

Brigid Kelly Senior Transport Planner Inner West Council PO Box 14 Petersham NSW 2049

11th April 2022

Dear Brigid,

Re: Making cycling safer

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to inform the development of the new Inner West Cycling Strategy and Action Plan.

Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW for over forty-five years, and has more than 30 affiliated local Bicycle User Groups. Our mission is to 'create a better environment 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. 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.

It is so exciting to see Inner West Council ramping up its efforts to create a safe cycling network for all kinds of bike riders. The Inner West already has a very high demand for cycling and it is a prime area for further increasing the mode share for active transport with due to its demographic profile and dense urban morphology.

There are currently nearly 200,000 residents in the LGA and the population is expected to grow to around 232,000 by 2036, placing increasing demands on the transport network. Inner West residents are young and mobile. The median age is 34 compared to the Sydney average of 38ⁱ and, between 2006 and 2016, the number of families with children grew by 21%ⁱⁱ.

The Inner West is a collection of vibrant '15-minute neighbourhoods' where all daily destinations could be accessed by an easy walk or bike ride. The built form is compact and population density is very high at 5,500 people/sq.km, compared to 1,279 people/sq.km for urbanised land across Greater Sydneyⁱⁱⁱ. This is reflected in a higher-than-average proportion of trips by walking and cycling (36% of trips, compared with 19% for metropolitan Sydney) and lower car ownership 1.2 per household (1.7 for Greater Sydney)^{iv}.

Despite this, far too much of road network is dedicated to the movement and storage of private vehicles, creating a hostile environment for people walking and cycling, with dangerous intersections, narrow footpaths, fast-moving noisy traffic and long distances between crossings. Three large and active BUGs in the area (Bike Marrickville, the Inner West Bicycle Coalition and BayBug) have worked hard over many years to advocate for better conditions for active travel. While some improvements have been delivered, the **Council has failed to prioritise safe infrastructure for walking and cycling**.

Opportunities:

Bicycle NSW recognises that the historic urban fabric, severed by major road and rail lines that bring heavy through traffic, complicates the delivery of cycling infrastructure. Although faced with similar constraints, the City of Sydney has rolled out some fantastic new separated bicycle paths in recent years. The residents of the Inner West now see and use best practice infrastructure as part of their daily trips and the call for improved facilities in the Inner West gets louder. It is hoped that the Inner West Cycling Strategy, supported by a new generation of Councilors and Council staff who understand how active travel can decarbonise transport, improve public health and ensure future liveability, will supercharge the roll-out of safe, protected active transport infrastructure.

There has never been a better time to build infrastructure for bike riding and active transport. As the new Minister for Infrastructure, Cities and Active Transport, Rob Stokes MP, set out in a recent speech^v, 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.

In early 2021, Transport for NSW published two policies that require State projects to prioritise road space for active transport:

- Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000^{vi} establishes a road user hierarchy that considers
 pedestrians first and private cars last. Multiple environmental and health benefits will flow from
 increased walking, cycling and public transport use. The streets will be more equitable for Sydneysiders of all ages, incomes and abilities.
- Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy CP21001^{vii} 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.

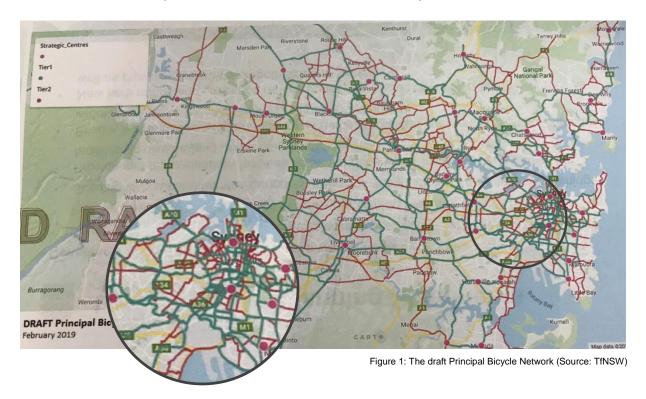
A commitment to new active transport infrastructure will deliver innumerable benefits to the residents of the Inner West. Improved walking and cycling paths will contribute to connected and liveable communities, increase resilience to climate change and reduce carbon emissions. Creating safe and attractive 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 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 viii. 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 new Inner West Cycling Strategy will be supported by several important policies and strategies:

<u>Future Transport 2056 Plan</u>* outlines an overarching vision for transport in NSW guided by community desire for better places. Future Transport 2056 commits to providing a regional cycle network in Greater Sydney, known as the Principal Bicycle Network (PBN). A coordinated delivery of bike lanes across Greater Sydney will ensure that routes across council boundaries align and create the most direct path of travel. Future Transport 2061 is currently being prepared following stakeholder consultation and will put an even greater emphasis on sustainable mobility.

The draft PBN is shown in Figure 1. Inner West Council's priority routes are clearly shown – Parramatta Road, Victoria Road, City West Link, Cooks River and the Greenway.



Greater Sydney Commission's <u>Eastern City District Plan (2018)</u>xi set outs how integrated land use and transport planning can help achieve the 30-minute city through increasing development density near public transit corridors in Planning Priority E10. The need for better accessibility, connectivity and amenity for pedestrian and cyclists is also emphasised in Planning Priorities E4, E17, E18 and E19. An important objective is a "city in its landscape" which has 2 relevant indicators – to create increased urban tree canopy and expand the Sydney Green Grid.

Sydney Green Grid^{xii}, developed by the NSW Government Architect in 2017 and reflected in the district and region plans, proposes an interconnecting network of open spaces that support walking and cycling. The Principal Bicycle Network will integrate the Sydney Green Grid to create important links between activity centres and support active recreation. Several important active transport corridors that have been subject to decades of community advocacy feature as Green Grid opportunity projects (figure 2).

Our Inner West 2036 Community Strategic Planxiii includes Strategic Direction 2: Unique, liveable, networked neighbourhoods with an outcome that people are walking, cycling and moving around Inner West with ease. The strategies to meet the direction are:

- 1. Deliver integrated networks and infrastructure for transport and active travel
- 2. Pursue innovation in planning and providing new transport options
- 3. Ensure transport infrastructure is safe, connected and well maintained.

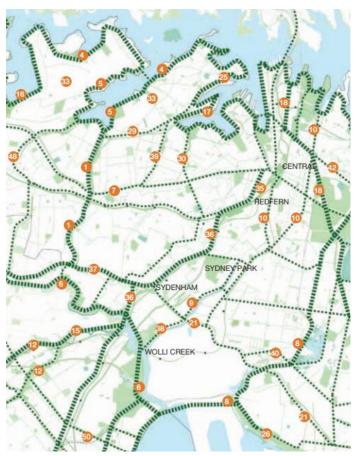


Figure 2: Extract from the Green Grid showing project opportunities in the Inner West area (Source: Tyrrell Studio / NSW Government Architect)

Priority project opportunities:

- 1, The Greenway and Hawthroned Canal
- 4. Sydney Harbour Foreshore Walk
- 5. The Bay Run and Iron Cove Greek
- Parramatta Road Urban Renewal Corridor
- 8. Salt Pan Creek Open Space Corridor
- 12. Georges River Parklands
- 29. Lilyfield Rad ATL or City West Link
- 30. Johnsons Creek and Harold Park
- 33. Victoria Road Bays Green Link
- 37. Bankstown to Sydenham Open Space Corridor
- 38. The Alexandra Canal ATL
- 39. Whites Creek

Going Places: An Integrated Transport Strategy for the Inner West^{xiv} sets out Council's commitment to sustainable transport – reducing car use and increasing the use of public transport, walking and cycling – in the interests of increasing the vibrancy of local neighbourhoods, reducing traffic congestion, enabling better parking options, improving air quality and improving access to local places.

The strategy highlights several key projects:

- · revitalise the Parramatta Road
- deliver the Inner West cycling network (figure 3)
- reduce speed limits on all non-arterial roads to 40 km/h
- complete the Greenways as highlighted in Sydney's Green Grid

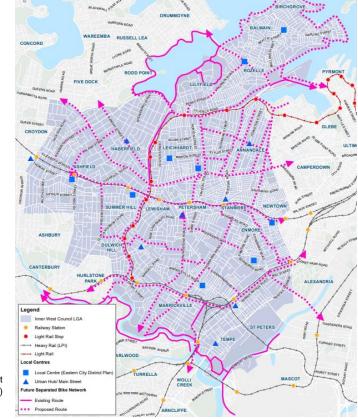


Figure 3: Strategic cycling network for the Inner West (Source: Going Places, Inner West Council)

Recommendations:

Bicycle NSW is delighted that the community has taken advantage of the excellent consultation process for the new Cycling Strategy and submitted hundreds of ideas and comments about crossings, existing and potential routes and safety issues. We will use this submission to urge immediate action on two very significant 'road diets' and provide a series of general considerations for future active transport infrastructure.

Reimagine Victoria Road and Parramatta Road as urban boulevards with separated bicycle paths

Victoria Road and Parramatta Road have long been earmarked for revitalisation projects. Council must capitalise on the opening of WestConnex by rebalancing road space and prioritising active and public transport.

Similar work is being undertaken by Transport for NSW at Sydney Park Junction. The proposals will see driving lanes reduces from 6 to 4, speed limits lowered to 40km/h. new separated bicycle paths, widened pavements and new landscaping. This project provides exciting evidence that the city can move forward from decades of car domination and sets a precedent for better place outcomes throughout Sydney. Changing the dial on how we measure the success of a movement corridor will have huge implications for reimagining arterial roads.

Bicycle NSW wrote a detailed submission in October 2021 to support the upgrades at Sydney Park Junction.

Possible conflict between people cycling and the bus stops has been an excuse from Inner West Council and TfNSW to delay installing separated bicycle paths. Plenty of projects in the City of Sydney, such as the proposals for Oxford Street, show that bus passengers can safely cross a bicycle path.

• Ensure bike riders are fully separated from vehicles and pedestrians on most streets

According to the best practice 'cycling segmentation' model, developed in Portland USA to identify the type and needs of existing and potential bike riders^{xv}, separated bicycle paths will allow 70% of local residents to consider journeys by bike (figure 4).



Figure 4:
Four general categories of comfort levels for cycling as transportation.
(Source: North Sydney Council)

The Bicycle NSW *Build it for Everyone* policy pillar^{xvi} sets a standard that bicycle infrastructure should be fit for eight year old children or elders to ride on. Door zone bike lanes, bike stencils on the road and dangerous intersections will continue to deter the 48%^{xvii} of people who are 'interested but concerned', from

making the switch to bike riding.

Bicycle NSW supports Inner West's rejection of shared paths in the road-related environment. There are several reasons why shared paths are not appropriate for important and well-used sections of a cycling network. These include conflict between people walking and cycling, which will get worse as population and active travel increase; the loss of verges, vegetation and, in some instances, mature trees; the uncomfortable pinch points caused by bus stops, power poles and retained trees; and constant interruptions when crossing side streets where vehicles effectively have priority. Importantly, no attempt is made to change the dial on car use when bicycles are squeezed into pedestrian spaces. By leaving the road between the kerbs as the unchallenged domain of private cars, with wide vehicle lanes and ample parking, car travel is encouraged, unsafe speeds are common and the modal shift needed to meet climate, health and liveability imperatives may not occur.

Segregated bi-directional bicycle paths have many benefits over shared paths:

- People riding bikes are separated from pedestrians and vehicles, reducing conflict.
- Street trees and green verges are not impacted.
- The narrower vehicle lanes will slow traffic, reducing noise and improving safety for all road users.
- No additional asphalt is required, reducing issues with urban heat and stormwater.
- Sufficient space is created to enable a significant modal shift to active transport.
- New landscaping and important pedestrian safety features such as kerb extensions can be incorporated into the buffers and the parking lanes.
- The cycle paths can be prioritised over driveways and minor road intersections.
- Motorists exiting driveways have a better sightline to approaching cyclists, improving safety.
- Dedicated bicycle paths are proven to entice new riders of all ages and abilities

Inner West Council must continue brave discussions with Transport for NSW and the community about reallocating road space from private cars to reflect the priorities set out in the Road User Space Allocation Policy and Council's own policies.

In our recent meeting, the Minister for Active Transport, Rob Stokes MP, stated his preference for properly separated walking and cycling infrastructurexviii. He expressed his strong belief that **the road-related environment is a public asset** that must be shared equitably between all road users. Any increase in inconvenience to car drivers, created by reducing road space for driving and parking private vehicles, will incentivise the mode-shift that Transport for NSW and Council seek. This will benefit local residents with quieter streets, and less pollution, noise and through-traffic.

An alternative to separated bicycle paths, only suitable for quiet residential streets with low traffic volumes, is a shared space 'bicycle boulevard' treatment where traffic calming interventions ensure very slow vehicle speeds. Most bike riders will feel safe using the vehicle lanes if traffic speeds and volumes are low.

Shared user paths will continue to be appropriate for off-road green corridors. It is important to future proof shared paths 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. **A minimum width of 3m** should be achieved at all times with extra width considered where volumes of people walking and cycling may be high^{xix} (see Figure 5). It is important that faster cyclists can overtake and that pedestrian comfort is never compromised. In busy areas, or on steeper sections, paths should be wide enough to provide separate space for pedestrians, as has been delivered along a section of the Bay Run.

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

Figure 5: Suggested shared user path widths (Source: Austroads Guide to Road Design Part 6A: Paths for Walking and Cycling AGRD06A-17

	Suggested path width (m)		
	Local access path	Regional path ⁽³⁾	Recreational path
Desirable minimum width	2.5	3.0	3.5
Minimum width – typical maximum	2.0 ⁽¹⁾ - 3.0 ⁽²⁾	$2.5^{(1)} - 4.0^{(2)}$	3.0 ⁽¹⁾ – 4.0 ⁽²⁾

- 1. A lesser width should only to be adopted where cyclist volumes and operational speeds will remain low.
- 2. A greater width may be required where the numbers of cyclists and pedestrians are very high or there is a high probability of conflict between users (e.g. people walking doas, in-line skaters etc.).
- 3. May be part of a principal bicycle network in some jurisdictions.

It is also recognised that a small percentage of 'strong and fealess' bike riders prefer the direct routes offered by busier roads and are comfortable in traffic. Cycling can be made safer on these roads with reduced speed limits, forward stop lines at intersections, head start green lights, and regular maintenance to ensure smooth surfaces.

Be strong about removing on-street parking

Removal of street parking will be necessary in places to create safe raised crossings, wide shared paths and separated bicycle paths. Council must be strong when faced with resident opposition. On-street parking is fundamentally the storage of private property in the public domain. It makes driving easier and generates car trips. When on-street parking is prioritised over safe cycling, active transport for the whole community suffers.

It is getting easier and easier to access a car for trips that are too awkward by public or active transport. Car sharing and ride hailing are slowly chipping away at the one-person, one-car mentality that Australians are accustomed to after 60 years of car-centric planning. In 2016, 17.3% of Inner West households had no car and this figure can be expected to increase^{xxi}. In 2019, membership of local car share schemes increased by 20%, showing a huge appetite for new models of vehicle use^{xxii}.

Studies show that parking spaces in commercial areas are less significant for customers than many businesses expect, with owners overestimating the proportion of customers arriving by car by a factor of 3^{xxiii}. Visitors themselves overwhelmingly prefer widened footpaths, even if it means sacrificing some parking spaces. Cyclists and pedestrians are better customers, spending over twice as much time in the area and 40% more money per month than people driving. A report from London showed that improvements to the public realm to enable safer walking and cycling lead to a 30% increase in trade^{xxiv}.

A parking survey can be useful to determine precise usage patterns for on-street parking. With accurate data to reflect on, the community may find it easier to accept the loss of parking to allow the installation of a best-practice bicycle path which benefits the wider community.

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 radius, 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^{xxv}.

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 Council strategies, small delays to vehicle traffic should never prevent the delivery of safer, more efficient and more attractive active transport infrastructure. Pedestrian and bicycle level of service should be optimised with the following features:

- Instant green on demand for pedestrians and bicycles at mid-block crossings, with induction loop detectors for bicycles/wheelchairs/mobility scooters and fully accessible push buttons.
- Longer crossing times so that pedestrians of all ages and abilities have time to cross safely and without stress.
- Automatic green for pedestrians/bicycles at all signalised intersections so there is no need to press a 'beg button'
- · Raised crossings at unsignalised intersections will slow cars and improve safety.
- Bicycle paths must continue across the raised and signalised crossings so people riding bikes are not required to dismount.

Reduce speed limits to 30km/h on all local streets

Residential streets form a critical part of any active travel network, connecting homes to safe cycle routes. 30 km/h speed limit reduce the need for bicycle infrastructure on local residential roads. 30 km/h has been shown as an optimal speed limit to allow people driving and cycling to share the road safely**xvi* 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**xvii.

The design speed of the roads and intersections needs to match the posted speed limits, and discourage travelling and turning too fast. Appropriate traffic calming with visual and physical cues are required to slow drivers down.

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^{xxviii}.

Use temporary materials to demonstrate best-practice infrastructure

Bicycle NSW suggests that Inner West Council uses pop-up methods to trial separated cycle paths. Moveable lane barriers can be installed quickly to create stretches of protected path (Figure 6) and demonstrate how unfamiliar cycle infrastructure fits into the street. Ridership can be observed over several months using electronic counters to monitor use, and issues with parking and buses can be resolved before permanent infrastructure is constructed. Many councils, including Randwick, Parramatta and City of Sydney, demonstrated the demand for safe cycling using the pop-up bicycle paths established as a COVID-19 response. Permanent changes to kerbs, parking and landscaping can then be made when funds allow.





Figure 6: Pop-up infrastructure in Sydney (Source: Bicycle NSW / Randwick Today)

Maintain a focus on the important details of the cycle network

It is the detailed design of cycle routes, end of trip facilities, wayfinding and education that will encourage the uptake of cycling and reduce dependence on private vehicles.

Integration of the route with train stations and 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.

Parking and other end of trip facilities should be provided at journey end locations to further support riders and encourage participation. Future iterations of the Inner West DCP must ensure that sufficient cycling parking is provided in future developments, including facilities for charging e-bikes.

The cycle routes must aim to be delightful, lined with trees to provide shade, and peppered with benches, water fountains, and bike racks. Artworks and memories of indigenous and colonial heritage can be incorporated to emphasise the sense of place and reflect the character of the locality.

Wayfinding supports visitors by clearly articulating and communicating the most efficient and safest route. Signage style for wayfinding should be consistent throughout the LGA and reflect the diversity of the community. Figure 7 shows a great example from the UK!



Figure 7: Fabulous graphics by advocacy group Walk Ride Bath that celebrate the diversity of people cycling (Source: Wheel for Wellbeing)

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:

Cycle infrastructure offer the greatest mode-shift potential when riders are able to connect their whole journey safely. The City of Parramatta and City of Sydney have demonstrated that building safe, wellconnected cycleways works to induce more people to travel activelyxxix. Sustainable, equitable active transport options for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities will decongest roads, public transport and parking, reduce noise and pollution, improve public health and benefit local businesses, as people who ride bikes can easily stop at local shops en-route.xxx.

Bicycle NSW looks forward to working with Inner West Council to progress the delivery of its integrated cycle network. Please reach out with any questions or help needed. If requested, we would be delighted to assist with advocating for new bicycle infrastructure though our connections with politicians, Transport for NSW and neighbouring metropolitan councils.

Yours faithfully,

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Sarah Bickford

Bike Planner Bicycle NSW Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer Bicycle NSW

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