

Western Parkland City Authority
Level 2, 10 Valentine Avenue
Parramatta NSW 2150

Email: blueprint@wpca.sydney

31st March 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

RE: Draft Western Parkland City Blueprint

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Blueprint developed by the Western Parkland City Authority.

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 green corridors and the road environment to 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.

The draft Blueprint aims to co-ordinate the delivery of infrastructure to ensure that the vision of a green, connected and advanced Western Parkland City is achieved. A jobs-led approach to planning new development in the City will help create a sustainable future.

The directions and priorities highlight a fundamental shift away from the short-term planning paradigm that has left many Western Sydney suburbs with a legacy of patchwork suburban housing developments with insufficient infrastructure, few jobs, missed opportunities for investment and poor liveability.

The Blueprint is accompanied by the draft Economic Development Roadmap - Phase 1 which provides a strategy for attracting investment, business and talent. It centres on a strong call for cabinet to endorse a significant proportion of infrastructure budget to developing the City.

The documents are complex and cover an area of significant scale. **This submission focuses on the opportunities for active transport.**

It is critical to get walking and cycling infrastructure of the highest-quality delivered across all corners of the Western Parkland City. Active travel will help achieve climate, liveability, health and equity goals. In the wake of the 2021 IPCC report, recent floods and bushfires, the accelerating move away from coal as a power source and the new work and travel patterns that have emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is clear that entrenched car dependency in Australian suburbs must be challenged urgently.



Figure 1. The framework for the Blueprints and Economic Development Roadmap (Source: WPCA)

Concerns and recommendations:

- The planning and delivery of active transport connections is a key Direction under 'connected city'. However, it is not one of the Priorities, which exclusively focus on rail and road infrastructure.

Recommendation 1 – Prioritise delivery of active transport connections

It is very important to construct a network of safe, attractive and convenient walking and cycling paths at the outset of development so that new residents and workers use it from their first day navigating the new City. New habits can be established and the risk of entrenched car dependency is reduced. It is much harder to later retrofit high-quality infrastructure and change habitual behaviours.

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 prioritize road space for walking and cycling:

- 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.

Studies have shown that 70% of people in NSW either ride a bike now or would start to ride if safe infrastructure was providedⁱⁱⁱ.

- The Blueprint ‘promotes pathways to deliver Net Zero by 2050’ by encouraging carbon neutral buildings in Bradfield City Centre. This is not ambitious enough in the face of escalating climate change.

Recommendation 2 - Aim for Net Zero by 2030 to align with IPCC recommendations

The Net Zero by 2050 target is a low bar set by the Federal Government that is completely out of step with global expectations and efforts by many local governments to reach Net Zero by 2030. Several Councils in the area are pushing forward with reducing emissions. Of the 8 LGAs within the Western Parkland City, Campbelltown, Fairfield and Liverpool have committed to 100%^{iv} renewables, Blue Mountains aims to be carbon neutral by 2025^v. Blacktown wants its operations to be Net Zero by 2025 with an aspiration for the community to be Net Zero by 2040^{vi}

The Western Parkland City, located in a region prone to flooding and urban heat, must position itself at the leading edge of global climate action. Greenfield developments provide an opportunity to innovate that must not be missed. With transport responsible for a 17% share of Sydney’s carbon emissions, active transport will play a critical role in a move towards Net Zero.

- Protection is promised for 63% of the City’s green spaces. However, this appears to be rural or bush land that is inaccessible on a daily basis, if at all.

Recommendation 3 – Include metrics for integrating green and blue corridors into the urban areas.

Green corridors along South Creek and Thompson Creek are a good start but green links with consistent tree canopy must weave through every part of the City. To meet the Premier’s Priority to increase the proportion of homes within 10-minutes’ walk of quality open space and ensure the vision for Sydney’s Green Grid (figure 2) is delivered, the regulatory context must include numerical targets and indicators that ensure action and funding.

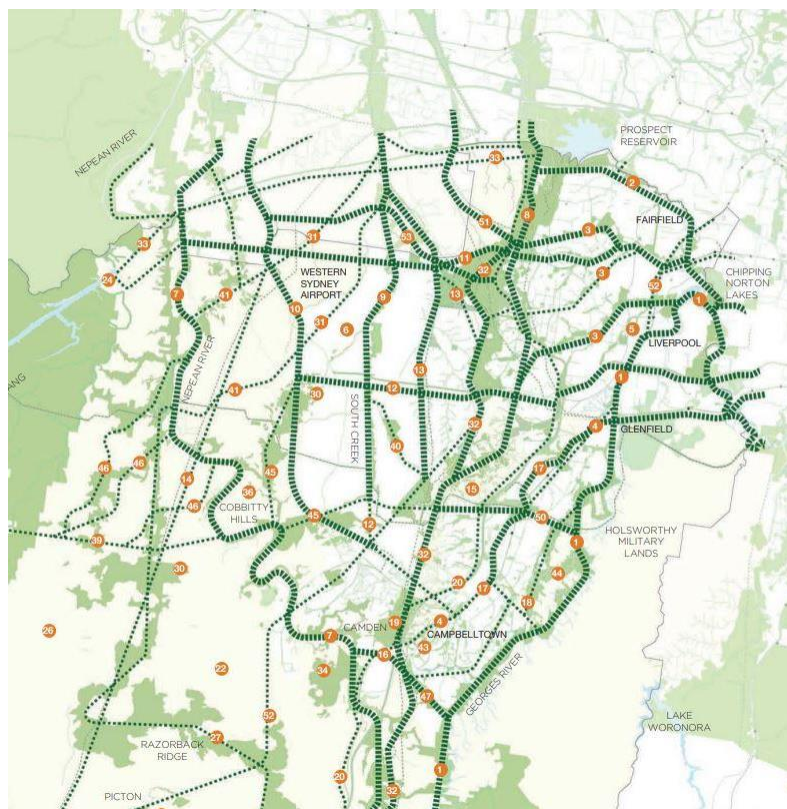


Figure 2:
The Green Grid for in South Western Sydney
(Source: Tyrrell)

- The draft Blueprint does not specify desired future modal share for active and public transport. With the population of the Western Parkland City forecast to grow from 1.056m in 2016 to 1.68m in 2036, business as usual will result in a congested and polluted urban environment. Walking as a mode share is currently half the average for greater Sydney at about 16% of trip and this proportion is falling (Figure 3).

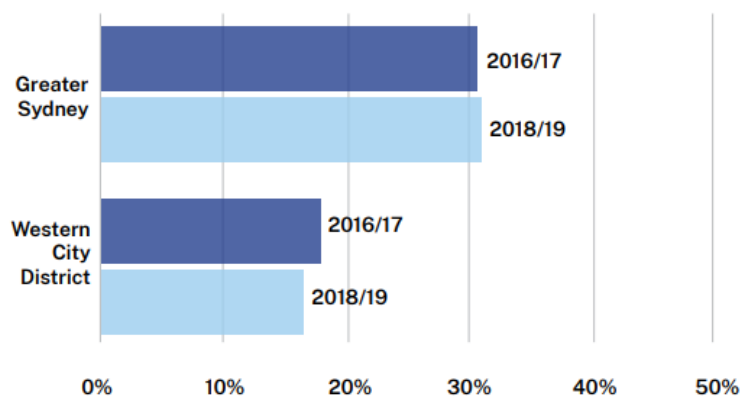


Figure 3: Walking (including to another mode of travel) as a proportion of total trips (Source: Greater Sydney Commission)

Recommendation 4 – embed targets for a serious mode shift away from private vehicles in the Blueprint

There are ambitious examples from other parts of the world. For example, Scotland aims to reduce vehicle miles traveled by 20% by 2030^{vii}. Transport for NSW is considering including a similar reduction in the forthcoming Future Transport 2061. Note that the target should relate to total vehicle kilometres for the whole population. A 20% cut per person will not be sufficient to address congestion and pollution as population soars by 60%.

- Priority C17 discusses delivering urban form that enhances physical activity but there is no mention of 15-minute region planning

Recommendation 5 – include the concept of the ‘15-minute region’ in strategic land use planning for the Western Parkland City

The concept of more compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods has spread across the world, with the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions demonstrating the importance of vibrant, connected local centres 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). In New South Wales, the draft Regional Plans for the Central Coast and the Hunter^{viii} focus on the development of a ‘15-minute region’. 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.

This a major shift in policy for regional NSW where development has prioritised travel by private car for the last 70 years. A clever and thoughtful approach to the urban-to-rural transect ensures that 15-minute thinking can apply to the range of different contexts found in the Western Parkland City: urban, brownfield infill, established suburbs, new greenfield suburbs, towns, villages and rural areas.

Further considerations:

Bicycle NSW would like to be involved with the delivery of active transport infrastructure in the Western Parkland City. 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](#).

- **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^{ix}, such 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 and separated cycle paths must be considered.

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

- **Set speed limits at 30km/h for 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^{xi} 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^{xii}.

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^{xiii}.

- **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.

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

All types of bikes should be accommodated by the cycling infrastructure, 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 are 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 are inclusive to disability but are a rare sight on urban streets due to barriers caused by poor urban design. Any measures enabling fully inclusive cycling will support a growth in cycling by novice cyclists, children and older people, and improve conditions for those using mobility scooters^{xiv}.

- **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 and continuous footpaths across side streets will slow cars and improve safety. Bicycle paths must continue across the raised crossings so people riding bikes are not required to dismount.

- **Maintain a focus on the important details of the cycle network**

The detailed design of cycle routes, adequate end of trip facilities, clear wayfinding and grass roots education are critical to encourage the uptake of cycling and reduce dependence on private vehicles.

It is essential to ensure that popular daily destinations such as town centres and schools 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. Without proper separation from vehicles and safe intersections, parents will still feel driving their children to school and activities is the only way to keep them safe from being hit by cars.

Integration of the routes with bus stops is essential to ensure easy access by bike and foot. All public transport journeys start and finish with a walk or cycle. Providing high-quality, safe conditions for active travel to bus routes will break down the first/last mile barrier which can inhibit take-up of public transport.

Cycle paths should feature amenities such as water fountains, shading, seating, lighting, bike maintenance stations and toilet blocks.

Secure bike parking and other end of trip facilities, including charging points for e-bikes and share bikes, should be provided at journey end locations to further support riders and encourage participation.

Wayfinding must support visitors by clearly articulating and communicating the most efficient and safest route. Signage style for wayfinding should be consistent throughout each LGA and reflect the diversity of the community.

Finally, 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.

Conclusion:

The commitment to new active transport infrastructure will deliver innumerable benefits to the residents of the Western Parkland City. 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.

We look forward to working with Transport for NSW, DPIE, WCPA, Local Government Authorities and local Bicycle User Groups to progress the delivery of active transport infrastructure in the Western Parkland City.

Yours faithfully,



Sarah Bickford

Bike Planner
Bicycle NSW



Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer
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 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>

^{iv} Petrass, R. 2022, March 3. The Fifth Estate. Councils jump on board for climate with 100 per cent renewable energy <https://thefifthestate.com.au/energy-lead/local-government-energy-lead/councils-jump-on-board-for-climate-with-100-per-cent-renewable-energy/>

^v 100% Renewables. 2021, Dec 9. Net zero commitments by states, local governments and communities – Dec 2021 <https://100percentrenewables.com.au/net-zero-leaderboard-states-local-governments-communities-dec-2021/#jump3>

^{vi} National Tribune. 2020, Feb 27. Blacktown City Council acknowledges climate emergency and moves toward.

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^{vii} Public Health Scotland. 2022, January. [https://publichealthscotland.scot/news/2022/january/briefing-to-evidence-20-car-km-](https://publichealthscotland.scot/news/2022/january/briefing-to-evidence-20-car-km-reduction/#:~:text=The%20Scottish%20Government%20set%20the,and%20Programme%20for%20Government%202021.)

[reduction/#:~:text=The%20Scottish%20Government%20set%20the,and%20Programme%20for%20Government%202021.](https://publichealthscotland.scot/news/2022/january/briefing-to-evidence-20-car-km-reduction/#:~:text=The%20Scottish%20Government%20set%20the,and%20Programme%20for%20Government%202021.)

^{viii} 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

^{ix} Roger Geller. (2009). Four types of cyclists. Portland Bureau of Transportation.

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/264746>

^x 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>

^{xi} 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>

^{xii} 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>

^{xiii} 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/>

^{xiv} 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