

The Hon. Jo Haylen, MP
Minister for Transport
SYDNEY NSW 2001

27th July 2023

Submitted via [website](#)

Dear Minister,

Re: Parramatta Light Rail Stage One

Stage One of the Parramatta Light Rail is very close to being finished. Passenger services are due to start in 2024 and it is exciting to see the high-quality public realm that has emerged from the hoardings, including 16 accessible stops and sections of green track. The Active Transport Link (ATL) along the light rail corridor from Tramway Avenue to Carlingford is [now open](#). This is a fantastic addition to walking and cycling network. It is already being used intensively by the community.

Bicycle NSW congratulates Transport for NSW for delivering a game-changing project that provides new connectivity for the rapidly expanding population of the Parramatta area.

However, we have significant concerns about elements of the project:

1. The project has removed safe, convenient, direct and comfortable access to the centre of Parramatta and the train station by bike.
2. The ATL was not designed with capacity that will cope with future patronage growth.
3. The ATL lacks adequate connections to streets and other cycling and walking paths.
4. There are design defects on the ATL route that should be fixed urgently.

Frustrating decisions were made during the design, approval and construction of Stage One that did not prioritise people walking and cycling. Over the last 5 years, the political and strategic context has shifted significantly in favour of active transport. In this letter, we look forwards not backwards, and make suggestions to rectify identified issues with the project.

1. Enable full access by bike to Parramatta CBD

Bicycle NSW has worked hard to ensure the best possible outcomes for bicycle riders from the Parramatta Light Rail project since 2019.

We highlighted how the cycling plan was riddled with [safety issues and broken connections](#). We explored [solutions to the hazards](#) created by the gaps in the light rail tracks. We advocated for better alternatives to dismounts and [banning bikes from light rail corridors](#). Delivery of Stage One has not been plain sailing.

Some of the disruption was temporary. We understand how hard it has been to keep traffic of all types moving around the construction zones of multiple major projects, including Sydney Metro West, Parramatta Square and the Powerhouse Museum. The on-going transformation of Parramatta is unprecedented in vision and ambition.

The CBD is now shaking off the rubble. It is clear that Parramatta Light Rail Stage One still excludes bicycles from large parts of the Parramatta CBD (Figure 1). This undermines the great good that can be achieved by the transformation of traffic sewers into multi-modal transport corridors.

Cycling has been permanently banned from sections of Macquarie Street and Church Street where vehicle lanes have been removed. People need to use the streets with light rail tracks to reach their final destinations. Directing bike riders to dismount can be dangerous in traffic or when manoeuvring heavy cargo bikes. Inconvenient and disconnected journeys discourage cycling, limiting the mode shift that recent NSW Government strategies and policies aim to achieve.

In addition, bike riders are not allowed to cross the tracks at several important intersections. Retro-fitting light rail into urban streets has resulted in intersections with a crossing angle less than the recommended 60 degrees. Instead of deploying proven technologies that make tracks safer, Transport for NSW has responded by erecting multiple 'No Cycling' signs. It may be possible for most bike riders to walk their bikes across the road, but some have limited mobility or very heavy cargo bikes. Of course, Transport has not asked those in wheelchairs or prams to get out and walk.

The [2018 Condition of Consent](#) E14 to provide “seamless, coherent, visible and safe pedestrian and cycle access throughout and adjacent to the CSSI corridor implemented to ensure that all works are operational no later than the commencement of CSSI operations” has not been met.

To create alternative east-west and north-south routes through the CBD, City of Parramatta is developing cycleways on Marsden Street and George Street (Figure 1) in accordance with the [2017 Parramatta Bike Plan](#). This will involve reallocating vehicle space to create separated bicycle paths that will be suitable for a wide range of riders of all ages and abilities. However, bike riders will need to cross the light rail tracks to access these cycleways.

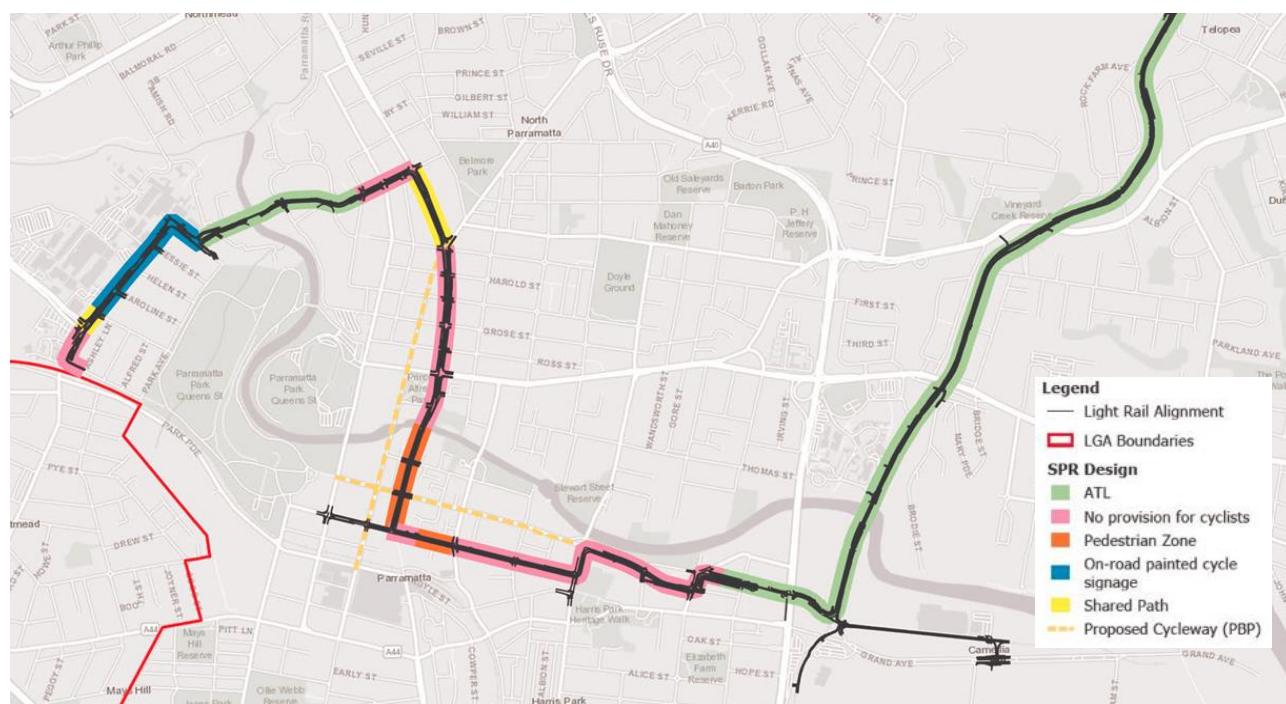


Figure 1: Overview of walking and cycling infrastructure along the PLR corridor. Cyclists are not allowed to use the sections shown in pink and orange. The proposed Marsden street and George Street cycleways are indicated as a dotted yellow line (Source: TfNSW/CPB Downer - Parramatta Light Rail [Pedestrian and Cyclist Network and Facilities Strategy](#), May 2020)

We ask Transport for NSW and the Department of Planning and Environment to work closely with transport planning staff from City of Parramatta to:

- identify the intersections where 'No Bicycles' and 'Cyclist Dismount' signs need to be removed to facilitate both cycle movements across the CBD and safe access by bike to all important destinations within the centre.

- investigate and trial track inserts where the angle of the tracks creates a risk of wheel entrapment for bikes and wheelchairs. There are translatable technologies that have been developed in different parts of the world to make tram tracks safer for vulnerable road users.
- develop solutions to allow bike riders to legally ride along all Parramatta CBD streets, including streets with light rail tracks. Every street has shops, restaurants, workplaces, public transport stops or schools that bike riders need to reach. For example, businesses in 'Eat Street' and Macquarie Street require access for bike couriers and food delivery workers.

2. Future-proof the Active Transport Link

The recently-completed ATL meets the Conditions of Consent and provides a seamless connection between Carlingford and Tramway Avenue.

However, it was short-sighted to deliver a shared path. Urban renewal projects along the light rail corridor will bring thousands of new residents to the precinct. The rapid uptake of micromobility will see an explosion of path users on wheeled devices, often under battery power and achieving considerable speeds. Conflict between walkers, dogs, runners, scooters and bike riders will be an increasing issue for all stakeholders.

The ATL should have been designed to separate bikes from pedestrians.

City of Parramatta recommended separated paths in its November 2017 submission to the EIS (Section 2.6.2) to avoid the mistakes made with the Parramatta Valley Cycleway, where conflict between different user is growing in line with local population and duplication is now required at great cost. Council suggested adjusting the light rail tracks if necessary to create space for twin paths with a minimum width of 3m for bicycles and 2.1m for pedestrians. Bicycle NSW submissions supported this position.

We now urge Transport for NSW to:

- develop a future-proofing plan to expand the ATL to create extra capacity as demand increases. The ATL is currently constrained in places by landscaped buffers. It is essential that future developments adjacent to the corridor accommodate a widened ATL.

3. Complete connections to neighbourhoods and the local path network

City of Parramatta and Bicycle NSW advocated for frequent access points to the Active Transport Link to maximise permeability and usage.

The Stage 1 project team was required to consult with City of Parramatta staff and Bicycle NSW during the development of detailed designs for the ATL. However, our feedback on connections to the future and existing local walking and cycle network, and to key neighbourhood destinations, was mostly ignored.

It is difficult to enter and leave ATL in many places. Some access points are still impacted by the light rail construction work, but others are missing, or require use of stairs or a non-DDA compliant ramp. At Carlingford, the ATL ends abruptly with no useable links heading east or west.

It is a serious oversight of the previous administration to omit these connections from the scope of work for Parramatta Light Rail. We now ask the Labor Government to:

- work with City of Parramatta to identify missing or sub-standard links and develop a plan to deliver the relevant infrastructure within a reasonable timeframe, allocating responsibility for each element to the most appropriate authority.

- provide sufficient funding and resources to City of Parramatta to complete any work that Council is in the best position to deliver.

4. Fix design and construction defects urgently

There are several safety and access issues along the ATL that need to be resolved in the very short term. For example, there are no kerb ramps to access the ATL from Dudley Street, Tiptrees Avenue, Brand Street and Adderton Road. Other kerb ramps have a dangerous lip. Unnecessary bollards, such as those installed in the middle of the shared path at either end of the bridge over the river, have already caused significant injuries to bike riders.

The Parramatta Light Rail project team must liaise with City of Parramatta staff and other key stakeholders to:

- compile a hit list of remediation works that must be actioned quickly while the contractors are still on site.
- remove all bollards from the ATL. If it is deemed essential to protect the bridge from vehicles, a bollard could be located at the entrance to the ATL. As riders slow to turn on or off the path, it is easier to navigate the bollards. The risk of collisions will be reduced.

In conclusion, Bicycle NSW requests your assistance in ensuring the massive investment in the Parramatta Light Rail project is leveraged to create safe cycleways of the highest quality in the Parramatta area.

Bicycle NSW has written a detailed [submission](#) in support of Stage Two. We will work closely with the project team to ensure that mistakes made during the design and construction of Stage One are not repeated.

We thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully,



Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer
Bicycle NSW

cc

The Hon. Paul Scully MP Minister for Planning
Caroline Butler-Bowden Acting Dep. Secretary, Cities and Active Transport
Donna Davies MP Member for Parramatta
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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.