

Post Exhibition - A City for Walking Strategy and Action Plan - Continuing the Vision

File No: X092554

Summary

This report seeks Council approval of the A City for Walking: Strategy and Action Plan – Continuing the Vision ('Strategy and Action Plan').

At its meeting on 19 February 2024, Council resolved to exhibit the draft Strategy and Action Plan. It was exhibited for public comment from 21 February 2024 to 5 April 2024, with extensions granted on request. Final submissions were received in mid-April 2024. The City received a total of 430 submissions: 406 survey responses and 24 written submissions. The City also engaged People With Disability Australia to facilitate a focus group on inclusive language.

The level of engagement reflects considerable interest in walking and improving walking in our area.

A City for Walking: Strategy and Action Plan – Continuing the Vision celebrates what the City has achieved since the release of its 2015 Walking Strategy. It shows how the City's existing programs contribute to the city for walking, how the City can further improve walking in its area and targets funding for programs that accelerate the delivery of walking improvement. It outlines the City's approach, structured around a strategy and 12 actions for the next 10 years.

The Strategy and Action Plan aligns with Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision and the Community Strategic Plan. Specifically, it facilitates Strategic Direction 5: A City for Walking, Cycling and Public Transport and outlines programs that contribute directly to the outcomes in the Community Strategic Plan.

The Strategy and Action Plan responds directly to the City's Access Strategy and Action Plan which guides the transport approach to be undertaken by the City over the coming years. Action 8 in the Access Strategy and Action Plan relates to this item.

The Strategy and Action Plan considers the whole walking experience, from physically connected infrastructure to needs such as physical and perceived safety, comfort and fun. It comprises 12 actions, including advocacy, working with partners and City-controlled actions which are a mix of capital works, behaviour change, data collection and leadership, and shows how the City will meet the walking-related targets contained in Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision .

The Strategy and Action Plan sets out an organisation-wide approach to walking, providing the principles and framework for those managing and delivering walking programs. It also assists with decision-making, prioritisation and collaboration regarding walking projects, ensuring a comprehensive and effective strategy for enhancing the walking experience in our area.

The Strategy and Action Plan aligns with best practice and NSW government policies and approaches, including 'movement and place' and 'road user space allocation'. It was developed with input from a panel of experts in walking from across Australia.

Submissions overall showed considerable support for the City's approach and commitments to improving walking in our area, particularly to the hierarchy of walking needs, the City's program of highest priority walking improvements (Action 1), the City's advocacy to improve priority and reduce wait times at signalised intersections for people walking (Action 4) and reduce vehicle speeds (Action 3) and the City's approach to traffic calming and reducing traffic volumes (supported by all of the actions, but notably Actions 1, 2, 5 and 8).

The biggest single-issue respondents mentioned was the *interaction between people walking and people cycling*, including people riding on the footpath, interactions on shared paths and clutter created by shared bike parking on the footpath. Many comments raised that people walking need their own space separate from other transport modes. This issue was addressed through the addition of a half-page call out box clarifying the road rules around cycling on footpaths and setting out the City's work to reduce illegal riding on footpath. Action 7 (regarding road rules) was also amended to reflect community concerns about people cycling.

The final Strategy and Action Plan was amended to clarify the City's plans in several specific areas, including clarification on the road rules related to people riding on the footpath, amendments to language use to make it clear that walking includes people using mobility aids, updating the safety section with new research supplied by Transport for NSW and clarification that updating our street design guidance (Action 8) includes reviewing the accessibility of different road crossing types. A fuller description of amendments is detailed in the Public Consultation section of this report.

Note that throughout this item and the Strategy and Action Plan, the term 'walking' refers to all people moving on the footpath. This includes people using mobility aids, people pushing prams or trolleys for deliveries, and people using unpowered scooters, skateboards or rollerblades.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note the submissions and feedback received through the public exhibition period as shown at Attachment A to the subject report;
- (B) Council adopt A City for Walking Strategy and Action Plan - Continuing the Vision incorporating amendments following the public exhibition process, as shown at Attachment C to the subject report; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to make minor amendments to A City for Walking Strategy and Action Plan - Continuing the Vision in order to correct any minor drafting errors and finalise design, artwork and accessible formats for publication.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Engagement Report - Draft A City for Walking Strategy and Action Plan - Continuing the Vision
- Attachment B.** Proposed Changes to Exhibited Draft A City for Walking Strategy and Action Plan - Continuing the Vision
- Attachment C.** Final A City for Walking Strategy and Action Plan - Continuing the Vision

Background

1. There have been many changes since the City of Sydney's first walking strategy was released in 2015, notably:
 - (a) Physical changes, including lower speed limits throughout much of our area, pedestrianisation of many streets and lanes and the transformation of George Street.
 - (b) Changes in City strategy and policy, particularly Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision, the Community Strategic Plan – Delivering Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050, both published in 2022, and the Access Strategy and Action Plan - Continuing the Vision, published 2024.
 - (c) Changes in NSW Government policy, namely the introduction of movement and place and a road user space allocation policy which recognise the roles streets play for different users and functions and provide guidance on how to best prioritise limited space among these.
2. The updated Strategy and Action Plan responds to these changes, celebrating what the City has achieved since 2015, shows how the City's existing programs contribute to the city for walking, how the City can further improve walking in its area and seeks funding for programs that accelerate the delivery of walking improvement.
3. The Strategy and Action Plan outlines the City's approach and commitments to walking, structured around a strategy and 12 actions for the next 10 years. It sets out an organisation-wide approach to walking, providing the principles and framework for those managing and delivering walking programs. It also assists with decision-making, prioritisation, and collaboration regarding walking projects, ensuring a comprehensive and effective strategy for enhancing the walking experience in our area.
4. The Strategy and Action Plan aligns with Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision. Specifically, it facilitates Strategic Direction 5: A City for Walking, Cycling and Public Transport and outlines programs that contribute directly to the outcomes in the Community Strategic Plan.
5. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision contains measures and targets which will track how well we are achieving Strategic Direction 5. This strategy aims to provide greater clarity of how the first part of that direction will be achieved. As such this strategy doesn't contain any new targets or measures and instead reinforces existing measures and targets.
6. The Strategy and Action Plan responds directly to the Access Strategy and Action Plan which guides the transport approach to be undertaken by the City over the coming years. Action 8 in the Access Strategy and Action Plan relates to this item.
7. The draft Strategy and Action Plan was developed with input from a panel of experts in walking from across Australia, as well as a broad range of City of Sydney staff.
8. The Strategy and Action Plan is structured around a human-centred hierarchy of walking needs that considers the whole walking experience, from a physically connected network to needs such as safety, comfort and enjoyment.

9. The 'Strategy' portion of the document is structured around a hierarchy of walking needs. These walking needs are:
 - (a) A city where people can walk – this strategy provides the infrastructure requirements to make walking possible.
 - (b) A city where people can walk safely – this strategy looks at both road safety and personal safety for people walking.
 - (c) A city where walking is comfortable – this strategy focuses on providing a high-quality public domain to improve the walking experience, including tree planting and street furniture.
 - (d) A city where walking is fun – this strategy is about encouraging people to walk more or further through providing surprise and delight along a walking journey through street activity and public art.
 - (e) A city that is a leader in walking – ensuring the City can use an evidence-based approach to walking planning and share our knowledge with other local governments and organisations.

10. The Action Plan comprises 12 actions, including a combination of capital works, behaviour change, data collection, leadership and advocacy planned over a 10-year timeframe. These are:
 - (a) Action 1. We will implement a program of highest priority walking improvements. (This includes crossings, greening, street upgrades and public domain improvements that are already committed and funded over the next 3 years.)
 - (b) Action 2. We will investigate ways of increasing our commitment to delivering walking improvements. (This action includes a list of proposed programs including doubling the rollout of pedestrian crossings, expanding the network of automated pedestrian counters and creating a dedicated funding pathway for walking improvements.)
 - (c) Action 3. We will work with Transport for NSW to implement 30 and 40 km/hr speed limits.
 - (d) Action 4. We will work with Transport for NSW to ensure that signal phasing prioritises people walking.
 - (e) Action 5. We will implement local area traffic management (LATM) plans to reduce vehicle volumes and speed to make it safer for people walking.
 - (f) Action 6. We will develop a code of practice for construction activities in public places that provides guidance on how to maintain safety, connectivity and place amenity for people walking.
 - (g) Action 7. We will advocate for Transport for NSW to improve how NSW road rules relate to people walking and raise awareness of road rules as they relate to people walking (including cycling on footpaths).
 - (h) Action 8. We will review the guidance in our Sydney Streets Code related to walking (including crossings, intersections, child friendly streets, lane widths and designing for people with disability).

- (i) Action 9. We will work with Transport for NSW to reduce red tape and make it easier for our community to activate their streets via temporary or permanent closures, street painting and plantings.
- (j) Action 10. We will promote walking as a form of exploration and curiosity through our Culture Walks, guided tours and self-guided walks.
- (k) Action 11. We will continue be a leader in walking and evidence-based planning.
- (l) Action 12. We will use language that highlights the human element of walking and advocate for others to do the same. For example, using "people walking" instead of "pedestrians".

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

11. 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 2 - A leading environmental performer - by reducing emissions through supporting walking, the most sustainable mode of transport.
 - (b) Direction 3 - Public places for all - by creating the opportunity for reallocating street space away from vehicles to people, places and planting.
 - (c) Direction 5 - A city for walking, cycling and public transport - by setting out in detail the approach and actions the City will undertake to achieve the first part of the direction. This is the key focus of the Strategy and Action Plan.
 - (d) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city - by identifying and responding to the varied walking needs across the community.
 - (e) Direction 9 - A transformed and innovative economy - by creating high-quality, walkable places that support businesses and communities.

Organisational Impact

12. The Strategy and Action Plan has insignificant organisational impact and implementation of actions will not require additional staff resourcing.

Risks

13. The Strategy and Action Plan includes actions impacted by external factors beyond the City's direct control, such as NSW Government approvals, agreement, policy and funding which require the support of external stakeholders in order to be implemented.

Social / Cultural / Community

14. In the Sydney city centre, people make almost 1.3 million trips per day, of which 92 per cent are walking trips. Within the City of Sydney local government area, almost 57 per cent of trips are by walking only (2022/23 Household Travel Survey). Every trip starts and ends with a walk, so improvements in walking benefit the whole community.

15. Thirty-seven per cent of households in our local area do not own a car (much higher than the 11 per cent across Greater Sydney), 31 per cent of residents walk to work and 27 per cent use public transport to get to work, which usually includes at least one walking trip. A high-quality walking environment, and access by walking to public transport by walking for longer trips, is critical.
16. A walkable city supports diversity and inclusion by providing the infrastructure and environment that makes walking available to everyone. This could be providing street furniture to provide opportunities for rest for those unable to walk long distances, or making streets quieter through traffic calming to improve the experience for people with sensory disability.
17. The actions proposed will result in reduced congestion, quieter, less polluted streets, calmed traffic, reduced crashes of all types, crossings, plantings, street furniture, trees, rain gardens and improved lighting. These improvements all have benefits beyond improving walking experience. These benefits include health, environmental and economic benefits.

Environmental

18. The key environmental challenge for the transport sector is net zero emissions by 2035. The City's overall approach is to reduce emissions by reducing the amount people need to travel by private motor vehicle by encouraging walking, cycling and public transport. Walking is intrinsically environmentally sustainable in terms of carbon produced, space and infrastructure required.
19. Some city centre streets carry three to four times more people walking per day than some motorways in the area. Parts of George Street, for example, had over 100,000 people walking on it per day in 2019.

Economic

20. The Strategy and Action Plan are consistent with the City's economic vision, encapsulated in Direction 9 of Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision.
21. The overall approach to improve walking in precincts such as the city centre, Tech Central (and our university cluster) and Pyrmont is fundamental to supporting high value growth in the innovation sector, as well as directly enabling the city centre tower clusters fundamental to the Central Sydney Planning Strategy.
22. A good walking environment is important to continuing to attract businesses, workers and visitors. Increased levels of walking bring significant health benefits to the community, reducing the burden of health care costs (financial and human),

Financial Implications

23. Many of the actions can be completed without additional funding.
24. The proposed items with financial implications are all part of Action 2 and are as follows:
 - (a) an additional \$9 million of capital funding that has been included in the draft 2024/25 Capital Works budget and future year forward estimates over the next 10 years to double the rollout of pedestrian crossings from Year 4 to Year 10, from four per year to eight per year;

- (b) for some years an operating budget to undertake specific Walking and Place Improvement Studies will be required for some specific initiatives, noting that the City would seek grant funding under available NSW Government programs at the time; and
 - (c) capital funding of around \$120,000 to expand automated counter network from four locations to 15 (noting operational budget would be requested through normal budgeting processes for operation and maintenance of cameras once installed). The automated counter network refers to the set of cameras we have installed on smart poles that automatically count the number of pedestrians 24 hours per day. The data is publicly accessible. Note that once all 15 are installed, we would stop the twice-yearly manual counting, and operational funding currently used for the manual counting would be reallocated towards maintenance of automated counters.
25. The City will seek Council's consideration and approval for any additional funding through the normal yearly budgeting processes.

Relevant Legislation

26. The Strategy and Action Plan relates generally to allocation of transport and traffic responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1993, the Roads Act 1993 and the Road Transport Act 2013.

Options

27. The City could consider advocating for specific projects or approaches based on existing Council strategies, including Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision, City Plan 2036 and the 2015 walking strategy. However, without the updated Strategy and Action Plan, there would be less organisation-wide understanding to assist with decision-making, prioritisation, and collaboration ensuring a comprehensive and effective strategy to improve the walking experience in our area.

Public Consultation

28. At its 19 February 2024 meeting, Council resolved to exhibit the draft Strategy and Action Plan. It was exhibited for public comment from 21 February 2024 to 5 April 2024, with several extensions granted on request. Final submissions received in mid-April 2024.
29. During the consultation period the 'Sydney Your Say' page was visited 2198 times, with 864 people downloading the draft Strategy and Action Plan.
30. The City received 406 survey responses and 23 written submissions (10 from organisations, 13 from individuals).
31. The City engaged People With Disability Australia to facilitate a focus group on inclusive language. Results are summarised in Attachment A.
32. The level of engagement reflects considerable interest in walking and improving walking in our area.

33. Attachment A provides a detailed Engagement Report.
34. Submissions overall showed considerable support for the City's approach and commitments to improving walking in our area, particularly to the hierarchy of walking needs and the approach that considers the transport needs of walking along with the experience.
35. The feedback highlighted the following key areas:
 - (a) The majority of respondents are walking regularly around our area, with 68 per cent walking daily or multiple times per day.
 - (b) Walking is very important to respondents (98 per cent), and walking needs to be possible, safe, comfortable and fun.
36. The biggest single-issue respondents mentioned in the open response part of the survey and in written submissions was the interaction between people walking and people cycling, including people riding on the footpath, interactions on shared paths and clutter created by shared bike parking on the footpath. Many comments raised that people walking need their own space separate from other transport modes. We recognise this is an on-going issue, particularly with shared bike parking on the footpath, and will continue to implement the Cycling Strategy and Action Plan and to run behaviour change programs such as Share the Path which provides cyclist education training. Furthermore, we will actively work to improve understanding and awareness of road rules for people walking and people riding (Action 7) and we are working with bike share operators to a) implement 'slow zones' where people on shared e-bikes cannot ride over 10 km/hr in areas with high levels of interactions with people walking and b) create mandatory parking areas for their bikes in key areas, ideally on-street rather than on footpaths.
37. There was significant support for:
 - (a) Implementing a program of highest priority walking improvements, including crossings, greening, street upgrades and public domain improvements that are already committed and funded over the next three years (Action 1).
 - (b) The City's advocacy to improve priority and reduce wait times at signalised intersections for people walking, and for us to explore different signal types including pedestrian priority signals and scramble crossings (Action 4).
 - (c) The City's approach to traffic calming and reducing traffic volumes including reducing non-essential traffic on local streets, improving major streets to support local businesses, reducing traffic in the city centre and reducing parking both on-street and off-street (supported by all of the actions, but notably Actions 1, 2, 5 and 8; note that the City sets maximum parking rates in new development through Sydney LEP 2012. This Strategy and Action Plan will not alter these rates).
38. There was support for the City's advocacy to reduce vehicle speeds, with support for 30 km/h on local roads and in areas of high pedestrian traffic (Action 3).
39. Many comments referenced wanting more "pedestrian streets" such as expanding the pedestrianised city centre, and support for temporary street closure programs such as Sydney Streets.

40. Many comments referenced the need to reduce footpath clutter and maintain clear paths of travel (Strategy A1).
41. Several submissions requested more pedestrian crossings, continuous footpath treatments and other crossing types (Strategy A2).
42. Many submissions provided ideas on how to reduce the time required for people to walk, including sharing their ideas to improve connectivity and linking walking with public transport. Time and distance were key needs identified (The hierarchy table has been updated to reflect this. See point 49).
43. From the open response and written submissions, there was support for all the actions, with significant support for Action 1 (program of highest priority walking improvements), 3 (advocacy around vehicle speeds), 4 (advocacy around signal priority), 5 (LATM) and 8 (reviewing the guidance in our Sydney Street Design Code). In addition, there was support for actions on road rules (Action 7), trees (and other shading; Actions 1, 2 and 8), road reallocation (Actions 1 and 2), construction impacts (Action 6), accelerating the walking delivery program (Action 2), using inclusive proactive language (Action 12), and creating more child friendly streets (Action 8).
44. There was concern that the design of some of the suggested treatment types needed to be more inclusive to people with disability, people pushing prams, older people, children and vulnerable people. This issue is part of implementation of Action 8. (The wording of Action 8 and Strategy A2 have been updated to reflect this. See point 49).
45. There was also some concern that the pedestrianisation and/or traffic calming of areas may result in a lack of mobility parking and/or drop off and pick up areas. This is noted, and out of scope of the Strategy and Action Plan. The design and parking arrangements (if any) of specific projects will go through the City's normal approval processes. The City's approach to parking is outlined in our Central Sydney On-Street Parking Policy which prioritises on-street parking for taxis, delivery and mobility purposes. Through our Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021–2025 we will continue to explore and implement strategies to increase access to on-street and off-street accessible parking and drop-off points in the City of Sydney area.
46. There was some concern about footpath maintenance, including the need for footpaths and crosswalks to be maintained, particularly for accessibility. (The wording of Strategy B3 has been altered to reflect this. See point 49).
47. There was support for measures to improve walking comfort, including seating, public toilets and drinking fountains. Several respondents requested shelter/shade options at intersections. (Action 8 was updated to reflect this. See point 49)

Amendments to the Strategy and Action Plan following exhibition

48. Based on the nature of the feedback provided, the final Strategy and Action Plan required minor amendments to clarify the City's plans in several specific areas. Attachment B identifies the proposed changes to the exhibited draft, with key amendments as follows:
 - (a) Amendments to language use following feedback from the focus group and the City's Inclusion team, including to the definition of 'Accessibility' used.

- (b) Clarification included in 'A note on terminology' (page 4) that walking does not include motorised scooters ('e-scooters'). It does include people using motorised wheelchairs or other motorised mobility aids. This was in response to several submissions.
- (c) Addition of time and distance to the diagram explaining the hierarchy of walking needs for clarity in response to additional needs section of the survey (Figure 2, page 8).
- (d) Clarification included in the delays and detours section (page 11) on the impact of traffic signals to people walking.
- (e) Clarification added to roles and responsibilities section (page 17) to include bus shelters and, in cases where responsibility is shared, that the City will work with the relevant NSW Government stakeholders.
- (f) Minor amendment to Strategy A1 to explain the City's approach to clear walking paths in response to open response and written submissions (page 20).
- (g) Clarification of our approach to improving connectivity for people walking through crossings, including our advocacy approach to signalised intersections and comments around the different types of crossings (Strategy A2; page 21). Several survey submissions and written submissions requested this clarification.
- (h) Addition to Strategy A3 to highlight the strong links between walking and public transport and the need for mobility parking in expanding the 10-minute city (page 22). This was in response to survey submissions, but also to submissions from the NSW Bar Association and the Department of Education.
- (i) In response to the submissions on the interactions between people riding on the footpath and people walking clarification has been provided in Strategy A1 (page 20) and a new 'explainer' box elucidating the rules related to people riding on the footpath has been added to Strategy B3 (safety; page 27).
- (j) Updated Strategy B3 (safety) to include (a) new research from Transport from NSW which they included in their submission and (b) the importance of maintenance of footpaths for accessibility in response to open response submissions (page 26).
- (k) Minor amendments to Strategy C1 (comfort) to align with the City's Resilience Strategy 2023-2028, specifically Action 5 Support our community to cope with increased heat and drought (page 27-28). Inclusion of the Resilience Strategy in Figure 6.
- (l) Addition to Action 7 that the City will work to improve the compliance with road rules of people riding (specifically in relation to riding on footpaths).
- (m) Addition to Action 8 that the review of our Sydney Street Codes will include reviewing the accessibility of different crossing types and shelter at waiting spaces.
- (n) Addition of 'schools' to Tranche 2 (Appendix B) walking improvements in response to submission by Department of Education, recognising the importance of walking to and from schools (and public transport access to schools).

- (o) Addition of a definition of 'Inclusion' and clarification added to our definition of 'interchange' at the request of Transport for NSW (Appendix E).
- 49. Several comments included location specific issues or suggestions. These comments have been retained to be reviewed during implementation phases of actions.
- 50. We will continue to work collaboratively and consult with specific stakeholders, including with state government agencies such as Transport for NSW, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and the Department of Education, and with key community groups.

KIM WOODBURY

Chief Operating Officer

Sebastian Smyth, Executive Manager City Access and Transport