

Rozelle Interchange – moving forwards

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Foreword

The construction at the Rozelle Interchange is proceeding fast. Some active transport infrastructure is being delivered in accordance with the conditions of consent. However, the future network is likely to reflect a piecemeal and reactive approach that deprioritises walking and cycling to the fast movement of motor vehicles.

Since 2019, a series of new policies and strategies have been released by NSW Government that aim to achieve a much better balance of movement and place with vastly improved facilities for active transport. Most recently, Transport for NSW has published the Eastern Harbour City Strategic Cycleways Corridors with key routes passing through Rozelle.

New priorities have been established. It is time to revisit previous plans and promises developed by WestConnex, adjust the conditions of consent and demand that the Rozelle Interchange delivers optimum outcomes for a healthier, less car-dependent future as Sydney's population grows.

This document sets out the background to Bicycle NSW's advocacy at Rozelle and the contemporary strategic and policy context.

Bicycle NSW asks that Transport for NSW and the WestConnex team reassess the active transport plans for Rozelle, taking a holistic study of all possible routes to ensure the infrastructure delivered will meet the needs of Sydney in the future.

This is the best opportunity in recent years for local and state governments to work together to deliver a truly transformational network for cycling, but there is no time to waste.

In preparing this submission we acknowledge the detailed contributions of members of the Inner West Bicycle Coalition including John McNeil, Robert Moore, Neil Tonkin and Col Jones, and BayBUG member David Martin. Their detailed knowledge of the local area and travel behaviour was essential to reviewing these plans. We recognize and applaud their commitment to their local Bicycle User Groups, the community, and their generous donation of time over many years

Background

The WestConnex Rozelle Interchange sits at the centre of several important active transport corridors linking the Inner West and Sydney's CBD (Figure 1). Its construction was always destined to cause years of disruption for local residents and induce more traffic onto the streets of the Inner West. Some recompense was provided by the new open space promised at the site of the former Rozelle Railyards.

Construction began in 2019 to deliver 'the new underground motorway interchange to the City West Link and an underground bypass of Victoria Road. As the interchange is mostly underground, the *project will create* new active transport options for Rozelle and more than 9 hectares of new public space.' (John Holland, 2020)

The original conditions of approval required at E60 that a Pedestrian and Bicycle Implementation Plan is to be completed, and improvements be made to cycle routes within a 1km radius of the project. In addition to the **priority routes along the City West Link and Victoria Road corridors**, Bicycle NSW recommended overpasses or tunnels to create safe and direct walking and cycling access towards the Crescent and Johnstons Creek to improve an important north/south route and facilitate connections from Balmain to key destinations including the University of Sydney and Prince Alfred Hospital, Newtown.



Figure 1: The Rozelle Interchange and Parkland superimposed on the existing cycle network (Source: Google Maps and Transport for NSW)

Condition E58 required that a cycleway between Springside St and Roberts St on Victoria Rd be completed, subject to negotiations between Council and NSW Transport.

While some of these links are being delivered, the bigger picture of how the Rozelle Interchange fits into the regional cycling network has been neglected and the contractors are doggedly sticking to their contracts. There is a serious risk that the active transport network will be saddled with second-rate or inappropriate infrastructure that will take decades to unpick and correct.

In addition, there have been many issues with **safety and diversions** during construction. Prior to the commencement of excavation at the Rozelle Railyards, Lilyfield Road was one of the most trafficked bike routes in NSW and ridership was growing fast. The Super Tuesday surveyⁱ in 2019 counted over 350 riders between 7am and 9am on 5th March, up nearly 50% from the 2018 count. Bicycle NSW was assured by John Holland that the project would preserve the Lilyfield route, maintaining safe and direct access for bike riders throughout the construction period. Construction traffic would be managed appropriately and multiple other safety practices would be followed. This did not happen.

Bicycle NSW and Inner West BUGs have invested many hours in meetings and submissions to be largely ignored. We requested project managers obey the law and follow the Austroads Guidelines and received refusals, false assurances and at times attitudes that are at odds with the NSW Government's Towards Zero prioritiesⁱⁱ. Bicycle riders have encountered serious hazards created by deficiencies in the bicycle detour routes and signageⁱⁱⁱ used around the WestConnex Rozelle Interchange project. A high degree of pressure had to be put on the contractors to get critical (and very expensive) rectifications of the temporary facilities while Lilyfield Road is less safe than ever as semi-trailers are now using this route to carry spoil to the site.

Bicycle NSW hopes that advocacy at Rozelle will benefit future projects. For example, we urged contractors to adopt the Austroads Guide to Temporary Traffic Management (AGTTM). AGTTM and the Austroads research report 'Bicycle Wayfinding' (AP-R492-15) to provide construction mangers with the tools they need to support the priorities of the NSW Government. We recommended moving to early-stage planning for bike riding and active transport, and to independent ride-through audits of detours and new infrastructure before these are opened to the public.

Strategic context

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 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 38^{vi} and, between 2006 and 2016, the number of families with children grew by 21%^{vii}.

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 Sydney^{viii}. 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)^{ix}.

Of course, the Rozelle area is also crossed by bike riders from all points north, south and west of the LGA with surveys recording commuters coming from Blacktown, Macquarie Park and beyond. As Sydney cycle network grows and e-bikes become ubiquitous, the number of long-distance commuters and leisure riders will undoubtedly increase.

Since 2019, there has been a **seismic shift in Transport for NSW policy direction**, framed by innovative thinking around 'place' after 70 years of car-centric planning that focused on movement to the detriment of community, urban amenity, walkability, public health and air quality. The <u>Movement and Place Framework</u> takes a cross-governmental integrated approach to infrastructure projects and land use design. It is bolstered by two policies published by Transport for NSW in early 2021 that require State projects to prioritise road space for active transport:

- Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000^x 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^{xi} 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.

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^{xii}, active travel projects that stitch the suburbs together and enable people of all ages and abilities to get around without a car are 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 NSW is committed to this objective, but in order to achieve it we emphasize that most people will not switch to walking or cycling, or allow their children to do so, if they feel unsafe^{xiii}. Infrastructure that fails to meet the needs of children and elders will not lead to the mode shift essential to prevent Sydney becoming choked with cars under the current plans for population growth.

A raft of recent NSW Government strategies supports the development of a network of safe cycleways, separated from vehicles:

<u>Future Transport 2056 Plan (2018)</u>xiv 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 protected bike lanes across the metropolitan area 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.

Greater Sydney Commission's <u>Eastern City District Plan (2018)</u>^{xv} 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^{xvi}, 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 crucial Inner West active transport corridors that have been subject to decades of community advocacy feature as Green Grid opportunity projects, including City West Link and Victoria Road Bays Link (Figure 2).

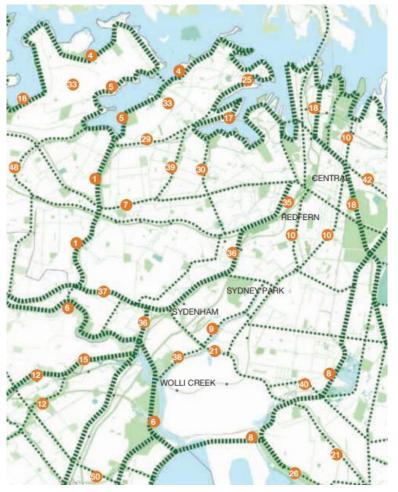


Figure 2: Extract from the Green Grid showing project opportunities in the Inner West area (Source: Tyrrell Studio / NSW Government Architect)

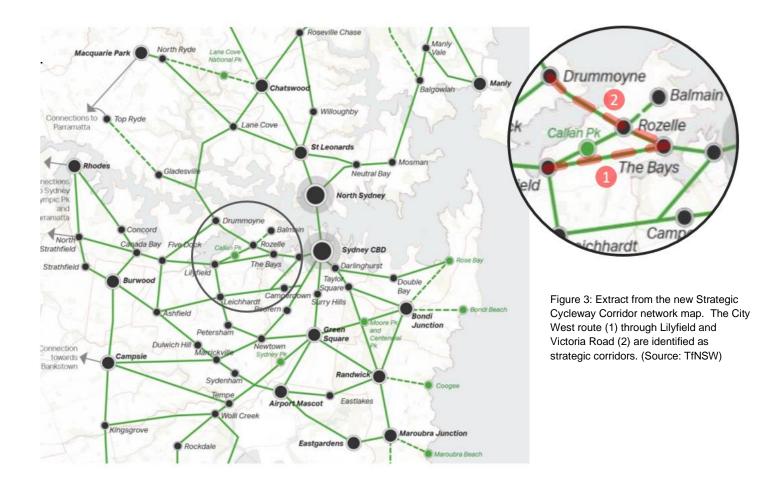
Priority project opportunities:

- 1. The Greenway and Hawthorne Canal
- 4. Sydney Harbour Foreshore Walk
- 5. The Bay Run and Iron Cove Greek
- 7. Parramatta Road Urban Renewal Corridor
- 8. Salt Pan Creek Open Space Corridor
- 12. Georges River Parklands
- 29. Lilyfield Road ATL or City West Link
- 30. Johnstons 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

The latest, and most exciting, document to be published by Transport for NSW, under the direction of Minister Stokes, is the <u>Eastern Harbour City Strategic Cycleway Corridors</u>^{xvii}. 30 strategic corridors have been identified for eastern Sydney, making up approximately 250 km of cycle network (Figure 3). The corridors will connect key centres and major points of interest. Exact routes will be subject to detailed design and collaboration with councils and the community. The corridors will form the backbone of the Principal Bicycle Network.

The Eastern Harbour City was the first of the 6 cities of the newly-defined sandstone megaregion to receive a cycleway corridors plan in April 2022: the other cities will follow by the middle of 2023.

Five 'immediate opportunities' have been identified that can be progressed quickly to fill important gaps in the network and enable more people to ride safely for everyday trips (Figure 4). The Lilyfield Connection, linking the Bay Run and the Greenway with the future Rozelle Parkland and the Bays Precinct, is listed as one of these top five priorities for the NSW Government.



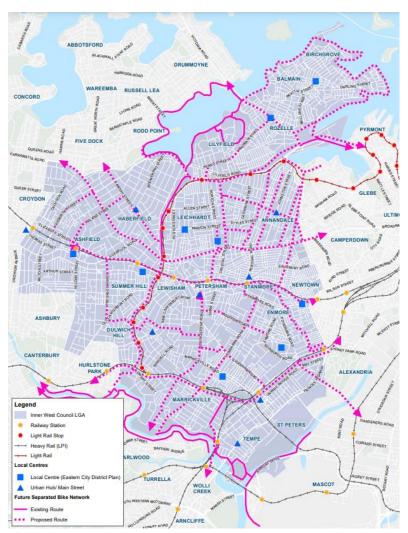


It is important to highlight how Inner West Council is striving to improve walking and cycling facilities in the LGA:

Our Inner West 2036 Community Strategic Plan^{xviii} 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.

Going Places: An Integrated Transport Strategy for the Inner West^{xix} 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 identifies several key projects:

- revitalise the Parramatta Road
- deliver the Inner West cycling network (Figure 3), including, of course, Victoria Road and the Lilyfield City West route.
- 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)

Inner West Council has recently consulted the community as part of the process to develop a new <u>Cycle Strategy</u>, the first since Ashfield, Leichhardt, and Marrickville Councils were amalgamated in 2016. Bicycle NSW made a <u>submission</u>. The draft Cycle Strategy is due to be placed on exhibition later in 2022.

Next steps

On behalf of current and future bicycle riders from across Greater Sydney, and the populations of Rozelle, Leichhardt, Balmain, Lilyfield, Annandale and Glebe, we request two feasibility studies to determine the optimum solutions for including high quality regional cycleways in the Victoria Road and City West Link road corridors. It is essential to ensure that the road construction projects at both Rozelle Interchange and the Bays West precinct lead to the finest possible outcomes for active transport.

As the discussion of the contemporary policy context underscores, NOW is the best moment in decades to really push the NSW Government to deliver active transport infrastructure that will enable its ambitious objectives for health, resilience, liveability and social equity to be achieved.

The EIS for Westconnex Rozelle Interchange and the conditions of consent were developed before the Movement and Place Framework became a foundation of urban planning in NSW, supported by the Road User Space Allocation and the Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects policies.

It is no longer good enough to deliver short sections of cycleway that don't connect to a bigger network. Constrained and crowded shared paths, cluttered with poles, bus stops and signs and broken by dangerous intersections, may meet the minimum requirements of the conditions of consent but are not appropriate for key strategic cycleway corridors.

It is time for Transport for NSW to revisit the active transport commitments at Rozelle and align the proposed cycleways to the latest policies and strategies before construction of the massive interchange proceeds past a point of no return.

The Lilyfield Connection

The existing Lilyfield Road cycle route forms the recommended gateway from the west, providing a route from Burwood, Five Dock and Concord over the ridge to the Anzac Bridge and CBD. It has been one of the busiest cycle corridors in Sydney, although ridership has decreased recently due to the dangerous conditions around the Rozelle Interchange construction site.

However, Lilyfield Road traverses a long, steep hill whose gradient deters many less confident or determined riders. In addition, terrace houses, many with no off-street parking, line both sides of the road west of Balmain Road, making the insertion of dedicated bicycle infrastructure very contentious.

Over the last two decades several options (Figure 5) have been proposed to avoid the worst of the hill west of James Street and create a safe, direct and comfortable active transport corridor known as the City West Cycleway.

Leichhardt Park Aquatic Centre Rozelle Leichhardt Oval Drive-through Clinic NSW Ambulance Bay Rur Dobroyo Crescent S. Perry St 6 Catherine St Sydney Bus Museum 5 Richard Athol St Murder Memorial Park Moore St Chargrill Charlie's Bar Italia Annandale š Annandale

Figure 5: A map showing some possible routes for the Lilyfield Connection (Source: Google Maps and Bicycle NSW)

Options (as numbered on the map) include:

Building a cycleway alongside or above the Inner West Light Rail. A community group developed a
scheme before the light rail began running but a proper feasibility study was not commissioned. It was
later deemed difficult to undertake construction work adjacent to operating trams. Refer to
http://citywestcyclelink.org.au/concept/ for details and drawings of the 2011 proposal.

Steepest part of Lilyfield Road between Charles St and James St

- 2. Moving the sound walls adjacent to the City West Link to create space for a cycleway on the north side.
- 3. Taking the cycleway across Blackmore Oval and Darley Road before crossing the City West Link near James Street, perhaps on a new overpass.
- 4. Using a route to the south of City West Link along Canal/Darley/Francis/Allen/Derbyshire and Moore Streets to Balmain Road.
- 5. Linking streets such as Hubert and Wragge Streets to create a high-level route to the north of the City West Link to reach James Street.
- 6. Another option, which must be seriously considered in the light of the Road User Space Allocation policy and new State Government priorities, is repurposing a lane of the City West Link itself to make way for a separated bicycle path from the Hawthorne Canal to Balmain Road or further east. Once the M4-M5 Link and the Rozelle Interchange open, the City West Link will carry less through traffic and a 'road diet' will be viable.

7. Once Balmain Road is reached, Lilyfield Road is bordered by non-residential uses on the southern side. Heading east, parking on the southern side could be removed and Lilyfield Road could accommodate a wide, bi-directional bicycle path which would feed into the proposed shared paths in the Rozelle Parklands and onto the Bays West precinct and the Glebe Island Bridge.

Transport for NSW must now commission a full feasibility study to assess all the ideas put forward by the community, consultants and councils. There may of course be new possibilities generated by project and policy changes that no-one has thought of yet.

No option that provides a future-proof, direct, safe and comfortable route is going to be easy to deliver. However, as the Lilyfield Connection has been identified as a priority section of the Rhodes to the Bays strategic cycleway corridor, Transport for NSW has a mandate to find a solution.

Victoria Road

As part of the Iron Cove Link, the Rozelle Interchange project promised to establish a 'Green Link' along the southern verge of Victoria Road between the Iron Cove Bridge and Springside Street '(Figure 6). The Green Link was to be an attractive, landscaped 'boulevard that would deliver much needed amenity for users. It would feature a wide shared path, new trees and seating.



Figure 6: The proposed Iron Cove Green Link (Source: Hassell)

The shared path has now been delivered and it falls very far short of a landscaped boulevard. It is a barren piece of cycleway broken by several dangerous side street intersections. The wide, curving kerb lines at the junctions of Victoria Road with Toelle and Callan Streets (Figure 7) have been engineered for fast vehicle entry and exit. These present extreme hazards to pedestrians and bike riders and should be re-constructed with reduce kerb radii and raised pedestrian/bike crossings.



Figure 7: The dangerous intersections where the new Victoria Road shared path crosses Toelle Street and Callan Street (Source: Bicycle NSW)

Further east on Victoria Road, the project team is still working on plans for a bike facility between Springside and Robert Streets to meet the E58 condition of consent. E58 does not specifically require the cycleway to be provided in the Victoria Road reservation and suggests using the parallel local road network.

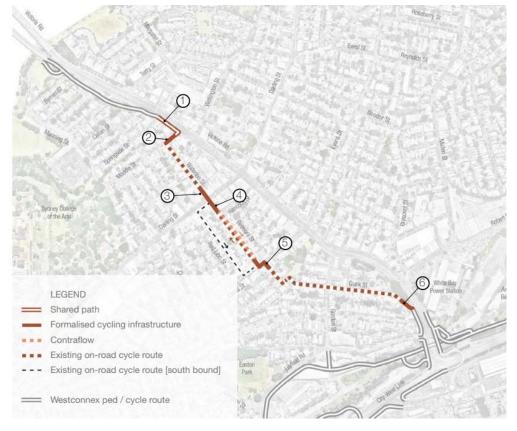


Figure 8: the back street route suggested by Transport for NSW in Septmeber 2021 to meet Planning Condition E58 (Source: Coxall MacGregor / TfNSW)

The preferred option put forward in September 2021^{xx} is a back street mixed-traffic route that mostly avoids Victoria Road (Figure 8). The suggested cycleway climbs steep hills and uses narrow streets clogged with parked cars and rat-running drivers. It will not be suitable for children, elders or less confident riders and will do nothing to grow ridership on this important regional route. Further upgrades of the shared path on the northside of Victoria Road are also proposed to give bike riders a second possible route. Even if the existing pinchpoints caused by bus stops, poles and signs (Figure 9) are resolved, and the dangerous side street intersections are improved, a shared path is not adequate for a commuter route.





Figure 9: uneven surfaces, dangerous intersections and street clutter on the existing Victoria Road shared path between Robert Street and Darling Street (Source: Bicycle NSW)

Transport for NSW's proposals are **completely unacceptable**. Victoria Road is a strategic cycleway corridor which must be direct, comfortable and safe to form a major spine of the future Principal Bicycle Network.

Bicycle NSW urges immediate action on the redevelopment of Victoria Road as an urban boulevard with separated bicycle paths. Transport for NSW must capitalise on the opening of WestConnex by rebalancing road space and prioritising active and public transport.

Victoria Road has long been earmarked for revitalisation. The Victoria Road Strategic Business Case developed a place-based, integrated transport vision for Victoria Road, including a strategic business case. Separated on-road bike paths as well as other ways to improve active transport along the corridor were included. This project needs to be delivered as part of the WestConnex Rozelle Interchange.

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 <u>submission</u> in October 2021 to support the upgrades at Sydney Park Junction.

South to Johnston Street and Rozelle Bay

Bicycle NSW also requests that options for moving south from Victoria Road and the future Bays West precinct towards Annandale and Glebe are re-assessed to ensure that the best possible connections are created through the Rozelle Interchange. Although not identified as a strategic cycleway corridor, routes to link Johnson Street and the Crescent to Balmain and Bays West are critical for local and regional connectivity.

A **review is urgent as construction is underway** and it will be very expensive to retrofit the necessary underpasses or bridges later.

The 'green bridge' from the Rozelle Parklands will provide a route south but it involves cycling up and over the Rozelle Interchange and leaves pedestrians and cyclists on the western side of the multi-lane Crescent, not the waterfront promenade at Rozelle Bay where amenity is much better.

We are particularly keen to explore the provision of an underpass of the Anzac Bridge approach as shown in the Bays West vision for 2040^{xxi}. This would provide a flat link between the Bays West precinct and Metro station to James Craig Road, the waterfront and the future bridge mooted for crossing Rozelle Bay (Figure 10).

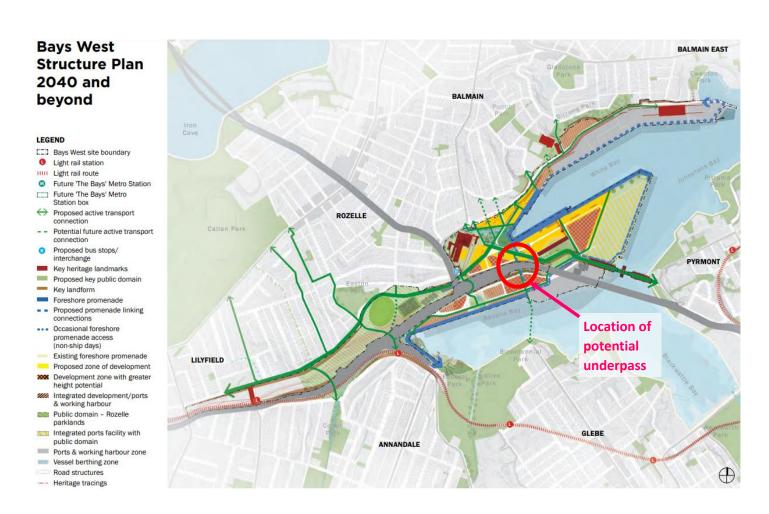


Figure 10: The Bays West Structure Plan from the 2021 Place Strategy. (Source: DPIE)

It is also important to include a shoulder lane on The Crescent under the light rail bridge so that a future bicycle path along The Crescent is not precluded and safe and direct connections can be provided to any bicycle paths or bike lanes that may be built on Johnston St.

Conclusion

Bicycle NSW looks forward to learning what Transport for NSW is planning for the Strategic Cycleway Corridors and being involved in the consultation, planning and design process.

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

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