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City of Newcastle  
PO Box 489  
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

28<sup>th</sup> July 2023

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Dear City of Newcastle,

**Re: Road Safety Improvements - Maud Street, Waratah West**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the plans to add a signalised midblock crossing of Maud Street between Prince Street and Vera Street, Waratah West.

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 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 supports proposals to improve safety of pedestrians and cyclists crossing Maud Street.**

The crossing of Maud Street between Prince Street and Vera Street is part of an important regional cycle route linking the University of Newcastle Callaghan campus with the city centre (Figure 1). However, this intersection has been a safety and accessibility blackspot for many years. The existing median refuge is too small, particularly if more than one bike, or a non-standard bike, is waiting for a gap in the heavy traffic on Maud Street.

A signalised crossing will allow pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities to cross the road safely. The kerb extensions and landscaped beds will improve visual amenity, capture stormwater and clarify the safest route for bike riders. Removal of the vehicle exit from Vera Street to Maud Street will not only reduce through traffic using the Queen/Vera rat run, improving amenity for residents and safety for bike riders. It also frees up valuable street space for landscaping.

We commend City of Newcastle for modifying the plan based on feedback from previous consultations. **In this submission we make a series of recommendations to inform the final design of the project.**

We would like to thank members of Newcastle Cycleways Movement, a large and active Bicycle User Group in the area, who have worked hard over many years to advocate for better conditions for active travel.

Bicycle NSW would also like to use this opportunity to again raise the concept of a shared path in the railway easement with a grade-separated underpass at Maud Street. This would contribute to a seamless, safe and continuous cycleway along the university to city corridor in the future. We ask City of Newcastle and other key stakeholders to re-visit the proposal and develop a strategy for moving forwards. Bicycle NSW can assist through our connections with politicians, Transport for NSW and neighbouring councils.

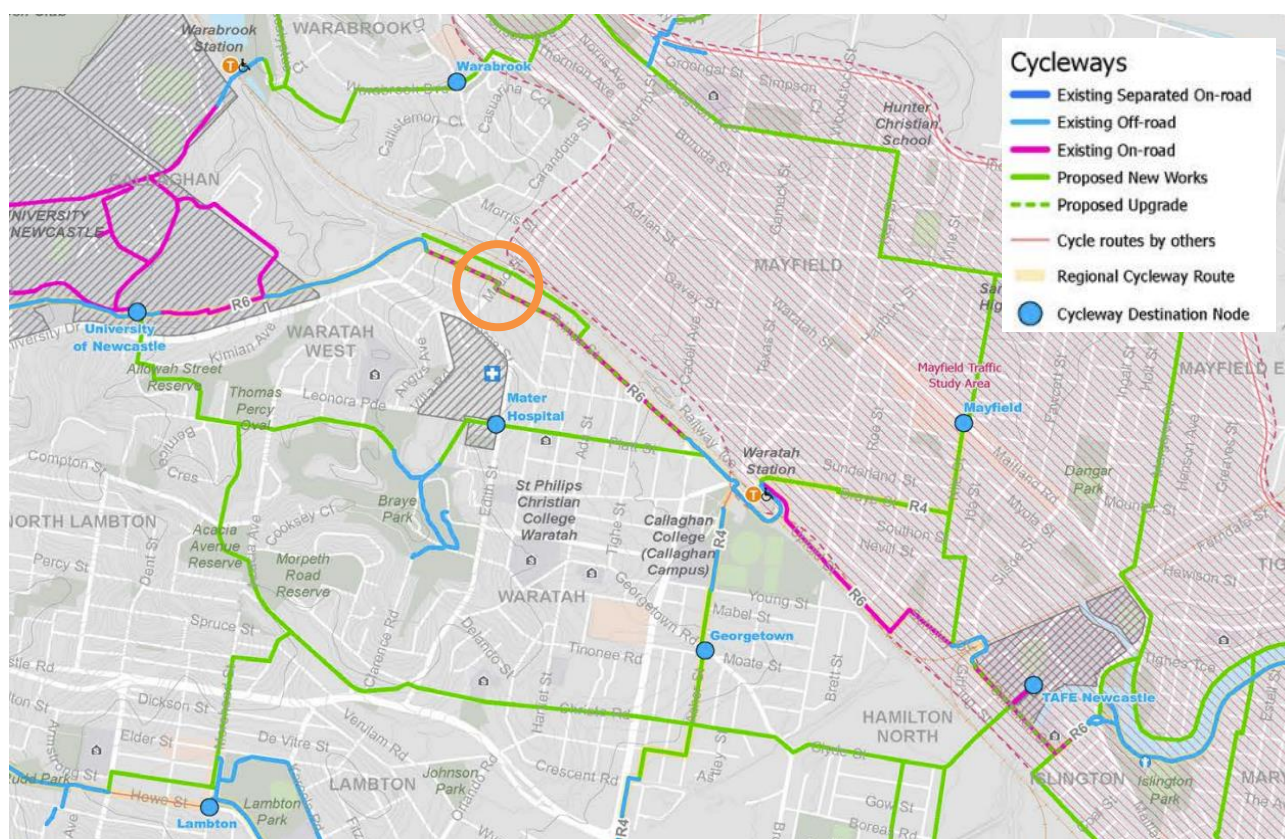


Figure 1: Extract from Map 11 of the On Our Bike Cycling Plan 2021-2030. The orange circle highlights the location of the Maud Street intersection on Regional Cycleway Route R6 – Newcastle City Centre to University (Callaghan) and Richmond Vale Rail Trail (Minmi Junction). (Source: City of Newcastle)

## Recommendations

- The light phasing must prioritise pedestrian and cyclist level of service. In line with the Road User Space Allocation Policy<sup>i</sup> and other State and local strategies, small delays to vehicle traffic should never prevent the delivery of safer and more efficient active transport infrastructure.
- In this location, the traffic lights will not control the turning movements of vehicles. The pedestrian/bike green signal will only be triggered by a pedestrian or bike rider pushing the 'beg' button. The wait for a green signal should be **no more than 30 seconds** – and much less than this if the traffic hasn't been stopped for a period of time. There is evidence that vulnerable road users faced with a longer wait are likely to run out of patience and take a risk to cross on red<sup>ii</sup>. Motorists are then frustrated when stopped at an empty crossing.
- The duration of the green signal must give pedestrians of all ages and abilities adequate time to cross the road. The needs of the elderly and those with disabilities must be at the forefront of signal phasing design.
- The 'beg' buttons must be located in a convenient location for bike riders to reach while waiting on their bikes at the left-hand side of each kerb ramp.
- The impact of merging the southbound carriageway of Maud St into one lane needs to be shown more clearly on the plans. The narrower road should allow a more extended kerb, further reducing the crossing distance of Maud Street. A larger kerb extension would also slow the vehicles turning left into Prince St, with benefits for pedestrian and cyclist safety.

- Future-proof the shared path sections by allowing for increased demand at the outset. Extra width should be considered wherever possible. It is important to avert conflict as population increases and use of the corridor grows.
- Ensure that the intersection is inclusive and accommodates all types of bikes and mobility devices, including cargo bikes, tricycles, hand-cycles, recumbents and wheelchair scooters.
- Refer to the new Cycleway Design Toolbox<sup>iii</sup> and the 2017 Cycling Aspects of Austroads Guides (AP-G88-17) to ensure that upgrades to the cycleway are constructed to current best practice.
- Prioritise bike riders on Vera Street and Prince Street. A mixed traffic on-road cycling facility requires a range of traffic calming interventions to ensure very slow vehicle speeds and low traffic volumes. The TfNSW Cycleway Design Toolbox provides design standards for a 'quietway' or 'bicycle boulevard'. Vera Street will have lower volumes of traffic due to the removal of the vehicle exit at Maud Street. Conditions on Princes Street are not proposed to change. We ask City of Newcastle to consider appropriate traffic filtering to prevent through traffic using the street. It is also important to:
- Reduce speed limits to 30km/h on all residential streets, particularly streets that form part of the on-street cycling network. The Vision Zero goal of lowering speed limits to 30 km/h on residential streets and around schools and town centres aligns with global best practice and the UN resolution of August 2020.<sup>iv</sup> The implementation of 30km/h limits is gaining momentum in Australian and New Zealand. 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<sup>v</sup>. Several 30km/h trials run in Melbourne and New Zealand before 2020 have been successful. Popularity increased further after people experienced the benefits<sup>vi</sup>.

### Additional projects to progress:

- The narrowing of the southbound carriageway of Maud Street from Miller Street to one lane has clear benefits that extend beyond the current intersection upgrade project. We ask City of Newcastle to develop plans to:
  - (i) widen the footpath to a shared user path between Miller Street and Lorna Street, and
  - (ii) add bicycle lanterns to all three pedestrian crossings at the junction of Lorna and Maud.

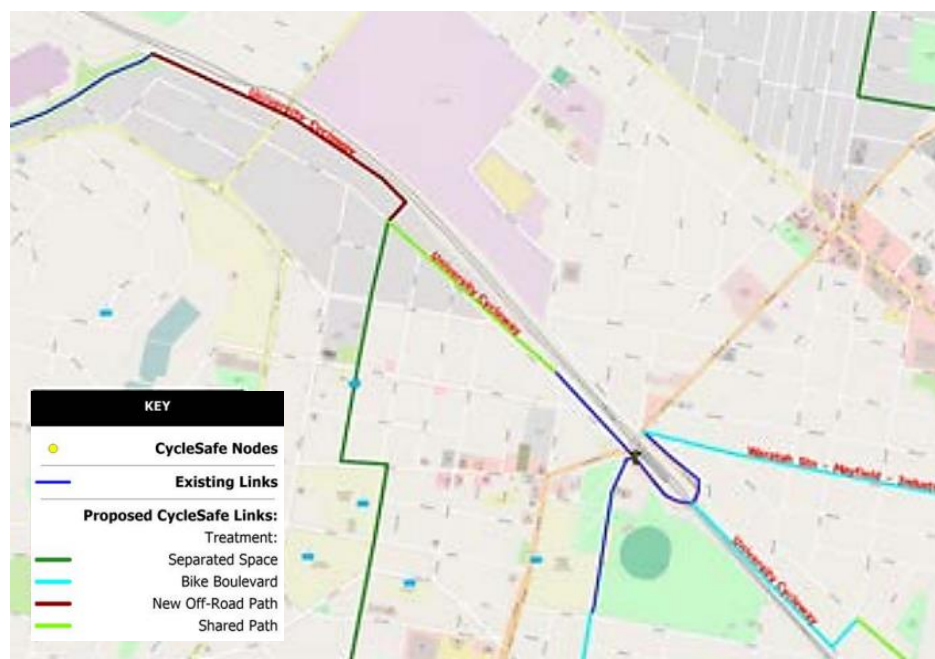
This would improve accessibility to the Mater Hospital and address longstanding issues with pedestrian comfort on the bridge over the rail tracks, where narrow footpaths were further constrained by the installation of crash barriers.

- Re-visit proposals to build a shared path in the rail corridor with a grade-separated crossing under Maud Street. This path would connect directly with the University cycleway near Queen Street at a much more level grade than that provided by Vera Street, and contribute to a safe, comfortable, direct and seamless R6 regional cycleway in the future.

Advocacy for this route has been on-going for many years. It is shown on Map 11 of the City of Newcastle Cycling Plan<sup>vii</sup> (Figure 1) and forms part of the CycleSafe Network, developed by a cross-disciplinary group of stakeholders in 2016<sup>viii</sup> (Figure 2).

Both network maps show the rail easement path rejoining Prince Street at Alfred St, but we suggest that City of Newcastle explores the feasibility of extending the path to the junction of Platt Street to connect with the existing shared path to Waratah Station and beyond.

Figure 2:  
A section of the University Cycleway, Route 3 of the CycleSafe Network, shows the rail corridor used between Queen and Alfred Streets. The Maud Street underpass is a key component of the proposed route (Source: CycleSafe Network)



Many reasons for not progressing with this concept have been put forward over the years. Bicycle NSW and Newcastle Cycleways Movement submit that this is a good moment to explore the concerns of Transport Asset Holding Entity (TAHE). Historic barriers to using rail corridors for cycleways could be overcome in the current political and strategic climate. We have a new State Government, a progressive Minister for Transport who recognises the huge value of active transport infrastructure relative to its cost, and a raft of recent NSW Government policies and strategies that aim to deliver 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 the NSW population grows.



Figure 3: Looking down into the rail corridor from the Maud Street bridge, to the south (left) and north (right). It is clear that there is a wide easement. Minimal stabilisation would be required for a 3-4m wide shared path (Source: Google Maps)

## Conclusion

It is exciting to see the project to upgrade the Maud Street intersection progress. We look forward to riding the improved R6 regional cycleway very soon!


Please reach out with any questions or help needed. If requested, we would be delighted to help advocate for new active transport infrastructure in the Newcastle area during our regular meetings with Transport for NSW and key ministers in the NSW Labor Government.

Yours faithfully,



Sarah Bickford

Bike Planner  
Bicycle NSW



Francis O'Neill

Head of Advocacy  
Bicycle NSW

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<sup>i</sup> Transport for NSW, 2021, Jan 27. Road User Space Allocation Policy.

<https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2021/road-user-space-allocation-policy.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Living Streets, 2019. <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/news-and-blog/press-media/what-makes-people-cross-waiting-more-than-30-seconds-for-the-green-man>; <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/better-crossings>

<sup>iii</sup> Cycleway Design Toolbox: designing for cycling and micromobility. Transport for NSW.

<https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2021/Cycleway-Design-Toolbox-Web.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> 20's Plenty. 2020, August. General Assembly of the United Nations says 20's plenty.

[http://www.20splenty.org/un\\_says\\_20splenty](http://www.20splenty.org/un_says_20splenty)

<sup>v</sup> What Australians want report, [https://irp.cdn-website.com/541aa469/files/uploaded/What\\_Australia\\_Wants\\_Report\\_.pdf](https://irp.cdn-website.com/541aa469/files/uploaded/What_Australia_Wants_Report_.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> [https://www.20splenty.org/20mph\\_choice](https://www.20splenty.org/20mph_choice)

<sup>vii</sup> City of Newcastle, 2021. On Our Bike Cycling Plan 2021-2030. <https://newcastle.nsw.gov.au/getmedia/19c3e8a0-e5b5-4c87-b8d6-4dc2ac12c567/On-our-bikes-Cycling-Plan-2021-2030>

<sup>viii</sup> CycleSafe Network, 2016. The CycleSafe Network Active Travel Infrastructure Project. <http://www.csn.org.au/s/CSN-Active-Travel-Infrastructure-Project-Consultative-Draft.pdf>