum in NSW. The Tumbarumba to Rosewood trail has brought a constant flow of visitors to small villages in the area since it opened in 2020, supporting 9 new businesses^{xx}. The Northern Rivers Rail Trail will be a catalyst for the Tweed Valley becoming an important hub for cycling. Tourism on neighbouring Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) is going from strength to strength. The BVRT is a great example of what can be achieved through community and government support.

Dedicated infrastructure is not always required for tourist routes. Establishing a series of waymarked routes on scenic back roads and publishing maps and resources to promote cycle touring will draw cyclists from far and wide and support a vibrant rural economy. The Central West Trail is a fantastic example of this, as are the waymarked bicycle trails that link the vineyards of the Lower Hunter and the Barossa Valley. It is important for neighbouring councils to work closely to facilitate longer touring routes.

Mountain biking is also very popular. The Blue Derby trails in north-eastern Tasmania provide an excellent example of bike tourism bringing economic benefits for local communities. \$3.1 million was invested in mountain bike trails in 2015. Now, more than 30,000 tourists visit the trails each year, injecting more than \$30 million back into the Tasmanian economy^{xxi}.

Share bike rental hubs should be provided in tourist centres to ensure access to the trails for all visitors. Facilities for e-bike charging, bike maintenance and bike storage need to be created in key locations.

The Initiatives

The draft Transport Plan identifies 66 initiatives required to deliver the regional transport vision for the Central West and Orana over the next 20 years. Several on the 66 initiative relate to active transport:

35. Identify opportunities to implement 30km/h Speed Zones
36. Identify opportunities to repurpose redundant road and rail assets
47. Work with local government to expand cycling networks for Bathurst, Dubbo and Orange
48. Encourage local government to necessitate all new developments include provision of secure bicycle parking and end-of-trip facilities
55. Identify opportunities to safely accommodate micro-mobility options
62. Work with local government, DPIE and industry to ensure regionally significant growth areas supporting walking and cycle-friendly neighbourhoods
65. Work with NSW Department of Education, Catholic Schools NSW and local government to address barriers to walking and cycling to school

However, Bicycle NSW is concerned that these are all in the 'for investigation' section and have no committed time frame. **Please ensure that initiatives aiming to expand active transport infrastructure and encourage walking and cycling have a higher priority in the final Transport Plan and a deadline for action.**

Conclusion:

A commitment to new active transport infrastructure will deliver innumerable benefits to the residents of the Central West and Orana regions. Improved walking and cycling paths will contribute to connected and liveable communities, increase resilience to climate change, reduce carbon emissions and ignite new industries such as sustainable tourism. Creating safe and attractive routes to workplaces, schools, reserves and recreation facilities will foster healthy lifestyles and ensure equitable access to economic opportunities for people of all ages, incomes and abilities.

Bicycle NSW would like to be involved with the delivery of future active transport infrastructure in the Central West and Orana. We can offer expert advice at each stage, from the planning of walking and cycling networks to the detailed design of paths and intersections. Many of the relevant technical standards, policies and guidelines are drawn together on our [website](#). Please also note that Transport for NSW will soon publish a new Regional Cycling Plan with strategies for developing bike riding in regional areas; Bicycle NSW has contributed to the stakeholder engagement.

We look forward to working with Transport for NSW, DPIE, Local Government Authorities and local Bicycle User Groups to grow active travel in the Central West and Orana.

Yours faithfully,



Sarah Bickford

Bike Planner
Bicycle NSW



Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer
Bicycle NSW

ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics. Quickstats for Central West SA4 2016.

https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/103?opendocument

ⁱⁱ 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

ⁱⁱⁱ 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>

^{iv} Stokes, Rob. 2022, Feb 10. Footpaths and cycleways are an act of democracy – ask Steph. Fifth Estate.

<https://thefifthestate.com.au/urbanism/planning/footpaths-and-cycleways-are-an-act-of-democracy-ask-steph/>

^v PIA. 2013, Sept 3. <https://www.planning.org.au/documents/item/5578>

^{vi} Byron Shire Bike Plan. 2019. <https://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/hptrim/traffic-and-transport-planning-medium-and-long-term-development-transport-strategies-2013-2020/byron-shire-10-year-bike-plan-2019-final-adopted-plan-only-without-appendix-24.2017.50.1.pdf>

^{vii} Government Architect NSW. 2020. Urban Design for Regional NSW. <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/-/media/Files/DPE/Guidelines/urban-design-guide-for-regional-nsw-2020-06-03.pdf>

-
- viii Australian Bureau of Statistics. Quickstats for Central West SA4 2016.
https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/103?opendocument
- ix Jerome N Rachele. Do the sums: bicycle-friendly changes are good for business, The Conversation [Online as at 24/2/2021] [Do the sums: bicycle-friendly changes are good business \(theconversation.com\)](https://theconversation.com/do-the-sums-bicycle-friendly-changes-are-good-business)
- x Central West Cycle Trail. <https://centralwestcycletrail.com.au/>
- xixvi Roger Geller. (2009). Four types of cyclists. Portland Bureau of Transportation.
<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/264746>
- xii 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>
- xiii 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>
- 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/>
- xvii 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
- xviii Upper Hunter Shire Council LSPS 2020. <https://upperhunter.nsw.gov.au/f.ashx/documents/plans-and-reports/Local-Strategic-Planning-Statement-2020-Adopted-by-Council-25-May-2020.PDF>
- xix DPIE, 2021. Draft Hunter Regional Plan 2041. https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/mysppau/uploads/redactor_assets/documents/6e175c5cf8aad3d6c0554e8a89c914b96224989778448aae81e02acfb9f130ce/10448/Draft_Hunter_Regional_Plan_2041_1_.pdf
- xx Railtrails Australia. 2021, April 18. Local economy thrives since the opening of the Tumbarumba to Rosewood Rail Trail. <https://www.railtrails.org.au/2021/897-local-economy-thrives-since-the-opening-of-the-tumbarumba-to-rosewood-rail-trail>
- xxi AMB Magazine. 2021, July 29. Riding to the edge. <https://www.ambmag.com.au/feature/riding-to-the-edge---understanding-logging-around-blue-derby-trails-568005/page3>