

The Hon. John Graham MLC, Minister for Roads
The Hon. Jo Haylen MP, Minister for Transport

13th June

2023
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Submitted via [website](#)

Dear Ministers Graham and Haylen,

Re: Warringah Freeway Upgrade

The Warringah Freeway Upgrade project does not include the game-changing upgrades to the active transport network that residents and commuters have advocated for over three decades. The Gore Hill cycleway, delivered by the Lane Cove Tunnel project in 2007, offered a tantalising vision of separated infrastructure that could one day be extended to the Harbour Bridge. However, the possible routes south of Naremburn to the Harbour Bridge remain dangerous and involve the congested streets of North Sydney's CBD or a very hilly and convoluted trip through residential streets. All but the most confident bike riders are deterred from active transport.

It is a disgrace that the scope of works for the Warringah Freeway Upgrade did not include a high-quality strategic cycleway.

Instead, widening of this vital transport corridor to accommodate yet more car traffic has removed [existing active transport infrastructure](#) such as the Falcon Street underpass, the direct ramp to the Ridge Street bridge and access to the motorway shoulder along Cammeray Golf Course. Pedestrians and cyclists continue to be inconvenienced by very circuitous detours. We have lost precious [urban tree canopy](#) to widen road space with an enormous impact upon amenity.

Scraps of [active transport infrastructure](#) will be delivered to replace removed assets but they are disconnected and fail to improve the experience of navigating through the corridor on bike or foot. The Falcon Street shared user bridge will be rebuilt but the scope does not include improving the difficult crossing of Falcon Street and the motorway off-ramp to reach Leonards Park. In the case of the replacement Ridge Street bridge, two options were offered for ramping up to the new active transport overpass. Neighbouring residents chose the least obtrusive – a straight ramp with a lift. But the ramp is 11%, twice the gradient of the previous ramp, and lifts are slow and prone to breakdown.

It is not acceptable for the project to deliver infrastructure that is worse than the assets it has destroyed. Pedestrians and cyclists have lost dearly to induce motorist demand. Car-first thinking is so prevalent at Transport for NSW that we can't move forward with creating Better Streets and a decarbonised transport system. The NSW Government continues to prioritise increased traffic volumes.

This is a problem of the project team's creation. But remedying the failures of the Warringah Freeway Upgrade is not something that will be contemplated without ministerial intervention.

There is better news regarding the Active Transport Network Review (ATNR) for North Sydney. The consultation with Bicycle NSW and Bike North began with a worrying lack of transparency. Following Minister Stokes' intervention, the WFU project team and Transport for NSW's Active Transport team have listened closely to our priorities and concerns, spent time with us on site and hosted 4 workshops attended by a large group of stakeholders. We appreciate this major uptick in engagement.

Of course, the [Eastern Harbour City Strategic Cycleway Corridors](#) program was released in 2022. The identification of the North Sydney Connections as an ‘immediate opportunity’ has clearly provided new impetus to propose continuous bike infrastructure on the Lower North Shore. We thank Transport for NSW for this important strategic work.

As required by Condition E195, the ATNR has recently been submitted to the Department of Planning and Environment. It contains a detailed review of existing and potential active transport networks within 500m of the Warringah Freeway Upgrade footprint.

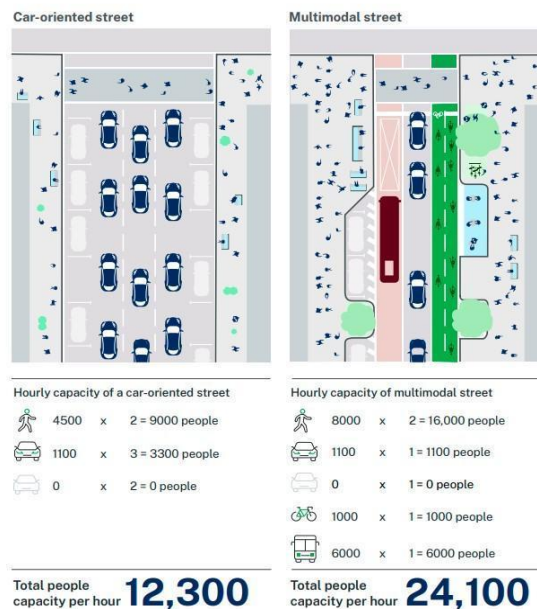
We strongly support the six priorities outlined in the Active Transport Network Review.

We align with Bike North and confirm that opportunities 5. *North Sydney CBD West* and 6. *Lavender Street to Blue Street* are the highest priority as they are the greatest barrier to people riding towards the Harbour Bridge from most directions. A vehicle lane on Pacific Highway must be reallocated to create a separated cycleway from Arthur St to West St. We do not believe that this option should be rated 'red' for technical difficulty/constructability. There is a wide swathe of tarmac ready to use! Apparently, the need to maintain vehicle lane widths mean kerbs will have to move and trees will be lost. But 40 (or 30) km/h speed limits would allow narrower lanes and a myriad of other placemaking benefits for North Sydney.

TfNSW needs to be reminded of this excellent diagram from the 2022 [Future Transport Strategy](#). It supports the reallocation of road space based on the efficient movement of people by comparing a car-oriented street to a multimodal street. Prioritizing pedestrians over private cars, as outlined in Transport for NSW’s [Road User Space Allocation Policy](#), brings environmental and health benefits.

Pacific Highway offers a perfect opportunity, alongside Victoria Road, Parramatta Road and Oxford Street, to set a benchmark for reimagining Sydney’s unloved arterial roads.

As a minimum, the Pacific Highway in this location needs to be trimmed down by the time the Warringah Freeway Upgrade and Western Harbour Tunnel are complete, otherwise the traffic will simply increase to fill any spare capacity.



Opportunity 1: Gore Hill Freeway would fix a highly dangerous gap in the network but will need a grade separated crossing of the Brook Street on-ramp. *Opportunity 2: Falcon Street Interchange* ideally requires an extension of the Falcon Street shared user bridge to St Leonards Park. We have questioned why a 7m clearance over Falcon Street is specified, and requested spot heights in the park to help assess feasibility but this information has not been supplied. Note that under Condition E200, a safe and convenient route across Falcon Street must be created. *Opportunity 4: North Sydney CBD East* is a visionary project that could unlock safe access to the Harbour Bridge for people approaching from the north and east, although it needs to include additional linkages to the east.

These projects must be designed, planned and delivered by TfNSW as part of the current works. Not sidelined as an aspiration for some time in the never never.

The current processes risk missing vital opportunities to improve cycling connectivity as part of the WFU investment. Of course, the contractors are working to Conditions of Consent that were formulated in 2018. Over the last 5 years, the political and strategic context has shifted significantly in favour of active transport. TfNSW has a mandate to review the Conditions of Consent, pause construction work if necessary and develop detailed designs that maximise the future outcomes for walking and cycling. It is no longer reasonable to claim there is 'not enough space' for high-quality active transport infrastructure in an immensely wide motorway corridor.

Once the contractors have finished the Warringah Freeway and Western Harbour Tunnel projects, it will be decades before the freeway will be disturbed again. The time to act is now.

To heighten our concerns that the six ATNR priorities will be permanently put into a 'too hard' basket, the WFU project team presented a series of micro-interventions that are considered achievable in the very short term, such as moving a stop sign on the traffic island at Falcon Street and adding patches of pavement to widen the shared path alongside the freeway south of Naremburn. These are like a dusting of crumbs after decades of inaction.

In conclusion, we request your assistance in ensuring the Warringah Freeway Upgrade project delivers the community's active transport network priorities and incorporates them into the current works. The loss of infrastructure and amenity has been devastating, and the proposed replacement options are substandard. Plans for the Falcon Street Interchange are required, the replacement Ridge Street bridge needs to be acceptable to all road users, and plans for a separated cycleway on Pacific Highway must be urgently progressed.

Efficient and cost-effective solutions are needed now, not decades into the future. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to your support to leverage the massive upheaval in the area to create continuous and safe strategic cycleways within or close to the Warringah Freeway.

Yours faithfully,



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cc

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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. 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.