

General Manager
Cumberland City Council
PO Box 42
Merrylands NSW 2160

12th September 2022

Dear Cumberland City Council,

Re: Prospect Pipeline Corridor Strategic Master Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Cumberland Council's draft master plan for the Prospect Pipeline Corridor.

Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW for forty-seven years, and has over 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.

The Prospect Pipeline Corridor Strategic Master Plan presents an excellent vision for the future development of the corridor, creating a safe and inviting 16km off-road active transport link from Prospect Reservoir to Potts Hill.

The master plan builds upon the existing projects along the Lower Prospect Canal Reserve to improve the quality of open space for recreation and increase urban greening, while maintaining security for the pipeline assets. Future projects at each end will eventually connect the Western Sydney Parklands and the Cooks River with a continuous cycleway, a major element of Sydney's Green Grid.

We congratulate Cumberland Council for working closely with multiple stakeholders and landowners, including Transport for NSW, Sydney Water and neighbouring Councils, to achieve consensus on the best way forward for this vital open space corridor. Bicycle NSW is very impressed by the high-level ambitions set out in the master plan which form the basis for a great number of exciting projects to benefit the local community.

Community and stakeholder endorsement at this stage will allow Council to develop critical elements of the corridor in detail, with a focus on key bridges and links to the local path networks. It is essential that Council has 'shovel-ready' projects when active transport funding becomes available. This is an increasingly important pre-requisite for NSW Government support.

Bicycle NSW wishes to stress the significance of the Prospect Pipeline Corridor for the development of an integrated **regional bicycle network**. Not only will the cycleway support local journeys to work, school, shops and public transport, but its strategic location (Figure 1) in Greater Sydney will help facilitate longer trips for commuting and recreation.

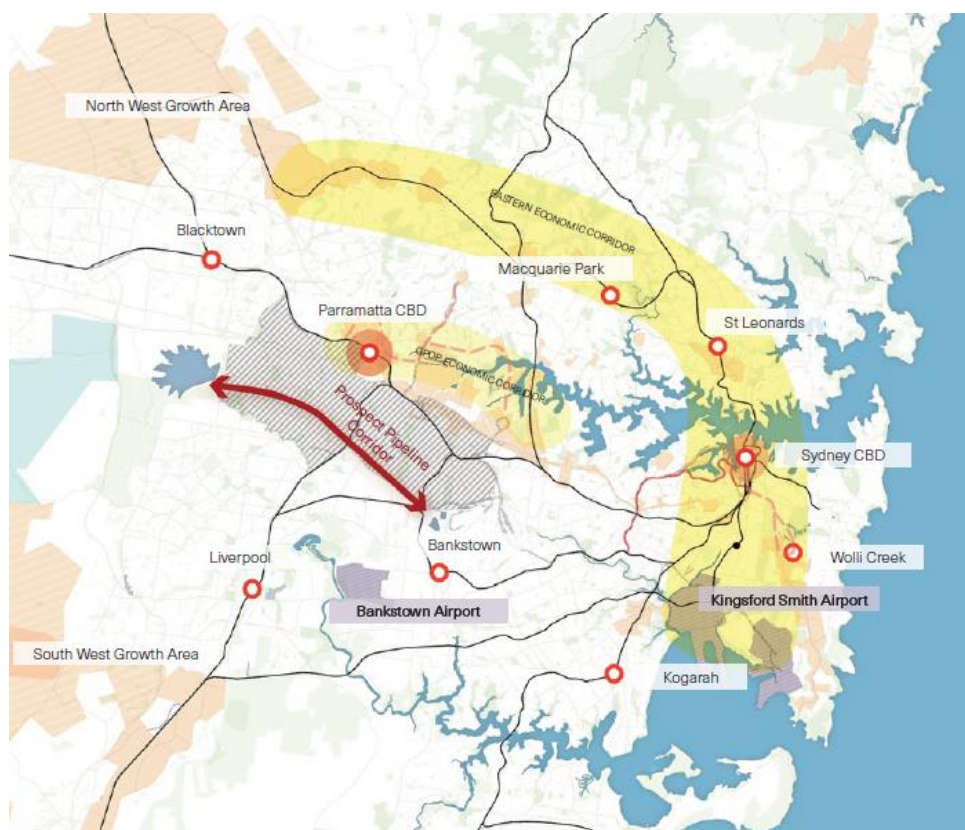


Figure 1: Locating the Prospect Pipeline Corridor in Greater Sydney (Source: Cumberland Council / SJB Architects)

We have consulted with local Bicycle User Group CAMWEST to better understand priorities and issues for bicycle riders in the area. CAMWEST has prepared its own submission, drawing on local knowledge and expertise to make detailed comments on elements of the proposals. Bicycle NSW aligns with their advocacy regarding path upgrades, bridges and short connections that would join up existing shared path infrastructure to create a much more useful network for residents of all ages and abilities.

It is important to note that the Prospect Pipeline Corridor contributes to the long-planned **Bay to Mountains** concept of a figure-of-eight shared user path (SUP) joining Sydney Olympic Park with Bankstown Velodrome, Fairfield City Farm, Cooks River and Prospect Reservoir. The Bay to Mountains loop has been at the centre of CAMWEST advocacy efforts for 25 years. A 2019 survey showed that it is 74% built, with 22 km of SUP still required. Bicycle NSW supports the completion of the route to Austroads standard for its entire length, creating a lasting asset for both local residents and cyclists from across the city. Iconic bicycle infrastructure that links key destinations will encourage residents to use active transport but also attract visitors and stimulate the local economy.

Opportunities:

Cumberland is one of the most culturally, socially and economically diverse communities in Sydney. 66% of residents speak a language other than English at home and 60% were born overseas (compared to 29% and 35% for NSW as a whole)ⁱ. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance of open space and recreation facilities while exposing the inequality of access in lower socio-economic areas. Areas such as Cumberland, where the average weekly household income of \$1678 is well below the Sydney average (\$2077)ⁱⁱ have particular need for high-quality parks to enable both active and passive recreation.

In 2016, Cumberland recorded a population of 226,000. This figure will likely increase by 35% to 304,800 by 2036. Merrylands and Wentworthville are expected to experience the largest population growthⁱⁱⁱ.

Congestion is an escalating problem. To maintain lifestyle amenity as population grows, Council will need to balance transport options and ensure that the good access is provided to important destinations for all road users. It is imperative not to continue with a business-as-usual approach to transport where a high proportion of trips are made by private car.

Cycling trips have scope for significant growth as two major destinations for work, Merrylands and Parramatta, are within cycling distance for many people. An upswing in travel by bikes has occurred recently due to COVID-19 responses, the expansion of the active travel network, individual reactions to climate change, a surge in online delivery services and the growing popularity of e-bikes. In addition, State policies to address climate change and urban liveability will add to pressures on councils to secure a much bigger modal share for walking and cycling. Improving active and public transport infrastructure and increasing the take up of people walking, cycling and catching buses and trains, will ultimately reduce the number of people choosing to drive.

Further impetus to reduce car use and encourage active travel comes from research published by the Western Sydney Diabetes alliance showing that more than half of Western Sydney's population is overweight and at risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The incidence rises by 1% annually^{iv}. Western Sydney is described as a *diabetogenic* environment where the local economy and built environment make it difficult for the residents to engage in a healthy lifestyle. There is an urgent need to change the environment in which people live, work, travel and play to address the social determinants of poor health. Active transport infrastructure in Cumberland will help reverse inactivity and improve public health.

Another critical benefit of more active travel infrastructure is the mitigation of the **urban heat island** effect. Western Sydney is particularly susceptible to extreme heat events which affect residents' ability to work, study, sleep and exercise^v. Bicycle NSW supports the efforts of WSROC to increase city resilience to a hotter climate and endorses WSROC's Urban Heat Planning Toolkit.^{vi} By focusing development on parks, open spaces and tree-lined shared paths rather than roads and car parks, Cumberland will contribute to creating cooler cities and healthy environment for all citizens.

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

Such ambitions are bolstered by the Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000^{viii}, published by Transport for NSW in early 2021. This policy establishes a road user hierarchy that considers pedestrians first and private cars last (Figure 2), and provides local and State governments with a **powerful lever** to prioritise road space for active transport.

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^{ix}. 30 strategic corridors have been identified for eastern Sydney, making up approximately 250 km of cycle network. 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.

Order of Road User Space Considerations

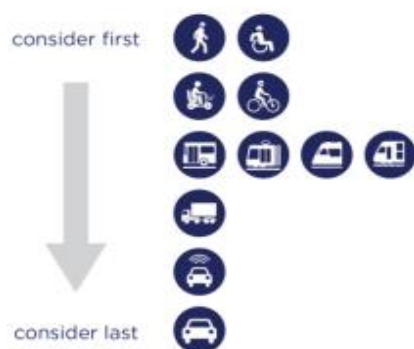


Figure 2:
Diagram expressing Transport for NSW's road user priority.
(Source: Transport for NSW)

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. The Central River network will pick up Prospect Pipeline Corridor.

The Bicycle NSW *Build it for Everyone* policy pillar^x sets a standard that bicycle infrastructure should be fit for eight-year-old children or elders to ride on. The Prospect Pipeline active transport link will provide safe cycling infrastructure that is completely separated from vehicles and caters for riders of all ages and abilities. According to the best practice 'cycling segmentation' model, developed in Portland USA to identify the type and needs of existing and potential bike ride riders^{xi}, such cycle paths will allow 70% of local residents to consider journeys by bike (Figure 3). The corridor has some steep inclines but the increasing use of e-bikes and other micromobility devices will ensure that active transport options are accessible to all residents.

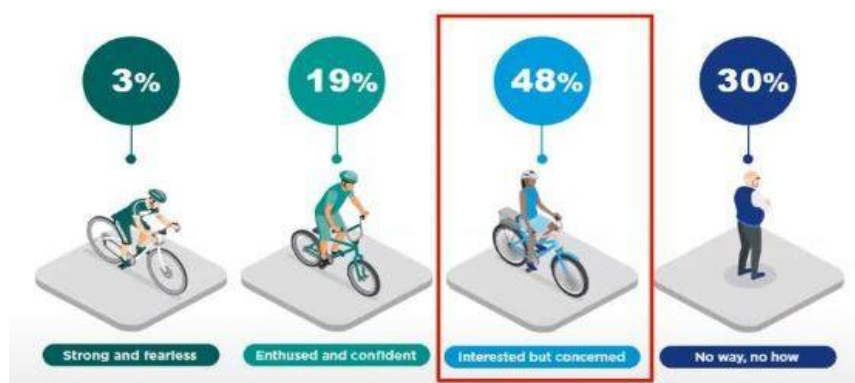


Figure 3:
Four general categories of comfort levels for cycling as transportation.
Source: North Sydney Council

We have reviewed the master plan alongside relevant strategic plans for Cumberland LGA to ensure the Prospect Pipeline proposals maximise opportunities to improve the active transport network. The master plan aligns with:

Transport for NSW Future Transport Strategy (2022)^{xii} which is hot off the press and commits to an extensive regional cycle network in Greater Sydney, reduced reliance on cars, development of blue and green infrastructure, and a more equitable use of public space to create better conditions for walking and cycling.

Greater Sydney Region Plan, A Metropolis of Three Cities (2018)^{xiii} contains 10 directions to create “three cities where most residents live within 30 minutes of their jobs, education and health facilities, services and great places”. Increased liveability will be delivered by focusing on walkability, with a network of green corridors for active transport, as set out in Objective 32. Cumberland is located in the Central River City.

Sydney Green Grid, 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 Green Grid for the Cumberland area is shown in Figure 4.

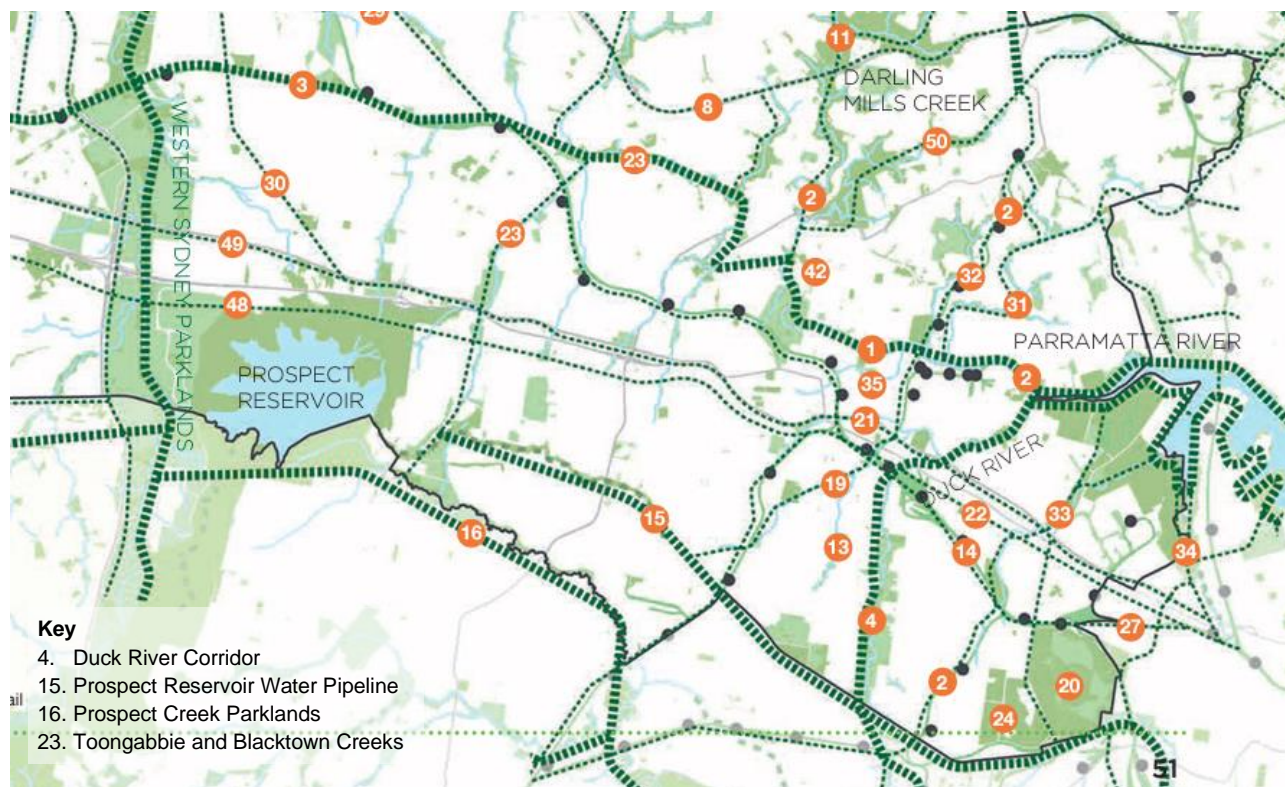


Figure 4:
Extract from the Green Grid showing project opportunities in the Cumberland area (Source: Tyrrell Studio / NSW Government Architect)

The Green Grid sets out an overarching vision for the development of important active transport connections in Greater Sydney, reinforces blue and green biodiversity corridors, offers multiple recreational opportunities and acts as a focal point for community and culture. The Prospect Reservoir Water Pipeline is a key project opportunity.

Central District Plan (2018) which aims to improve the 30-minute access to jobs within the area. There is a commitment to increase tree canopy and develop Green Grid Connections (Planning Priority C16) with two Cumberland routes highlighted as priorities – the Duck River Corridor and the Prospect Reservoir Pipeline Corridor.

Cumberland 2030 Local Strategic Planning Statement which expresses an aim to encourage walking, cycling and public transport use as Planning Priority 2 and reinforces the Central District Plan's key actions of developing the Duck River and the Prospect Reservoir Pipeline corridors and implementing urban cooling through increased canopy cover in Planning Priorities 11-16.

Highlights

The Prospect Pipeline Corridor master plan report is a comprehensive and well-conceived document that aspires to a very high-quality outcome.

Bicycle NSW is delighted by many elements of the proposals including:

- the ambition to provide a wonderfully wide 5.25m path that separates people walking and cycling. Such a facility will allow faster cyclists to overtake, accommodate future population growth and ensure that pedestrian comfort is never compromised.
- new public facilities such as rest stops, toilets, barbecues and exercise stations to improve amenity and attract visitors of all ages and abilities.
- the addition of lighting to allow residents to use the corridor for exercise and transport in the evenings and early mornings.
- ideas for celebrating heritage items and unique local landmarks, such as the listed Boothtown Aqueduct dating from 1883.
- four new walking and cycling bridges, including a bold proposal to span dangerous Woodville Road and two smaller bridges that cross the pipeline and provide access to the south.
- new linkages with the regionally-significant Duck River and Prospect Creek corridors
- a fine network of connections to town centres, local destinations, schools and open spaces.
- streetscape upgrades to create safer, shadier streets for walking and cycling in the vicinity of the corridor, with a focus on the streets surrounding schools. There are many schools adjacent to the corridor and much thought has been given to providing children with easy access to the Prospect Pipeline active transport link, supporting their health and independence.
- a clear intention to reallocate road space to provide separate facilities for walking and cycling where local connections use the road reserve
- numerous 'recreational loops' to support informal daily use of the corridor by the area's diverse community.
- extensive new landscaping and tree planting to help achieve the NSW Government's target of 40% tree canopy cover in suburban areas to combat urban heat.
- new wayfinding and signage to improve accessibility, support visitors by clearly articulating and communicating the most efficient and safe route, celebrate indigenous and industrial heritage, and create a 'branded' identity for the corridor that engages new and existing visitors

Some suggestions

Bicycle NSW would like to make a series of recommendations to inform the future planning and detailed design of the Prospect Pipeline Corridor:

- **Inclusive design**

The active transport infrastructure must accommodate a range of mobility options such as cargo bikes and disability scooters. Cargo bikes will increasingly be used for deliveries and have potential to play a huge 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 to enable 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^{xiv}.

Adequate path width is key, and it is important to consider turning radius, dropped kerbs and ramps and the design of modal filters to ensure that non-standard bikes not excluded from the network. Chicanes and bollards must be avoided. Austroads Guide to Traffic Design, Walking and Cycling: 6A, Section 7.5^{xv} suggests numerous alternative interventions to prevent vehicles entering the cycleway.

- **Lighting**

It is important to allow access to the paths after dark but we appreciate that there are heritage and environmental concerns. Explore ways to keep light levels low and consider a sensor-controlled system to ensure that lighting is only on when needed.

- **Design excellence**

It is critical to invest in high-quality, attractive public toilets, shade structures, seating areas and landscaping to ensure that new interventions complement heritage elements of the corridor.

- **At-grade road crossings**

We support the construction of elegant new bridges that separate cyclists and pedestrians from vehicles and celebrate active travel. However, new bridges are very expensive and the wait for funding should not hold up the delivery of the active transport link. At-grade road crossings should be considered to expediate the development of the corridor in the short term. There may be minor impacts on traffic flow but, in line with the Road User Space Allocation Policy^{xvi}, the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists must be prioritised over vehicle speed and convenience.

- **Drainage**

Sections of the existing shared path experience flooding after heavy rainfall. Drainage issues need to be addressed during any future upgrade works. CAMWEST advocates can assist with locating problem areas.

- **More bridges**

A bridge over the Prospect Highway has been the subject of local advocacy since the road was built 20 years ago, cutting into the hill and interrupting the shared path. Cyclists must descend to road level, cross at lights and climb the hill again to continue their journeys. Although not as important as the Woodville Road bridge, a bridge at this location should form part of any long-term strategic master plan for the Prospect Pipeline Corridor. Additional crossing points over the pipeline should also be included in high-level plans at this stage to maximise future north-south connections to existing and emerging residential, commercial and recreational areas.

- **Pedestrian- and cyclist-priority at 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.

- **Cooks River connection**

Finally, we ask that Council continues to have open and progressive conversations with stakeholders about creating a safe and direct active transport link to the Cooks River. It is important to ensure that planning for the ends of the Prospect Pipeline Corridor does not preclude future connections east and west. A continuous, off-road cycleway between Wolli Creek and Western Sydney Parklands will unlock transformative sustainable mobility options for the next generation of Sydney-siders.

Conclusion:

The Prospect Pipeline Corridor represents a vital section of the emerging regional network of active transport corridors across Greater Sydney. Safe infrastructure to support walking and cycling will benefit everyone in the community, reducing congestion, noise and pollution while improving public health and providing more equitable access to employment, businesses, services and public transport. Cycle paths 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, well-connected cycleways works to induce more people to travel actively^{xvii}.

Bicycle NSW looks forward to working with Cumberland Council and other stakeholders to progress the detailed design of the corridor. Please reach out to Bicycle NSW with any questions or help needed. If requested, we would be delighted to assist with advocating for cycling infrastructure in the LGA through our connections with politicians, Transport for NSW and neighbouring metropolitan councils.

Yours faithfully,



Sarah Bickford

Bike Planner
Bicycle NSW



Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer
Bicycle NSW

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- ⁱⁱⁱ Cumberland 2030 – Local Strategic Planning Statement. <https://www.cumberland.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/inline-files/cumberland-2030-our-local-strategic-planning-statement.pdf>
- ^{iv} Western Sydney Diabetes. 2022. Western Sydney hotspot. <https://westernsydneydiabetes.com.au/western-sydney/western-sydney-hotspot/>
- ^v Climate Council. (2021, Jan 28). Untouchable playgrounds: urban heat and the future of Western Sydney. <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/urban-heat-island-effect-western-sydney/>
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