29 June 2019

Clover Moore
Lord Mayor of Sydney
GPO Box 1591
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Clover

Sydney 2050: Make Sydney the best city in the world for walking

WalkSydney is a community group advocating for walking. As Sydney’s population grows we want people to be able to walk easily to schools, public transport, local shops and services and shared transport choices. Streets and other spaces provide important social and economic engagement as well as infrastructure for walking and WalkSydney wants to see bold coordinated action to make walking in the City of Sydney convenient, accessible, safe and enjoyable.

Making Sydney a great city for walking has benefits for everyone and as the City of Sydney prepares its strategic plan for 2050 this submission outlines actions that can be taken by the City as well as by the State Government for which the City needs to advocate.

Following the work of Gehl Architects in 2007 and adoption of Sustainable Sydney 2030, the City of Sydney has achieved good outcomes to support people walking including:

- Pedestrianisation of George Street and lanes in the city centre
- Improved footpaths and intersections with trees, landscaping, filtered permeability and reduced road space
- Signs showing walking times to nearby destinations
- Online mapping for inclusionary access
- Footpath lighting, seating and bubblers
- New streets and links in previously inaccessible areas
- A bicycle network providing a safer transport choice
- Establishing the Liveable Green Network to prioritise streets for walking, and
- Work to improve pedestrian counting and measuring of crowding and safety.

The City of Sydney needs to be a place where it is a pleasure to stroll, linger, and look around as well as walk to destinations quickly. To achieve this and build on previous work, the City of Sydney needs a coordinated and strategic approach taking action where it can and influencing the State Government for necessary change. We recognise that change inevitably attracts resistance as it challenges established practices and attitudes about how street space is used and WalkSydney encourages the City of Sydney to embrace this reaction with an ongoing
strategy of attractive trial implementations while addressing valid concerns and giving residents, visitors and businesses time to experience the benefits and adapt to new circumstances.

For example over time cars have been removed from the along the bank of the river Seine in Paris starting with temporary closures over summer using attractive installations on access ramps as shown in the photo below. Today a 3 km stretch of former highway alongside the river is a safe, healthy and appealing destination.

The bank of the Seine

As the City of Sydney plans for 2050, WalkSydney outlines a number of considerations as part of a comprehensive and strategic outlook for moving around the City.

Our submission urges improvements around:

1. Walking and schools
2. Walking and public transport
3. Reconsidering street space in village centres and on major corridors
4. Creating streets for safer road transport
5. Prioritising walking in planning for the Eastern Harbour City
6. Reduced speed limits
7. Traffic signals, and
8. Reduced car parking in new developments.

1. **Walking and schools**

The World Health Organisation recommends 60 minutes of daily activity for children. To support this, comprehensive coordinated action is needed to make walking, scooting, and cycling to school the easiest, safest and most convenient transport choices for families.

Schools in the City are expanding and physical interventions in streets around schools such as the following are needed to change the travel choices and create healthier habits for children:
Reduced road space and restricted drop-off parking close to schools
- Wider footpaths, pedestrian crossings with horizontal deflections to slow driving speeds, and ramps for prams, scooters and bicycles
- Continuous footpaths across intersections along busy roads
- Landscaping and incidental installations to engage young children
- Retimed traffic signals to recognise the high-pedestrian environment such as short cycles, double-phasing, scrambled crossings, etc.

Reducing childhood obesity is one of the Premier’s priorities and WalkSydney has written to the Premier outlining a clear approach for improving access to schools by active transport choices. Changes are needed now to turn around the modern and all-too-common practice of driving children to school and in this high pedestrian area with many young families.

Constant movements to-and-from the kerb, double-parking, parents in a rush, large cars with limited visibility, children and bicycles are a dangerous combination which occurs twice each day outside schools

2. Walking and public transport

The link between walking and public transport is clear, and every year media reports refer to increased crowding on trains with a recent report saying almost 8,000 more people are traveling into the city centre during one hour of the morning peak period. With more mass transport to come and new State Government strategies outlining improved walkability to transport services, access by walking as well as for people with limited mobility needs to be given clear physical priority around mass transport and major interchanges.

The current Draft Transport Strategy for the City of Melbourne identifies strategic plans for precincts around major transport facilities so people can move easily between transport services and on to their destinations. With Sydney’s growing population and the expansion of
mass transport services in the city centre and surrounding neighbourhoods, this is necessary action for which the City of Sydney also needs to plan.

- Remove slip lanes so pedestrians are not stranded on small concrete islands surrounded by traffic
- Remove guardrail fencing so pedestrians can move around easily
- Reconfigure footpaths at intersections to cater for crowds
- Reduce traffic signal waiting times for people walking
- Widen ramps where footpaths cannot be elevated across streets
- Pedestrianise the area around Redfern station to recognise walking connections to the University of Sydney and Australian Technology Park
- Ensure people walking have the best possible access to train platforms by working with Transport for NSW to install platform access as is to occur at Redfern Station.

Remove guardrail fencing, widen footpaths and ramps especially at intersections, remove slip lanes, change signal timing, provide multi-directional crossings

In 2017 *The Whole Journey: A guide for thinking beyond compliance to create accessible public transport journeys* was endorsed by all state and territory transport Ministers. The guide provides advice on how all levels of government can work together to make public transport more inclusive and user-centred and this guide needs to form the basis of public domain planning around transport services.

3. **Reconsider street space in village centres and on major corridors**

The City of Sydney has created beautiful parks and public places which people can enjoy in a range of different ways, and public streets such as village main streets need to be part of this work.

A significant amount of street space is allocated to an inefficient transport choice and action is needed to start reallocating street space towards movement and activities which are more relevant to this highly populated inner urban area. Footpaths are expected to accommodate large numbers of people walking, strolling, chatting, eating, waiting and watching as well as utility poles, pillars, boxes, garbage bins, advertising, builders hoardings, bus stops and abandoned trollies. Meanwhile too much space holds mainly passenger cars often carrying few people and even containing no one as when parked.

On major corridors more street space is needed for walking and moving people efficiently as well as landscaping and activities which make great cities appealing – slip lanes need to
removed, safe walking and cycling space needs to be provided, road crossing distances need to be reduced and traffic signals need to provide safe and direct access for people walking.

In the neighbourhoods, more street space needs to be available for people to walk, live and linger – children’s play, remote working, seating, socialising and exercising. By restricting street parking and keeping most vehicles to the neighbourhood fringe people living locally can be encouraged to walk instead of drive short distances and people travelling from further afield would be able to park within short walking distances.

![Sydney is growing and we can no longer allocate so much street space to an inefficient and dangerous transport option](image)

4. **Create streets for safer road transport and new heavy vehicles**

More street space needs to be allocated to or prioritised for safer road transport choices. Media reports of people dying while walking and cycling are much too common and we barely hear about the injuries many more people are left with after car and truck crashes.

The City of Sydney has made a great start on rolling out a protected bicycle network and this needs to be accelerated and expanded particularly on major corridors and streets connecting with growth locations, high population areas and popular destinations like universities. Research and experience has shown that more people will ride a bicycle when they have safe cycling infrastructure and this improves safety and amenity for everyone as people are travelling slower and engaging with the places around them. Every bicycle acts as a reminder to drivers to look out for other bikes. This work has become more urgent as cities around the world are experiencing a range of new transport choices for short trips such as electric bikes and scooters.
Infrastructure for safer road transport makes streets safer for everyone

Streets in this high pedestrian inner urban area need to be designed for the large number of walking trips instead of occasional movements by large vehicles. Heavy vehicles are changing with the use of low level windows for direct vision of the surrounding road, rear steering for better manoeuvrability, 360° cameras, adjustable suspension, reduced driver height and proximity sensors – and street designs need to recognise these changes. Coulson Street Erskineville adjacent to about 6,000 residents in Ashmore is an obvious walking route between current and future destinations and yet it features wide turning corners and no continuous footpaths. In future the design of streets needs to recognise the changing technology of heavy vehicles to provide safer people-friendly outcomes.

Coulson Street is an obvious walking link and yet designed for heavy vehicles and fast-moving traffic
5. Plan for a walking network in the Eastern Harbour City

Truly walkable centres facilitate important informal connections for people and businesses and to support the global competitiveness of the Eastern Harbour City a network of walking connections and high-quality public places needs to be prioritised in the planning of this significant centre. Such a network should be designed to encourage high levels of use by its ease and quality of design standing in contrast to streets that are traffic sewers with miserable footpaths attached.

New walking connections need to be identified across sections of the city that are currently separated by motorways, railways and large blocks. More connections are needed between Darling Harbour, Pyrmont, Ultimo and Wentworth Park and connecting with the future Fish Markets and the Bays Precinct. Walking routes through the Domain and from the east, at the eastern end of Pyrmont Bridge and through and around Central Station need to be improved. Additional connections are needed across rail lines between Central and Macdonaldtown linking residential and recreational areas to the east and south.

Over time private traffic should be removed from the centre starting with regular car-free periods in areas of highest pedestrian concentration such as throughout the shopping precinct during peak shopping times. Land owners and developers need to work with the City and State Government to provide a network with through site links and cross-city walking connections, particularly to increase east-west permeability in the existing city centre. Pedestrian access, safety and comfort needs to be prioritised in decision-making with clearly stated outcomes in the Local Strategic Planning Statement and LEP objectives and provisions.

6. Liveable streets need slow moving traffic

Neighbourhood streets play a vital role in making places liveable. They are important places for walking, cycling, social interactions and playful exploration by children and speed limits of 30 km/hour need to be introduced.

The NSW Government’s 40km/hour speed limit is based on research carried out in 1994 which focused on vehicle travel speeds and fatal pedestrian collisions however, it did not take serious injuries into account. Research in 2016 by the Australian Road Research Board and the Centre for Automotive Safety Research (University of Adelaide) shows that previously accepted speed thresholds have limited applicability to reduce the severity of injuries in crashes with pedestrians.

In 2017 work by BIKEast and its collaborators demonstrated how neighbourhood streets can provide a focus for low-cost interventions that hold considerable benefits for road safety and neighbourhood amenity. The initiative is based on experience in The Netherlands which indicates limited implementation of traffic-calming measures can be effective when focused on important bottlenecks and dangerous locations. Along with other key elements such as designing streets for slow speeds and improving residential amenity to provide enjoyment, these limited measures help make local streets safe for everyone to use and enjoy.

Trials of 30 km/hour speed limits are underway around Melbourne, Perth and New Zealand and similar work needs to commence in the City of Sydney over large designated residential areas and around schools. This work could support revision of the speed zoning applied by the State Government including reduced signposted speed limits in high pedestrian areas and reduced default speed limits in residential streets.
7. Traffic signals and pedestrians

The traffic signal system used in Sydney, SCATS, was not designed with pedestrian access in mind. It primarily serves vehicle throughput and now that walking is given high priority in the transport network by NSW Government strategies, greater attention is needed on how SCATS can provide better pedestrian safety and accessibility in this high pedestrian LGA.

Action by the State Government on the following is needed to improve safety and accessibility for people at signalised intersections:

- Count pedestrians automatically like occurs with cars
- Prioritise pedestrian time in the traffic signal algorithm
- Implement automatic pedestrian phases with the maximum feasible amount of green time for walking at every movement of every intersection
- Provide leading pedestrian intervals (LPI) at all intersections
- Display the green pedestrian signal until traffic is detected like the Rainbow Crossing in Bourke Street and greater use of scrambled pedestrian phases (also known as Barnes Dance intersections)
- Regular review of signalised intersection instead of implement-and-leave as occurs now.

Pedestrian detection technology, such as that now in use in Queensland and Victoria, needs to be installed. This technology adjusts signal timing according the needs of people walking. It recognises when people are waiting to cross the road and their walking speed while crossing the road in order to provide shorter waiting periods and more time to cross the road. The detectors are in use at more than 250 Victorian intersections and the Queensland government has now allocated funding to install them on 300 pedestrian crossings around the state. A copy of the report for the testing period of footpath detectors and road detectors is attached for engagement with the State Government.

In addition, pedestrian crossings need to be installed on all approaches of existing and future signalised intersections. The RMS Traffic Signal Design guide says a signalised foot crossing must be provided on each leg of a signalised intersection “in a built-up area” and it then outlines
exceptions to this requirement. These exceptions have been applied excessively, resulting in people having to cross multiple roads, adding delay and hazard to what should be a simple journey. – the busy intersection of Broadway and City Road is an example. These exemptions need to be removed and pedestrian crossings need to be installed on all approaches of signalised intersections in this high-pedestrian LGA. Greater transparency is needed in the design of signalised intersections and the RMS Traffic Signal Design guide needs to be revised or deleted to allow signal implementation which addresses local access needs of people walking.

8. Reduced car parking provision for new development

Confined inner city streets cannot accommodate more car trips and onsite parking provisions for future development need to be eliminated to prevent this. WalkSydney has heard from people who live near recently completed large developments and they’ve spoken about significantly decreased amenity and safety as a result of more vehicle traffic especially at peak travel periods. How much more can the inner city bear?

The planning controls have previously required travel plans as a means of achieving sustainable transport outcomes for new development but these are ineffective and tokenistic and more tangible action is needed.

People who live and work in the City of Sydney live in close proximity to essential and desirable destinations including transport options making the need for car ownership unnecessary. With the preparation of strategic statements and revised planning controls now underway, access to privately-owned cars in new developments needs to be removed to encourage people to drive only when necessary using shared cars or taxi-style services. Along with other mechanisms like demand-responsive fees for street parking and car share within easy reach, this is a crucial step for making the City safe and pleasant for walking.

With Sustainable Sydney 2030 the City of Sydney recognised the need for action on many urgent issues for the future. It has subsequently taken important and necessary action on these issues and WalkSydney would like the City of Sydney take much-needed action to make Sydney the best city in the world for walking.

Members of WalkSydney would be prepared to meet with you or City staff to consider what we could do to make it safer, easier and more pleasant to walk in Sydney and we can be contacted by email at walksydney1@gmail.com

Yours sincerely,  

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