

Brigid Kelly
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24th November 2022

Dear Brigid,

Re: draft Inner West Cycling Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft version of the new Inner West Cycling Strategy.

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.

Bicycle NSW fully supports the Inner West Cycling Strategy and its ambitions to make the Inner West one of the best LGAs in NSW for riding and walking. The strategy is grounded on excellent analysis of current trends and future needs in the Inner West. It focuses on delivering a *safe* network for bike riders of *all* ages and abilities and explains how reconfiguring streets for safer cycling will create a better urban environment for *everyone*.

In April 2022, we submitted [detailed feedback](#) to inform the development of the Cycling Strategy and yet-to-be published action plan. We are delighted to see that **many of our recommendations are deeply embedded in the 6 priorities of the draft strategy.**

These include a clearly stated intention to:

- Ensure bike riders are separated from vehicles and pedestrians on most streets
- Avoid shared paths in the road-related environment, except where needed to fill missing links and expedite delivery of an integrated network.
- Use quietway or 'bicycle boulevard' treatments on appropriate residential streets with a range of traffic calming interventions applied to ensure very slow vehicle speeds and low traffic volumes.
- Future-proof cycleways and shared paths by allowing for increased demand at the outset. 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.
- Collaborate with Transport for NSW to implement the Eastern Harbour City Strategic Cycleway Corridorsⁱ.

- Advocate for NSW Government to adhere to its excellent plans and policies that aim to decarbonise the transport system, improve liveability and prioritise active transport. Future Transport Strategy 2061ⁱⁱ, the Movement and Place framework, and the Road User Space Allocationⁱⁱⁱ and Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects^{iv} policies must all be considered when proposing changes to roads and streets.
- Refer to the new Cycleway Design Toolbox^v and the 2017 Cycling Aspects of Austroads Guides (AP-G88-17) to ensure that cycleways are constructed to current best practice.
- Ensure that new cycle infrastructure is inclusive and accommodates all types of bikes and mobility devices, including cargo bikes, tricycles, hand-cycles, recumbents and wheelchair scooters.
- Include Victoria Road and Parramatta Road as priority routes for the bicycle network, reflecting growing calls to reallocate roadscape on these arterial corridors to take advantage of the reduction of surface traffic following the completion of Westconnex.
- Prioritise active travel at all intersections with traffic light phasing, raised crossings and continuous footpaths and cycleways designed to optimise pedestrian and bicycle level of service.
- Reduce speed limits to 30km/h on all shopping streets, residential streets and high pedestrian activity areas in line with global best practice and the UN resolution of August 2020.^{vi}
- Provide additional bike parking and end-of-trip facilities, alongside an updated development control plan that sets minimum standards for cycle storage in new residential, community and commercial projects.
- Ensure that cycleways integrate with bus stops and train and metro stations, delivering a multi-modal transport network that unlocks car-free mobility across the entire city.
- Develop a range of educational initiatives to help residents build cycling skills and confidence, understand the network as it is delivered, and share the road more safely, whether walking, rolling or driving.
- Support Council staff, local businesses, school children, women and families to ride and walk with e-bike and cargo bike trials, bike buses and community events that celebrate cycling.
- Install much-improved signage and wayfinding to clarify routes through the LGA
- Deliver upgraded urban realm as part of all projects. New trees and landscaping will support traffic calming, reduce urban heat and provide increased habitat. Artwork, quality paving, benches, bike racks and water fountains will add delight and amenity to daily trips.

This submission sets out a series of further recommendations for the final Cycling Strategy.

We would like to thank the three large and active BUGs in the area (Bike Marrickville, the Inner West Bicycle Coalition and BayBUG) who have worked hard over many years to advocate for better conditions for active travel.

Opportunities:

It is exciting that Inner West Council can finally prioritise safe infrastructure for walking and cycling, emboldened by a raft of NSW Government policies and strategies that aim to achieve a much better balance of movement and place with vastly improved facilities for active transport. There is clear agreement from all sides of politics that walking and cycling are essential to enable a healthier, less car-dependent future as Sydney grows. NSW now has a Minister for Active Transport and new impetus to deliver projects for walking and cycling.

Bicycle NSW wishes to reiterate that this is **the best moment in recent years** for local and State governments to work together to create a truly transformational network for cycling, but there is no time to waste.

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^{vii}. 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)^{viii}.

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. As a result, 60% of typical weekday car trips are under 5km in length – that amounts to approximately 175,000 journeys that could easily be undertaken using active modes^{ix}.

Despite complex challenges posed by topography, intersecting motorways and rail lines and 70 years of car-centric planning, Inner West Council has demonstrated spine and commitment to active travel. Recent breakthroughs for urban livability include the near-completion of the Greenway between Iron Cove and Cooks River, and cycleways along the rail line between Lewisham and Newtown and on Livingstone Road, Marrickville.

Bicycle infrastructure has a low cost per km, offers better value than road projects and support Council's financial sustainability. Over 100km of bike paths can be delivered for the cost of 1km of new road^x. Cycleways relieve the intractable deadweight of traffic congestion. In 2019 congestion cost \$19 billion nationwide, estimated to grow to a staggering \$38.9 billion by 2031^{xi}. Whilst it has been known since the 1960s that motorways add to congestion through induced demand^{xii}, bicycle infrastructure can reduce driving. As a benefit-to-cost ratio, bike infrastructure returns between 5:1 \$AUD (Queensland Government study^{xiii}) and 13:1 £ (UK Government study^{xiv}). Studies have shown that 70% of people in NSW either ride a bike now or would start to ride if they felt safer^{xv}. Given the Inner West has nearly 200,000 residents, with a young population is expected to grow to around 232,000 by 2036, the socio-economic benefit of connected active travel infrastructure will be immense.

Recommendations

- **Develop a clearer map for the proposed and existing active transport network**

The map in the draft strategy is small, unclear and hard to interpret. We understand that it is best to avoid committing to routes in too much detail in a high-level guidance document that will form the basis of decision-making over several years. Instead, Inner west Council should investigate a dynamic [online mapping system](#) such as the one embedded in the Northern Beaches Bike Plan 2020^{xvi}. The location and treatment of each element of cycleway can be described and updated quickly as projects evolve.

The proposed network appears to align strongly with the strategic cycling corridors, the Green Grid and previous bike plans. Our Bicycle User Group members will provide detailed comments about the routes. However, it is essential to ensure good connections with existing facilities and routes in neighbouring LGAs to create a coherent regional network.

- **Consult on the Action Plan as soon as possible**

A detailed Action Plan should form part of the final Cycling Strategy. This will list deliverable projects against agreed time lines and funding streams and set out a pathway to achieve the proposed cycling network with the resources available to Council.

Given the history of inadequate cycleway projects by completed Inner West Council in the past it will be crucial that the Action Plan has measurable outcomes and appropriate metrics to support these outcomes.

That Action Plan will be a dynamic document that not only delivers major new cycleways but also addresses Priority 3 to upgrade existing walking and cycling facilities – pinch points, dangerous intersections, poor surfacing and missing links, kerb ramps and signage. The active and knowledgeable Inner West BUGs will provide detailed input into these discussions and identify issues that need attention.

- **Expand the capacity of Inner West Council to deliver cycling infrastructure**

Priority 4 focuses on the importance of upskilling staff, recognising that Council engineers still struggle to move forward from car-first thinking to develop innovative active transport solutions. Budgets are an historical issue but Bicycle NSW urges Council to put more resources towards walking and cycling, and seriously consider employing another full-time active transport planner.

A skilled and well-educated team of designers and engineers will be able to develop a steady stream of projects, endorsed by stakeholders and aligned to an overarching vision. It is essential that Council has 'shovel-ready' projects in the pipeline for when funding becomes available.

- **Be more ambitious with proposals to reimagine Victoria Road and Parramatta Road as urban boulevards with separated bicycle paths**

Victoria Road and Parramatta Road have long been earmarked for revitalisation projects. Council must capitalise on the opening of WestConnex by rebalancing road space and prioritising active and public transport in line with the Road User Space Allocation policy.

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.

The proposed cycling network shows priority routes on Victoria Road between Anzac Bridge and Iron Cove Bridge and on Parramatta Road between Camperdown and the Greenway. Although this is a huge step forward after decades of planning bike routes to avoid these traffic sewers, Bicycle NSW would like to propose an extension of the Parramatta Road cycleway west to Iron Cove Creek, currently subject to a green grid masterplan, and beyond to the future metro station at Burwood North.

- **Campaign to reduce speed limits to 30km/h on all local streets and shopping areas**

The Vision Zero goal of lowering speed limits to 30 km/h on residential streets and around schools and town centres is considered international best practice and is gaining momentum in Australian and New Zealand. This approach includes pedestrian zones, physical separation between bicycle and car traffic, data-based traffic enforcement and behaviour-change education^{xvii}. The British Medical Journal^{xviii} found that the use of 20mph (32kph) over a twenty-year period from 1986–2006 significantly improved road safety for users of all transport modes and ages.

The rate of children under 15 years old being killed and seriously injured dropped by 50% in areas where the speed limit is reduced to 20mph (32kph). Most Australians already support lowering speed limits in neighbourhoods^{xix}. Acceptance usually increases after implementation, as has been the case in countries like the UK and Germany. Several 30km/h trials run in Melbourne and New Zealand before 2020 have been successful. Popularity increased further after people experienced the benefits^{xx}.

- **Develop well-resourced projects to encourage active transport to school**

According to the NSW School Safety Survey^{xxi}, 36% of parents wouldn't let their children walk or ride to school due to unsafe road crossings. 25% of Australian children aged 2-17 and 67% of adults are considered overweight or obese. Obesity linked to physical inactivity is a major contributor to type 2 diabetes with estimates showing that eliminating obesity from the population can potentially reduce the incidence of diabetes by over 40%^{xxii}.

Safe paths to school with 30 km/h speed limits were unanimously voted as the 'most achievable goal for active transport' at the 2022 Transport for NSW Mobility Summit. This is because (i) there is a critical need; (ii) schools are neutral territory and everybody supports children's right to health and independent mobility; (iii) daily active travel will have a profound intergenerational impact and (iv) safe paths to school can be rolled out rapidly and cheaply through relatively minor adjustments to existing infrastructure.

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

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^{xxv}. 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^{xxvi}.

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.

- **Use temporary materials to demonstrate best-practice infrastructure**

As discussed in our previous submission, Bicycle NSW suggests that Inner West Council uses pop-up methods to trial separated cycle paths. Moveable lane barriers can be installed quickly to create stretches of protected path and show how unfamiliar cycle infrastructure can fit 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. Once Council has demonstrated demand for safe cycling, permanent changes to kerbs, parking and landscaping can be made when funding allows.

- **Establish a regular programme of proactive community initiatives**

The Inner West is densely populated with arguably the country's highest percentage of artists and bicycle riders per capita. Bicycle NSW encourages IWC to mobilise its artistic capital to create inclusive, fun street activations that connect people and places whilst leaving out the cars. Not only does this stimulate street business and assist with post-COVID recovery through concentration of human-paced traffic; it also warms the community to the significant social and retail benefits of walkable, liveable streets (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Liveability returns to O'Connell St, Auckland. (Photo courtesy of [Stuff](#))

Conclusion

Bicycle NSW understands that the historic urban fabric, 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 the Inner West now see and use best practice infrastructure as part of their daily trips and the call for improved facilities in the Inner West gets louder. It is hoped that the Inner West Cycling Strategy, supported by a new generation of Councillors and Council 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.


We look forward to working with Inner West 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

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Bicycle NSW



Francis O'Neill

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^v Cycleway Design Toolbox: designing for cycling and micromobility. Transport for NSW.

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