

Attn: Antonio Villacorta
Senior Traffic and Transport Planner
ARUP
Barrack Place, Level 5
151 Clarence Street
Sydney NSW 2000

20th May 2022

Dear Antonio,

RE: Fort Street Public School

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the School Transport Plan for Fort St Public School.

Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW for over forty-five years, and has over 30 affiliated local Bicycle User Groups. Our mission is to ‘make NSW better for all bicycle riders’, and we support improvements to facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. We advocate for improved bicycle infrastructure that supports the safety and comfort of pedestrians and bicycle riders from 8 to 80 years of age. Supporting active transport in schools through safe and effective infrastructure is essential to building a society of healthy active adults.

The traffic calming strategy plan for Fort Street Public School (Figure 1) does not deliver on the objectives set out in the School Transport Plan to encourage sustainable transport, prioritise walking and cycling, reduce reliance on cars and tackle childhood obesity (Section 1.5, p. 2). Instead, a series of traffic calming interventions have been suggested that will exacerbate risk for people riding or walking, and, as a result, encourage vehicular traffic.

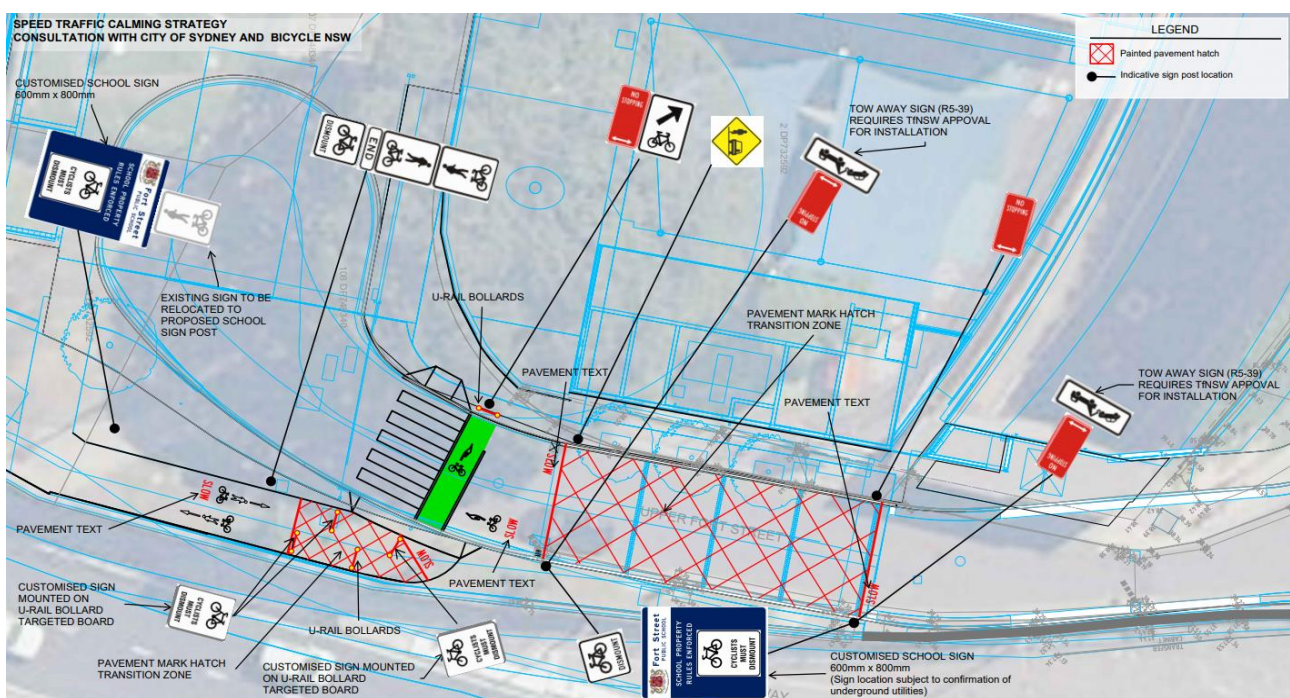


Figure 1: Traffic calming strategy at Upper Fort Street, Dec 2021. (Source: Arup)

The proposal for a series of 4 u-rail bollards blocking the cycleway and signs requiring cyclists to dismount are completely unacceptable and unworkable in the location shown.

- Chicanes and bollards are unsafe. There are high risks to cyclists in relation to the use of chicanes or bollards which are generally prescribed for the protection of sensitive infrastructure from traffic intrusion. Austroads Part (6A section 10.1) considers their use in the context of railway crossings. The unnecessary use of traffic terminals on cycleways risks serious injury to bicycle riders, and the strong possibility of litigation.
- Chicanes increase congestion. Forcing riders to come to a dead stop and dismount is inconvenient and raises the risk of collision and conflict. This is a critical consideration given southbound cyclist traffic at peak hour will increase substantially once the northern ramp to the Harbour Bridge Cycleway is delivered as promised.
- Maneuvering around chicanes is often impossible for personal mobility devices, cargo bikes and large prams. Wheelchairs and mobility scooters will be particularly challenged. We doubt the design is DDA compliant.
- The Harbour Bridge Cycleway is an important **regional route** and one of the busiest in Sydney. On a recent weekday peak hour 8-9am (on 3rd May), there were 360 bikes going south (6 per minute) and 185 bikes going north. There were 3152 trips throughout the day (Source: City of Sydney). Austroads Part 6A sets out the design speeds and acceptable treatments for regional cycle routes. Barriers forcing bike riders to stop dismount are not compliant. And if commuters have to wait while a parent with a cargo bike tries to navigate the chicanes, queues will spill into Upper Fort Street and chaos will ensue.

The 40km/h speed limit for Upper Fort Street school zone is unsafe and must be lowered.

- The Austroads Guide to Traffic Management Part 8 considers high pedestrian activity zones where the speed limits are reduced to 30kmph. These are prescribed for areas of high activity such as schools. Reducing the limit from 40km/h to 30km/h is proven to reduce risk to vulnerable road users. Pedestrians are safer and traffic still flows.
- The pedestrian and cycle crossing must be raised to further reduce vehicle speeds in the area.
- This section of Upper Fort Street could be treated as a shared zone with even lower speed limits.
- Whilst there is a 'kiss and ride' zone on Upper Fort St, how is Fort Street School catering for parents dropping off and picking up children by bike? The access point for bikes and pedestrians from the cycleway appears narrow and will get congested, with safety horribly compromised by the passing commuters.
- Cyclist and pedestrians accessing the school will be routed around the back of the loop of Upper Fort Street, effectively making it more convenient to arrive by car. How does this square with the stated aims of encouraging physical activity?

We urge the Department of Education to return to first principles at Upper Fort Street and consider aspects of place, not just movement, and prioritise people, not vehicles. These principles inform all current TfNSW infrastructure projects and aim to encourage active transport at a cultural level to improve the primary health of participants through movement, walkability and livability of place.

Schools are highlighted in these guides, because this is where culture is shaped. It is inevitable that safe pathways to schools, supported by 30km/h speed limits, will soon be ubiquitous. Australia and New Zealand's active transport advocacy groups have made safe routes to schools and reduced speed limits (on local streets) their priority. Both were identified as 'the most achievable goals for active transport in NSW' at the 2022 Mobility Summit organised by TfNSW and supported by the NSW Minister for Active Transport. It is in the interests of DET to adopt these values early rather than later.

Bicycle NSW looks forward to being consulted on the redesign of the traffic calming strategy for Fort Street.

Any form of transport planning needs to take the long view. Austroads: 2.3 Integrated and Multi-modal Planning states that *'bicycle planning needs to consider that transport planning will be at its most effective if it is integrated with other types of planning.'*

We understand that the 'solutions' shown in the plan are intended to work with the existing cycleway from the Harbour Bridge to Kent Street. In future, a fully separated cycleway with a new spiral ramp is proposed to be delivered by TfNSW which would separate people riding bikes from pedestrian and vehicles on Upper Fort Street (Figure 2)

Bicycle NSW has advocated that TfNSW build the easier sections of the design, between the existing bridge over the Cahill spiral access road and the Harbour Bridge cycleway entrance, at the same time at the school re-construction. This would ensure separated paths from the outset. Please advise us if there has been any progress on this.



Figure 2: Artist's impression of the proposed southern access ramp (Source: TfNSW)

Yours sincerely,

Francis O'Neill

Head of Advocacy
Bicycle NSW

Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer
Bicycle NSW