



WalkSydney
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4 September 2019

Lucy Turnbull, Chief Commissioner
Greater Sydney Commission
PO Box 257
Parramatta NSW 2124

Dear Ms Turnbull,

The Pulse of Greater Sydney – Measuring what matters for walking

WalkSydney is a community group working to make it easier, safer and more pleasant to walk in Sydney. With a growing population and limited space we need to ensure people can easily make walking their first choice for short trips - walking to public transport, local shops and services, schools and shared transport options.

We write to provide feedback on *The Pulse of Greater Sydney*, the monitoring and reporting framework for the Region and District Plans produced by the Greater Sydney Commission.

The Pulse of Greater Sydney specifies “walkable places” as a performance indicator for measuring progress towards the goal to make walking and cycling more convenient ways to access schools, shops, public transport and open space. WalkSydney strongly supports the use of walkability as a proxy for the quality of places and the vitality of Greater Sydney, however we are concerned that the measures identified for monitoring walkable places do not adequately measure the intended goal. Whilst pragmatically exploiting readily available data sets and therefore not requiring additional expense, the proposed data sets fail to reflect the goal of more convenient walking access to schools, shops, public transport and open space.

WalkSydney has a number of suggestions to improve how progress is measured. We appreciate the challenges in applying some of these measures however, the Region and District Plans take a long-term view and it is important the right outcomes are achieved for the future. We encourage the Commission to recognise that measuring walkability is challenging and complex and that investment in designing a data set and collecting information should not be ruled out. Substantial investment has been made in collecting data sets for public transport patronage, car movements and road safety to understand the measurement and performance of these issues and walking must be treated similarly.

Walking Accessibility

If the GSC is serious about creating walkable neighbourhoods with convenient access to services, the monitoring framework needs to include the number of residents who can get to shops to buy basic household items in a short time frame (such as 5, 10 or 15 minutes) without getting in their car. Measuring walking accessibility has been carried out around the world as well as by researchers based in Sydney, and the GSC needs to take advantage of this growing pool of knowledge and deploy these measurements as a baseline for tracking the effects of changes to the transport network and land use patterns.

Quality and Enjoyment

The quality and 'enjoyability' of the walking experience also needs to be taken into account - shade, street landscaping, traffic speeds and volumes, perceived safety and opportunities for social interaction. The role of features which improve street amenity cannot be ignored. Barriers such as major traffic corridors need to be recognised because these result in people, especially families with young children, jumping in their car to go further afield instead of walking locally because it feels safer and easier than navigating busy roads as a pedestrian. Concepts such as the average pedestrian delay at intersections for a 10 minute walking trip should also be adopted as a measure.

Statistical safety and perceptions of safety are measurable and personal safety needs to be taken into account if we are serious about creating walkable places. Safety should include road safety measures such as pedestrian / vehicle collision rates per pedestrian, as well as conventional measures of personal safety.

Measuring people walking

To understand walkability we need to accurately count people throughout the system, not just at set locations. Participation by women is a strong indication of a "walkable" street and consideration needs to be given to counting to understand the gender split of people walking.

The Pulse of Greater Sydney acknowledges the indicators are a starting point from which to measure progress and WalkSydney urges the Greater Sydney Commission to ensure Transport for New South Wales collects the data needed to assess walkability genuinely and effectively - this is within its technical and financial ability if it is sufficiently prioritised.

If you would like more information about the suggestions raised in this letter WalkSydney can be contacted by email at walksydney1@gmail.com

Yours truly,



Brigid Kelly
WalkSydney