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Chatswood to St Leonards Active Way

Dear Hugh,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the designs for a new separated cycleway, streetscape improvements and traffic calming features on Hampden Road, Artarmon and Herbert Street, St Leonards.

Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW for fifty years, and has more than 35 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 Willoughby City Council's plans to construct a 2.4km separated bi-directional bicycle path between Chatswood and St Leonards.

A safe, off-road cycling facility on Hampden Road and Herbert Street has **been a top priority for bike riders** for many years.

The new cycleway and improved footpaths will connect people to major transport hubs at St Leonards and Chatswood stations, as well Artarmon Public School, a cluster of large schools in Chatswood, and major employment and health precincts in St Leonards and the Chatswood CBD. There will be a fantastic connection to the Gore Hill Cycleway which has a high-quality east-west link providing access to Lane Cove and on to Macquarie Park, and Naremburn and Neutral Bay.

The Active Way route also has significant **strategic importance**. This key north-south connection will fill a significant gap in the regional bike network (Figure 1). It delivers a Strategic Cycleway Corridor, as shown in the network map for the Eastern Harbour City, published by the NSW Government in 2022 (Figure 2).

It is a much better strategic route than the shared path along the Pacific Highway. Although this path is a welcome addition to Willoughby's cycling network, the shared path is longer, does not separate people walking and riding, and crosses multiple hazardous driveways.

Bicycle NSW is excited by the **high-quality concept designs** on exhibition. The chosen consultants have worked on some of Sydney's best cycling infrastructure and we are confident the project is in good hands.

Separated bicycle paths, built between the existing kerbs, 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, which reduces 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 roll out a 'green carpet' to encourage more people all ages and abilities to take to two wheels

The plans include new raised crossings, landscaping, pocket parks and fantastic best-practice pedestrian priority treatments at every intersection. These are important features that will improve the amenity and safety of the neighbourhood. The Active Way will be brilliant for the local community, providing new safe transport options and a calmer street, as well as bike commuters from a wide swathe of northern Sydney heading to the Metro, the hospital and the light industrial area in Artarmon.

It is fantastic that a 3.0m wide bicycle path is proposed for most of the corridor with generous 1m wide separators. The cycleway will provide safe operating space for riders of all ages and abilities, now and into the future.

This high-quality, future-proofed approach does mean that some on-street parking will be removed or relocated, with a net loss of spaces.

Bicycle NSW congratulates Willoughby City Council for undertaking such detailed studies to assess the demand for on-street parking.

The independent study showed that the net change is a reduction of around 5% of total supply, and even at the busiest time surveyed, 35% (624) of current spaces were unused. With adjustments to timed parking, it will be possible to maintain an adequate supply of spaces, including accessible spaces, loading zones and pick-up/drop-off bays, despite a reduction of 92 spaces, 5% of the total supply.

The reallocation of parking space is in line with Transport for NSW and Council policies to prioritise people and active modes over the storage of private vehicles. This is **strongly supported** by Bicycle NSW. In an area close to world-class public transport, the focus must absolutely be to help as many people as possible access stations on foot and bike – and not to protect free street parking for the least efficient mode of transport.

We recognise that the plans are at a concept stage and the detail design work is still to come. We therefore wish to use this submission to make **a series of suggestions** to improve the final plans:

- Widen to the cycleway to 3.0m for the full corridor
- Implement a 40km/h speed limit for Hampden Road and Herbert Street, with a 30km/h zone in Artarmon village and near the hospital
- Ensure that confident riders can transition to the road in Artarmon Village
- Advocate for the missing pedestrian crossing at Mowbray Road
- Provide plenty of bike parking, including dedicated on-street bays for share bikes
- Develop supportive behaviour change programs to educate local residents and workers, and encourage use of the Active Way
- Include wayfinding and signage as part of the project
- Collaborate with the hospital authorities to improve bike connections from the Active Way
- Collect data, both now and as the Active Way is delivered
- Seek advice from the BUGs as the detail design is developed

There is more detail on each point below. Some suggestions could be incorporated into the current project scope, while others can be scheduled as future improvements.

Many of our recommendations have also been made by affiliated Bicycle User Group **Bike North**. Bike North members have worked hard over many years to advocate for better facilities for active travel in Sydney's north. We are very grateful for their detailed knowledge of local conditions and their enormous contribution to bicycle advocacy. Bicycle NSW aligns with Bike North's feedback on the Chatswood to St Leonards project.

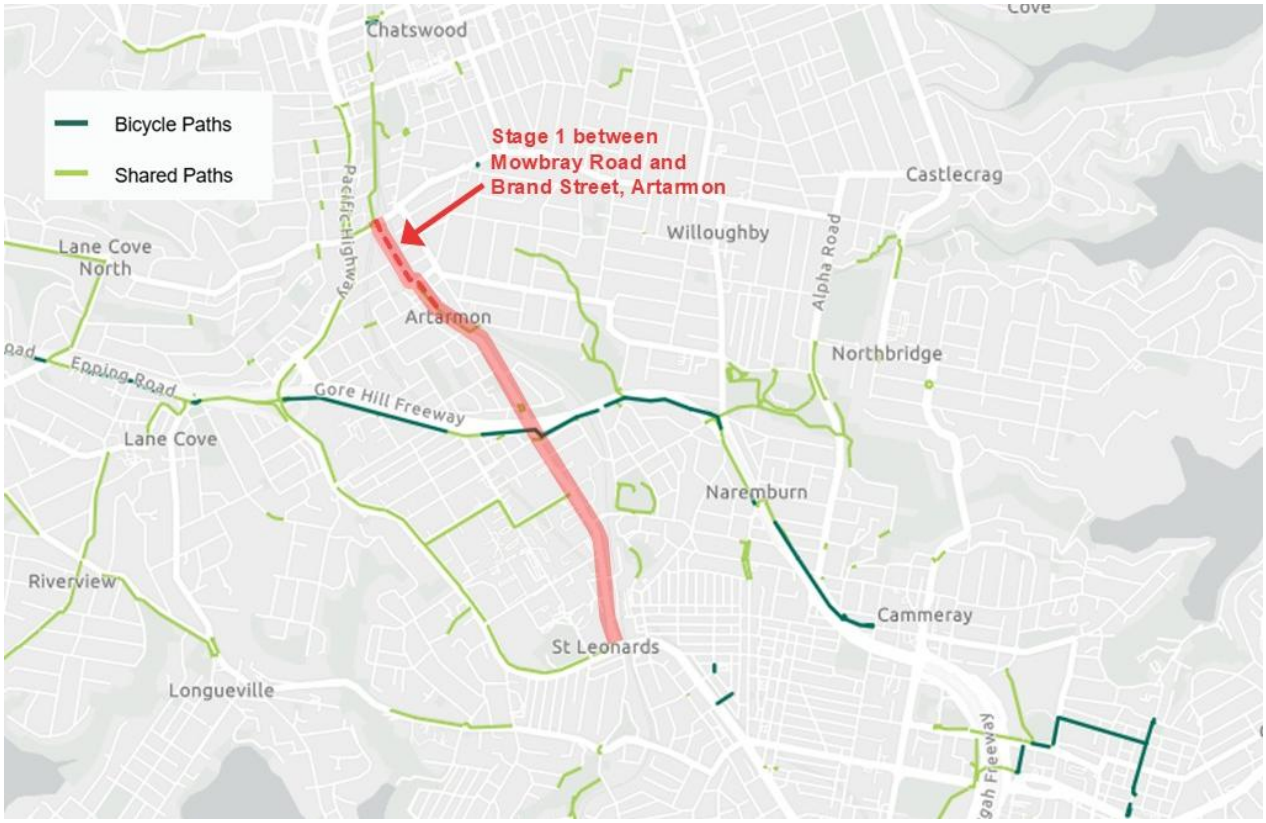

Figure 1: An extract from TfNSW's Cycleway Finder showing existing shared paths (light green) and bicycles paths (dark green) in the area. The proposed Active Way is highlighted in red (Source: TfNSW / Bicycle NSW)

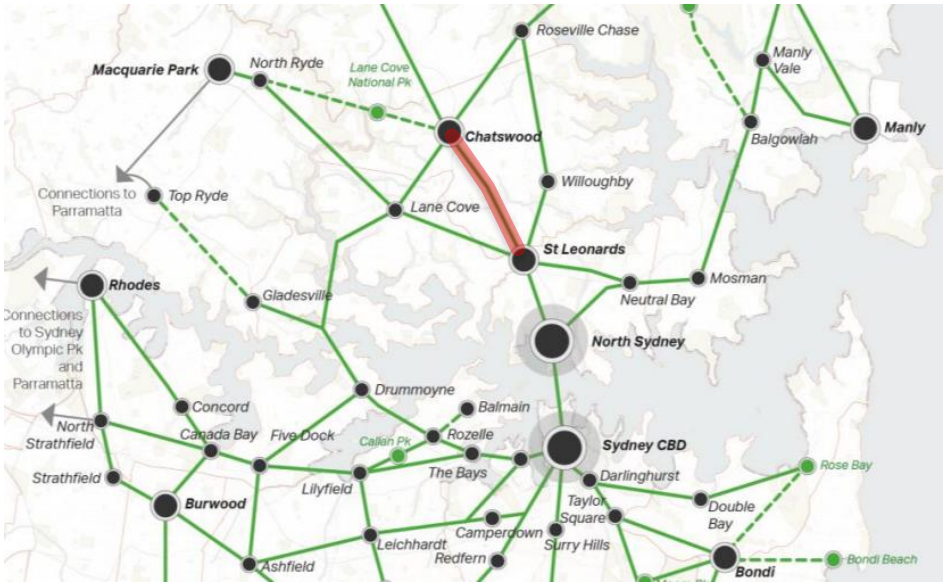

Figure 2: An extract from the Strategic Cycleway Corridor network map for the Eastern Harbour City. The Active Way corridor is highlighted in red (Source: TfNSW / Bicycle NSW)

Recommendations:

1. **Widen to the cycleway to 3.0m for the full corridor**

The Active Way will be a regional cycleway. It will be popular and very busy. It would be best to avoid any sections with a width of 2.4m.

We would like Willoughby City Council's consultants to revisit the allocation of road space to try and find additional space for the cycleway. It may be possible to gain a little width by narrowing the vehicle and parking lanes to 2.9 and 2.1m, as shown in the NSW Cycleway Design Toolbox. Narrower lanes have the additional benefit of lowering vehicle speeds.

The standard 3.2m lane width applied throughout the corridor is generally used for bus routes. It appears that only infrequent night services use Hampden and Herbert. These are unlikely to pass each other in the short sections where lanes might be narrowed below 3.2m. If necessary, the buses can yield to oncoming vehicles with no impacts on traffic flow in the middle of the night.

2. **Advocate for a 40km/h speed limit for the project corridor, with a 30km/h zone in Artarmon Village and near the hospital precinct.**

The existing 50km/h speed limit is far too high, given the changed character and usage of the area.

Although Bicycle NSW campaigns for 30km/h speed limits to be rolled out in areas of high pedestrian activity, on mixed traffic cycle routes and around schools, 40km/h would be a great first step.

A lower speed limit will support the proposed cycleway, improve safety for people walking and riding, and align with best practice speed guidance for an urban connector street. It would also allow narrower vehicle and parking lanes, so more road space can be allocated to the cycleway.

And of course, the benefits extend beyond reduced injuries. Slower traffic encourages more walking and cycling. Businesses have more passing trade. Residents will be more physically active with knock-on gains for the health budget. There will less pollution and less need for car parking – leaving more space for trees and places to sit. Neighbourhoods become more liveable.

The revised Speed Zoning Standard provides Transport for NSW with greater flexibility in lowering speed limits to reduce the risk of conflict.

3. **Facilitate on-road cycling through Artarmon Village for confident riders**

Confident 'strong and fearless' bike riders will prefer to ride on the road when the off-road alternative is a shared path. They ride at higher speeds than appropriate on a shared path, prefer to avoid navigating intersections and driveways, and feel comfortable in traffic.

It is particularly important to provide an on-road option in Artarmon Village as the shared path passes in front of a train station with high levels of pedestrian traffic.

The designers must take care to ensure that riders can leave and enter the cycleway, with appropriate ramps and gaps in the separators. Add PS-2 symbols in the centre of the vehicle travel lanes, and (ideally) reduce the speed limit to 30km/h.

Bike symbols alert drivers to the fact that some riders will be using the road, reassure cyclists that they should take a primary position, and help all road users share the road safely and patiently.

4. Advocate for the missing pedestrian crossing at Mowbray Road

It is disappointing to that there will be no change to the intersection of Mowbray Road other than a bike lantern on the existing pedestrian crossing.

There is a missing crossing on the western side. This contravenes a very clear NSW Government policy to provide signalised crossings on all intersection legs.

If Transport for NSW is adjusting the intersection to accommodate bike riders, there is a key opportunity to include further changes. We urge Council to push the Transport for NSW to include the missing crossing in the scope of work for the Active Way upgrades. It will be more expensive to revisit the intersection later. There will likely be thousands of new residents here when the Metro dive site is developed, and it is essential to ensure they can easily cross the road to reach shops and public transport.

5. Provide plenty of bike parking, including dedicated on-street bays for share bikes

Share bikes must be integral to the project, not an afterthought. The use of share bikes is set to increase, and the re-design of Hampden Road and Herbert Street offers an opportunity to create sufficient parking spaces so parked bikes do not impact public space.

Install plenty of hoops for private bike in the public realm, and advocate to Transport for NSW for secure bike sheds at St Leonards and Artarmon stations. Consider providing suitable spaces for food delivery workers to park and rest.

6. Develop behaviour change programs to educate local residents and workers, and encourage use of the Active Way

The delivery of the full length of the bike path will take a number of years, but it is essential that behaviour change programs starts now. The programs could include activities to:

- support people to use the new infrastructure
- build cycling skills for children and new riders
- promote the benefits of multi-modal travel
- ensure that all road users understand the new crossings, public realm treatments and cycleway typologies
- educate the community that abundant parking does not make places better
- expand the supply and use of car share and share-scheme bikes.

7. Include wayfinding and signage as part of the project

Good wayfinding is really important to help users navigate the Active Way, but also to signal that the route exists and goes somewhere useful. Active transport is often inhibited by a lack of knowledge about attractive and convenient routes

Some well-located information boards with larger maps would be very valuable to show how local and more regional destinations can be reached by bike. The new Punch Street parklet particularly needs a clear map as it is the intersection of two key regional connections.

8. Collaborate with the hospital authorities to improve bike connections from the Active Way into the hospital grounds

The Royal North Shore and North Shore Private precinct is a major employment centre. There is secure bike parking for staff and visitors but cycling access to the hospitals needs to be improved. The Active Way provides an opportunity encourage more staff and visitors to commute by bike rather than using a vehicle.

We encourage council to partner with the hospitals on projects to build better facilities into and on the precinct, and programs to support behaviour change.

9. Collect data, now and as the Active Way is delivered

Data is vitally important to measure the uptick in cycling, the impact of streetscape improvements on footfall, business takings and public transport use, and changes to traffic flow and parking demand.

Good data is extremely valuable to justify future projects.

Include bike counters on each section of the Active Way as the project is delivered. For future comparison, some form of counts on the usage of the existing bike lanes should be done in the months before construction starts.

10. Seek advice from the BUGs as the detail design is developed

Bicycle NSW's advocacy partners at Bike North have expert local knowledge, gained from decades of cycling in and around Willoughby.

Please consult regularly with Bicycle User Groups as the plans are refined to ensure that local riders can continue to shape the designs.

Bicycle NSW is very excited by the plans for this important active transport corridor.

Safe, direct, accessible and attractive active transport links are not a nice-to-have in high density precincts. They are an absolutely essential foundation for development. They 'roll out the green carpet' for people walking and cycling, and ensure that residents of all ages can get around and connect to public transport with using a car.

Please do not hesitate to contact Bicycle NSW if we can assist any further with advocacy for the Active Way. We look forward to riding on the new cycleway very soon!

Yours sincerely,

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