

North Sydney Council  
PO Box 12  
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

11<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Re: West Street Cycling, Walking and Streetscape Upgrades – Stage One**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the plans for West Street, North Sydney.

Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW for forty-seven 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.

**We strongly support the proposal to construct a separated cycleway on West Street.**

The new cycleway will deliver the small section of Priority Route 1: Sydney Harbour Bridge to Cammeray identified in the 2014 North Sydney Integrated Cycling Strategy shown in Figure 1. It is an excellent first step for a long-awaited project to create a safe route from the Harbour Bridge to North Shore suburbs.

The project includes 100m of segregated bi-directional bicycle path between Pacific Highway and Ridge St, six new street trees and landscaped raingardens, new raised pedestrian and cycling crossing at the junctions of Ridge Street and Church St and a continuous footpath across the intersection of West Street and Church Lane.

The West Street Stage 1 cycleway provides a direct connection into the Ridge Street bi-directional separated bicycle path which was completed by Council in 2019 and improves safety for cyclists who use the shared on-road routes on Church Lane and Church Street.

The Bicycle NSW *Build it for Everyone* policy pillar<sup>i</sup> sets a standard that bicycle infrastructure should be fit for eight year old children or elders to ride on. We are delighted that the proposals comply with our recommendations for set out in our June 2022 submission to the [draft Community Strategic Plan](#):

- The cycleway is designed to comply with the current best practice set out in the 2021 Cycleway Design Toolbox<sup>ii</sup> and the 2017 Austroads Cycling Aspects of Austroads Guide (AP-G88-17).
- The bi-directional bicycle path separates bike riders from vehicles and pedestrians
- The upgraded public realm and new landscaping will improve amenity and pedestrian safety.
- Additional trees will augment the tree canopy in North Sydney, essential is urban heat intensifies due to the changing climate.
- Speed limits will be reduced, with narrower lanes and raised crossings and intersections further helping to calm traffic.
- Pedestrians and cyclists are prioritised at the intersections with raised crossings that slow cars and incorporate a cycle crossing so people riding bikes are not required to dismount.

It is important to re-iterate the benefits of segregated bi-directional bicycle paths 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



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

## Strategic importance:

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<sup>iii</sup>, 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<sup>iv</sup>, compared to 3.9 people/hectare across Greater Sydney<sup>v</sup>. 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)<sup>vi</sup>.

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.

The priority routes (Figure 1) promised by the 2014 North Sydney Integrated Cycling Strategy<sup>vii</sup> 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 North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028<sup>viii</sup> 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 priority<sup>ix</sup>. Cycling and public transport demand is growing at a significantly higher rate than private vehicle travel demand<sup>x</sup> in North Sydney.

High-quality cycling and walking facilities would contribute to all five directions set out in the new Community Strategic Plan, Vision 2040<sup>xi</sup>: *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." Strategies under *Direction Two* 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

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 Minister for Infrastructure, Cities and Active Transport, Rob Stokes MP, set out in a recent speech<sup>xii</sup>, 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.

Such ambitions are bolstered by the *Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000*<sup>xiii</sup>, published by Transport for NSW in early 2021. This policy establishes a road user hierarchy that considers pedestrians first and private cars last, and provides local and State governments with a **powerful lever** to prioritise road space for active transport.

The reconfiguration of streets to provide more space for walking and cycling does not only achieve transport objectives. Projects such as West Street are significant urban design proposals with a vision to deliver quieter, calmer, leafier streets that benefit every resident and visitor.

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<sup>xiv</sup>. Studies have shown that 70% of people in NSW either ride a bike now or would start to ride if safe infrastructure was provided<sup>xv</sup>.

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<sup>xvi</sup>. 30 strategic corridors have been identified for eastern Sydney, making up approximately 250 km of cycle network (Figure 2). 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.

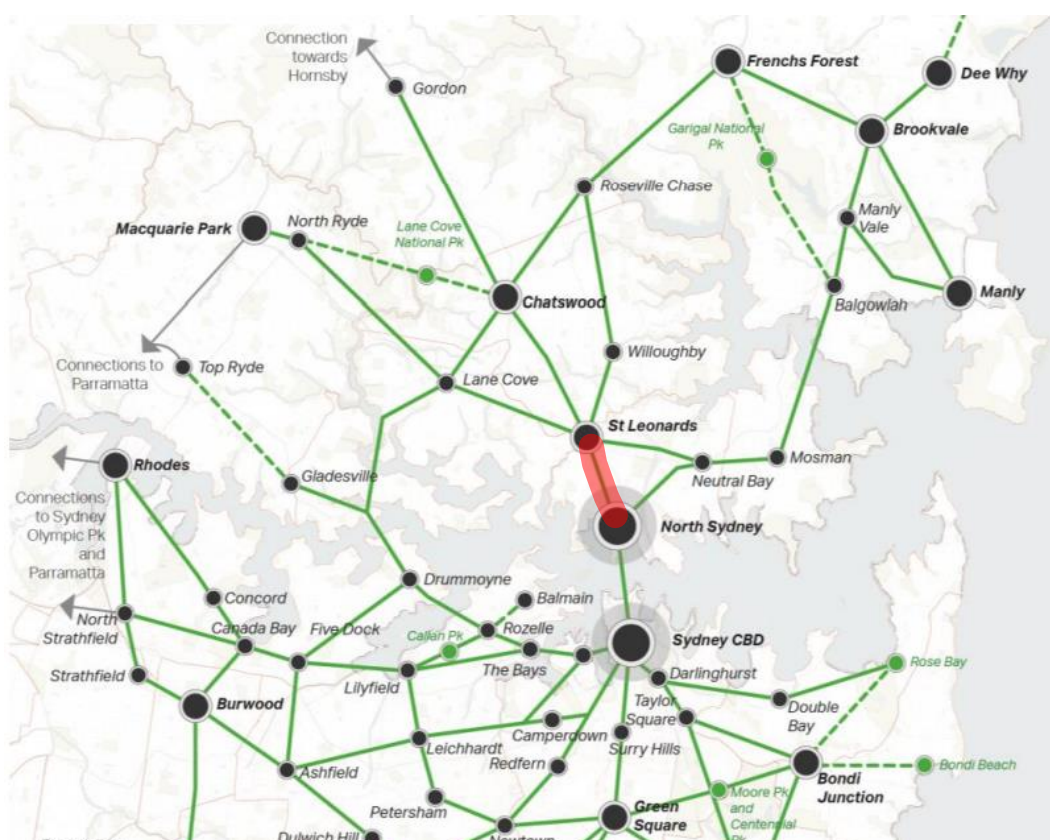


Figure 2: Extract from the new Strategic Cycleway Corridor network map. The North Sydney Connection is highlighted in red and identified as an 'immediate opportunity' (Source: TfNSW)

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. The **North Sydney Connection**, linking 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.

## Recommendations:

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

Having identified the North Sydney Connection as a priority route, 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 between the Alfred Street underpass and West Street is an important element of most options. Reallocating road space for dedicated cycling infrastructure, wider footpaths and more trees would not only provide a 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.

- **Deliver West Street Stage 2 and 3 as soon as possible.**

On 26 September 2022, Council resolved to progress the concept designs of Stages 2 and 3 while implementing Stage 1. The continuation of West Street cycleway to Cammeray is critical to plans to finally link the Harbour Bridge to the shared path that runs alongside the Gore Hill Freeway from Merrenburn Avenue to Lane Cove, Epping Road and beyond. The connection from West Street to the start of the Gore Hill SUP is more difficult but should be delivered as part of the major road infrastructure projects underway in the area, as required by the *Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy CP21001*<sup>xvii</sup>

- **Reduce speed limits to 30km/h on West Street and other local roads in North Sydney CBD**

30 km/h has been shown as an optimal speed limit to allow people driving and cycling to share the road safely<sup>xviii</sup> 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<sup>xix</sup>.

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<sup>xx</sup>.

- **Ensure the cycleway is inclusive and accommodates riders of all ages and abilities**

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<sup>xxi</sup>.

- **Consider more landscaped beds between car parking spaces.**

The new landscaped rain gardens are limited to the main intersection where they will reduce kerb radii, slow turning cars improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists. There is scope to introduce more landscaped beds on either side of the driveways, to contain the parking spaces and provide additional amenity and storm water retention. Some possible locations are marked in Figure 3. The inset image shows high-quality landscaping installed by North Sydney Council at Sutherland Street in Neutral Bay.



Figure 3: Possible locations for additional landscaped beds (Source: North Sydney Council / Bicycle NSW) Inset image shows landscaping alongside the separated bicycle on Sutherland Street (Source: Google Maps)

## Conclusion:

New active transport infrastructure will deliver innumerable benefits to the residents and workers of North Sydney. Improved walking and cycling facilities 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.

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.

After 4 decades of advocacy, 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.

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

<sup>i</sup> Bicycle NSW (2018) Our Policy, [online as at 24/2/2021] <https://bicyclensw.org.au/our-policy/>

<sup>ii</sup> Cycleway Design Toolbox: designing for cycling and micromobility. Transport for NSW. <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2021/Cycleway-Design-Toolbox-Web.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> North Sydney Council. 2022. Draft Community Strategic Plan – North Sydney Vision 2040. <https://yoursay.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/72233/widgets/371601/documents/231175>

<sup>iv</sup> North Sydney Council. 2022. Draft Community Strategic Plan – North Sydney Vision 2040. <https://yoursay.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/72233/widgets/371601/documents/231175>

<sup>v</sup> City of Sydney. 2020, April 9. The city at a glance. <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/guides/city-at-a-glance>

<sup>vi</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016. Quickstats for North Sydney LGA. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2016/LGA15950>

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- <sup>xii</sup> Stokes, Rob. 2022, Feb 10. Footpaths and cycleways are an act of democracy – ask Steph. Fifth Estate. <https://thefifthestate.com.au/urbanism/planning/footpaths-and-cycleways-are-an-act-of-democracy-ask-steph/>
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- <sup>xiv</sup> PIA. 2013, Sept 3. <https://www.planning.org.au/documents/item/5578>
- <sup>xv</sup> Byron Shire Bike Plan. 2019. <https://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/hptrim/traffic-and-transport-planning-medium-and-long-term-development-transport-strategies-2013-2020/byron-shire-10-year-bike-plan-2019-final-adopted-plan-only-without-appendix-24.2017.50.1.pdf>
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