

Northern Beaches Council  
PO Box 82 Manly  
NSW 1655

8<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Dear Northern Beaches Council,

**Re: Curl Curl - Freshwater Connectivity and Streetscape Upgrade**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the revised plans for connecting Curl Curl to Freshwater.

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

**Bicycle NSW fully supports the plans to upgrade the streetscape and improve safety for people walking and cycling on Oliver Street and Bennett Street.**

The project includes 8 new or upgraded pedestrian crossings, more garden beds and landscaping, and the first long separated cycleway on the Northern Beaches. A bi-directional bicycle path along Oliver Street will make it much easier for local residents to access services, parks and Freshwater Village on foot or by bicycle. There are two primary schools on the route with two high schools, another primary school and extensive sports grounds at the Curl Curl Lagoon end. The path offers very significant transport and recreational benefits to the community and completes a missing link for longer journeys between Seaforth, Balgowlah, Manly and Dee Why.

The map in Figure 1 highlights the existing and future cycling connections plan in the area.

Bicycle NSW supported a separated cycleway for this corridor in our [December 2021 submission](#). Please read this feedback in conjunction with the earlier submission as the recommendations made are relevant and it is not necessary to repeat them.

**Comments on the proposals:**

As set out in our previous submissions, Bicycle NSW applauds Northern Beaches Council's efforts to roll-out the Safe Cycling Network developed for the [Northern Beaches Bike Plan 2020](#)<sup>i</sup>. The Curl Curl to Freshwater link is identified as a Tier 2 District route between Manly and Dee Why.

The separated cycleway will encourage more people to choose cycling as a transport option, create a safer cycling environment and help meet the targets established in [Move 2038 - Northern Beaches Transport Strategy](#)<sup>ii</sup> to double the active travel trips and strive for a 30% reduction in journeys by cars. Cycling is already popular on the Northern Beaches – data from 2020 showed 40% of residents used a bicycle in the past 12 months compared to the state average of 25%.

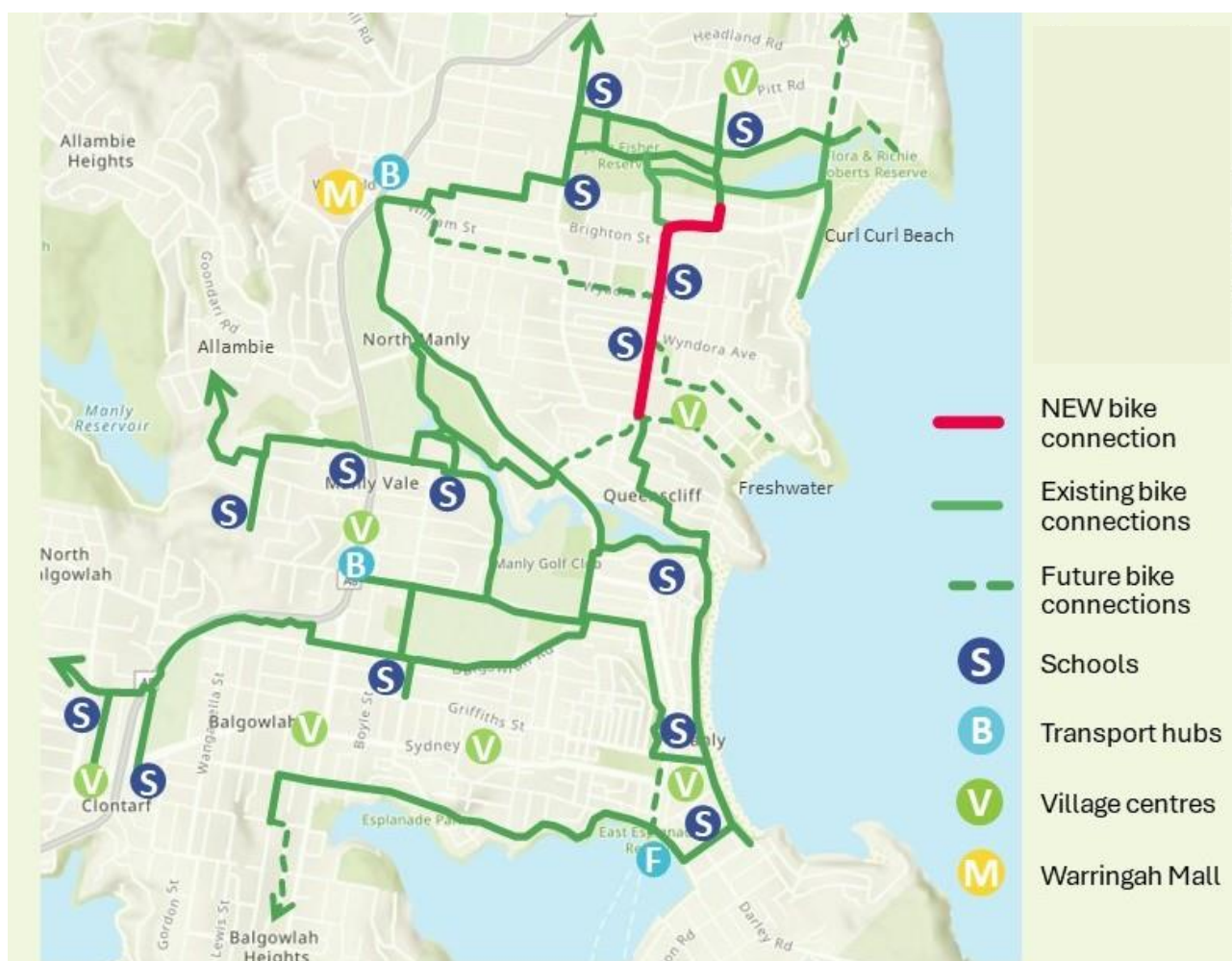


Figure 1: The new cycleway fills an important missing link in the local network. It passes 2 schools and connects to 3 more as well as sports fields and Freshwater Village. Families will be able to cycle safely to the park, school, shops, sports ground or beach (Image: Bicycle NSW / Better Streets Northern Beaches)

We suspect these figures are no longer accurate! There has been an explosion in e-bike use in Manly-Freshwater area and it is fantastic to see so many people getting around on two wheels, avoiding the hassles of finding parking and paying for fuel, and reducing congestion and pollution. We are particularly excited by how quickly teenagers have taken to e-bikes. This is such an important life stage for forming travel habits and the current surge in bike riding offers an incredible opportunity for Northern Beaches Council to embed that #bikeisbest in young minds and shape mode choice for the future - supporting our health, air quality, urban liveability and biodiversity.

Of course, the community has raised concerns about e-bikes being used unsafely, both on roads among fast vehicle traffic, and on footpaths and shared paths busy with pedestrians. The Curl Curl - Freshwater project responds to this apprehension by providing **a separate space for bike riders**.

According to the best practice 'cycling segmentation' model, developed in Portland USA to identify the type and needs of existing and potential bike riders<sup>iii</sup>, separated bicycle paths will allow 70% of local residents to consider journeys by bike. The area has some steep inclines but e-bikes and other micromobility devices will ensure that active transport options are accessible to all residents.

A portion of the road space will be reallocated to create space for the cycleway and new landscaped beds. The reallocation of road space for active travel is supported by the Road User Space Allocation Policy<sup>iv</sup> and a raft of Northern Beaches Council strategies. Priority 21 of *Towards 2040 - Northern Beaches Local*

*Strategic Planning Statement*<sup>iv</sup> aims to redesign existing streets to be more efficient, accommodating more people, goods and services in a limited space and creating safer and more attractive public realm. *Move 2038 – Northern Beaches Transport Strategy* recognises that pedestrians and cyclists should be separated. The *Northern Beaches Bike Plan 2020* strives for separated cycle paths on regional and district routes.

Our [September 2021 submission](#) set out the reasons why a shared path is not appropriate for such an important section of the cycling network. A segregated bi-directional path will have many benefits over a shared path:

- People riding bikes are separated from pedestrians and vehicles, reducing conflict.
- Street trees and green verges are not impacted.
- Vehicle lanes will be narrower, forcing drivers to slow down and take care.
- No additional asphalt is required, reducing issues with urban heat and stormwater.
- Sufficient space is created to enable a significant modal shift to active transport.
- New landscaping and important pedestrian safety features such as kerb extensions can be incorporated into the buffers and the parking lanes.
- The cycle paths can be prioritised over driveways and minor road intersections.
- Motorists exiting driveways have a better sightline to approaching cyclists, improving safety.

The road-related environment is a public asset that must be shared equitably between all road users. Any inconvenience to car drivers created by reducing road space for driving and parking private vehicles will incentivise the mode-shift that Transport for NSW and Council seek. The narrower vehicle lanes and slight changes to lane alignment will help reduce vehicle speeds, improving safety and amenity. Oliver and Bennett Streets will be greener, leafier, quieter and calmer.

Our [December 2021 recommendations](#) supported a modified Option 1A cross section with a 3.0m wide cycleway and a 1.0m buffer north of Wyndora (where buses need to pass) and a modified Option 1B cross section with a 2.4m cycleway and a 0.4m buffer south of Wyndora.

However, the proposed configuration will work well and meets the minimum standards set out in the Cycleway Design Toolbox<sup>vi</sup>. Bicycle NSW recognises that Council has worked very hard with the residents and the bus operator to preserve as much parking as possible.

We support the location of the cycleway on the east side of Oliver Street, reducing the number of side streets and driveways to navigate, and the crossing to west side north of Brighton to facilitate access to both Park Street and the Bennett Street / Stirgess Avenue link into John Fisher Park.

We are pleased that a shared-street treatment for Park Street has been incorporated into the proposals eliminating the need for a shared path or cycle lane to connect with the Curl Curl Lagoon open space and sports facilities.

The bike and pedestrian raised crossings prioritise people walking and cycling. Bike riders will not need to dismount, and walking will be much safer for vulnerable members of the community. The crossings are inclusive – they are easy to negotiate with prams, wheelchairs or heavy non-standard bikes as users stay at footpath level and are not faced with steep kerb cuts. The Council's [school walking catchment map](#) is excellent, highlighting how many more households will be able to walk to Harbord and St John's primary schools using only safe raised or signalised crossings.

The shared areas around each intersections are well resolved. There are many precedents in the City of Sydney and elsewhere. Pedestrians will have priority in these areas and bike riders will need to move with great care to the next section of separated bicycle path.

Bicycle NSW prefers the 'naked shared path' now proposed in front of the school over separated paths marked with green paint or lines. Bikes can pass either side of the trees, depending on pedestrian activity. City of Sydney-style shared path decals can be applied to the ground and with the word 'slow'. Ideally avoid signs on poles as bike riders don't see them and the street does not need extra visual clutter, or collision hazards.

Finally, we support the strategy for locating bins. Parked cars will be pulled back from the edges of the driveways by 1m to help ensure good visibility for drivers exiting their properties.

### Some recommendations to refine the project:

- **Apply a 40km/h speed limit across the whole area**

Lower vehicle speeds make a difference to road safety. There is no time to waste. We urge Northern Beaches Council to roll out a 40 km/h speed limit on all streets in Queenscliff, Freshwater and Curl Curl, with the possible exception of Harbord Road.

Our roads are becoming less safe every year. The [road toll is rising](#). 1184 people were killed on Australian roads last year. This year, the number killed has surged to a staggering 1240. NSW had the second highest increase, with 340 deaths recorded, a 17.2% increase on the 290 recorded the year before. Cycling deaths rose 30.3%, and pedestrian deaths rose 11.3%. That is on top of the hidden road toll of 11,000 each year due to toxic dust and vehicle emissions.

Bicycle NSW refers Northern Beaches Council to our [recent submission to Inner West Council](#) on its plans to implement an area-wide 40km/h speed limit. This submission outlines the benefits for:

#### Safety

Lower speeds provide road users with increased reaction time, significantly reducing the likelihood of crashes. Furthermore, in the unfortunate event of a collision, slower speeds can limit the severity of injuries, ultimately saving lives and reducing trauma. Research from across the globe shows that a pedestrian has a 60% chance of survival when hit at 40km/h. This reduces to 10% at 50km/h.

#### Mode shift

When streets are perceived as safe and comfortable for walking and cycling, more people opt for sustainable modes of travel. This shift reduces congestion and air pollution, benefitting both the environment and public health.

#### Quality of life

Lower speeds and less driving reduce noise pollution. Slower traffic allows more children to walk and cycle safely to school, leading to long term health and psychological benefits. Businesses benefit from increased foot traffic, as more people choose walking, cycling, and other sustainable modes of transportation over cars. Reduced speeds allow vehicle lanes to be narrowed, providing opportunities for improvements in the public domain streetscape and ultimately community development.

It is important for speed zones to be predictable and legible. Varying speed limits in a small area is difficult for all road users to navigate and creates unnecessary acceleration and deceleration. National and international experience is that 40km/h speed limits, comprehensively applied across larger areas, create a more uniform sense of awareness in drivers.

Speed limit inconsistencies also contribute to the need for additional road signs and speed treatments, which chew through Council funds and create visually cluttered streetscapes.

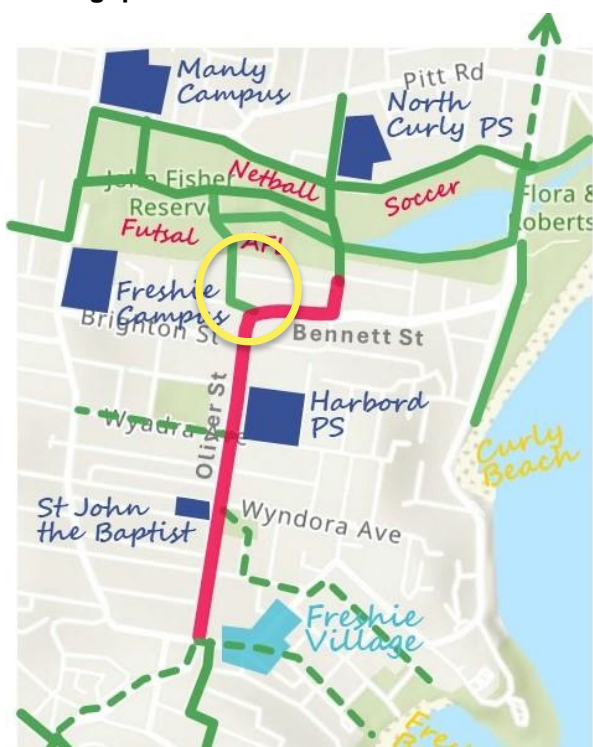


Once a new 40km/h baseline is established we recommend that Northern Beaches Council implements 30km/h limits on the side streets off Oliver Street that are designated as local bike connections on the Safe Cycling Network. Traffic calming and traffic filtering to discourage rat running will further reinforce low speeds and ensure that riders of all ages can share the street. This is a low-cost way of rapidly creating a fine-grain network to link more front doors to the cycleway.

Northern Beaches Council has shown great leadership with the 30km/h trial in the centre of Manly. The lower vehicle speeds have significantly improved safety for everyone in the community, particularly people walking and cycling, children going to school and other vulnerable road users outside a car.

The Vision Zero goal of lowering speed limits to 30 km/h on residential streets and around schools and town centres is considered an international best practice. [Research](#) from across the globe shows that a pedestrian has a 90% chance of survival when hit at 30km/h. This reduces to 10% at 50km/h.

- **Ensure that the route to the lagoon park via Bennett Street and Stirgess Avenue is clearly signposted.**



The relocation of the cycleway to the north side of bend where Oliver Street turns into Bennett Street will make it very easy for bike riders to peel off towards Stirgess Avenue and follow the route shown in yellow on Figure 2 to the lagoon park.

This should be the main route taken to reach the two high schools, the Harbord Road shared path and the district route to Warringah Mall and the B-Line via Brookvale. Clear wayfinding is essential.

It is important to add shared 'quietway' treatments, like those proposed for Park Street, to this section of Bennett and Stirgess to ensure cars move very slowly through the area and bike riders of all ages and abilities can share the road.

Figure 2: The yellow circle marks an important route to the lagoon, Curl Curl, Brookvale and DeeWhy that should be clearly shown on maps and signage. (Image: Bicycle NSW / Better Streets Northern Beaches)

- **Add more trees and landscaping wherever possible**

We hope Council will take every opportunity to integrate additional trees and native plants to support biodiversity. Oliver Street could emerge as a biodiversity corridor to connect Curl Curl and Queenscliff lagoons.

- **Reconfigure the cycleway transition at the junctions of Wyadra Avenue and Brighton Street**

The abrupt transition to the share space at both of these intersections looks awkward to navigate, particularly for people using loaded cargo bikes or other non-standard micromobility devices, and may cause conflict. We ask Council to explore the option of a straight transition to a shared space, as used in most of the other intersections in the corridor. The yellow lines marked on the extracts from the civil drawings in Figure 3 indicate what might be possible.

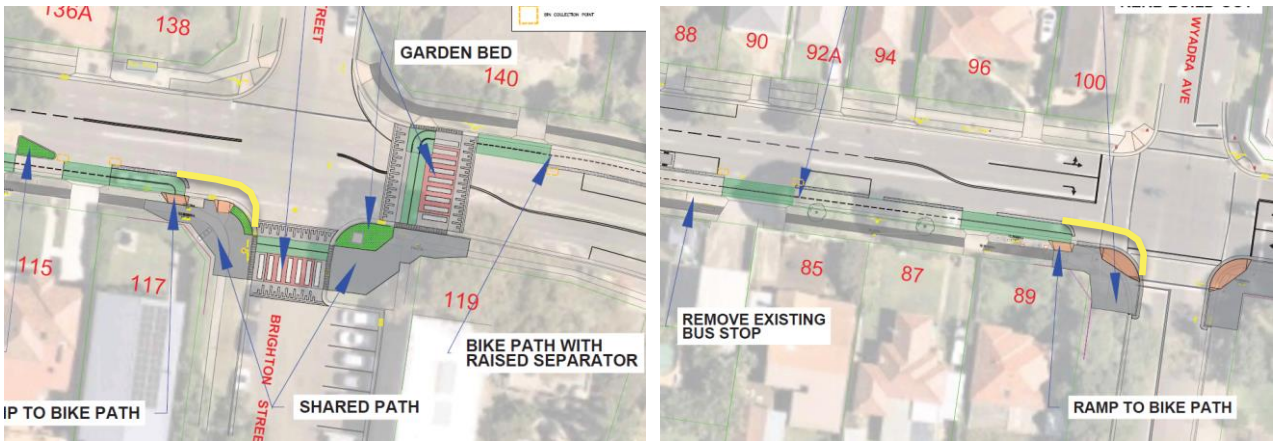


Figure 3: Extract from the civil engineering drawings showing the intersection of Oliver Street with Wyadra Avenue and Brighton Street (Image: Northern Beaches Council)

- Consider using an intermittent median for the cycleway barrier

City of Sydney has developed a tried-and-tested design for the concrete separators used to form cycleways. 1.2m long medians are located with 1.2m gaps, and a 2.4m gap where car doors open, as shown in Figure 4. This requires careful marking of parking bays but makes it easier to get out of cars, simplifies construction and reduces costs.

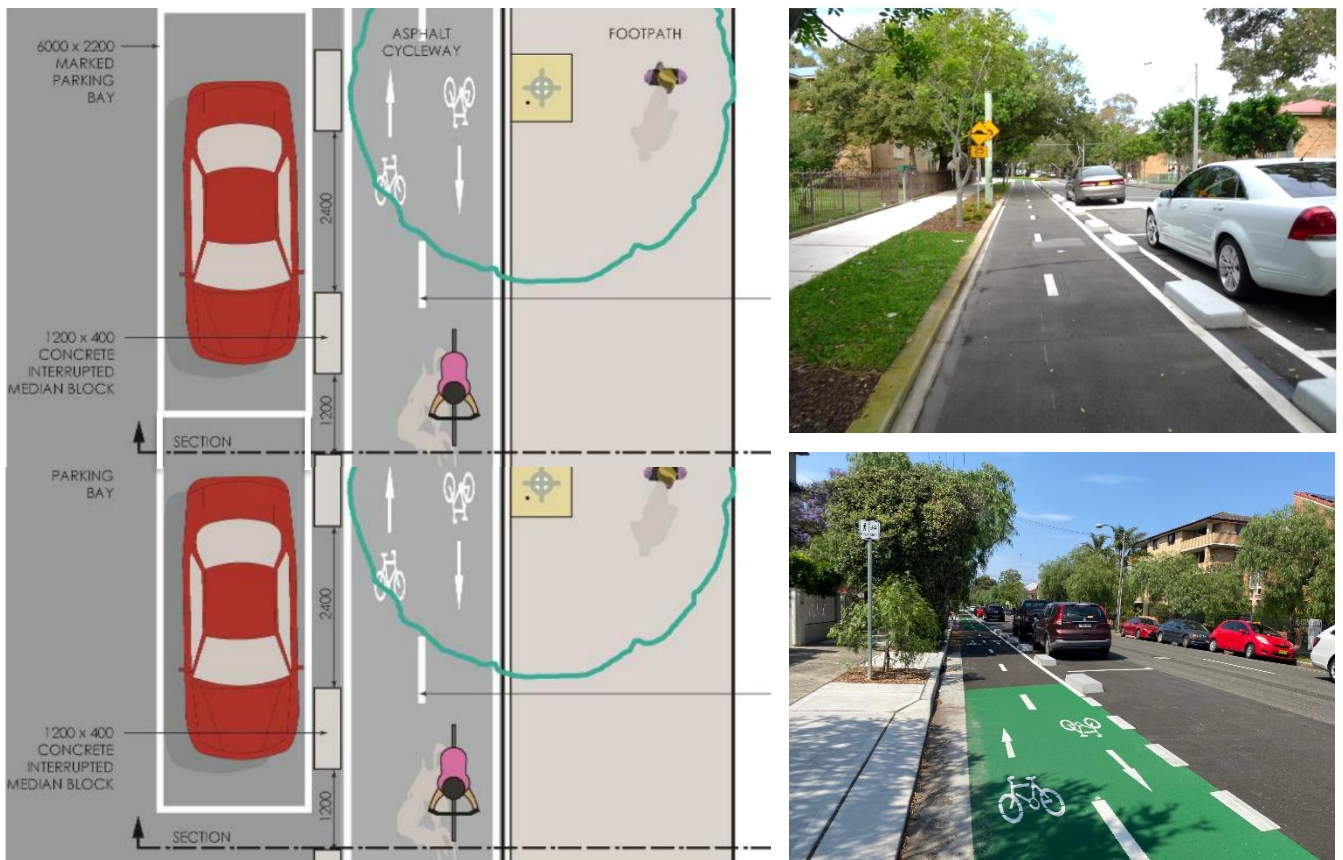


Figure 4: An extract from City of Sydney's 2015 Standard Cycleways Treatments Overview document (Source: City of Sydney) The photographs show a section of the George Street cycleway (top) and the new Doncaster Avenue cycleway (Images: [Warren Salomon](#) and Bicycle NSW)

- **Develop an education campaign on crossing the cycleway to access driveways**

City of Parramatta has an action in its [2017 Bike Plan](#) to provide households with driveways crossing a shared path or cycleway with guidelines for safely exiting their property. We suggest Northern Beaches Council prepares similar education material for residents of Oliver Street and Bennett Street.

- **Align the construction of the cycleway with initiatives to promote and encourage bike riding**

There are a range of activities that Council can roll out to ensure that the community is aware of the cycleway and knows how to use it safely for everyday trips.

The schools are clearly key stakeholders. It is important to collect data on transport habits before and after the cycleway goes in. Bicycle NSW is working with the NSW Government and many stakeholders to launch a large-scale program to drive a major uptick in active travel to schools in NSW. Great case study projects include [Willoughby's safe active paths](#), launched a few weeks ago, and [Sutherland's bike skills project](#). The results are amazing!

Bicycle NSW is running Try an E-Bike sessions for the City of Sydney and we would be very happy to discuss an event in Jacka Park in the new year. E-bike libraries are running successfully in other LGAs and help people switch to an e-bike lifestyle.

We have also developed a Share the Path pop-up that can travel to different LGAs to educate path users with friendly advice, coffee and bike repairs.

Bike riding training programmes, to help rusty riders and those that need support with route planning and riding in traffic, should be offered. And Council needs to develop much better mapping and wayfinding to help both locals and tourists find the existing infrastructure – which in many cases is of good quality but hiding in plain sight!

### Further recommendations:

These items will form part of future projects but should be highly prioritised by council to maximise connectivity benefits from the new cycleway.

- **Complete the missing section of the shared path on the south side of Greendale Creek**

This path currently ends abruptly at the blank wall of a dated amenities building. The shared path must be extended to Harbord Road as soon as possible. This will **reduce pressure** on the narrow path on the north side of the creek, and complete a valuable recreational loop for riders and walkers of all ages and abilities.

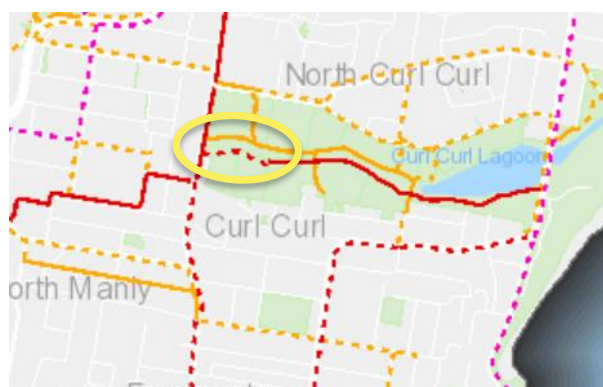


Figure 5: Extract from the Safe Cycling Network showing the missing section of the Tier 2 District path along the south side of the lagoon park (Source: Northern Beaches Council)



- **Plan to upgrade all the paths in the lagoon.**

The shared paths within John Fisher Park are substandard and not suited to an increase in bike riding. Missing links, overgrown vegetation and narrow bridges restrict the space available for path users and increase conflict between bikes, dogs and pedestrians. It's pitch black at night and this is a big barrier to active travel, especially for women to ride bikes.

Council must plan to upgrade all paths so they have a minimum width of 3.0m, in accordance with the Transport for NSW Cycleway Design Toolbox and Austroads Cycling Guide. Lighting should be added to at least one east-west and one north-south route. This can be biodiversity-sensitive lighting that uses movement sensors so it is only on when needed. Clear links should be constructed past edge of netball courts to North Curl Curl PS and Pitt Road shared path, and from the Stirgess Ave bridge to Abbott Road.

The crossings at Griffin Road are dangerous with small refuges for pedestrians. Cars rarely stop to let people cross. Raised crossings, shared for pedestrians and bike riders, are a priority here.

## Conclusion:

Bicycle NSW is excited by the Curl Curl to Freshwater Connectivity project and the opportunity for Council to put policy into practice for a high impact outcome.

We look forward to working with Northern Beaches Council to progress the delivery of the cycleway and associated streetscape upgrades. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need further assistance.

Yours faithfully,



Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer  
Bicycle NSW

<sup>i</sup> Northern Beaches Bike Plan. 2020, July. [https://yoursay.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/download\\_file/3194/2346](https://yoursay.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/download_file/3194/2346)

<sup>ii</sup> Move – Northern Beaches Transport Strategy 2038.

<https://files.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/policies-register/transport/transport-strategy/transportstrategy.pdf>

<sup>xvi</sup> Roger Geller. (2009). Four types of cyclists. Portland Bureau of Transportation.

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/264746>

<sup>iv</sup> NSW Government, Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000, [Online as at 19/2/2021]

[www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2021/road-user-space-allocation-policy.pdf](http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2021/road-user-space-allocation-policy.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> Northern Beaches LSPS - Towards 2040. 2020, April.

<https://files.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/policies-register/planning-strategies/local-strategic-planning-statement-lsps/lspstowards-2040.pdf>

<sup>vi</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>