

9 June 2026

Our Ref: 2026/284059

File No: X111361.015

Transport for NSW
Via email
walkingnsw@transport.nsw.gov.au

City of Sydney Submission to NSW Government's Walkable NSW Discussion Paper

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Walkable NSW Discussion Paper ('Discussion Paper'). We support in principle the NSW Government's exploration of how they can improve walking across NSW and look forward to a statewide strategy with actions, funding and commitments.

City of Sydney's position on walking

Our communities consistently tell us that walking is important to them and that they want Sydney to be safe, sustainable, green and walkable. They want streets with more trees, more space for walking, space for children to play and for socialising. They want a city that is safe and easy for all ages, all people and all mobility levels.

In our city centre, walking accounts for 93% of trips. All trips have a walking component. Walking is an important part of everyday transport and is also a treasured recreation activity in NSW.

The City of Sydney's (the City) '[A City for Walking' Strategy and Action Plan](#) (linked) responds directly to the voices of our community. It considers the whole walking experience – from safe walking connections to needs such as comfort and enjoyment for people, using a hierarchy of walking needs (moving from 'can I walk' to 'do I want to walk': A city where walking is possible, safe, comfortable and fun). Its 12 actions include advocacy and working with partners, and City of Sydney-led actions such as more pedestrian crossings and public domain improvements. Our priorities include:

- Continuing our programs of walking improvements, which we spend \$28 million per year on, including new crossings, footpath improvements, street upgrades, planting and public domain improvements
- Working with the NSW Government to ensure signal phasing prioritises people walking, including advocating for:
 - a maximum wait time of 45 seconds and a target of 30 second at all signals
 - more crossings on state-controlled roads
 - automatic phasing so that people don't need to 'request' to cross by pushing a button
 - ensuring that 15% or less of walking journeys is spent waiting at traffic lights as per best practice

- Working with the NSW Government to implement 30km/h speed limits in areas of high pedestrian activity, and 40km/h elsewhere
- Integrating transport and land use so residents will have what they need for daily life in a 10-minute walk
- Reviewing our [Sydney Streets Design Code](#) (linked) to make sure it provides for walkable streets.
- Advocating for the NSW government to improve compliance with road rules by people driving and cycling, particularly by regulating share bike operators and bike delivery companies
- Making sure that construction activities provide safe and easy access for people walking.

While the City's Walking Strategy and Action Plan was developed for our local context, its positions and actions are, for the most part, applicable to other towns, suburbs and urban centres across NSW.

The Discussion Paper needs to translate into funding, commitment and action by the NSW Government

However, to make Sydney 'a city for walking' and NSW 'walkable' requires strong, consistent leadership, support and financial commitment from the NSW Government.

The need for more walkable places and the benefits of more walkable communities are now well-known.

As the Discussion Paper highlights, the NSW Government's community consultations and stakeholder engagement echo our own findings – the NSW community wants more walkable places, they want safe walking to school, they want safer speeds and more crossings so that interactions with people driving are safer, and they want better links to public transport and daily services (see page 18, for example).

Many of the most effective measures – such as reducing vehicle speeds – are also the most cost effective. Physical infrastructure such as accessible footpaths, streets that are easy and safe to cross, street trees, lighting and benches are also low cost and have low space needs. They do, however, require prioritising beyond strategy. The Discussion Paper highlights how much dialogue there has been about improving walking by the NSW Government to date, but misses the opportunity to present a commitment, a strategy or, importantly, a plan of action to do this.

Committed funding is the critical element in making such a plan impactful. The plan of action following on from this Discussion Paper must be accompanied by additional funding towards walking improvements. Our recommendation would be to establish a program providing predictable on-going funding for Councils instead of once-off grants which can be labour intensive and favour projects already in the pipeline.

The Discussion Paper presents a number of high-level ways to make NSW more walkable but needs to go into more detail

The Discussion Paper presents a solid framework for considering 'levers of change' (page 13), but does not go as far as providing examples or details. Some levers that should be included are :

Legislation, policy and regulation:

- Changing road rules to prioritise people walking.

Planning:

- Changes to neighbourhood design and building codes and guidelines to make sure that new development creates walkable neighbourhoods and streets.

Grants, programs and partnerships:

- Providing ongoing and predictable funding to councils

Education, guidance and behaviour change:

- Raising awareness and understanding of existing road rules related to walking
- Targeting enforcement to improve pedestrian safety, including speeding, failing to give way to people walking and cycling, running red lights and distraction.

Infrastructure, assets and operations:

- Ensure signal phasing prioritises pedestrians through maximum wait times, automated pedestrian phases, and rest-on-pedestrian-green phasing.
- Develop a program of proactive speed limit changes to enable speed limit reductions to be delivered quickly and at scale

Transport for NSW should make it easier to make changes on local streets

The Discussion Paper highlights that “*local, low traffic streets outside homes, shops and schools...offer the quickest, lowest cost and most scalable way to improve walking across NSW. Simple changes including continuous footpaths, safer crossings, lower speeds, shade and lighting offer immediate gains*” (page 34). Rolling this out at a scale across NSW requires a review of standards to ensure that councils are able to deliver fit-for-purpose infrastructure (rather than gold-plated).

Ensure all of Transport for NSW is responsible for delivering walking outcomes, not just the Active Transport team

Finally, in response to the Discussion Paper’s call for feedback on organisational governance, we recommend that delivery of walking projects be included as a key performance metric for relevant parts of Transport for NSW (including the Network Operations team). When walking (and cycling) delivery sits separately from the team responsible for street space allocation and operations, it can create a structural barrier to implementation. Aligning Network Operations’ performance measures with walking outcomes would help shift the governance model from one of approval/ veto, to one of shared problem-solving and delivery.

The NSW Government already has strong policies and standards, such as the [Road User Space Allocation Policy](#) (linked) and the [Walking Space Guide](#) (linked), that prioritise people walking, but these are not translating into action.

We are still seeing projects that deliver outcomes contrary to these policies, suggesting a disconnect between NSW Government policy and project implementation. One of many examples of this in our area is the 2024 Western Distributor Networks Improvements Program which *removed* a necessary pedestrian crossing on Harris St, the high street of a vibrant urban neighbourhood.

TfNSW now has the opportunity to take the lead on prioritising walking outcomes in its infrastructure delivery, operations and assets, as the Discussion Paper identifies in the last ‘lever of change’ (page 13). Some priority examples in the City of Sydney include:

- Pyrmont and Hunter St Metro station precincts: Taking the opportunity to improve walking connections to and from the stations rather than only delivering within the station frontage
- Central Station: Improving walking connections around the state’s busiest rail station, where we see 50 km/h traffic speeds and regional cycleways through over-flowing pedestrian islands

In closing

We support the NSW Government developing a walking strategy/plan. This needs to include actions with timeframes, accountabilities and sources of additional funding.

We look forward to contributing more and constructively when the NSW Government offers real commitment to making NSW more walkable: a plan with budget, responsibilities and timeframes.

**Kim Woodbury**

Chief Operating Officer