

Traffic & Transport Team  
Cumberland City Council  
PO Box 42  
Merrylands NSW 2160

5th March 2024

Email: [council@cumberland.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@cumberland.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Cumberland Council,

**Re: Pippita Rail Trail Masterplan**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Cumberland City Council's exciting masterplan to develop the abandoned Abattoir Branch line into a shared user path linking Lidcombe town centre with the Sydney Olympic Park.

Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW for forty-eight years and has over 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 strongly supports Cumberland's Pippita Rail Trail Masterplan.**

Conceived as a green linear park, the Pippita Rail Trail will incorporate two restored bridges that span 13 lanes of traffic over Parramatta Rd and Great Western Highway. Opening the bridge for active transport will break down major barriers to connectivity between town centres and green spaces.

The rail trail will serve the rapidly growing residential populations in precincts such as Carter Street. High-quality, connected walking and cycling infrastructure is critical to support the NSW Government [push for increased housing density](#).

The project aligns with a raft of local and State strategies, plans and policies. These include the [Sydney Green Grid](#), the [Strategic Cycleway Corridors program](#), the [NSW Active Transport Strategy](#), the [Cumberland Walking and Cycling Strategy](#) and the [Parramatta Bike Plan](#).

Bicycle NSW Members Andrew Moss and Bruce Ashley have [advocated for this connection since 1997](#). They were instrumental in gaining political support for the \$770,000 Get NSW Active grant that has funded the master planning stage. We are delighted that the Pippita project is making progress through the hoops.

Bicycle NSW works closely with CAMWEST, an affiliated Bicycle User Group in Western Sydney. CAMWEST members have worked hard over many years to advocate for better facilities for active travel in and around Cumberland. We are very grateful for their detailed knowledge of local conditions and their enormous contribution to bicycle advocacy. Bicycle NSW aligns with [CAMWEST's recommendations](#) for the Pippita Rail Trail Masterplan. Some of these fall outside the scope of the immediate project. However, we urge Cumberland City Council to investigate all suggestions for improving active transport connectivity in and around Lidcombe.

## Some concerns

The proposed connections at each end miss opportunities to integrate the Pippita Rail Trail into existing and future active transport network.

Resident just a few streets away from the corridor will struggle to access the rail trail due to poor walking and cycling infrastructure in the area. A safe connection to Railway Street and Rockwood Cemetery is of strategic importance, as is a route west of Lidcombe Station towards Auburn and the Duck River.

At the Olympic Park end, path users will descend from a steep embankment to Edwin Flack Avenue where there is nowhere to cross the road. A bridge over Edwin Flack Ave is mooted as a possible future addition. But no new crossing has been proposed to provide a direct and comfortable link to the shared paths on the opposite side in the short term.

There's only one mention of lighting in the document text. Will the entire railway corridor route be adequately lit?

Above all, there is **currently no funding** for building the rail trail design shown in the Masterplan, never mind a bridge over Edwin Flack or improved links in Lidcombe.

## Our recommendations

- **Include the bridge over Edwin Flack Avenue in the Masterplan**

A walking and cycling bridge to extend the Pippita Rail Trail over Edwin Flack Avenue is important to prioritise access to the Olympic Park by people on foot and two wheels. It makes sense to ensure that this bridge is front and centre of funding applications. All stakeholders need to know that it is a critical element of the project so it can be delivered in line with the rest of the rail trail. At this stage nothing is funded and the budget hasn't been estimated.

- **Extend the separated cycleway on Church Street in Lidcombe and add more trees**

Drawing 2B shows an option which inserts a new roundabout on Church Street. This allows for a substantial extension of the bi-directional bicycle path. Road space is reallocated for walking and cycling. The configuration of the vehicle lanes is much simplified, making it easier for riders to navigate towards and over the railway bridge.

It is important to re-iterate the benefits of segregated bi-directional bicycle paths over shared paths:

- People riding bikes are separated from pedestrians and vehicles, reducing conflict.
- 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.
- 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.
- Dedicated bicycle paths are proven to entice new riders of all ages and abilities

The plans for Roundabout Option 2B currently show a generous footpath. There is ample space to include a landscaped verge and many new street trees.

- **Install good lighting along the full length of the corridor**

An unlit path will not feel safe at night. Darkness falls by 5pm in the winter, preventing many commuters from using the rail trail. It is important to budget for high-quality, integrated lighting. Sensor-activated lights are a possibility. These reduce energy costs and light pollution when no-one is using the path.

- **Move the Church Street bus stop 'in lane'**

The bus stop opposite the station is located on a shared path section of the route. The proposal to install a slimline bus shelter is really not adequate for an area with high levels of pedestrian activity. There will be conflict with bike riders at busy times.

We suggest moving the bus stop into the kerbside (parking) lane so the buses can stop in-lane. The shared path would then be unimpeded. This design solution creates more space in the verge for landscaping (and car parking), reduces conflict and prioritises bus passengers as buses do not have to wait to re-enter the traffic flow.

- **Develop a clear wayfinding strategy**

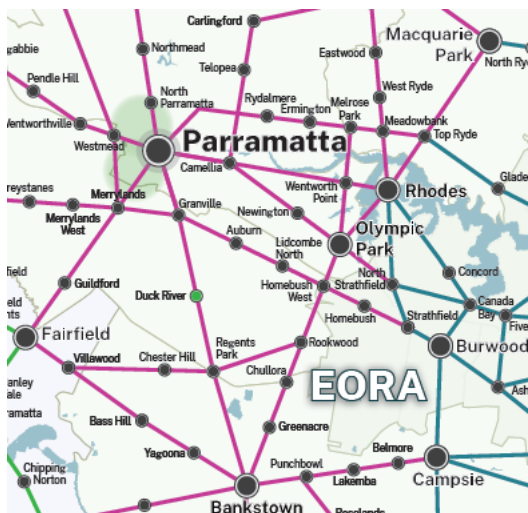
There is little information about wayfinding in the Masterplan. It is important to allocate adequate thought and resources to signage. We suggest extending the wayfinding beyond the immediate footprint of the rail corridor to clarify safe legal routes to the main destination points of the Olympic Park precinct, including Bicentennial Park, and the Lidcombe/Auburn/Rookwood area. Of course, Cumberland City Council will need to collaborate closely with neighbouring councils to develop consistent, attractive and legible signage.

- **Plan and deliver additional connections to the rail trail**

It is important that Pippita Rail Trail serves the widest possible catchment to maximise its social and economic benefit. We urge Cumberland City Council to push on with the development of safe active transport infrastructure in and around Lidcombe. There are several excellent suggestions in submissions from [CAMWEST](#) and EcoTransit. These are currently not in the scope of the project but could be included in the final Masterplan or delivered separately to enhance local connectivity.

Examples include:

- An additional entrance to Platform 1 or 0 on the eastern end of Lidcombe Station
- A shared path on southern side of Parramatta Road between John St, Lidcombe and Plaza Road, Homebush West
- A shared path on Church St west of John Street to create a clear route across Olympic Drive and onto Lidcombe Oval and Auburn.
- A link from Bachell Avue through the creek easement to provide direct access from the rail trail toward streets north of Lidcombe town centre
- Widening the Church St/Railway St overbridge to include a bike lane on the eastern side, or building a completely new bridge further east between Swete St and East St. Both CAMWEST and EcoTransit have put forward some concepts that we would like Cumberland City Council to investigate in collaboration with TfNSW.
- A link across the rail corridor from Pippita Street to Couralie Avenue, Homebush West via the (ideally refurbished) Pippita station.



Note that creating access to the rail trail from Lidcombe North and Homebush West via Pippita station could bolster the chances of NSW Government funding: the Central River City Strategic Cycleway Corridors Program (Figure 1) has identified Olympic Park to Homebush West (not Lidcombe) as one of the strategic cycleway corridors.

Figure 1: An extract from the Strategic Cycleway Corridors network plan (Source: [TfNSW](https://www TfNSW))

- **Consider the Pippita Rail Trail and other key cycle routes when delivering public domain upgrades in Lidcombe**

We have recently commented on public domain plans for [Regents Park](#) and [Guildford](#), as well [Lidcombe](#). In each case, we raised concerns about the lack of intent to integrate the regional bicycle routes that traverse the town centres. We refer council to re-read these submissions for detailed recommendations on the following topics:

- addressing the poor connectivity across the rail lines
- future-proofing the active transport network
- ensuring that new cycle infrastructure is inclusive
- reducing speed limits to 30km/h for local streets and shopping areas
- removing surface parking as necessary to improve place outcomes
- prioritising pedestrians and cyclists at all intersections

**It is important that Cumberland develops a clear and well-resolved solution to town centre cycling facilities** before making changes to the public domain that may lock out future delivery. Kerb extensions, landscaping, kerb cuts, raised crossings and other streetscape interventions must be designed with the bike routes front of mind.

All stakeholders need to understand what is proposed so that projects can be delivered over time without unplanned obstacles. Council can maintain a clear vision of final outcomes when setting planning controls and applying for grants. Developers can be asked to contribute to public realm projects. Utilities companies, Sydney Trains, and Transport for NSW can plan and manage assets with future cycleways front of mind.

- **Continue to lobby for funding**

Of course, there will be no progress on delivering the Pippita Rail Trail until all levels of government come together and commit to funding construction!

Bicycle NSW will use every opportunity to advocate for the project in our discussions with politicians, Transport for NSW and neighbouring metropolitan councils. Please let us know when and if there are specific moments when you would like us to sharpen our pencils!

We recognise that full funding may take several years to organise. However, partial funding would allow Cumberland City Council to build some of the road corridor paths in the short term. These would contribute to the Pippita route in the future and help build the local network.

We will also urge the NSW Government to unlock more land to increase the public open space delivered alongside the trail.

There is clear agreement from all sides of politics that walking and cycling are essential to enable a healthier, less car-dependent future as Sydney grows. Bicycle NSW wishes to stress that this is the best moment in recent years for local and State governments to work together to create a truly transformational network for cycling, but there is no time to waste.

Bicycle NSW looks forward to working with Cumberland City Council and other stakeholders to progress the Pippita Rail Trail project.

Yours faithfully,



Sarah Bickford

Bike Planner  
Bicycle NSW



Peter McLean

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