Sydney Harbour Bridge Project Team
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5th December 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: Sydney Harbour Bridge Cycleway Northern Access Project

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the plans for the Sydney Harbour Bridge northern access ramp.

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 strongly support the plans for a linear ramp to access the Sydney Harbour Bridge cycleway from Milsons Point.

The proposed ramp will fill a critical gap in the cycling network. Once completed, bicycle riders unable to push a bike up a steep, narrow ramp beside 55 stairs will finally be able to cross the Sydney Harbour Bridge. This includes children, elderly, riders with disabilities, those using e-bikes, recumbents and heavy cargo bikes - the diverse forms of active mobility that make an essential contribution to decongesting and decarbonising Greater Sydney.

We thank Transport for NSW for completing an extensive and detailed Review of Environmental Factors[i]. The Bicycle NSW agrees that 'the benefits of the proposal …. outweigh the expected impacts on the environment.' The project's approach to Design Excellence has resulted in a very high standard of design from a team led by one of Australia's leading landscape architects, ASPECT Studios. We are very excited by the design of the elegant ramp which touches Bradfield Park as lightly as possible. As the design has evolved, long-term impacts to heritage, landscape, visual amenity and traffic have been carefully ameliorated. Impacts will mostly be felt during the construction phase, and these will be minimised by a largely off-site fabrication process. We are sure that the ramp will become a new architectural icon for Sydney and draw admirers from far and wide!

In writing this submission, Bicycle NSW would like to thank all the Members and friends who have supported an access and inclusion campaign that is virtually as old as our organisation. We are especially grateful to our Bicycle User Group (BUG) Bike North and local resident Fergus McLagan for their dogged advocacy, and the Minister for Active Transport for his vision.

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Figure 1: ASPECT Studio's competition winning design (Source: TfNSW)

A long-awaited strategic need

The Sydney Harbour Bridge cycleway connects the proposed North Shore cycleway on the Pacific Highway with the existing Kent Street cycleway in Sydney's central business district (CBD). It is one of the busiest links in the Sydney bike network averaging just under 2,000 daily bike trips[ii]. Bicycle NSW foresees that numbers using the cycleway will rise significantly once the northern access ramp opens the floodgates to riders hitherto prevented from crossing the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

In connecting riders travelling between the lower north shore, North Sydney and Sydney's CBD, the Sydney Harbour Bridge ramp will align with the following place-making and future-proofing strategies, frameworks and policies:

- Future Transport Strategy – Our Vision for NSW (TfNSW, 2022)
- Connecting to the future: Our 10 Year Blueprint (TfNSW, 2018)
- NSW Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2042 (Infrastructure NSW, 2022)
- Transport Sustainability Plan 2021 (TfNSW 2020)
- Movement and Place framework
- Transport for NSW Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects policy
- Transport for NSW Road User Space Allocation policy

In addition, the project's objectives are fully supported by a plethora of local, district and regional strategic plans developed by City of Sydney, North Sydney Council and the Greater Cities Commission.

All of these documents underscore the importance of mode shift towards active and public transport. The Sydney Harbour Bridge access ramp is a crucial element of an integrated transport network that delivers:

Sustainability. If we are to reach Net Zero carbon emissions, car-free mobility must be an option for most people for most trips. It is essential to reduce the 70% of trips under 2km that are taken in a car[iii].

Social equity. Not only is this project environmentally sustainable, it is socially responsible and equitable because it enables low-cost transportation and alleviates the significant cost of living burden faced by many.

Inclusivity. The proposed access ramp is a truly inclusive design enabling people of all abilities and mobility types the opportunity to actively cross the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Public health. Obesity linked to physical inactivity is a major contributor to type 2 diabetes and is costing Australians up to $6 billion annually. The ramp will allow more car trips to be replaced by active transport.

Multi-modal mobility. Better end-to-end facilities for walking and cycling support first and last mile journeys, and are key to reducing the $19.1 billion ($39.8 b by 2031)[iv] economic dead weight of traffic congestion.

Regional connectivity. The North Shore to the CBD is a line of desire 162 000 daily traffic movements[v]. Greater Sydney's traffic must be stabilised to ensure that population growth can occur without the city seizing up. This can only happen by replacing car use for short trips with walking and cycling.

Independent mobility. It is essential to maximise mobility for people unable to drive, especially children. 25% of Australian children aged 2-17 are considered overweight or obese.

Road space reallocation underpins all future transport goals. The Alfred St cycleway is a fine example of reallocating space for walking and cycling. Bicycle NSW looks forward to many projects to rebalance road space to benefit all road users and counteract 70 years of car-first planning.

Design, consultation and implementation

Around 30 ramp designs have been considered since 2012. In June 2021, the community was asked if a linear or spiral ramp would best meet the needs of bike riders, pedestrians, residents and users of Milsons Point and Bradfield Park. Nearly 3000 responses were received, with 83% in favour of a ramp and 63% selecting the linear option.

Three concept linear designs were exhibited for public feedback at the end of 2021. ASPECT Studios won the competition in February, delivering on the brief to develop an elegant linear bridge that respects the heritage of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, gives *'physical form to the stories and movements of the Gadigal and Cammeraygal people*' and minimises the impact on Bradfield Park. Bicycle NSW has attended regular progress meetings with the design team and thanks Transport for NSW for setting up a transparent and collaborative design process.

Close consultation has taken place with North Sydney Council, local resident groups, Heritage NSW, a Community and Bike User Group (CBUG) and indigenous advisory group Design Jam.

The ramp alignment has been refined to retain trees and ensure that important views of the bridge structure are not lost. Gradients will allow riders of all ages and abilities to climb the ramp while not allowing too much speed going down. Lighting will be carefully directed onto the ramp so that the existing uplighting of the bridge is not impacted. Particular care has been taken to resolve the area where the ramp meets the park, to minimise potential conflict between people walking and cycling. Landscaping and paving treatment will reinforce spaces for pedestrians and bike riders.

TfNSW underwent an extensive design and public consultation process to develop a 2.5-metre-wide bi-directional segregated bicycle path on Alfred Street South that provides a clear and safe route to the ramp from the north. Bicycle NSW fully supports the decision to reallocate road space to ensure that pedestrians and cyclists are separated and opportunities for conflict minimised. The loss of 15 parking spaces allows the optimum configuration of the street. The narrower vehicle lanes will slow traffic, reduce noise and improve safety for all road users. Dedicated bicycle paths are proven to entice new riders of all ages and abilities and will encourage more people to use the Sydney Harbour Bridge cycleway.

The Alfred St cycleway is designed to comply with the current best practice set out in the 2021 Cycleway Design Toolbox[vi] and the 2017 Austroads Cycling Aspects of Austroads Guide (AP-G88-17).

Recommendations:

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

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[vii]. 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.

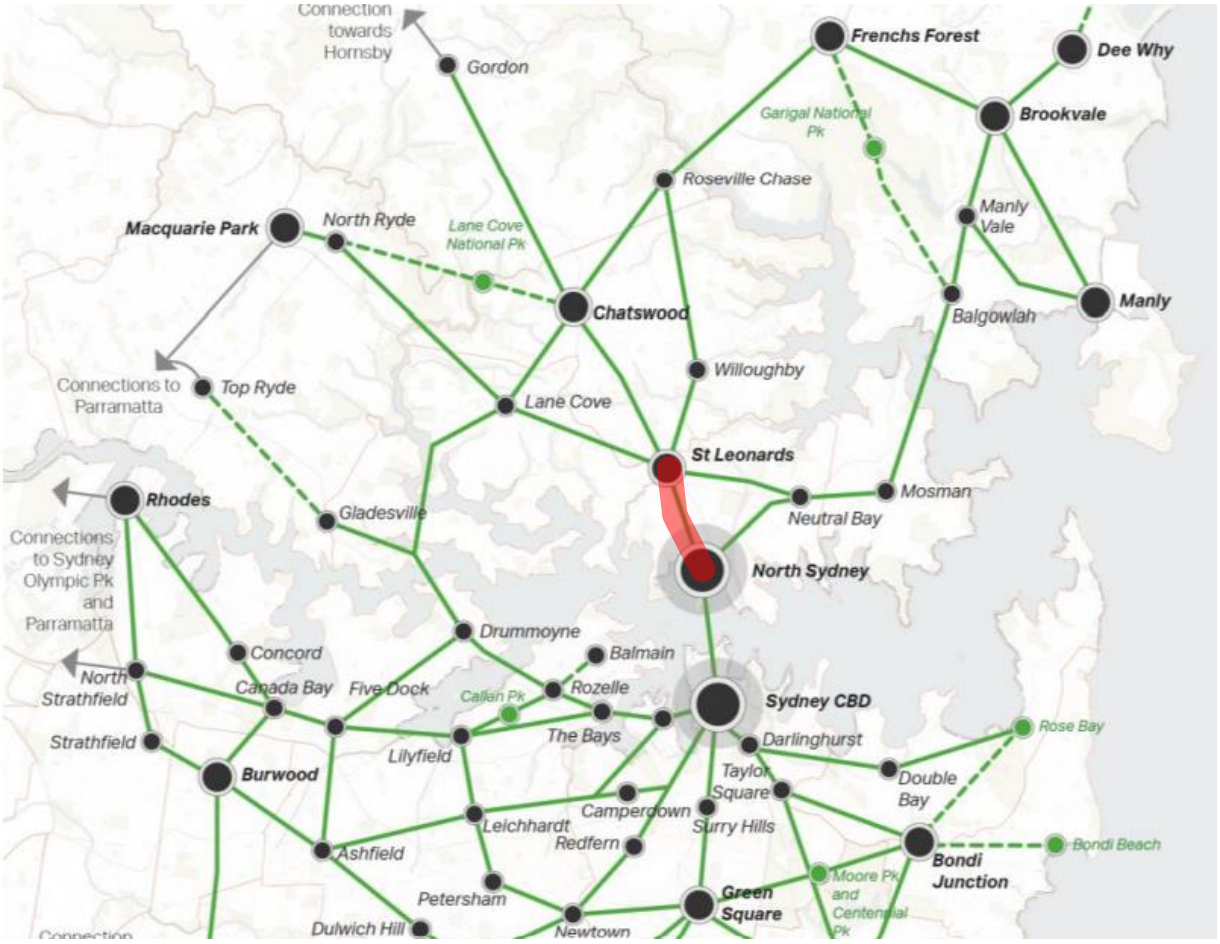


Figure 2: Extract from the new Strategic Cycleway Corridor network map. The North Sydney Connection from North Sydney to St Leonards is identified as an 'immediate opportunity' (Source: TfNSW)

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 will support forecast growth on the Sydney Harbour Bridge cycleway. It is listed as one of the top five priorities for the NSW Government.

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. Our supportive 2021 submission is here. 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.

Integrating this project with the North Sydney to CBD section of the strategic cycleway corridors will maximise its socioeconomic benefits. The more bicycle infrastructure is integrated into the wider network, the greater the return on investment. The Queensland and UK governments determined that ROI could range from 5:1[viii] to a stunning 13:1[ix] depending on the level of connectivity.

Reduce speed limits to 30km/h on Alfred 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[x] 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[xi].

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[xii].

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[xiii].

Be strong about removing on-street parking

Bicycle NSW supports the removal of 15 parking spaces to make way for the Alfred St cycleway and would back further roadspace reallocation if necessary to optimise the configuration of Alfred Street for all vulnerable road users.

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.

In 2019, membership of local car share schemes increased 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. 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.

Endure that the Warringah Freeway and Western Harbour Tunnel projects leave a legacy of vastly improved active transport infrastructure

The Warringah Freeway leads to the Sydney Harbour Bridge and carries the bulk of its 162 000 daily traffic movements. Despite a raft of NSW Government policies require major transport projects to deliver active transport connections, the Warringah Freeway Upgrade (WFU) is barreling ahead with no plans in place for the future walking and cycling networks. Road space is currently being **de-allocated** by removing facilities like the Falcon Street shared user underpass. Warringah Freeway is 15 lanes wide in places. It is unreasonable to claim there is 'not enough space' for excellent active transport infrastructure. We once again ask Transport for NSW to review the Conditions of Consent, pause construction if necessary and develop detailed designs that maximise the future outcomes for walking and cycling.

In defense of the ramp

68%[xiv] of respondents support the northern access ramp due to its design excellence and the amenity and convenience that it will bring to countless thousands of bike riders. Predictably, because it involves Australia's most iconic bridge, it has also generated a pocket of controversy from a small but very vocal opposition. Bicycle riders of all ages and abilities have waited too long for the northern access ramp for it to be stalled by a misinformation campaign. Therefore, in defense of the bridge ramp Bicycle NSW reaffirms the NSW Government commitment to the following:

1. **Consultation -** Transport for NSW has conducted Q&A sessions and seminars, published its proposals and results, and called for comment. TfNSW has responsibly addressed community concerns and invited feedback, and as a result prepared solutions that benefit most members of the community.
2. **Integrity of Bradfield Park North -** The plans for an elegant, elevated light-structured ramp and associated Alfred Street cycleway will upgrade the amenity of Bradfield Park and ensure cyclists are well separated from pedestrians.
3. **Tree preservation -** Only 5-6 that will be removed (and replaced). Compare that to the 750+ tree removals due to the Warringah Freeway Upgrade project.
4. **Increased mode shift to active transport -** Australians bought 44% more bicycles over 2021/22 with 1,750,000 forecast in 2022 and a 500% increase in e-bikes (ABS, MicroMobility Report[xv]). The linear

ramp will enable thousands more cyclists to access the bridge in addition to those already using the bridge daily.

5. **A winning design** - TfNSW has examined, evaluated, and announced its findings on the "community proposal" for an alternative spiral ramp in Bradfield Park Central. In comparison to the linear ramp, the spiral ramp is unsafe, difficult to negotiate and ignores the stated objective of solving pedestrian, vehicular and cyclist congestion at the foot of the 55 steps and Burton Street, site of the Kirribilli Markets.

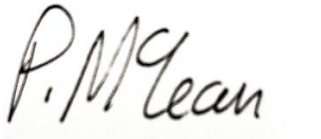
Conclusion:

Transport for NSW has done an excellent job in resolving pedestrian, vehicular and cyclist congestion associated with the 55 steps leading up to the Sydney Harbour Bridge cycleway.

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, and recreation facilities will foster healthy lifestyles and ensure equitable access to economic opportunities for people of all ages, incomes and abilities.

Bicycle NSW envisages 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.

Yours faithfully,



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