

Traffic Treatment - Pedestrian Boulevard - Devonshire Street, Surry Hills

File No: X027274

Summary

The City of Sydney's Sustainable Sydney 2030 strategic direction includes integrated transport for a connected city; a city for walking and cycling; and a lively and engaging city centre.

The City's Community Recovery Plan in response to the Covid-19 pandemic includes actions to continue the acceleration of the capital works program to upgrade city streets, parks and playgrounds; and work with the NSW Government on city management initiatives such as mobility and transport, temporary footpath widening, cycleways, change signal timing, lower speed limits, travel demand planning and reprioritisation of roads.

Chalmers Street, between Elizabeth and Randle Streets, has had traffic treatments installed to close the roads to general traffic and convert it into a pedestrian boulevard following the introduction of the CBD and South East Light Rail (CSELR).

To continue the pedestrian boulevard, it is proposed to install traffic treatments to close Devonshire Street to general traffic between Randle and Elizabeth Streets.

The proposed pedestrian boulevard includes the installation of traffic treatments to close Buckingham Street and Chalmers Lane at Devonshire Street to general traffic.

This report recommends Council approve the installation of traffic treatments associated with the proposal to convert Devonshire Street to a pedestrian boulevard between Randle and Elizabeth Streets.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council, subject to the concurrence of the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee, approve the installation of traffic treatments to close the following roads in Surry Hills to general traffic:

- (A) Devonshire Street, between Randle and Elizabeth Streets; and
- (B) Buckingham Street and Chalmers Lane at Devonshire Street.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Concept Design and Local Access Plan
- Attachment B.** Item 37 of the Local Pedestrian Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee (LPCTCC) 19 November 2020
- Attachment C.** Community Engagement Summary and Analysis Report dated 30 October 2020

Background

1. Prior to the introduction of the CBD and South East Light Rail, Devonshire Street, between Randle and Elizabeth Streets, had two eastbound traffic lanes, two parking lanes on both sides of the street and footpath widening for outdoor dining.
2. For the construction of the light rail, Devonshire Street was reduced to one eastbound traffic lane from mid-2016, and in 2017, the street was closed to traffic.
3. Devonshire Street has remained closed to traffic as light rail services commenced in December 2019 (L2 Randwick Line) and April 2020 (L3 Kingsford Line).
4. During this time, parking and traffic changes have been implemented in surrounding streets to service and provide access to properties.
5. The proposal to install traffic treatments to close Devonshire Street to general traffic and convert it to a pedestrian boulevard will improve pedestrian access and provide opportunities for outdoor dining and the installation of street furniture.
6. The proposal to install traffic treatments to close Devonshire Street to general traffic will reduce the number of conflicts between drivers and trams at Elizabeth and Randle Streets. To improve pedestrian safety in the proposed pedestrian boulevard, the speed limit of trams will need to be reduced from 40km/h to 20km/h. Despite the reduction of the speed limit, journey times for trams are expected to improve due to the reduced number of conflicts with drivers and opportunities to optimise the phasing of traffic signals.
7. Cleansing, construction, freight and servicing vehicles are encouraged to utilise off-street and on-street parking to service businesses, properties and future developments. For special deliveries, vehicular access to Devonshire Street via the tram tracks and stopping in the proposed pedestrian boulevard will be permitted subject to approval from the City, Transport for NSW and Light Rail operator.
8. Emergency vehicles will be permitted to access Devonshire Street via the tram tracks and stop in the proposed pedestrian boulevard under flashing lights.
9. On 7 October 2020, a Traffic Management Plan for the traffic treatments was approved by Transport for NSW.
10. Approval has been sought from the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee out of session. Council's approval of the traffic treatments is subject to concurrence from the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

11. 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. This plan is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 3 - Integrated Transport for a Connected City - The proposal invests in walking infrastructure that encourages more people to walk when travelling within the city; enhances the amenity of the city's villages; and provides accessible infrastructure.
 - (b) Direction 4 - A City for Walking and Cycling - The proposal extends the network of accessible, safe and connected walking paths that is integrated with green spaces; facilitates the movement of people walking; and encourages and increases the number of people walking.
 - (c) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre - The proposal creates safe and attractive public spaces for people to meet, rest and walk during the day and night; provides villages with diverse uses and experiences; supports innovative, creative, retail, hospitality, tourism and small business activity; and creates places for cultural activity, creative expression and participation.

Risks

12. Drivers will need to travel on alternative routes to access and egress properties, however, this has been the case since 2017 and so the risk is minimal. For special deliveries, vehicular access to Devonshire Street via the tram tracks and stopping in the proposed pedestrian boulevard will be permitted subject to approval from the City, Transport for NSW and the Light Rail Operator.

Social / Cultural / Community

13. The repurposed traffic lanes will become additional public spaces which may be used for outdoor cultural activities.

Environmental

14. The closure of vehicular lanes creates the opportunity for additional street tree planting which will positively contribute to the City's tree canopy cover targets.

Economic

15. Several businesses have expressed interest in creating outdoor dining areas in the redundant traffic lanes. This is positive step towards post-pandemic economic recovery.
16. The extra space created through traffic treatments and traffic changes will provide opportunities for businesses to re-engage with the public and boost their turnover to aid economic recovery. Pre-Covid019, 1.3 million pedestrians used the City's streets every day and this project will stimulate local businesses along the street and increase economic activity, which is much needed in Sydney's CBD with current Covid-19 impacts.

Financial Implications

17. There are sufficient funds available in the 2020/21 capital works budget and future year forward estimates for the George Street South Pedestrianisation project. The Devonshire Street works will be undertaken as part of the George Street South Pedestrianisation project.
18. Ongoing maintenance costs for the proposed pedestrian boulevard are not expected to exceed existing costs to maintain the current trafficable road.

Relevant Legislation

19. Transport for NSW is responsible for the control of traffic on all NSW roads and has delegated to Council certain functions to regulate traffic on local roads.
20. Transport for NSW delegation gives Council authority to approve road closures and traffic changes under Part 8, Division 2 of the Roads Act 1993.
21. This delegation can only be exercised by the elected Council and is subject to a number of conditions and limitations, including the advice of Council's Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee.
22. The traffic treatments are proposed pursuant to Section 116 of the Roads Act 1993.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

23. A construction contract for the works was approved by Council on 26 October 2020. A delay to the approval of the traffic treatments could affect the construction program. Construction is due to commence in February 2021.

Public Consultation

24. In accordance with Section 116 of the Roads Act 1993, a notice for the proposal was published in the Sydney Morning Herald on Wednesday 23 September 2020. The proposal was also published on the City's website with 98 letters and 19 emails sent to residents and businesses in the area. Consultation for the proposal closed on 21 October 2020.
25. An external consultant reviewed all comments received on the proposal's Concept Design, Local Access Plan and Review of Environmental Factors. To complete the analysis, the consultant read each comment received and organised them into themes and topics based on the points made. Some comments contained multiple points, relevant to multiple topics, resulting in many comments being allocated to multiple topics. Please refer to Attachment C for the Community Engagement Summary and Analysis Report.
26. The proposal received a total of 215 comments with 183 comments supporting the proposal, 10 comments opposing the proposal, 18 neutral comments and four mixed comments - feedback that was a mix of supportive, unsupportive and neutral. All comments have been forwarded to Transport for NSW pursuant to Section 117 of the Roads Act 1993.

27. The comments supporting the proposal welcomed the opportunity to improve pedestrian access, the local amenity and outdoor dining.
28. The neutral and mixed comments suggested improving access for cyclists.
29. The issues raised by people who were not supportive include limited access for cyclists, the need to construct the pedestrian boulevard and impacts to the community during construction.
30. The City is reviewing the cycling network in and around the project area to address the wider connection needs.
31. According to the Road Rules 2014, it is illegal for cyclists to ride in the tramway and on the footpath. The City will work with Transport for NSW to develop options to improve local access for cyclists.
32. Should approval be granted to construct the proposal, the City will work with the local community to minimise impacts during construction. The City and Contractor's Community Liaison Officer along with the project teams will ensure the community is regularly updated and their issues are addressed.
33. The proposal was endorsed by the Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee at their meeting on 19 November 2020 and has been provided to the members of Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee for out of session endorsement.

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