



Sarah Bickford &lt;sarah.bickford@bicyclensw.org.au&gt;

---

## Bicycle NSW feedback - Grand Pacific Walk, Austinmer

1 message

---

**Sarah Bickford** <sarah.bickford@bicyclensw.org.au>

14 December 2023 at 12:00

To: engagement@wollongong.nsw.gov.au

Cc: Peter McLean <peter.mclean@bicyclensw.org.au>

Dear Engagement Team at Wollongong,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the concept plans for a new shared path between Mountain Road and the Headland Avenue at Austinmer.

**Bicycle NSW strongly supports this very exciting project** which adds 1.6km of shared path to the iconic Grand Pacific Walk. This is Wollongong's major active transport route that, once completed, will stretch 70km along the coast between Royal National Park in the north to Lake Illawarra in the south.

Please read on for some **recommendations** to widen the shared path, separate people walking and cycling where possible and make the road as safe as possible for faster, confident bike riders.

New walking and cycling links are very much needed in an area with a booming population. There is no way the road network, or the environment, can sustain everyone travelling in cars. A business as usual approach to transport planning is not viable and massively expanded active transport infrastructure is essential.

It is clear that locals are already embracing e-cargo bikes to replace car trips in Austinmer. This family was spotted on a Google Maps tour of the project site! They will be very much looking forward to the new shared path along Lawrence Hargrave Drive that will allow them to connect safely with Thirroul and beyond.



### A few comments on shared paths:

Bicycle NSW does not generally support shared paths in the road-related environment.

There are several reasons why shared paths are not appropriate for important and well-used sections of a cycling network. These include conflict between people walking and cycling, which will get worse as population and e-bike use increase; the loss of verges, vegetation and, in some instances, mature trees; the uncomfortable pinch points caused by bus stops, power poles and retained trees; and constant interruptions when crossing side streets. Importantly, no attempt is made to change the dial on car use when bicycles are squeezed into pedestrian

spaces. By leaving the road between the kerbs as the unchallenged domain of private cars, with wide vehicle lanes and ample parking, car travel is encouraged, unsafe speeds are common and the modal shift needed to meet climate, health and liveability imperatives may not occur.

Segregated bicycle paths have many benefits over shared paths:

- × People riding bikes are separated from pedestrians and vehicles, reducing conflict - a growing issue as e-bikes explode in popularity.
- × Street trees and green verges are not impacted.
- × The narrower vehicle lanes will slow traffic, reducing noise and improving safety for all road users.
- × 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.
- × Motorists exiting driveways have a better sightline to approaching cyclists, improving safety.
- × Dedicated bicycle paths will out a green carpet to encourage more people all ages and abilities to take to two wheels - it is a virtuous cycle!

Any increase in 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. This will benefit local residents with quieter streets, and less pollution, noise and through-traffic.

We hope that City of Wollongong will continue brave discussions with Transport for NSW and the community about reallocating road space from private cars for future projects to reflect the priorities set out in the Road User Space Allocation Policy and Council's own policies.

**However, it is an imperfect world and for this project, a shared path is a good solution.**

Note that shared paths should be wide enough for overtaking and must accommodate a range of mobility options such as cargo bikes and disability scooters. 2.5m shared paths are not strictly best practice and **where there is space, Wollongong should aim for a minimum of 3.5m**. It is important that faster cyclists can overtake and that pedestrian comfort is never compromised.

It is great that some road space will be reallocated for the project. The concept diagrams show that existing kerbs will be shifted to accommodate the shared path. and a 500mm buffer is planned to give more separation from the road along most of the project corridor. This will ease the conflict between people walking and riding. A more significant reallocation of road space is proposed approaching Austinmer Beach, allowing for the existing pedestrian footpath to be retained alongside the shared path.

**Bicycle NSW recommends that additional road space is reallocated to create a 3.5 - 4.0m shared path wherever possible.** Council should investigate further narrowing the shoulder, the vehicle lanes and the parking lane as these are currently more generous than necessary. And look at separating people walking and cycling in reserves and other areas with more space. This will help provide a future-proofed project.

We refer Wollongong to the new Cycleway Design Toolbox and the 2017 Austroads Cycling Aspects of Austroads Guides (AP-G88-17) to ensure that the paths are constructed to current best practice. The Austroads Guide to Road Design Part 6A: Paths for Walking and Cycling AGRD06A-17 contains the following table with suggested shared path widths:

	Suggested path width (m)		
	Local access path	Regional path <sup>(3)</sup>	Recreational path
Desirable minimum width	2.5	3.0	3.5
Minimum width – typical maximum	2.0 <sup>(1)</sup> – 3.0 <sup>(2)</sup>	2.5 <sup>(1)</sup> – 4.0 <sup>(2)</sup>	3.0 <sup>(1)</sup> – 4.0 <sup>(2)</sup>

1. A lesser width should only be adopted where cyclist volumes and operational speeds will remain low.
2. A greater width may be required where the numbers of cyclists and pedestrians are very high or there is a high probability of conflict between users (e.g. people walking dogs, in-line skaters etc.).
3. May be part of a principal bicycle network in some jurisdictions.

It is important that Wollongong recognises that 'strong and fearless' bike riders will prefer to ride on the road. They ride at higher speeds than appropriate on a shared path, prefer to avoid navigating intersections and driveways, and feel comfortable in traffic. **Bike stencils** should be placed on the road, in the centre of each vehicle lane, to make it clear to all road users that they need to share the road safety and patiently with bike riders. We also recommend a consistent 40km/h speed limit across the area, forward stop lines at intersections, head start green lights, and regular maintenance to ensure smooth surfaces.

**In conclusion:**

This project represents a big step forward for active transport in the Illawarra. We look forward to riding north from Thirroul very soon.

Many kind regards,



**Sarah Bickford**  
Bike Planner

**Bicycle NSW**

Gadigal Country  
Tower 2, Level 20,  
201 Sussex Street, Sydney, NSW 2000  
T: 02 9704 0800 M: 0431 961 520 W: [bicyclensw.org.au](https://bicyclensw.org.au)



**JOIN OUR FAMILY**