

To all Councillors  
Northern Beaches Council  
PO Box 82  
Manly NSW 1655

Via email: [councillors@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au](mailto:councillors@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au)

30<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Northern Beaches Councillors,

**Agenda item 13.4 - Curl Curl - Freshwater Connectivity and Streetscape Upgrade**

Bicycle NSW is **very supportive** of Northern Beaches Council's efforts to deliver safer infrastructure for people walking and cycling on Oliver Street, Bennett Street and Park Street. We have provided written submissions about this project on 3 occasions, most recently in [December 2023](#), and worked closely with council staff to progress the design and consultation process.

The proposal exhibited over the summer for a separated bicycle path retains trees and verges, and incorporates new landscaping. Tree canopy is so important for shade, biodiversity and comfort while walking and bike riding. The narrower lanes will slow vehicles, improving safety and reducing noise. Very few parking spaces are lost. The bicycle path responds to concerns about e-bikes being used unsafely by providing a separate space for bike riders.

**Bicycle NSW is therefore very disappointed by the sudden and unexpected recommendation to revert to an early shared path proposal, which will involve the removal of 43 trees.**

We ask Councillors to:

1. Defer a decision on the future of the project to enable additional information to be sought.
2. Instruct Council staff to collaborate with TfNSW, bus operators and independent cycleway design experts to refine design options for a separated dedicated bicycle path, to address safety issues identified in the safety audit and provide sufficient space for all road users.
3. Organise for Councillors, staff and community members to visit a bi-directional bicycle path that has been implemented as part of a streetscape improvement project.

**1. Defer a decision on the future of the project to enable additional information to be sought.**

**This is too important to rush or get wrong.** No detailed drawings of alternative options have been provided. At this stage it is completely impossible to either (i) assess the actual impacts on trees for a shared path solution or (ii) know accurate figures for street parking losses for an improved separated cycleway solution.

Council has not yet worked with cycleway design experts or Transport for NSW to resolve issues highlighted by the road safety audit.

The recommendation ignores the outputs of the recent consultation that showed 52% of respondents supported the streetscape upgrade while many more supported the project with some changes. This **sets a dangerous precedent for community trust** in council processes.

There has been no consultation on new designs. We recognise that there are differing opinions about the best way forward. However, it is clear that residents, bike riders and the wider community are **united in rejecting the loss of tree canopy for the construction of a sub-standard shared path.**

Please note that **TfNSW no longer funds shared paths under the Get NSW Active programme** when there is space for a proper dedicated cycleway. The [TfNSW Cycleway Design Toolbox](#) only recommends shared paths for streets with very limited pedestrian activity. Our [September 2021 submission](#) set out the reasons why a shared path is not appropriate for such an important section of the cycling network.

**2. Instruct Council staff to collaborate with TfNSW, bus operators and independent cycleway design experts to refine design options for a separated dedicated bicycle path, to address safety issues identified in the safety audit and provide sufficient space for all road users.**

Whilst the current separated bicycle path proposal is not perfect, it is almost there. Significant resources have been invested by Council, stakeholders, consultants and advocacy groups. With a few changes, a workable design will emerge that will transform accessibility and safety for all users of the roads in this part of the Northern Beaches and beyond. **It is important to move forward not backwards.**

The **TfNSW Cities and Active Transport Team has committed to working with council.** Independent experts have offered advice and support.

**Possible solutions** to bring to the table include:

- **A hybrid design that uses different treatments along the length of the corridor.** For example, our [December 2021 recommendations](#) supported a modified Option 1A cross section with a 3.0m wide cycleway, one lane of parking 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, parking on both sides and a 0.4m buffer south of Wyndora. On the bend of the road at Bennett there is extra width between the kerbs, allowing both sides of parking to be retained. The section of shared path in front of Harbord PS could be modified to accommodate parking on both sides.
- A hybrid design will ensure that **far fewer parking spaces are lost** than the headline figure. These spaces could be replaced by introducing angled parking into side streets, and any new pressure on parking supply managed by installing 'car only' restrictions to prevent long-term parking of boats and caravans.
- Another option for constrained areas is to build the footpath, verge, cycleway and buffer to be flush with each other. This increases the usable width of a narrow cycleway.
- **Implement a 40km/h speed limit.** Lower vehicle speeds make a huge difference to road safety and will help all road users interact safely in a constrained space. Northern Beaches Council has shown great leadership with the 30km/h trial in the centre of Manly. The low 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. Note that a 40km/h zone is being planned by Council for the whole of Freshwater but the impact of this change was not considered in the Road Safety Audit.

**3. Organise for Councillors, staff and community members to visit a bi-directional bicycle path that has been implemented as part of a streetscape improvement project.**

Possible projects would be Wilson Street or Bourke Street in City of Sydney, Doncaster Avenue in Randwick, Queens Avenue in Westmead or West Street/Ridge Street and Young Street/Sutherland Street in North Sydney. Engage with councillors, staff and residents to learn from their experiences.

It can be very reassuring to see firsthand how **cycling infrastructure can contribute to a better street**.

It is clear that bike riders are not the only beneficiaries of these projects. Pedestrians have more space and no longer fear conflict with bike riders. Residents will have more separation between their property and moving cars. Businesses will have more passing trade. Streets with well-designed bicycle paths are greener, leafier, quieter and calmer.

Very importantly, a **separated bicycle path rolls out a 'green carpet' to bike riding**. Dedicated infrastructure is proven to encourage new riders to take to two wheels, particularly women and girls.

**Please refer to our previous submissions for more detailed commentary on all issues.**

### Final thoughts:

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.

Safe cycling facilities 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 is a useful reminder of the corridor's key location in the local cycling network. There is no viable alternative route.

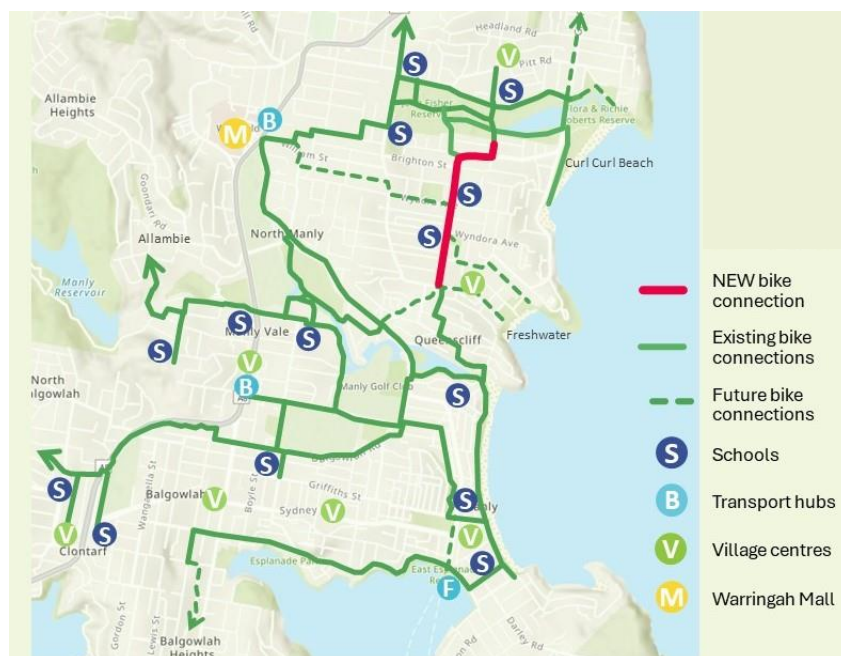


Figure 1: The new cycleway fills an important missing link in the local network. It passes 2 schools and connects to 3 more as well as sports fields and Freshwater Village. Families will be able to cycle safely to the park, school, shops, sports ground or beach (Image: Bicycle NSW / Better Streets Northern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

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 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%.

These figures have undoubtedly changed! 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.

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>ii</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>iii</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.

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

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

<sup>i</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>iii</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>iv</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>