

North Sydney Council
PO Box 12
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

8th June 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: draft Community Strategic Plan - North Sydney Vision 2040

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Community Strategic Plan for North Sydney.

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.

Although we support the overall vision and objectives of the draft Community Strategic Plan, Bicycle NSW is concerned about the **lack of specific goals for new cycling infrastructure**.

The North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028ⁱ identified that improved walking and cycling connections are a key priority for the community. Feedback from the community consistently indicates that many more people would walk and cycle when safer, more convenient and more attractive routes are available. During the engagement process for the review of the 2018 CSP in late 2021, 64% of respondents felt that 'supporting sustainable transport' was of highest priorityⁱⁱ. Cycling and public transport demand is growing at a significantly higher rate than private vehicle travel demandⁱⁱⁱ in North Sydney and the provision of associated infrastructure should be front-and-centre of all strategic planning documents.

It is important to point out that high-quality cycling and walking facilities would contribute to all five directions set out in the new draft Community Strategic Plan:

Direction One: Our Living Environment - investment in bike riding infrastructure is critical to support an active lifestyle for residents and visitors.

Direction Two: Our Built Infrastructure sets out that North Sydney's "infrastructure follows sustainable design principles and meets the needs of our growing population. Our community prioritises walking, cycling and public transport and people of all ages are comfortable riding in the area."

Direction Three: Our Innovative City - cycling can deliver sustainable tourism activity, strengthen the North Sydney CBD's competitiveness and identity, and improve urban amenity, liveability and public domain as projects to reallocate space for cycling can transform streetscapes.

Direction Four: Our Social Vitality – cycling connects communities, encourages healthy happy lifestyles and provides transport resilience. Active transport infrastructure also supports the use of prams and mobility devices to allow equitable access to urban amenities.

Direction Five: Our Civic Leadership - Council will aim to meet the aspirations of the community. The community has shown over and over that better active transport infrastructure is a huge priority.

It is good to see that strategies under *Direction Two: Our Built Infrastructure* include:

- Incentivise use of sustainable and innovative public transport
- Provide infrastructure to support sustainable, innovative and active transport
- Provide a connected walking and cycling network for people of all ages and abilities

However, there are no numerical target for mode shift or the delivery of active transport infrastructure and none of the 'transformative projects' relate to the cycling network.

Concerns:

There are currently nearly 79,100 residents in the North Sydney local government area and the population is expected to grow by 14% to around 89,900 by 2041^{iv}, placing increasing demands on an already stressed transport network. The roads are jammed with cars and buses are overflowing.

North Sydney 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 64.0 people/hectare^v, compared to 3.9 people/hectare across Greater Sydney^{vi}. This is reflected in a higher-than-average proportion of trips by walking and cycling (12% of journeys to work, compared with 4.8% for metropolitan Sydney) and lower car ownership 1.2 per household (1.7 for Greater Sydney)^{vii}.

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. North Sydney remains a very difficult area to traverse safely by bicycle. Bike North, a large and active Bicycle User Group, has worked hard over many years to advocate for better conditions for active travel. While some improvements have been made, the **Council has failed to prioritise safe infrastructure for walking and cycling**.

North Sydney Council, like many other neighbouring councils, has a long history of acknowledging the importance of sustainable transport in its policies and strategies. Unfortunately, this Council has not managed to deliver on these aspirations and North Sydney remains a black hole for safe cycling from the Sydney Harbour Bridge to the borders of Willoughby and Lane Cove. The priority routes (Figure 1) promised by the 2014 North Sydney Integrated Cycling Strategy^{viii} are mostly still lines on the map. Some effort has been made to provide a safe and comfortable route to the Mosman border. The protected bike path on Merlin, Ernest, Park, Sutherland and Young Streets is a great facility but it remains unconnected to North Sydney CBD and is therefore underutilised.

The recently released draft Operational Plan & Budget 2022/23 details the projects and services that Council will undertake in the first year of the Draft Delivery Program 2022-2026 to contribute to the achievement of the outcomes and strategies defined in the North Sydney Community Strategic Plan.

Unfortunately, the Council's commitments offer **no more bike infrastructure** than previous iterations of the budget. Why is there no mention of the West Street separated bicycle path which should be ready for exhibition and progression to the next stage? Why no mention of working together with Transport for NSW for a bike path along the Pacific Highway?

Appendix 2 of the draft CSP lists indicators that will help measure progress. The indicators hint at Council's desire to increase the proportion of residents and workers travelling to work using public or active transport, reduce the number of cars registered, increase the car share memberships and increase the number of

residents satisfied with walking and cycling paths (from 52% in 2020). **However, there no numerical targets to be achieved within the timeframe of Vision 2040.**



Figure 1: The priority routes outlined in the North Sydney Integrated Cycling Strategy, 2014 (Source: North Sydney Council / GTA Consultants)

Opportunities:

Bicycle NSW recognises that the historic urban fabric, enhanced by steep topography and waterways but 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 North Sydney now see and use best practice infrastructure as part of their daily trips and the call for improved facilities north of the Harbour Bridge gets louder. It is hoped that the new generation of North Sydney Councillors and 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^{ix}, walking and cycling 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^x](#) establishes a road user hierarchy that considers pedestrians first and private cars last (Figure 2). Multiple environmental and health benefits will flow from increased walking, cycling and public transport use. The streets will be more equitable for Sydney-siders 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.

Order of Road User Space Considerations



Figure 2:
Diagram expressing Transport for NSW's road user priority.
(Source: Transport for NSW)

As Lord Mayor Clover Moore sets out in **Sustainable Sydney 2030—2050 Continuing the Vision^{xii}**, the reconfiguration of streets to provide more space for walking and cycling does not only achieve transport objectives. Projects such as the Castlereagh Street upgrades are significant urban design proposals with a vision to deliver quieter, calmer, leafier streets that benefit every resident and visitor in the city's heart. There are inspiring plans for many more regeneration projects that will return street space to people in order to meet the ten strategic directions of Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050. These projects are priorities for Sydney's future planning.

It is essential to provide high-quality walking and cycling environments to maintain global competitiveness and reputation. A target has been set for 90% of trips to work in central Sydney to be by walking, cycling or public transport. In line with the Road User Space Allocation Policy and other State and local strategies, small delays to vehicle traffic must no longer prevent the delivery of safer, more efficient and more attractive active transport infrastructure.

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^{xiii}. Studies have shown that 70% of people in NSW either ride a bike now or would start to ride if safe infrastructure was provided^{xiv}.

The latest, and most exciting, document to be published by Transport for NSW under the direction of Minister Stokes is the [Eastern Harbour City Strategic Cycleway Corridors^{xv}](#). 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.

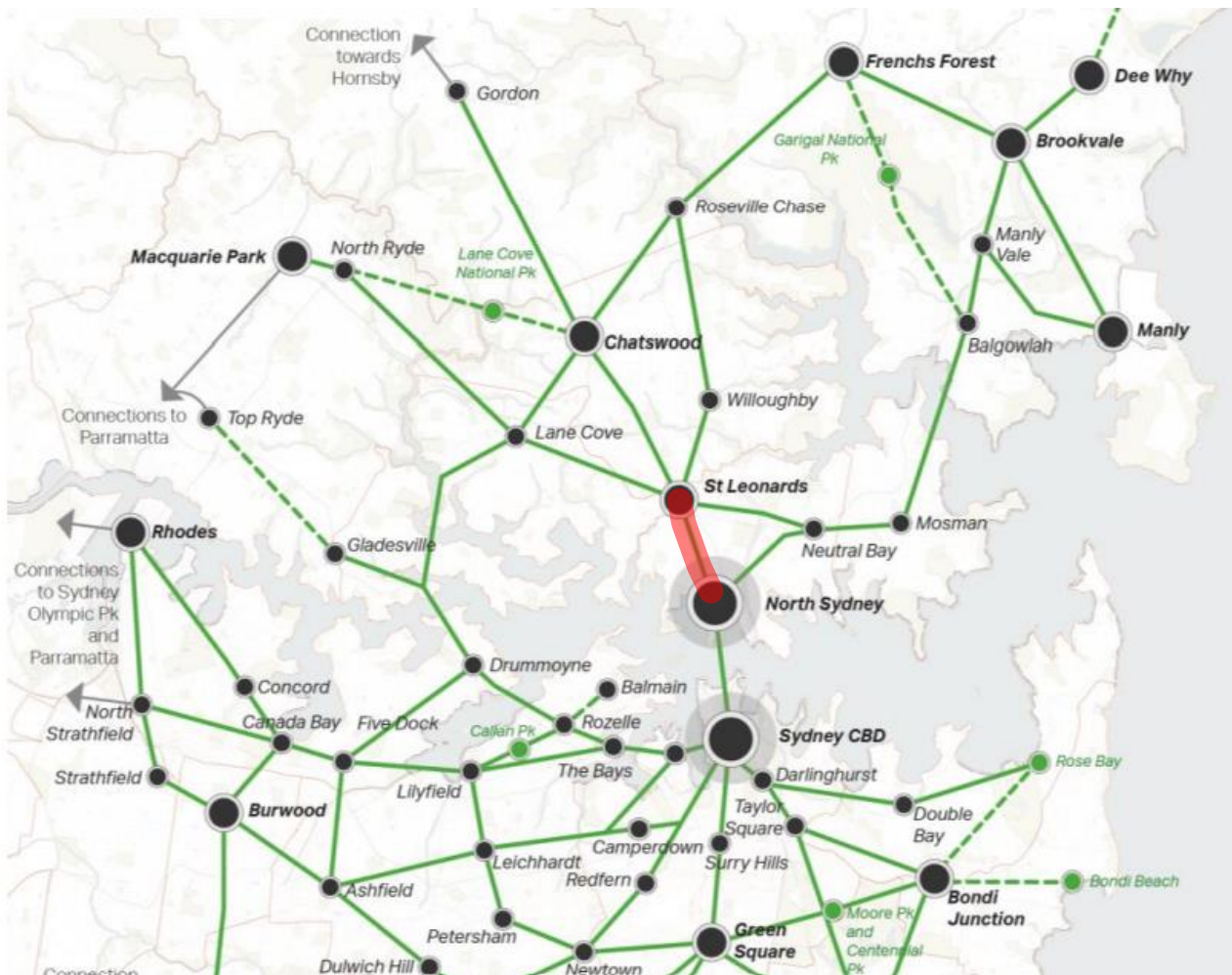


Figure 3: Extract from the new Strategic Cycleway Corridor network map. The North Sydney Connection is highlighted in red and identified as an 'immediate opportunity' (Source: TfNSW)

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 North Sydney Connection, linking the Milsons Point, North Sydney CBD and St Leonards to support forecast growth to the Sydney Harbour Bridge, is listed as one of these top five priorities for the NSW Government.**

Major infrastructure projects are underway in North Sydney and it is essential that the Council leverages maximum benefit from the upheaval and devastation caused by road and tunnel construction. The Warringah Freeway Upgrade project is required to review active transport infrastructure within at least 500m of the Warringah Freeway corridor in consultation with the councils, Bicycle NSW and Bike North. Capacity constraints or missing links will be identified, reported to the Planning Secretary for approval and implemented as part of the construction contract. The Western Harbour Tunnel will offer similar opportunities to ensure that active transport links are provided.

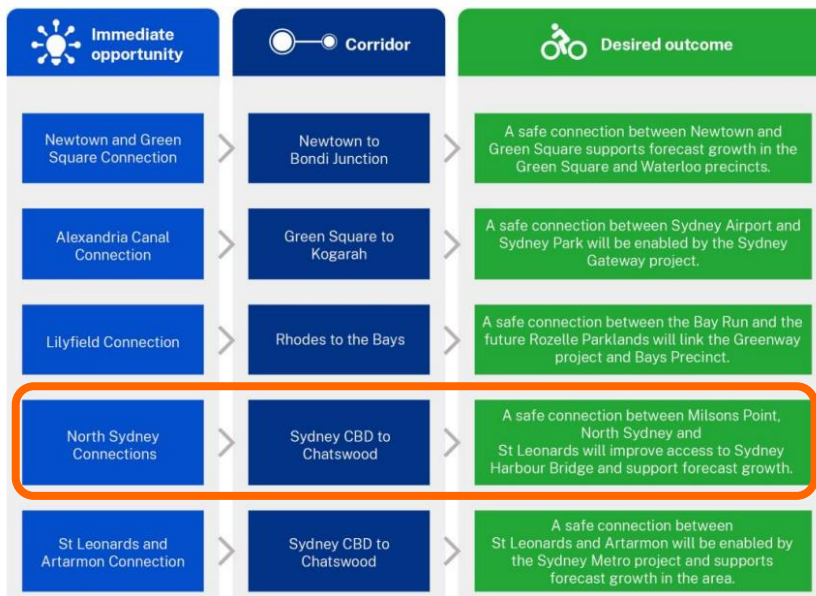


Figure 4: The five 'immediate opportunities' that the NSW Government will prioritise in the roll-out of the strategic cycle way corridors. North Sydney Connection is on the list. (Source: TfNSW)

Finally, the north ramp to the Harbour Bridge cycleway is undergoing detailed design. Transport for NSW has committed to the project and forecasts a steep rise in ridership in the North Sydney area, including many bike riders of all ages and abilities who have long been excluded from crossing the Harbour Bridge. It will be more important than ever to provide safe cycling infrastructure across the LGA to meet the needs of all the workers, visitors and residents travelling by bike.

Suggestions for Vision 2040:

- **Include a complete and coherent bicycle network as a 'transformational project'**

The existing Integrated Cycling Strategy identifies a series of priority routes that should be the focus of Council's attention. The West Street protected bicycle path is shovel-ready; options to reach St Leonards, Naremburn and Willoughby have been explored many times over the years; the route through St Leonards Park and across Falcon Street desperately needs attention; and connections to Neutral Bay and Mosman still involve dangerous mixed traffic conditions.

These main routes then need to be connected to every home, school and workplace via filtered low-speed, low-traffic local streets that prioritise people walking and riding.

- **Reconfigure the Pacific Highway as an urban boulevard with separated bicycle paths.**

The North Sydney Connection is a priority route identified in the Eastern Harbour City Strategic Cycleway Corridors. The NSW Government has a mandate to deliver a wide, safe and comfortable bicycle path between the Harbour Bridge ramp and St Leonards. Several possible routes could be investigated for the North Sydney Connection but a protected bicycle path within the road environment on the Pacific Highway is the preferred solution. Reallocating road space for dedicated cycling infrastructure, wider footpaths and more trees would not only provide the most direct, level and useful cycling route; it would also deliver a vastly better urban environment that will allow North Sydney to thrive in the future.

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.

- **Include targets for new infrastructure and cycling mode share**

Vague indicators to increase active and public transport mode share are not enough. As population grows, a substantial reduction in vehicle trips per person will be needed to ensure that North Sydney remains liveable. Please research best-practice mode shift ambitions from comparable urban area across Australia and overseas and set numerical targets to work towards.

The expansion of active transport infrastructure should also be set against a target for new kilometres delivered so that Council can work with a clear mandate from the community and report on progress.

General recommendations:

- **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^{xvi}, separated bicycle paths will allow 70% of local residents to consider journeys by bike (Figure 5).

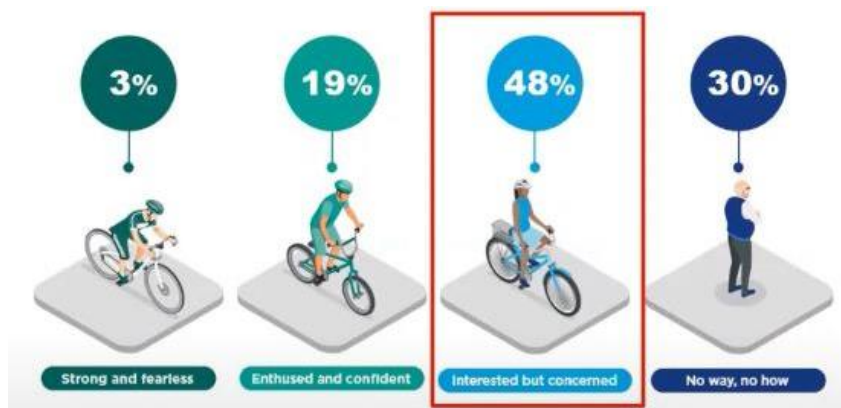


Figure 5:
Four general categories of comfort levels for cycling as transportation.
(Source: North Sydney Council)

The Bicycle NSW *Build it for Everyone* policy pillar^{xvii} 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%^{xviii} of people who are 'interested but concerned', from making the switch to bike riding.

Bicycle NSW does not generally support 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

North Sydney 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 infrastructure^{xx}. 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^{xx} (see Figure 6). 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.

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

It is also recognised that a small percentage of 'strong and fearless' 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.

Figure 6: 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 dogs, in-line skaters etc.).
3. May be part of a principal bicycle network in some jurisdictions.

- **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 North Sydney households had no car and this figure can be expected to increase^{xxii}. In 2019, membership of local car share schemes grew by 20%, showing a huge appetite for new models of vehicle use.

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^{xxvi} 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^{xxvii}.

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 North Sydney Council uses pop-up methods to trial separated cycle paths. Moveable lane barriers can be installed quickly to create stretches of protected path (Figure 7) 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.

Conclusion:

A commitment to new active transport infrastructure will deliver innumerable benefits to the residents and workers of North Sydney. 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 NSW looks forward to working with North Sydney 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 through our connections with politicians, Transport for NSW and neighbouring metropolitan councils.

Yours faithfully,



Sarah Bickford

Active Transport Planner
Bicycle NSW



Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer
Bicycle NSW

ⁱ North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028.

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