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The Hon. (Chris) Christopher John MINNS, MP
Premier

Via webmail

11 August 2023

Dear Premier,

Re: Make Active Travel a Priority for the September Budget

Better Streets is a coalition of community groups, businesses, and individuals committed to creating safe, healthy, people-friendly, climate-friendly streets. Bicycle NSW has been advocating for safe bicycle infrastructure for people of all ages and abilities in NSW since 1976.

We are writing to advocate for the prioritization of Active Travel in the upcoming September Budget. Research shows that the current car dominated system is failing us:

- Vehicle emissions cause 11,105 premature deaths, 12,210 cardiovascular hospitalisations, 6840 respiratory hospitalisations, and 66,000 childhood asthma cases every year. ([Sydney Morning Herald](#))
- 1187 people died on Australian roads in 2022 ([Sydney Morning Herald](#) and publicly available road accident data)

The mounting toll of fatalities, injuries, and health-related burdens underscores the imperative of adopting a proactive stance. We need safe, people friendly, climate friendly streets for all. And we need them now.

Improving our streets is particularly important for the health and safety of future generations. In the 1980s, 75% of kids walked or rode to school. But after four decades of car-centric urban planning, that proportion has plummeted to 14.5%. This has had disgraceful public health consequences:

- Australian Teens rank 140 out of 146 of the least physically active nations on the planet. ([The Lancet](#))
- 25% of Australian children and 67% of adults are overweight or obese due to physical inactivity ([Diabetes Australia](#)).
- Traffic violence is the leading cause of death among children and teens. ([Sydney Morning Herald](#))
- Traffic pollution causes 11 000 deaths ([Sydney Morning Herald](#)) and 66,000 childhood asthma cases every year ([Sydney Morning Herald](#)).



Transport for NSW has introduced a suite of great new policies on: Active Transport; Providing for Walking and Cycling; Road Space Reallocation and Future Transport Strategies. But at the current allocation, it will take more than 320 years to deliver healthy community outcomes.

NSW currently only spends 0.2% of its transport budget on active travel (AT) which is 100 times below that recommended by the UN (20%).

We believe that 20% of Transport's budget is achievable, with a ramp up from 5-10% in the immediate term. Below we have outlined how this could be allocated over the next four years.

We also understand that the NSW Government is exploring how active transport would sit at the centre of the transport agency. We believe there are five key components to this:

1. Set mode share targets for the whole agency, report on progress annually, a tie this to performance pay for executives as per the Transport for London model
2. Active transport should be central to the machinery of government changes underway, with governance is a core component. For example, Active Transport should be directly represented in ITCO, FIAC and other decision making entities.
3. Reform known barriers to implementation such as traffic committees and the current veto powers vested in other divisions/ branches such as Network Operations
4. Active Transport needs a line of sight to the budget
5. Take a cross-government whole of portfolio approach to incorporate projects and initiatives planned and delivered through DPE, Education and so on.

We also understand that the NSW Government is considering funding for safer roads and an active travel to schools program as part of a 3 to 4 year collaboration with Bicycle NSW, AusCycling and Amy Gillett Foundation. Whilst this is a step in the right direction, it's a fraction of the costs in relation to what is required to improve the health of children and young people for generations to come.

In preparing the budget for September we recommend that the NSW Government allocate 10% to active transport over the next four years with a view to increase to 20% as capability to deliver increases. The table below (Attachment A) sets out what some of those potential programs could be.

Active transport infrastructure averages 4:1 to 5:1 return on investment ([Queensland Government](#) and TfNSW) due to the enormous benefits to community health, productivity, and environment. The UK Government in *The Value of Cycling*, estimates an impressive ROI in the range of 19:1 – 35.5:1 taking into account population density, connectivity and the environment ([UK Government](#)).

We request a meeting with you to share our vision for the future and discuss this in further detail ahead of the September budget.

We look forward to your response.



Yours faithfully,

Sara Stace
Peter McLean
CEO, Bicycle NSW

President, Better Streets




Attachment A: Potential programs to deliver better streets in NSW 2023-2027

Proposed Program	Cost over 4 years	Benefits
Active Travel to Schools Co-funded opportunity with Department of Education and Schools Infrastructure.	\$25 million pa \$100 million total	Support 1,250 schools a year Health and traffic decongestion benefits of up to \$33 million a year Improve safety for children around schools and reduce local traffic congestion
High Streets Place Improvement Increase from current spend of \$15-20 million pa	\$25 million pa \$100 million total	Support local businesses through increased footfall and spending Improve road safety and access to public transport
Local Quiet Streets	\$50 million pa \$200 million total	Roll out in all NSW councils within 4 years Return of ~\$4.30 for each \$1 invested, so a \$200m program would return \$860m over 30 years (\$28m a year)
Pedestrian Crossings	\$100 million pa \$400 million total	Improve access and children for children and people to key destinations Improved access to public transport Access to local centres Improve access for people in wheelchairs, with prams and mobility impaired Deliver 2,500 new or upgraded crossings a year which equates to around 20 per council Health benefits of up to \$100 million a year
Accelerated Cycleways	\$250 million pa \$1,000 million total	Reduce travel costs for households Provide alternatives for trips up to 5km which constitute half of all trips in NSW Reduce emissions to achieve climate targets Improve local air quality and reduce noise



Proposed Program	Cost over 4 years	Benefits
		Return of \$5.20 for each \$1 invested, so a \$1b program would return \$5.2b over 30 years (\$170m pa)
Integrating Active Transport into all transport projects	\$425 million pa \$1,700 million over four years	Delivering active transport as part of other projects reduces the need to retrofit at ten times the cost (Australian Government 2013)
TOTAL for all programs	\$875 million pa \$3,500 million total over four years	Over \$330 million a year in economic benefits for up to 30 years No other investment can match these returns!

