

Josh Murray
Secretary
Transport for NSW
231 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY NSW 200

19th September 2024

Email: secretary@transport.nsw.gov.au

Strategic Cycleway Corridor program – Eastern Harbour City

Dear Josh,

As you will know, the Strategic Cycleway Corridor (SCC) program is now at Stage 3B: Route Options Assessment. A series of stakeholder workshops were held in late August. Bicycle NSW attended 7 of these sessions. The project teams presented the first tranche of short-listed priority projects were presented, with detailed insights into the multi-criteria assessment (MCA) process.

We informed the project teams that Bicycle NSW wouldn't provide detailed feedback on the route options in each of the 6 cities. Bicycle NSW has invested many hours in supporting the SCC program with no fees, and we need to draw a line under our involvement.

Instead, our comments in the workshops can be taken as feedback. In addition, we align with the submissions from the area experts in our Bicycle User Groups.

The proposed routes are generally supported. In some of the council areas, such as Lake Macquarie and Wollongong, stakeholders are very pleased that Transport for NSW will tackle and fund some tricky projects.

However, I want to ensure you have seen the response from the **Inner West Bicycle Coalition**, copied below.

The Inner West advocates are very disappointed that the priority connections in the current tranche of projects barely touch the Inner West council area. There is no attempt to deliver much-needed cross-LGA connectivity, despite 3 decades of collaboration with local and state governments on cycleway planning. The chosen projects are not ambitious, they don't square up to the challenge of transforming the traffic sewers that bisect the Inner West suburbs, and they won't move the dial on car dependency.

There still appears to be confusion - both within Transport for NSW and among stakeholders - about what the program is trying to achieve. It is to maximise the potential of existing infrastructure by making upgrades and dealing with knotty problems such as railway crossings and unsafe intersections?

Or should the focus be on bigger picture thinking? Could the SCC program establish the backbone of the future cycleway network with direct and reasonably level regional corridors, created by reallocating road space on state roads or utilising rail and water easements?

Some of the proposed connections in this first tranche use convoluted back street routes, while others are on state roads. And some obvious state road routes, where there is ample space to reallocate vehicle lanes or parking for active transport, were discarded as options.

Pymont Bridge Road epitomises the muddled thinking. I have written to you separately (letter dated 18th September) outlining my concerns about the planning for this corridor.

I also want to draw your attention to the fact that 4 out of 5 of the 'Immediate Opportunity' projects for the Eastern Harbour City have been ignored by the first tranche of priority connections. These 5 'Immediate Opportunities for Investigation' were announced to the community in April 2022 when the first SCC network plan was published, and they are shown in red in Figure 2 on the 2023 map.

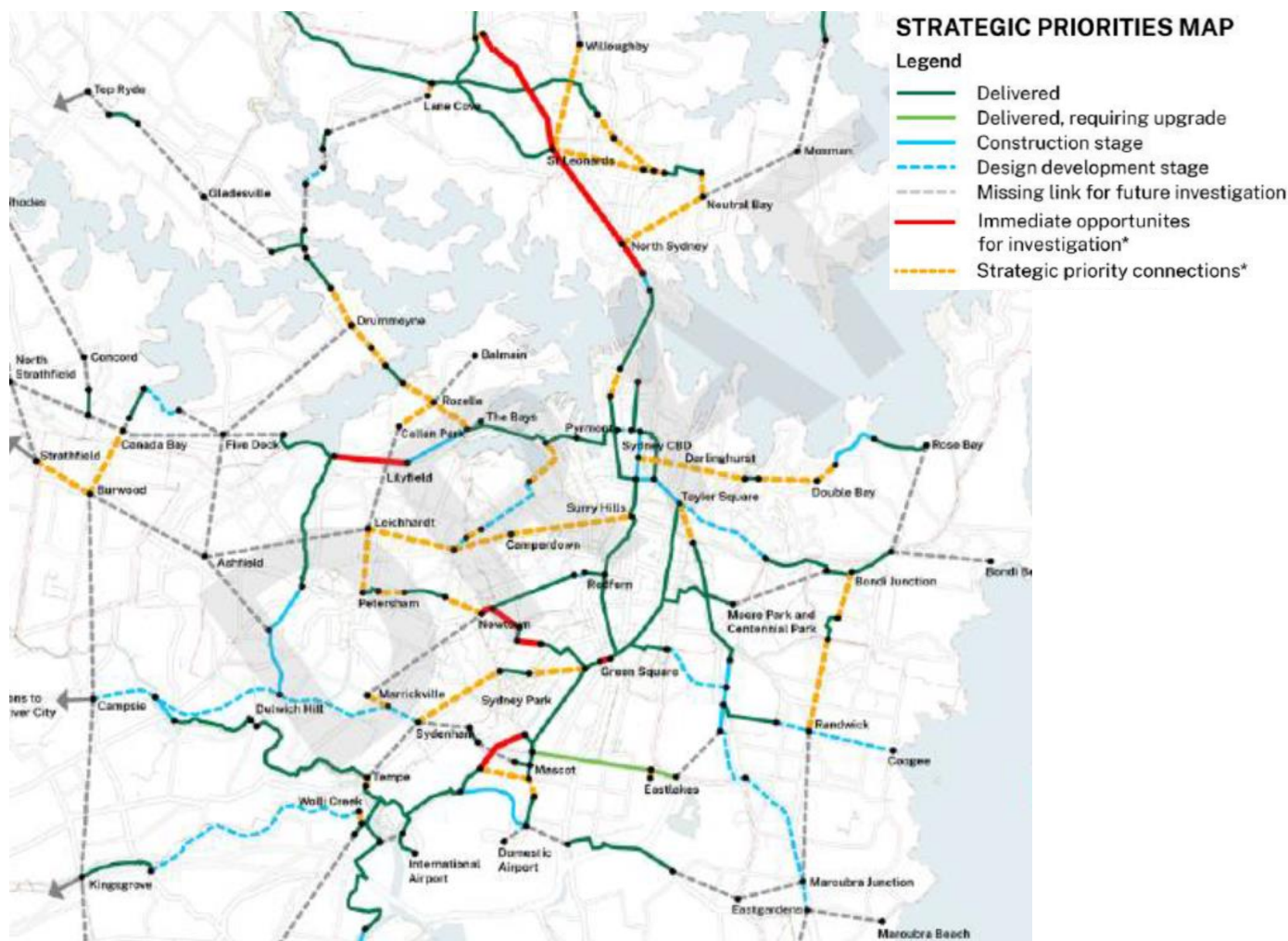


Figure 1: The strategic priorities map from 2023, which still shows the 'Immediate Opportunities' announced when the SCC program was launched in April 2022, as well a series of other priority connections (Image: TfNSW)

Only the Newtown to Green Square connection is still considered a priority. It is important to note that this involves delivering the **Wilson Street West cycleway**, which Transport for NSW has recently put on hold due to lack of funding – even though it is only 200m long and uses existing road space. What does this mean for the Newtown to Green Square connection?

The Lilyfield, North Sydney and St Leonards to Artarmon connections remain **significant gaps** in the network that need to be addressed by Transport for NSW. And the **Alexandra Canal connection** has been shelved due to one short missing link. This was meant to be an easy win, first off the rank in the SCC program, but Transport has faltered at the first hurdle.

The major shift in project priorities will require careful communication to a community expecting the SCC program to focus on very different connections.

We kindly ask for your feedback on the internal priority and the progress of the Strategic Cycleway Corridors program. In particular: What is planned for the Inner West LGA? When will the EHC 'Immediate Priorities' be reinstated on the to-do list? And how do you plan to communicate to the public about the changed priorities?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer
Bicycle NSW

cc. The Hon. Jo Haylen
The Hon. John Graham
Anna Bradley
Tim Selby

Minister for Transport
Minister for Roads
Executive Director, Cities and Active Transport, TfNSW
Director Strategy, Planning and Integration, TfNSW

via website
via website
anna.bradley@transport.nsw.gov.au
tim.selby@transport.nsw.gov.au

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.

Copy of Inner West Bicycle Coalition feedback

From: Neil Tonkin <neiltonkin94@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, September 9, 2024 1:29 PM

To: Ken Shepherd <Ken.Shepherd@transport.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Strategic Cycleway Corridor program Eastern Harbour City: Inner West

Dear Ken and Dominic,

The Inner West Bicycle Coalition (IWBC) extends its sincere appreciation for including our voice in the Strategic Cycleway Corridors progress report. We value the opportunity to represent the thousands of people currently and potentially cycling within the Inner West, and are encouraged by the recognition of our key points:

- **Refined Multi Criteria Analysis:** *We are pleased that our suggestion to share this scoring scheme with all councils has been noted. This collaborative approach will undoubtedly aid in more informed planning discussions.*
- **Resourcing and Education:** *We commend your acknowledgement of our request to support councils with resources. Transport can help with education, standards, secondments, scholarships, internships and loaned experts as well as specific active transport templates, plans and designs.*

While we are heartened by these developments, we must candidly express our disappointment with the slow pace, lack of ambition and the absence of any cross-LGA cycling routes in the current tranche of priority projects. The routes presented hardly touch the Inner West, which has one of the highest propensities to cycle in Australia.

This key area of the Eastern Harbour City is home to 200,000 people but is bisected by the Hume and Princes Highways, Parramatta Road, City West link, Victoria Road, railway lines, rivers and creeks, water supply rights of way and 1,000 km of roads, many of which follow ancient First Nations' walking paths.

We have prepared multiple plans in the current and prior councils over 30 years, none of which are reflected here. For example, why has Lilyfield Road not been included? This was one of the original Five Immediate Opportunities. It is still an important one to crack. On the prioritisation maps shown to us at the end of last year, Ashfield to Burwood was shown as a grey dotted line - for future investigation. And now it's become a strategic priority. That joins to nowhere.

We recognise that a systematic analysis has happened in the interim, but this is still an unexpected shift.

More generally, we believe the plan has shied away from tackling the most challenging yet essential concepts:

- **Confronting Heavy Mixed Traffic:** *We urge a bolder approach to balancing major traffic routes, which remain a significant barrier to safe and comfortable cycling, with the needs of people walking and cycling.*
- **Entrenched Parking:** *We must actively seek solutions to reclaim road space currently dominated by parked cars, prioritising the needs of people over motor vehicles.*
- **Bus Routes and Water/Rail Easements:** *We see great potential in using existing infrastructure by people cycling. A street being a bus route should not preclude it being a bike route. Greater exploration of water and rail easements should be made.*

The Inner West is witnessing a steady influx of private vehicles (about a thousand a year!) into a road network which is over a century old. The promised traffic reduction following tunnel openings has not materialised, and the shift to electric motor vehicles, while environmentally positive, is too slow and does not address the fundamental issues of car dependence. As noted by the Climate Council (Seize the Decade, March 2024) a shift to cycling and active transport could reduce greenhouse emissions from transport by half before 2030.

We challenge Transport to demonstrate measurable progress towards the Movement and Place Guidelines in this and future tranches. Specifically, we seek evidence of:

- **Reduced reliance on private cars:** *Will our plans drive a shift towards sustainable modes of transport and public transport?*
- **Improved safety and accessibility for people cycling and walking:** *Will we quickly build cycling networks to provide people a realistic, safe alternative to driving, for people of all ages and abilities?*
- **Enhanced liveability:** *How will our towns and villages become more vibrant and people-centric spaces due to these plans?*

Kind regards

Neil Tonkin

*Advocacy Coordinator
Inner West Bicycle Coalition*