

Item 3.3

Creating More Space for People –the Urgent Vision for a Post-Covid-19 City

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

Covid-19 has heightened our awareness of the importance of public space as essential to public life, community wellbeing and mental health.

Our parks, cycleways and public spaces have never been more in demand, and never been more needed. Under social distancing arrangements, we have all witnessed our neighbours exercising in parks, families cycling on our village main streets, queues for take away in local cafes on our main streets – all in stark contrast to the haunting images of an empty CBD, bereft of its usual crowd of workers, tourists, shoppers and Sydneysiders.

Across the world, in response to this pandemic cities are creating more space for people where it is needed, enabling an increase in cycling, more space to walk in the city centres and village neighbourhoods to enable social distancing.

These have been priorities for the City of Sydney over the past 16 years and under the Sustainable Sydney 2030 plan. And now is the time to double our efforts to support the creation of more space for people in our parks, cycling and walking. During the pandemic, we saw 50 per cent less traffic on roads and cycling up 20 per cent - we must find ways to encourage sustainable travel choices that provide urban amenity in the long term.

In the light of the impacts of Covid-19 and the City's forthcoming recovery plan I am asking the Chief Executive Officer to consider the following:

Providing more space for Cycling and Main streets

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted two key issues for the City:

Many of our village main streets have narrow footpaths and limited space for people to walk or gather, either for commerce or to access essential services.

Public Transport with strict social distancing will only accommodate up to 20 to 50 per cent of its 'normal' capacity. More buses and trains are needed to spread the peak on our busiest routes and lines. But Sydney's geography dictates that many services, especially in the peak, will reach the edge of the City of Sydney already full. This will require residents to walk or cycle where possible, and we must provide the infrastructure to allow this.

Neither of these issues can be solved by more people driving. The City streets can only accommodate a very small proportion of the demand for private vehicles before congestion gridlocks the network and we feel the other impacts of cars such as pedestrian safety, noise, dust, and delays. All of these have a major impact on economic productivity, as well as the environmental and social wellbeing of City residents and workers.

While the streets are still quiet there is an opportunity to reclaim space for infrastructure to support more people to walk, and more people to ride.

The issue is urgent. With the first lifting of restrictions on activity on 15 May 2020, it is obvious how quickly we need to get tactical measures in place as soon as possible – in weeks not months.

City staff have been working with NSW Government staff since mid-April to address these two key economic initiatives:

1. Rapid roll-out of trial cycleways on key access routes to improve safety for people riding to the City Centre, school and health facilities, and to reduce crowding on public transport.
2. Rapid roll-out of temporary footpath widening in areas of high pedestrian activity or crowding to provide safe space for people to walk in the CBD as well as support local businesses in our village main streets and centres.

The City and Transport for NSW have identified a list of quick tactical cycleways that would supplement public transport and are consistent with the overall City of Sydney strategic bike network and the NSW Government's Principal Bike Network strategic transport network.

On Friday, 15 May 2020, the Minister for Transport advised me that the NSW Government will provide an additional \$3,680,000 to deliver six new temporary cycleways in partnership with the City of Sydney, in the following locations:

- Bridge Road and Pyrmont Bridge Road, Glebe (between Lyons Road and Wattle Street);
- Dunning Avenue, Roseberry (from Gardeners Road to Green Square);
- Sydney Park Road, Alexandria (from Princes Highway to Mitchell Road);
- Henderson Road, Railway Parade and Bridge Street, Erskinvale (between Davey Street and Swanson Street);
- Moore Park Road and Fitzroy Street (between Lang Road and Bourke Street); and
- Pitt Street North (between Alfred Street and King Street).

In addition, the Minister has committed to working with the City to develop plans to deliver temporary cycleways on Oxford Street in Paddington/Darlinghurst, King Street in Newtown, and King, College and Castlereagh Streets in the CBD.

The Minister also committed to work with the City to finalise my proposal to reduce the speed limit on Oxford Street to 40km/hour between Taylor Square and College Street, and to not proceed with extending the pedestrian fence near Taylor Square.

With legitimate public concerns about individual and public health, there is a risk that the temporary embrace of private vehicles for more trips becomes permanent. Our City can't accommodate, nor afford to let that happen. The City will continue to work with Transport for NSW on options to manage car traffic, but we must continue to encourage walking and cycling for those who can.

The connecting links for our cycling network have never been more important, and the aspirations outlined in NSW Bike Plan from 2010 should be a priority for all councils and the NSW Government.

City staff are also working to quickly assess the need for footpath widening in our Village Centres.

Creating public space in the City Centre

I was very pleased to support Minister Stokes' announcement last Friday week about the NSW Government's in principle support to pedestrianise George Street South (from Bathurst Street to Rawson Place Central). This action will transform the city further and allow more people to safely walk the streets of one of our busiest CBD areas. I am asking the Chief Executive Officer to prepare a project plan for implementing this working with the NSW Government.

I am also asking the Chief Executive Officer to investigate the opportunity to close some city streets at lunch time or to temporarily widen footpaths to create more public space adjacent to food and beverage offerings and enable clients and workers to get to and from work.

This will assist local business to trade during the recovery period when workers return back in the City Centre under physical distancing measures. We need to progress this work in partnership with the State and local businesses.

The City and NSW Government must work together to also consider issues such as crowding around public transport stations and bus stops. Addressing this will give confidence to workers and visitors that, when official restrictions are lifted, we are making it is safer to come to and move around the City to work or socialise.

Converting Moore Park Golf Course

The urban renewal of Green Square will see 70,000 people living and working in the area by 2030 (30,000 have already moved into high-density apartments). The City has committed \$540 million over 10 years to create much needed community facilities including an innovative new library and plaza, an aquatic centre, many parks and playgrounds, a childcare centre and a creative hub.

Yet as one of Australia's fastest growing and most populated area, this pandemic has shown the need for parkland has never been more important. Moore Park is just over the road from Green Square high rises and it is scandalous that a large part remains off-limits despite the intended purpose of these lands being bequeathed for public use.

It is vital that this land is shared with the broader community, and I am asking the Chief Executive Officer to develop a proposal to take to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to extend public access to Moore Park by reducing the golf course from an 18 hole course to a nine hole course given there is another golf course just five kilometres away and that the main income earner for the Trust is the driving range which could remain.

A key priority for the City Recovery Plan

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the City budget, as it has on other levels of government and many businesses.

While there will need to be difficult decisions in order to ensure the City's long-term financial position, the City needs, with State support, to continue to invest strongly in capital works to adapt our city to these new circumstances and provide much needed stimulus to support employment in our city.

In developing the budget for Council consideration, the City needs to prioritise funding for cycleways, widening footpaths and giving more room for pedestrians and expanding our community's access to parks.

We also need to investigate new and alternative funding sources, including applying to Federal and State Governments for economic stimulus funding.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note that City staff and Transport for NSW are developing plans for tactical responses to support movement of people and economic recovery as Covid-19 travel restrictions ease, including installing temporary cycleways and footpath widenings;
- (B) Council note that the NSW Government will provide an additional \$3,680,000 to deliver six new temporary cycleways in partnership with the City of Sydney, in the following locations:
 - (i) Bridge Road and Pyrmont Bridge Road, Glebe (between Lyons Road and Wattle Street);
 - (ii) Dunning Avenue, Roseberry (from Gardeners Road to Green Square);
 - (iii) Sydney Park Road, Alexandria (from Princes Highway to Mitchell Road);
 - (iv) Henderson Road, Railway Parade and Bridge Street, Erskinvile (between Davey Street and Swanson Street);
 - (v) Moore Park Road and Fitzroy Street (between Lang Road and Bourke Street);
and
 - (vi) Pitt Street North (between Alfred Street and King Street);
- (C) Council note that, in addition, the Minister for Transport has committed to working with the City of Sydney to develop plans to deliver temporary cycleways on Oxford Street in Paddington / Darlinghurst, King Street in Newtown, King Street in the CBD, and College Street and Castlereagh Street;
- (D) Council note that the Minister for Transport also committed to work with the City to finalise my proposal to reduce the speed limit on Oxford Street to 40km/hour between Taylor Square and College Street, and to not proceed with extending the pedestrian fence near Taylor Square;
- (E) Council agree that increasing open space, and providing more space for walking and cycling be included as a priority in the Social and Economic Recovery plan that my 4 May 2020 Lord Mayoral Minute asked the Chief Executive Officer to prepare;
- (F) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to reprioritise the capital works program to accommodate these new priorities and reflect this in the budget and long term financial plan that will be returned to Council in June 2020, including the project to pedestrianise George Street South (from Bathurst Street to Central);

- (G) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to investigate the opportunity to close a small number of city streets at lunch time where appropriate or temporarily widen footpaths to create more public space adjacent to food and beverage offerings, enabling clients and workers to get to and from work;
- (H) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to develop a proposal to convert part of Moore Park Golf Course into a public park by reducing the golf course from an 18 hole course to a nine hole course for a submission to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces; and
- (I) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to investigate new and alternative funding sources, including applying to Federal and State Governments for economic stimulus funding.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor