

**ITEM 6. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS - COWPER WHARF ROAD
WOOLLOOMOOLOO - APPROVAL OF PROJECT SCOPE****FILE NO: S123526****SUMMARY**

Streetscape improvements are planned for Cowper Wharf Road, Woolloomooloo to provide a pedestrian crossing, footpath widening, tree and shrub planting.

Cowper Wharf Road is a key pedestrian link connecting the city with Woolloomooloo, Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay. The proposed streetscape improvements contribute towards the City's Sustainable Sydney 2030 commitments through the:

- (a) installation of a new signalised pedestrian crossing to improve pedestrian safety, strengthen pedestrian links and promote walkable neighbourhoods;
- (b) widening of footpaths and creation of an in-lane bus stop that provides a safe area for crowds to embark and disembark from buses;
- (c) planting of 10 Sydney Red Gum trees in the central median to increase canopy cover and reduce the urban heat island effect; and
- (d) installation of 500 square metres of new garden beds to improve streetscape amenity and reduce stormwater run-off into Woolloomooloo Bay.

Opportunities to improve pedestrian safety and increase the canopy cover of the area are consistent with the City's Greening Sydney Plan, Walking Strategy and Action Plan, Street Tree Master Plan and the East Sydney Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Plan.

The initial proposal, which involved a trial closure of traffic lanes for a period of one month, was not supported by the Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee. A modified proposal was endorsed by the Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee on 15 February 2017 and has the support of key stakeholders, including representatives of the nearby Navy Base (HMAS Kuttabul).

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that Council approve the following scope of works for traffic treatments and streetscape improvements at Cowper Wharf Road, Woolloomooloo:

- (A) the installation of a signalised pedestrian crossing on Cowper Wharf Road, near the intersection with Brougham Street;
- (B) footpath widening to create an in-lane bus stop on the eastern side of Cowper Wharf Road; and
- (C) in-road tree planting and landscaping within the central median islands.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Concept Plan

Attachment B: Site Photos

Attachment C: Financial Implications (Confidential)

(As Attachment C is confidential, it will be circulated separately from the Agenda Paper and to Councillors and relevant senior staff only.)

BACKGROUND

1. Cowper Wharf Road is a 50km/hr, four-lane road managed by Council and provides connections between the Domain, Woolloomooloo, Kings Cross and the Royal Australian Navy Base (HMAS Kuttabul).
2. The road is closed to vehicles on Friday and Saturday nights due to reported instances of dangerous driving and noise complaints.
3. Comprehensive traffic studies have indicated that Cowper Wharf Road has high volumes of pedestrians crossing the road (to access Kings Cross and the Domain) and low traffic volumes.
4. In 2008, Council adopted the City East Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Plan, which aims to improve access and safety for pedestrians and cyclists. The plan includes a proposal for an in-road cycleway and improved pedestrian accessibility across Cowper Wharf Road at Brougham Street.
5. In 2011, Council adopted the Street Tree Master Plan, which supports the City's target to increase tree canopy cover by 50 per cent across the local government area. The master plan also includes a proposal to plant trees in the median at Cowper Wharf Road.
6. At the 16 December 2015 meeting of the Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee, a proposal was considered for Cowper Wharf Road to widen the existing central median and plant 36 trees, introduce on-road bicycle lanes and a marked pedestrian crossing south of Brougham Street, and to narrow the four lane road down to two lanes at this location.
7. The proposal was deferred pending a trial lane closure to test the proposed narrowing of the road and further stakeholder meetings.
8. A trial lane closure was conducted in January 2016 to coincide with a peak traffic period of the Navy Base (HMAS Kuttabul). Studies of the trial lane closure indicated that there were no impacts to existing traffic.
9. Due to stakeholder concerns, the cycle lanes and median widening were removed from the proposal to retain all four lanes of traffic, and a signalised pedestrian crossing is proposed in lieu of a marked pedestrian crossing. The amended proposal will also plant 10 *Angophora costata* (Sydney Red Gum) trees and 500 square metres of native shrubs within the existing concrete median to soften the streetscape.
10. A meeting with all project stakeholders was held on 12 December 2016, where the amended proposal was endorsed 'in-principle' by all attendees.
11. The amended proposal was subsequently endorsed by the Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee on 15 February 2017.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

12. *Sustainable Sydney 2030* is a vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. The traffic treatments and streetscape improvements proposed are aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 2 - A Leading Environmental Performer – 10 new trees and 500 square metres of garden beds will be planted that contribute towards Council's commitments to increase tree canopy cover by 50 per cent by 2030, and to increase the physical greening of our streets.
 - (b) Direction 4 - A City for Walking and Cycling – a signalised pedestrian crossing will provide a new and safe crossing point for pedestrians travelling between Kings Cross and the Domain.

Street Tree Master Plan

13. The planting is consistent with the Street Tree Master Plan (adopted by Council in 2011), which included the planting of *Angophora costata* (Sydney Red Gum) trees within the median of Cowper Wharf Road.

Greening Sydney Plan

14. The new garden bed areas are consistent with the strategy to 'green our streets' by replacing unused concrete surfaces with planting and permeable surfaces. These areas also contribute towards reducing the 'heat island' effect of the city and can reduce storm water run-off.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

15. There are sufficient funds allocated for this project within the 2016/17 Capital Works Budgets for the In Road Tree Planting and Traffic Signals Programs. Current cost estimates are detailed in Attachment C.
16. The project will be delivered using the following existing contracts:
 - (a) Civil Works – Tender 1319; and
 - (b) Street Lighting and Traffic Signals – Tender 1334.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

17. Attachment C contains confidential commercial information of the City which, if disclosed, would confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business. Discussion of the matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest because it would compromise Council's ability to negotiate fairly and commercially to achieve the best outcome for its ratepayers.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

18. Construction is scheduled from April to June 2017.
19. Delivery of the traffic signals is pending approval by the Roads and Maritime Services (separate to their endorsement of the overall project). The project has been designed to allow for construction in stages should this approval be delayed.

OPTIONS

20. An alternative design option for the project has been explored to allow for more tree planting within the existing medians by removing the 'Right Turn Only' lanes, however this design was not supported by NSW Roads and Maritime Services.
21. Not proceeding with the project may place pedestrians at risk as there is no existing safe crossing point for them to cross near the McElhone Stairs, which is a popular connection to Kings Cross Station and fitness circuit.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

22. Community consultation was conducted on two occasions during the development of the design for this project, commencing in March 2015. Letters were sent out to 4,650 addresses and information presented on the City's 'Have Your Say' website. During the lane reduction trial, signage was installed along the road providing a description of the proposal.
23. Responses received in support of the project were in favour of the pedestrian safety improvements (pedestrian crossing and footpath widening), cycle lanes and increased amenity from tree planting. Responses which noted objections to the project cited traffic concerns and potential loss of views from tree planting.
24. The City has conducted ongoing consultation with the NSW Roads and Maritime Services, State Transit Authority, Royal Australian Navy and the Kings Cross Police to explore design options for Cowper Wharf Road. This current design scheme is supported 'in-principle' by all of these project stakeholders.
25. The amended design has removed the previous inclusion of cycle lanes, reduced the number of proposed trees from 36 to 10 (which forms part of the City's In Road Street Tree Planting Program and also includes 500 square metres of landscaping), replaced the marked pedestrian crossing with a signalised crossing and maintained all existing traffic lanes in response to feedback from these stakeholders.

DAVID RIORDAN

Director City Operations

James Lawton, Project Manager Tree Planting
Joel Johnson, Manager City Greening and Leisure