

Traffic Treatment - Proposed Closure of Liverpool Street to Traffic at Oxford Street, Darlinghurst

File No: X039659.002

Summary

Council approved the concept design and estimated costs for the Oxford Street West Cycleway project in February 2022. The Oxford Street West Cycleway is a bi-directional cycleway along the northern kerbside lane of Liverpool Street and Oxford Street between Castlereagh Street and Flinders Street (Taylor Square).

The approved concept design includes the closure of Liverpool Street to vehicular traffic at the intersection with Oxford Street (east of College Street) (refer to Attachment A).

This report recommends that Council approves the proposed use of traffic treatments to close Liverpool Street to vehicular traffic at its intersection with Oxford Street (east of the College Street intersection). It makes this recommendation as part of the Oxford Street West cycleway project and in compliance with section 116 of the Roads Act 1993.

Transport for NSW requested the closure of Liverpool Street to vehicular traffic at Oxford Street (east of College Street) as part of the collaborative design process for the Oxford Street West cycleway project. The request addresses existing safety issues associated with motor vehicles crossing the busy footpath in this location, which puts people walking and riding at risk. It also addresses motor vehicles queuing back from this intersection across College Street, which impacts bus operations and causes road safety risks to people crossing the road walking and driving. The closure will also reduce the instances of motor vehicles rat-running from Oxford Street, through local streets to access the Cross City Tunnel and Eastern Distributor. The closure will be critical to ensuring the safety of people riding along the bi-directional Oxford Street West cycleway.

The City exhibited the concept design for the cycleway on Oxford and Liverpool Streets and consulted with the community over four weeks between 28 October and 25 November 2021. 157 people made submissions.

In compliance with section 116 of the Roads Act 1993, the City consulted local residents and businesses in the area. In February 2023, 1,550 letters requesting feedback on the proposal were sent to the nearby residents and businesses. A newspaper advertisement was published in the Sydney Morning Herald on Wednesday 22 February 2023.

The Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee (LPCTCC) endorsed the proposal at its meeting in April 2023 (refer Attachment B).

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) endorse the use of traffic treatments to close Liverpool Street to vehicular traffic at Oxford Street; and
- (B) endorse the conversion of Liverpool Street to a two-way street between Oxford Street and Yurong Street.

Attachments

Attachment A. Location Plan

Attachment B. Item 30 - 20 April 2023 Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee - Traffic Treatment and Parking - Separated Cycleway, Permanent Road Closures, Turn Bans and Parking Changes - Oxford Street and Liverpool Street, Sydney and Darlinghurst

Attachment C. Proposed Closure of Liverpool Street to Traffic at Oxford Street and Restrict Left Turn Access into Palmer Street Darlinghurst – Section 116 Exhibition

Background

1. In February 2022, Council approved the concept design and estimated costs of the Oxford Street West cycleway project that extends from Taylor Square in the east to the intersection of Liverpool and Elizabeth Streets in the west. The proposed bi-directional cycleway will be along the northern kerb alignment of Oxford and Liverpool Streets.
2. The proposal includes the use of traffic treatment to close Liverpool Street to vehicular traffic, at the intersection with Oxford Street east of College Street. The proposal also requires the conversion of Liverpool Street to a two-way street between Oxford and Yurong Streets.
3. The proposal has received in-principal approval from Transport for New South Wales.
4. The Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee (LPCTCC) endorsed the cycleway proposal, including the closure of the road to vehicular traffic, at its meeting on 20 April 2023 (refer Attachment B). The approval is subject to Transport for NSW approving the Traffic Management Plan (TMP), which is expected in mid-2023.
5. The use of traffic treatments to close Liverpool Street at Oxford Street will provide a safe and continuous route for people riding along the future bi-directional cycleway along the northern side of Oxford Street (in the section between College Street and the pedestrian crossing east of Brisbane Street).
6. Transport for NSW requested the closure of Liverpool Street to vehicular traffic at Oxford Street (east of College Street) as part of the collaborative design process for the Oxford Street West cycleway project. The request addresses existing safety issues with motor vehicles crossing the busy footpath in this location, which creates safety risks for people walking.
7. The request also addresses motor vehicles queuing back from this intersection across College Street which impacts bus operations and causes road safety risks at the intersection for people walking or driving.
8. The closure will also reduce instances of motor vehicles rat-running from Oxford Street, through local streets to access the Cross City Tunnel and Eastern Distributor.
9. The closure will be critical to ensuring the safety of people riding along the future Oxford Street West (bidirectional) cycleway.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

10. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. 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 5 - A city for walking, cycling and public transport -
 - (i) Objectives under this Direction include developing a network of safe, linked pedestrian and cycle paths integrated with green spaces throughout both the city and inner Sydney; giving greater priority to cycle and pedestrian movements and amenity in the City Centre; and promoting green travel for major workplaces and venues in the city.
 - (ii) The cycleway proposed in this project will complete missing links in the bike network, which will provide a viable sustainable transport alternative that will contribute to lower carbon emissions and reduced pollution.
 - (b) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural and creative life - people will have improved access to safe cycling infrastructure to enjoy a healthy lifestyle with an increased level of physical activity. As part of the City's bike network, this project will contribute to better connected neighbourhoods, increased transport choice and a more socially connected, active and healthier community.

Risks

11. Road Safety Audits were undertaken on both the Strategic and Concept Designs, with recommendations being considered for implementation in the design. Further Road Safety Audits will be carried out at the completion of the design and at the completion of construction to further identify any risks associated with the proposals and develop mitigation measures.

Social / Cultural / Community

12. Safety and amenity for the local community will be improved as the closure will decrease vehicular traffic from local streets heading towards the Cross City Tunnel and the Eastern Distributor.

Environmental

13. The project aligns with the City's Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision goals which aim to provide a better environment for people walking and riding bikes, resulting in lower carbon emissions and reduced pollution.

Financial Implications

14. The proposed traffic treatments will be implemented as part of the proposed Oxford / Liverpool Street cycleway project, which is to be jointly funded by the City and Transport for NSW.
15. There are currently sufficient funds in the 2022/23 Capital Works budget and future year forward estimates to deliver the project.

Relevant Legislation

16. Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW) is responsible for the control of traffic on all NSW roads and has delegated to Council certain functions to regulate traffic on local roads.
17. The delegation gives Council authority to approve certain traffic controls, including partial road closure, under Part 8, Division 2 of the Roads Act 1993. This delegation can only be exercised by the elected Council and is subject to a number of conditions and limitations, including the need to obtain the advice of the Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee and receive 'in-principal' approval from Transport for New South Wales.
18. This report seeks to formalise the use of traffic treatments to close Liverpool Street at Oxford Street to vehicular traffic, in accordance with Section 116 of the Roads Act 1993.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

19. A Request for Tender for the head contractor for the Oxford Street West Cycleway will close in June 2023. Council approval for the preferred tender and site works are forecast to commence in October 2023.
20. Key dates for the project are:

Milestone	Target dates
Report to Council for head contractor	August 2023
Construction commences	October 2023
Construction completion	October 2024

Options

21. An alternative option would be to construct the cycleway without using traffic treatments to close Liverpool Street at Oxford Street to vehicular traffic. This option is not recommended due to significant safety issues.

22. A pedestrian crossing ("zebra") could be installed for people walking and cycling to cross Liverpool Street at Oxford Street. The high volume of people making this crossing would delay drivers entering Liverpool Street, particularly in peak periods, and result in traffic queueing back to the intersection of Oxford and College Streets. Additionally, westbound riders would travel quicker due to the downward slope of Oxford Street creating a risk that drivers on the busy road would not see people riding. Together, these movements would create unacceptable road safety risks.

Public Consultation

23. The City exhibited the concept design for the cycleway on Oxford and Liverpool Streets and consulted with the community over four weeks between 28 October and 25 November 2021. A notification letter was sent to 12,500 properties. 157 people made submissions.
24. In compliance with section 116 of the Roads Act 1993, the proposed use of traffic treatments was included in the City's consultation with local residents and businesses on the broader cycleway and pedestrian improvements project.
25. In February 2023, there were 1,550 letters sent to the nearby residents and businesses requesting feedback on the road vehicular closure proposal. A total of 57 formal submissions were received from 56 residents and businesses and one bike user group (refer to Attachment C). The main issues and concerns raised were:
 - (a) That the closure will prevent emergency vehicle access.

Response - emergency vehicles will have access from Hargrave Street, and the bollards installed to enforce the turn ban to Liverpool Street are removable.
 - (b) That the closure will increase traffic on neighbouring streets, in particular on Francis, Hargraves and Yurong Streets.

Response - as endorsed by the Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee, the City will investigate and develop strategies for access to the Darlinghurst Area and to undertake traffic counts prior and after the road closure to assess traffic impacts due to the closure.
 - (c) That the street parking and loading zones will be reduced.

Response - the majority of parking will be retained with parking reallocations, however, there will be a net loss of three car spaces.
 - (d) That vehicular access should be maintained at the intersection through a shared zone.

Response - by retaining access, bike riders and pedestrians are at a greater safety risk. With the closure of the intersection, a safe and continuous route for bike riders is provided along the proposed cycleway section on Oxford Street which also improves bus operations.
26. A newspaper advertisement was published in the Sydney Morning Herald on Wednesday 22 February 2023.

27. The details of the proposal were available on the Sydney Your Say website with feedback able to be provided between 20 February 2023 and 23 March 2023 by mail or email.
28. The City also consulted with the following stakeholders to inform the development of the concept design:
 - (a) Transport for NSW
 - (b) Anzac Memorial
 - (c) Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras
 - (d) Community and business leaders
 - (e) Woollahra Municipal Council
 - (f) Office of Member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich

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