

Dobroyd Parade Pedestrian Bridge
Transport for NSW
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Haymarket NSW 1240

Email: ni@transport.nsw.gov.au

7th December 2023

Dear Transport for NSW,

Re: Pedestrian Bridge over Dobroyd Parade, Haberfield

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed bridge over Dobroyd Parade in Haberfield.

Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW for over 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.

Bicycle NSW does not support the installation of a bridge that creates an inconvenient detour for people walking and cycling.

The proposed bridge will disrupt an important regional active transport route between Waratah Street, Haberfield and Ingham Avenue, Five Dock. The Option 4 design, favoured by Transport for NSW, is not rideable despite advocacy from Inner West Council and Bicycle User Groups during the 2020 community consultation that ramps are essential to maintain connectivity. Crossing at surface level will no longer be possible as Transport for NSW plans to completely remove the at-grade signalised crossing and block access to Dobroyd Parade with concrete barriers and extended median fencing. The proposed structure is ugly (Figure 1) and offers nothing for the visual amenity of Haberfield.

This is car-first infrastructure, thinly veiled as a 'safety upgrade' but clearly intended to alleviate traffic congestion created by WestConnex.



Figure 1: Proposed Pedestrian Bridge across Dobroyd Parade at Waratah Street intersection (image: TfNSW REF)

Comments:

Elaborate and eye-wateringly expensive elevated crossings of this type are not, in essence, active travel infrastructure. They are designed to facilitate the movement of vehicular traffic. Joe Cortwright's observations from *'The Myth of Pedestrian Infrastructure in a World of Cars'* ([Cortwright, 2020](#)) aptly describe this proposal:

"Its purpose is primarily to benefit cars, speeding car travel, by freeing them from the need to pay attention to or yield to pedestrians... These elaborate and expensive pedestrian bridges are at best a remedial effort to minimize the danger this environment poses to anyone who isn't in a car. They really don't make the area any more desirable for walking."

Bicycle NSW disagrees with the statement in the REF that the overpass aligns with the 2022 Future Transport Strategy and Active Transport Strategy. This is because such designs achieve the polar opposite of these strategies by placing active transport and the environment subordinate to motorised transport.

The bridge represents a failure in Transport for NSW's objectives for sustainable, multi-modal transport. It does not promote mode shift away from driving to active travel. The bridge proposed in 2020 had accessible ramps but the new design cuts these out, to save money after spending \$16bn on WestConnex. It makes walking, wheeling and rolling more difficult and less accessible while driving becomes more streamlined and more attractive. A street-level signalised crossing will be replaced with stairs and a lift. Previously, people on wheels or with prams could cross at grade. Now, in Transport's relentless quest to avoid traffic slowing down and waiting, active travellers must negotiate additional barriers. Bicycle riders must dismount. There are no ramps. As unsuitable as pedestrian overpasses are, the barest husk of suitability necessitates ramps so that people requiring them need not depend on lifts which are slow, inconvenient, and prone to failure.

The project puts pedestrians and cyclists last. Removing an at-grade crossing in a densely populated precinct, with housing, parks and schools, signals to motorists that they are at the top of the Road User Hierarchy and pedestrians are at the bottom. Pitifully, the REF admits that cycle access is not optimised by use of lifts, but has promised each lift can 'accommodate 2 bicycles and 1 cargo bike'. This is hardly transport equity, as is also the concept that motorists can effortlessly glide past the intersection while bike riders and pedestrians (also people) have to use lifts to climb over the motor traffic obstruction. Local amenity, good urban design, active transport focus and transport equity are concepts completely alien to the WestConnex team at Transport for NSW.

The claim that the proposal is driven by safety is a fig leaf. There have been no pedestrian injuries (REF Section 2.1) and there are many other ways of improving safety – like lower speed limits, wider medians, longer 'green man' crossing periods. But such interventions may have a slight impact on vehicle trip time and go against the Transport for NSW mandate to prioritise level of service for cars over all other road users.

Unfortunately, there is zero discussion in the 318-page REF about the at-grade solution, even though it would be the cheapest and easiest to implement. What's more, it's the fairest of the options and promotes safe, convenient, comfortable, and direct active travel to promote mode shift and reduce CO₂ emissions.

Recommendations

- Bicycle NSW would prefer to see **'Option 5 – construct a single stage at-grade crossing'** implemented. This would require a lowering of traffic speeds from 60 to 40 km/h and a signalised crossing with phasing that preferences active travel.
- The least worst bridge is Option 3 with the 100m long ramps to ensure continuous progress over this dangerous intersection.

- Please maintain access to Timbrell Park for bike riders using the vehicle lanes of Waratah Street.
- It is essential to consider very carefully how the bridge will interact with the proposed Iron Cove Creek shared path. This is intended to be a very attractive Green Grid corridor, a piece of infrastructure that is joyful and lifts the spirits of a community besieged by the negative externalities of Westconnex. At the moment, the two projects are not communicating or aligned (Figures 2 and 3).
- The existing narrow and broken bridge to Timbrell Park is not fit for purpose. A new bridge crossing of Iron Cove Creek at the base of the pedestrian bridge must be resolved and delivered now as part of the pedestrian bridge design, not left to Canada Bay Council to provide (or not provide) in the future.



Figure 2:
An extract from the precinct plan for Ramsay St to Iron Cove (Precinct 6) in the [Iron Cove Creek draft masterplan](#), currently on exhibition to collect community feedback before more detailed design work commences. The masterplan does refer to the REF Option 2 bridge but there is no attempt to resolve the junction. Transport for NSW must design any interventions at the Waratah St/Dobroyd Parade intersection with this project front of mind.
(Image: Civile / Inner West Council)



Figure 3:
Extract from the REF, Part 1. It appears that access to the low-level bridge over the creek has been accommodated but not the future location of the Iron Cove Creek shared path. A new low-level bridge is not indicated. Or the need to create an attractive element within the landscaping for this Green Grid corridor. Will there be sufficient space to go under the stair structure? Can a gateway for the Iron Cove Creek path be incorporated into the bridge structure?
(Image: TfNSW)

Conclusion

Bicycle NSW opposes the proposed design for the Dobroyd Parade Pedestrian Bridge, which prioritizes cars over pedestrians and cyclists. The bridge's lack of ramps, reliance on lifts, and removal of at-grade crossings hinder accessibility. We strongly advocate for 'Option 5 – a single-stage at-grade crossing' for safety and convenience, as it aligns with sustainability objectives. Alternatively, adding rideable ramps, albeit not ideal, would enhance accessibility if the proposal proceeds.

Elaborate overpasses, even with ramps, represent failures in urban planning - because the landscape is given wholly to traffic movement voiding its status as a place. No Acknowledgements of Country nor citations of various movement and place-based strategies change this devaluation of a popular regional corridor.

Yours faithfully,



Francis O'Neill

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Bicycle NSW