

Warringah Freeway Upgrade
Transport for NSW
Locked Bag 928,
North Sydney NSW 2059

11th July 2023

Submitted via email whtbl@transport.nsw.gov.au

Dear WFU team,

Re: Warringah Freeway Upgrade Place Design and Landscape Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the design and landscape objectives of the Warringah Freeway Upgrade (WFU) project.

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.

Grave concerns

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. In 2023, 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.

The Warringah Freeway Upgrade project does not currently include game-changing upgrades to the active transport network that residents and commuters have advocated for over three decades.

Instead, widening this major 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.

The replacement active transport infrastructure is documented in the Place, Design and Landscape Plan (PDLP), primarily in [Chapter 5: Active Transport Bridges](#). Three new bridges for pedestrians and bike riders at Ridge Street, Falcon Street and Ernest Street and a new shared path on the High Street Bridge will replace removed assets and widen existing east-west links for walking and cycling. However, these new scraps of infrastructure are isolated and disconnected. **They fail to materially improve the experience of navigating through the corridor on bike or foot.**

The bridges are conceived as a ‘family’ with a consistent design language. We appreciate the efforts to incorporate motifs and materials that attempt to connect this hugely destructive project to Country. The railings, lighting and plantings are well-considered. The canopies are a welcome addition to shelter walkers and bike riders from both rain and the north sun.

However, the bridges do little to meet the project’s stated Urban Design Objectives of augmenting connection, legibility, liveability and sustainable outcomes (Figure 1).

Scope and Approvals

The Warringah Freeway Upgrade (WFU) Project is being designed and constructed by the CPB Downer Joint Venture (CPBD).

The Place, Design and Landscape Plan (PDLP) has been prepared by Hassell for CPBD to satisfy the Ministers Conditions of Approval (MCoA) (SSI8863). The WFU shares the MCoA with the Western Harbour Tunnel project but this PDLP is only related to WFU.

The Urban Design Objectives include:

- enhancing identity and user experience
- integrating design into existing elements
- connection and legibility
- ensuring urban renewal and liveability
- creating living environments
- encouraging sustainable outcomes

Figure 1:
The Scope and Urban Design Objectives as discussed in the online information session, 29th June 2023 (Source: Hassell/CPBD)

We will not make further comments on the detailed design of these elements in this submission. It is much more important to highlight the issues and concerns about the active transport network that is emerging from the Warringah Freeway Upgrade, before making recommendations to salvage real improvements to local and regional connectivity from the current construction works.

Please read this in conjunction with our feedback on the Active Transport Network Review for North Sydney.

Our **concerns** are many but include the following:

- The scope for the replacement Falcon Street active transport bridge does not include improving the existing crossing of Falcon Street and the motorway off-ramp to reach St Leonards Park. This is a difficult junction to navigate by bicycle and it is a huge lost opportunity not to improve the access as part of the huge NSW Government investment in replacing the bridge. Note that the plan on page 5-37 shows the steep path from the off-ramp crossing into the path as ‘DDA-compliant’ (Figure 2) - this is clearly not correct.

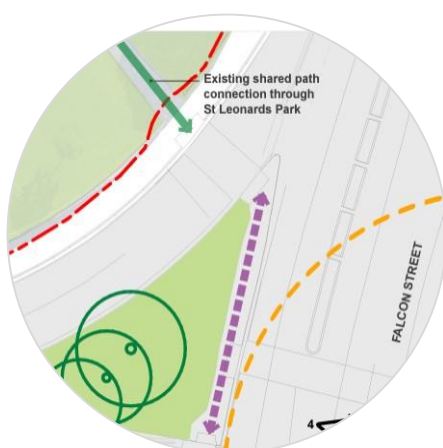


Figure 2: Extract from a plan in Chapter 5 of the PDLP showing connections near the replacement Falcon Street active transport bridge. The existing path up to St Leonards Park is marked DDA-compliant which is not correct. This plan does not align with the graphic in Figure 3. (Source: TfNSW/CPBD)

Item	Description
	Site Boundary
	Proposed DDA compliant shared path
	Proposed shared path
	Existing DDA compliant shared path
	Existing pedestrian path
	Proposed pedestrian path

- Although not discussed in the PDLP, an image on construction hoardings (Figure 3) shows some improvement made at this intersection by removing vegetation and realigning kerbs on the refuge island west of the heritage brick chimney. This will help. However, the image also shows NO footpath on the south side of the Falcon Street freeway bridge. The footpath has just been closed for 18 months and pedestrian detours extend a 230m trip from Merlin St (south) to the north-east corner of St Leonards

Park to 750m (Figure 4). A permanent loss of the direct connection is not acceptable, especially as the underpass to that once provided access to the Falcon Street shared user bridge has been demolished (discussed in the next point). It is essential to clarify the plans for the Falcon Street freeway bridge.



Figure 3: An image from the construction hoardings around the Cammeray compound does not feature in any other documents but indicates a permanent loss of pedestrian access on the south side of the Falcon Street freeway bridge. This is a major concern, as crossing to the north side of the intersection on the eastern side of the bridge involves a 500m detour. Note that this graphic does not align with the plan discussed in Figure 2 (Source: TfNSW)



Figure 4: Without a shared path on the southern side of the freeway bridge, or an underpass or new signalised surface crossings on the eastern side, pedestrians must backtrack to Watsons Street to cross from Merlin St to St Leonards Park, adding 500m to the walk. This is the current situation as indicated on the detour map but it is not acceptable in the long term. (Source: TfNSW)

- The removed Falcon Street underpass to the east side of freeway will not be replaced. This underpass helped pedestrians and cyclists navigate a difficult junction. The PDLP states that future active transport links will be planned as part of the Active Transport Network Review required by Condition E195. The benefits and feasibility of a replacement underpass or an alternative grade-separated facility will apparently be analysed in the future. But this is not satisfactory. Once the construction work to build the new bus ramp is complete, it will be prohibitively expensive to re-work the intersection.

- Note that under Condition E200, a safe and convenient route across Falcon Street must be created. **This will not be achieved under current plans.**
- At Ridge Street, 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 10% or 1:10, twice the gradient of the previous ramp. [Cycling Aspects of Austroads Guides](#) states that 5% is the maximum acceptable gradient. Lifts are slow, expensive and prone to breakdown. The project is delivering infrastructure that is worse than the asset it has destroyed. This extremely steep linear ramp is listed as 'confirmed' with no discussion of the looping option originally proposed. It is therefore strange that the proposed treatments for Alfred Street North are 'under consultation' with all options listed - despite the 10km/h shared zone being overwhelmingly supported in the same consultation period.
- The 10m-wide linear land bridge slated to sit adjacent to the existing Ernest St bridge won't be completed until the Western Harbour Tunnel (WHT) project is open. The current requirement for cyclists to dismount on the narrowed footpath is not acceptable over such a protracted construction period.
- The crossing of Ernest St at the west end of bridge is shown unsignalised and unmarked on page 5-48 (Figure 5), even though it connects Jeaffreson Jackson Reserve with Anzac Park PS. There is no safe way to navigate this important north-south walking and cycling route without a substantial detour. It is clear that the safety of children has not been prioritised.

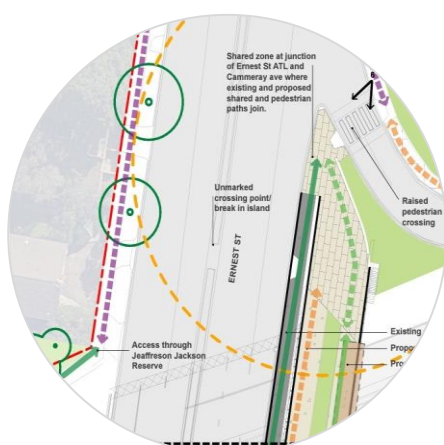


Figure 5: Extract from a plan in Chapter 5 of the PDLP showing connections on the east side of the Ernest Street active transport bridge. It is not possible to cross Ernest St at the desire line that connects St Leonards Park to Anzac Park via Jeaffreson Jackson Reserve (Source: TfNSW/CPBD)

Item	Description
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- The separation of the WFU and WHT projects has created confusion about the final configuration of active transport infrastructure. Two very complex projects in a constrained environment with two separated project teams will open up cracks for errors and confusion – both in the documentation and on site.
- The documents should clarify the final outcomes after both projects are complete. Is it currently very unclear what additional impacts the WHT project will have on walking and cycling routes, and if any additional infrastructure will be delivered for active transport.
- For example, the WHT documents include a plan of the Cammeray precinct with a cycleway running behind the motorway facilities and then along the edge of the freeway (Figure 6). The map in the Active Transport Network Review (ATNR) (Figure 7) shows this route as a 'project in development'.

Until the end of June, the map on the online WFU portal included the statement *'We are building a dedicated cycleway between Miller and Falcon Streets at Cammeray to improve safety and journey times for cyclists'*. This promise is no longer visible and there is no other no other indication that a cycleway will be delivered in this location.

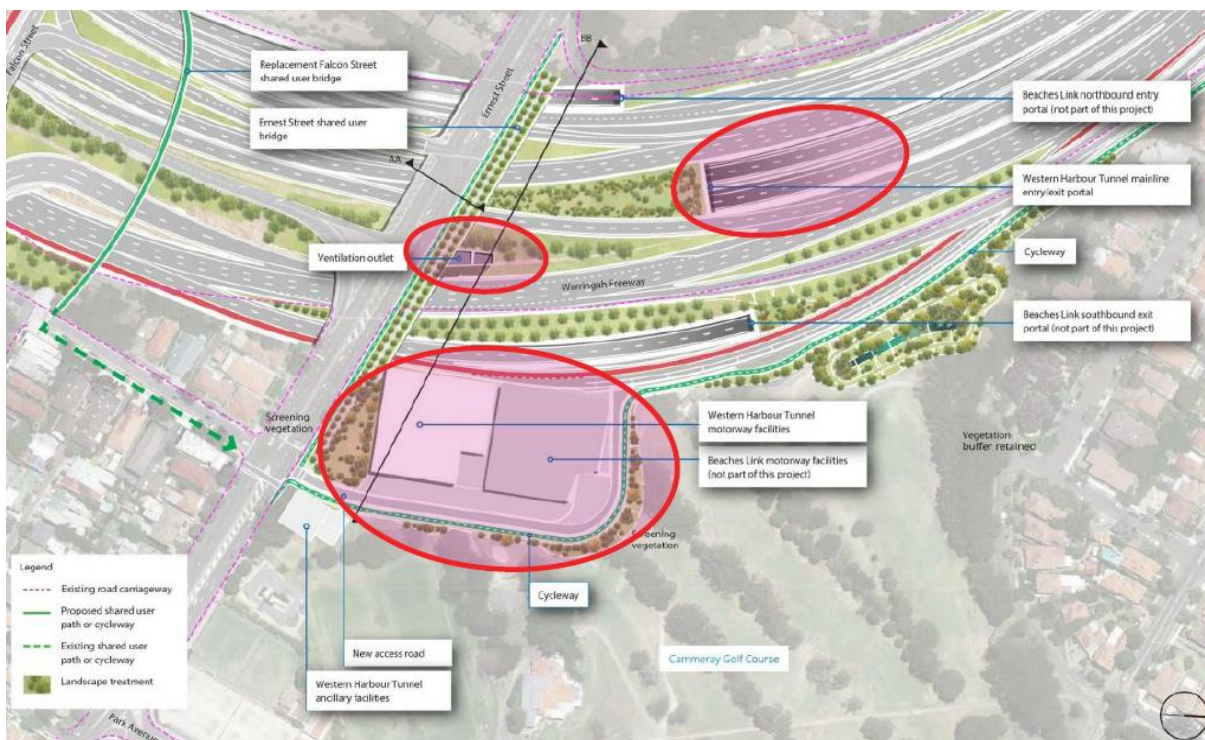


Figure 6: Plan of the Cammeray area once the WHT is complete (Source: Acciona)

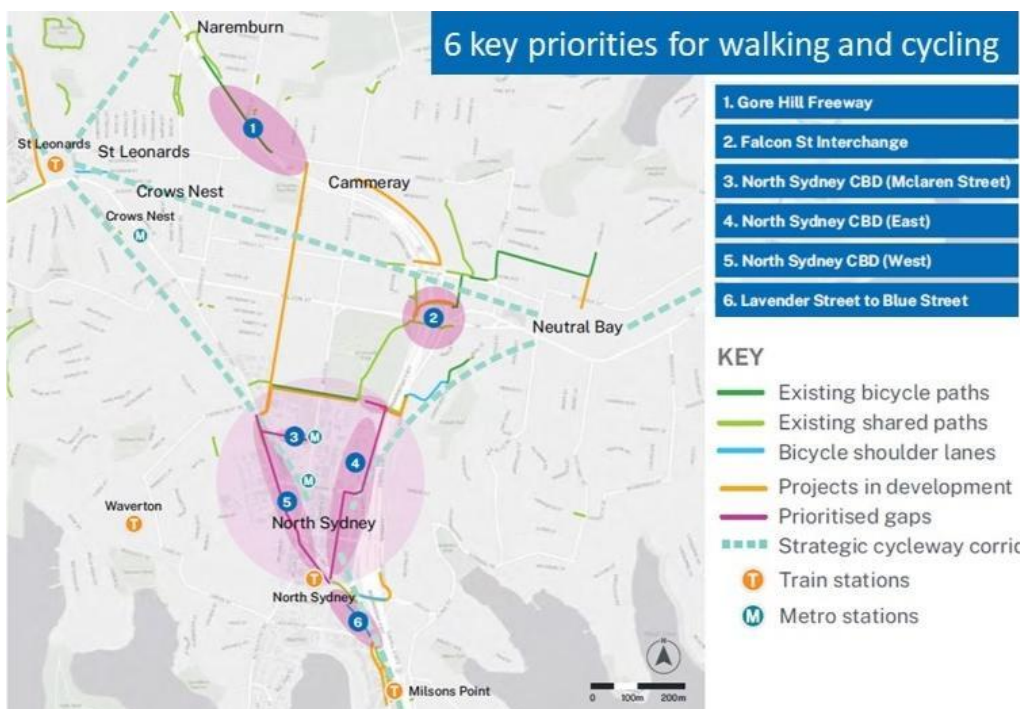


Figure 7: The walking and cycling priorities set out in the Active Transport Network Review indicate that cycleway will be delivered adjacent to the freeway north of Ernest St. (Source: TfNSW)

- We have learnt of WHT plans to remove parking, kerb extensions and trees on Berry Street (Figure 8) to create 4 clear vehicle lanes. This does not align with other proposals to reduce the current function of Berry St as a key access route to the freeway. Widened footpaths and landscaping have been flagged to improve place and walkability in advance of the opening of the Metro; a section of separated cycleway is required to deliver North Sydney East priority outlined in the ATNR.

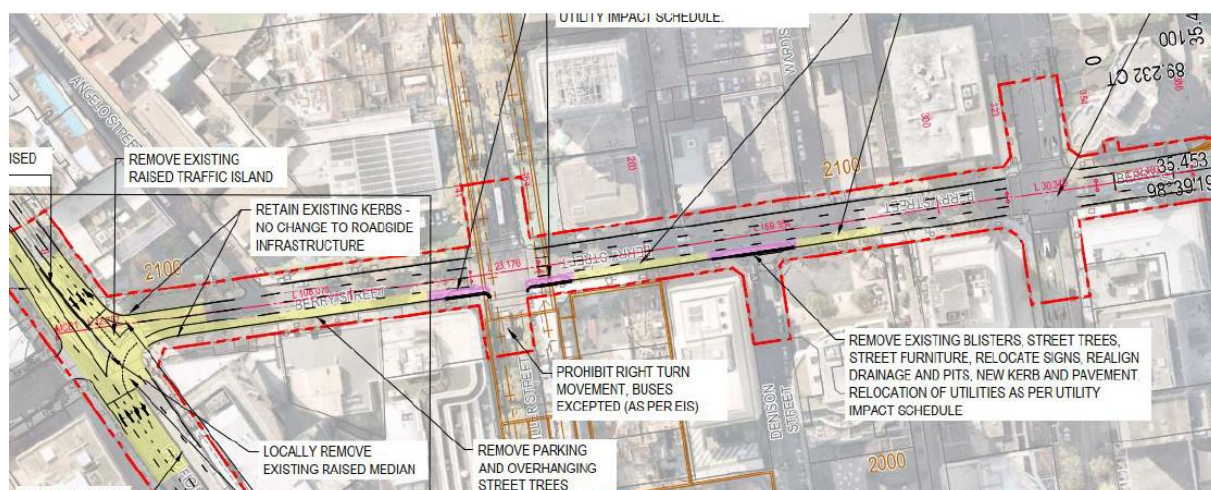


Figure 8: Alterations proposed to Berry St by the WHT project will prevent the improvements to walking, cycling and landscaping that are key to the successful operation of the Metro and other projects (Source: Acciona)

- Public domain amenities such as water bubblers, bike repair stations and bike parking are completely absent from the PDLP. Apparently “this project is only required to provide a very small suite of furniture elements” – why? This is substandard. The only places to sit are the built-in benches at the lookout on the western side of the Ridge Street active transport bridge. The freeway is very wide and people with limited mobility need to know that there are regular opportunities to sit and rest as they move across the corridor. Elderly residents may be discouraged from walking, with all its benefits to mental and physical health.

Recommendations

- Include the priorities outlined in the Active Transport Network Review (ATNR) for North Sydney within the WFU scope**

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 ATNR, as shown in Figure 7. Our submission on the ATNR provides detailed feedback on the routes, and highlights other links that should be considered.

In summary:

Opportunity 1: Gore Hill Freeway aims to fix a highly dangerous gap in the network. A grade separated crossing of the Brook Street on-ramp is required, ideally landing on Jenkins St to provide level access to the West St cycleway being delivered by North Sydney Council. There are benefits beyond the extension of the regional cycleway. This bridge would provide an excellent walking connection between the local villages and schools of Naremburn and Cammeray, currently linked only via steep paths through Flat Rock Gully.

Opportunity 2: Falcon Street Interchange ideally requires an extension of the new Falcon Street shared user bridge over Falcon Street to St Leonards Park. Plans must consider a new east-west connection to the

south of Falcon Street. The east-west route has been severely compromised by the removal of the underpass, the possible loss of the southern footpath and the non-compliant ramp proposed for the Ridge St active transport bridge which will limit access to all but the fittest of riders. We urge the project team to consider all possibilities for connecting each corner of the interchange, including more out-of-the-box ideas such as a grade-separated active transport ring (Figure 9).



Figure 9:
The Hovenring provides safe, seamless and transformational active transport connections across a major road junction in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. It is a landmark structure that touches the ground lightly and celebrates walking and cycling
(Source: <https://hovenring.com/>)

Opportunity 3: McLaren Street will provide upgraded public realm and safe walking and cycling access to Victoria Cross Metro Station, which is forecast to attract 15,000 passenger movements at peak hour by 2036. The proposed quietway treatments need to be in place when the Metro opens.

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. This route interfaces very closely with the WHT and WFU projects and must be designed to integrate with the current construction works before it is too late.

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. 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. It is also essential to deliver the cycleway before Miller Street is converted to a pedestrian-priority plaza by North Sydney Council. Although bike riders will be able to use the plaza to access destinations in the vicinity of the plaza, riders traversing North Sydney from the Harbour Bridge desperately need a dedicated cycleway on Pacific Highway to connect with the West Street facility that is under construction.

- **Clarify the final active transport outcomes once the North Sydney and Cammeray components of the WHT are complete**

It is impossible for stakeholders to understand the final configuration of the traffic lanes, active transport infrastructure and landscaping when overlapping projects with different contractors and consultants are underway. This confusion reduces trust in the project teams and processes. In particular, the community needs to understand if a shared path is planned adjacent to the freeway between Ernest Street and Miller Street.

- **Ensure that the Warringah Freeway Upgrade project reconnects village centres severed by the motorway**

The construction of the Warringah Freeway in the 1960s caused huge disruption to the street grid in the area and left communities divided by a 10-lane traffic sewer. The recent removal of infrastructure such as the

Falcon Street underpass and the path along the edge of Cammeray Golf Club has made things even worse for residents trying to access local schools, shops and services. Several of the ATNR priorities detailed above will help stitch the village centres back together and must be delivered as part of the WFU. For example, a bridge over the Brook Street on-ramp to Jenkins Street would link Cammeray and Naremburn. A shared path is adjacent to the freeway between Ernest Street and Miller Street would provide a level, direct route between Cammeray and Neutral Bay. A simple raised or signalised crossing of Ernest St west of the freeway bridge would help connect North Sydney with Anzac Park PS and Cammeray.

- **Include public domain amenities missing from the current proposals**

Additional benches and seating areas are needed to provide amenity and respite for people walking and cycling across the motorway corridor. Items such as bike hoops, bike repair stations and water fountains are extremely useful; they are standard inclusions in any contemporary high-quality public domain upgrade. Such items are very low cost relative to the enormous budget for the road widening, and it makes no sense to scrimp when the opportunity exists to integrate them into the project.

Conclusion

It is a disgrace that the scope of works for the Warringah Freeway Upgrade does not include high-quality, continuous and safe strategic cycleways within or close to the freeway corridor to connect the Sydney Harbour Bridge with Naremburn, St Leonards and Neutral Bay. It is appalling that additions to the walking and cycling network to improve access between communities severed by the motorway are not proposed.

The current processes risk missing vital opportunities to improve walking and 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:

The new [Future Transport Strategy](#) has a key ambition to reduce car reliance and prioritise active, public and multi-modal transport options. Transport for NSW's 2021 [Road User Space Allocation Policy](#) supports the reallocation of road space to ensure the efficient movement of people rather than vehicles, bringing environmental and health benefits. The [Eastern Harbour City Strategic Cycleway Corridors](#) program was released in 2022. The identification of the North Sydney Connections as an 'immediate opportunity' clearly provides new impetus to propose continuous bike infrastructure on the Lower North Shore.

NSW Government 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.

The Warringah Freeway Upgrade project must deliver the community's active transport network priorities and incorporate them into the current works. Game-changing designs for the Falcon Street Interchange are required, the replacement Ridge Street bridge needs to be acceptable to all road users, north-south pedestrian and cycling routes must be reinstated and/or upgraded adjacent to the freeway corridor and plans for a separated cycleway on Pacific Highway must be urgently progressed.

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

Yours faithfully,



Sarah Bickford

Active Transport Planner
Bicycle NSW



Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer
Bicycle NSW

CC

The Hon Jo Haylen	Minister for Transport
The Hon. Paul Scully	Minister for Planning
The Hon. John Graham	Minister for Roads
Caroline Butler-Bowden	Acting Dep. Secretary, Cities and Active Transport
Felicity Wilson MP	Member for North Shore
Tim James MP	Member for Willoughby
Natalie Ward MP	Shadow Minister for Transport and Roads
Zoë Baker	Mayor, North Sydney Council

summerhill@parliament.nsw.gov.au
wollongong@parliament.nsw.gov.au
john.graham@parliament.nsw.gov.au
caroline.butlerbowden@transport.nsw.gov.au
northshore@parliament.nsw.gov.au
willoughby@parliament.nsw.gov.au
office.ward@parliament.nsw.gov.au
mayor@northsydney.nsw.gov.au