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Sustainable Transport Project Coordinator
North Sydney Council
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NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

By email: council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

29th February 2024

Dear Max,

Re: West Street Cycling, Walking and Streetscape Upgrades – Stage Two

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the plans for West Street, North Sydney. Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW for forty-eight years and has more than 30 affiliated local Bicycle User Groups. Our mission is to ‘*create a better environment for all bicycle riders*’, be they 8 or 80. Bicycle riding has so many benefits. It is a healthy, sustainable form of transport that reduces congestion, gets people outdoors and active, and eases pressure on household budgets. We elevate active transport in all its forms.

Bicycle NSW strongly supports the proposal to extend the separated cycleway and streetscape upgrades on West Street, between Ridge Street and Amherst Street.

The new cycleway will complete the northern half of of Priority Route 1: Sydney Harbour Bridge to Cammeray identified in the 2014 North Sydney Integrated Cycling Strategy shown in Figure 1. It will help fill a critical gap in the regional cycling route linking Naremburn and the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

West St is already heavily used by experienced commuting cyclists heading into North Sydney CBD and across the bridge. However, it is a very dangerous route and not suitable for less confident riders, or the hundreds of children attending schools along the route. Traffic volumes have dramatically increased along West St since the Cammeraygal High School senior campus opened in 2019. There is no doubt that it is time to address bicycle and pedestrian safety.

The project will deliver 1.1km of separated cycleway, continuous footpath treatments at most intersections, 3 additional pedestrian crossings, kerb build outs and upgraded pedestrian refuges, a bus platform that prioritises public transport, and, in a fantastic win for the community, 29 new trees. The narrower vehicle lanes will slow traffic, reducing noise and improving safety for all road users. This is very appropriate on a local road such as West Street with high levels of pedestrian activity.

We are delighted that, as for [Stage 1](#), **the detailed plans are of a very high standard**. We congratulate North Sydney Council for investing in excellent staff and consultants. The Bicycle NSW *Build it for Everyone* policy pillarⁱ sets a standard that bicycle infrastructure should be fit for eight-year-old children or elders to ride on. The West Street bi-directional bicycle path design comply with the current best practice set out in the 2021 Cycleway Design Toolboxⁱⁱ and the 2017 Austroads Cycling Aspects of Austroads Guide (AP-G88-17). It will be an all ages and abilities facility.

The proposed road configuration was chosen to preserve parking spaces. As a result, the bicycle path is quite narrow and it will have a fairly low design speed (around 20km/h). This will suit the majority of current and potential bike riders who would like to cycle along West Street. – school children, woman, people doing local utility trips, older riders and families.

However, the **project also caters for confident commuters**. These riders travel at faster speeds that are inappropriate on the bicycle path at busy times. Many will opt to continue riding in the vehicle lanes. The narrowed lanes, traffic calming interventions such as raised crossings and intersections, and resulting lower vehicle speeds will make mixed traffic riding safer. Riders will be able to use the full lane rather than the existing ‘door zone’ painted bicycle lane. They will no longer risk being overtaken and close passed.



Figure 1: The priority routes outlined in the North Sydney Integrated Cycling Strategy, 2014 (Source: North Sydney Council / GTA Consultants)

Recommendations:

- **Deliver West Street Stage 2 as soon as possible**

There is not yet any funding allocated for West St Stage 2. We encourage the Council to petition the State Government for funding so that this critical missing link can be built quickly. Bicycle NSW can assist through our connections with politicians, Transport for NSW and neighbouring metropolitan councils.

It is essential to complete these cycling, walking and streetscape upgrades before the opening of the Warringah Freeway Upgrade to avert the likelihood of increased motor traffic along West Street from rat running around the freeway.

The continuation of West Street cycleway to Amherst Street is critical to plans to finally link the Harbour Bridge to the shared path that runs alongside the Gore Hill Freeway from Merrenburn Avenue to Lane Cove, Epping Road and beyond. The connection from West Street to the start of the Gore Hill SUP is difficult. An active transport overpass crossing of the Warringah Freeway and Brook St is the only realistic high capacity, fully accessible option for this section.

In the short term, options have been developed as part of the [Active Transport Network Review](#) to improve the at-grade crossing of the Brook Street on-ramp. This must be delivered as part of the Warringah Freeway Upgrade, as required by the Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy. Bicycle NSW will continue to work with North Sydney Council and Willoughby Council to urge TfNSW to complete this work while the contractors are on site.

- **Reduce speed limits to 30km/h on West Street and other local roads in North Sydney CBD**

30 km/h has been shown as an optimal speed limit to allow people driving and cycling to share the road safelyⁱⁱⁱ and is becoming a standard speed limit in many parts of the world. All single lane roads in Spain have been under a 30km/h limit since May 2021 and 30% of UK residents live in 20mph areas^{iv}.

Lower speed limits are an important building block for Vision Zero, an approach to road safety that was launched in Sweden in 1994 with the simple premise that no loss of life is acceptable. The Vision Zero approach has been highly successful and has spread to many other countries. The key policies include prioritizing low urban speed limits, pedestrian zones, physical separation between bicycle and car traffic, data-based traffic enforcement and behaviour-change education^v.

A 30km/h limit will make it safer for pedestrians, students and slower riders using the cycleway to cross West St to access schools and the east- and westbound links to the local bike network.

- **Maximise integration with current and future bike network**

Although we trust that Council's staff and consultants are considering how bike riders will access and cross the West Street bicycle path, we would like to highlight the following important links:

- Rosalind St is an appealing quiet street that provides an east-west connection down to Anzac Park Public school and back street routes through Cammeray and Cremorne. A rideable crossing at Rosalind St, rather than the pedestrian-only crossing proposed, will help bike riders access Rosalind St.
- Huntingdon Street is another quiet street that riders can use to reach the Crows Nest town centre, the Naremburn shops and an access point to the Gore Hill Freeway SUP by the Willoughby Road bridge. The raised intersection proposed here is great and allows an easy transition to the vehicle lanes of Huntingdon. Additional signage and road markings will help clarify the route.
- A shared path on the south side of Amherst would make more sense than on the north side, with a raised crossing to create safer access from the West Street cycleway. The shopping village is on the south side, an important destination for less confident bike riders. Cyclists heading over towards Cammeray will probably be happy to continue using the vehicle lanes on Amherst.

- The termination point of the cycleway at Amhurst St roundabout is complex and there are many unknowns because of the Warringah Freeway Upgrade works. At this stage we encourage North Sydney Council to allow for various future scenarios by maximising the space for bikes and pedestrians on all sides of the existing roundabout.
- McLaren Street will provide a connection to the new Victoria Cross Metro and needs to be linked by safe bicycle infrastructure (quietway treatments or a separated cycleway) to the southern end of the West Street cycleway. This will unlock the new station to residents in Cammeray, parts of Willoughby LGA and potentially even Cremorne and further east. Or course, high-quality, well-located bicycle parking is essential in the station precinct.

Conclusion

There are currently nearly 79,100 residents in the North Sydney local government area and the population is expected to grow by 14% to around 89,900 by 2041^{vi}, placing increasing demands on an already stressed transport network. The roads are jammed with cars and buses are overflowing.

North Sydney is a collection of vibrant '15-minute neighbourhoods' where all daily destinations could be accessed by an easy walk or bike ride. The built form is compact and population density is very high at 64.0 people/hectare^{vii}, compared to 3.9 people/hectare across Greater Sydney^{viii}. This is reflected in a higher-than-average proportion of trips by walking and cycling (12% of journeys to work, compared with 4.8% for metropolitan Sydney) and lower car ownership 1.2 per household (1.7 for Greater Sydney)^{ix}.

Despite this, far too much of road network is dedicated to the movement and storage of private vehicles, creating a hostile environment for people walking and cycling, with dangerous intersections, narrow footpaths, fast-moving noisy traffic and long distances between crossings. North Sydney remains a very difficult area to traverse safely by bicycle.

The North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028^x identified that improved walking and cycling connections are a key priority for the community. Feedback from the community consistently indicates that many more people would walk and cycle when safer, more convenient and more attractive routes are available. During the engagement process for the review of the 2018 CSP in late 2021, 64% of respondents felt that 'supporting sustainable transport' was of highest priority^{xi}.

Creating space for walking and cycling became easier after the *Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000*^{xii} was published by Transport for NSW in early 2021. This policy establishes a road user hierarchy that considers pedestrians first and private cars last. It provides local and State governments with a **powerful lever** to prioritise road space for active transport.

The reconfiguration of streets to provide more space for walking and cycling does not only achieve transport objectives. Projects such as West Street are significant urban design proposals with a vision to deliver quieter, calmer, leafier streets that benefit every resident and visitor.

Bicycle NSW recognises that the historic urban fabric, enhanced by steep topography and waterways but severed by major road and rail lines that bring heavy through traffic, complicates the delivery of cycling infrastructure. Although faced with similar constraints, the City of Sydney has rolled out some fantastic new separated bicycle paths in recent years. The residents of North Sydney now see and use best practice infrastructure as part of their daily trips and the call for improved facilities north of the Harbour Bridge gets louder.

It is exciting to see a new generation of North Sydney Councillors and staff, who understand how active travel can decarbonise transport, improve public health and ensure future liveability, working to supercharge the roll-out of safe, protected active transport infrastructure.

Bike North, a large and active Bicycle User Group, has worked hard over many years to advocate for better conditions for active travel. We thank Bike North for championing the West Street route over two decades.

We very much look forward to riding on the cycleway, alongside crowds of local school students, very soon!

Please reach out with any questions or help needed.

Yours faithfully,



Sarah Bickford

Active Transport Planner
Bicycle NSW



Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer
Bicycle NSW

ⁱ Bicycle NSW (2018) Our Policy, [online as at 24/2/2021] <https://bicyclensw.org.au/our-policy/>

ⁱⁱ 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>

ⁱⁱⁱ City of Yarra - 30km/h speed limit: pre-trial final report, 2017. <https://thanksfor30.com.au/sites/default/files/2018-08/City-of-Yarra-Pre-Trial-Report-Aug-2017-FINAL%5B1%5D.pdf>

^{iv} O'Sullivan, F. (2020, November). Why Europe is slowing down. Bloomberg CityLab. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-11-18/speed-limits-are-dropping-in-europe-and-the-u-k>

^v Vision Zero Network. (2015, April 13). European Cities Lead the Way Toward Vision Zero. <https://visionzeronetwork.org/european-cities-lead-the-way-toward-vision-zero/>

^{vi} North Sydney Council. 2022. Draft Community Strategic Plan – North Sydney Vision 2040. <https://yoursay.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/72233/widgets/371601/documents/231175>

^{vii} North Sydney Council. 2022. Draft Community Strategic Plan – North Sydney Vision 2040. <https://yoursay.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/72233/widgets/371601/documents/231175>

^{viii} City of Sydney. 2020, April 9. The city at a glance. <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/guides/city-at-a-glance>

^{ix} Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016. Quickstats for North Sydney LGA. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2016/LGA15950>

^x North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028.

https://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/docs/1_council_meetings/policies_plans/strategic_plans/communitystrategicplan_2018-2028_final_lr.pdf

^{xi} North Sydney Council. 2022. Community Strategic Plan Review - Stage 1 Engagement Outcomes. <https://yoursay.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/72233/widgets/371601/documents/233876>

^{xii} NSW Government, Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000, www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2021/road-user-space-allocation-policy.pdf