

The document should be commended for the commitment to active transport in the Newcastle city centre. Car usage will likely remain the dominant mode for transport in the city centre for some time but the implementation of a safe cycle network will allow another option and will help mitigate some of the negative impacts of car use that will increase with density and congestion. It will also enable the possibilities of future enhancements such as a bike share and better integration of transport modes, such as bicycles and public transport.

The proposed separated bike lanes on Hunter St will provide a great backbone for the cycle network. It will allow cyclists access to the major destinations within the CBD without having to worry about navigating through traffic. Though the document does not speculate on the location of the proposed light rail, it should be noted that safe bicycle access should be retained along Hunter St regardless of the location of the light rail.

Though the location of connections to the Hunter St protected bike lanes has been deferred the City of Newcastle cycling strategy, it is disappointing that safe cycle access has not been incorporated into the design of the new north south routes across the rail corridor. As these are new routes I do not believe they are in the scope of the cycling strategy. By not providing separated access for cyclists on these routes it will lead to cyclists invading the new pedestrian spaces, an undesirable outcome if these spaces are designed as pedestrian only spaces.

Though the conditions applied to car parking for new developments have been deferred to Newcastle DCP 2012 Section 7.03, special mention should be made for parking requirements for “affordable housing”, as this is not covered in the DCP. Car parking is a considerable overhead on development costs, so a relaxing of these requirements allows for lower priced dwellings to be constructed. With the introduction of the university campus into the city centre it will be important to include accommodation options for students who may not have the need for a car space or the purchasing power to buy or rent a dwelling with an allocated car space.

It is disappointing bicycle traffic has not been catered for in the precinct plan for the Hunter St Mall. With the protected bike lane along Hunter St stopping at Scott St, there is no marked route for cyclists to travel east of this point. This could be amended with the addition of a counter flow bicycle lane in an easterly direction in the Hunter St Mall. This is already a popular behaviour with cyclists. This action is not only illegal but also dangerous as space has not been set aside for cyclists to travel in this direction and it regularly brings cyclists into conflict with pedestrians and motorists. Unless a viable alternative is found cyclists will continue to make take this risky behaviour. As the Hunter St Mall is planned to remain a popular retail destination and residential centre, it is important that safe cycle access is provided to it from both easterly and westerly directions for shoppers, residents and visitors.

The current design of the Wheeler Place precinct encourages cyclist movement through Wheeler place, with cyclists passing through Wheeler Place from Mereweather St and onto Civic Park to access Darby St or Laman St. This is not a desirable outcome as Wheeler Place should be retained as a pedestrian zone and it also encourages cyclists to illegally cross King St using a pedestrian crossing. To discourage this behaviour viable alternatives for cyclists should exist on both Auckland St and Darby St. A cycle route on Auckland St should at the least provide a protected lane travelling southward, as the hill between King St and Laman St makes it difficult of cyclists to travel in traffic. Though the majority of Darby St is out of scope of this document, it remains a popular destination for cyclists and if they are not catered for in future modifications there will be negative

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impacts for spaces inside the study area of the document, such as Wheeler Place.

The redevelopment of Birdwood park will bring important public space to Newcastle West. I welcome the addition of the shared zone in King St. Though I fear the making of the space a shared zone will not be a success if traffic is allowed to access King St from a westerly direction. This is currently a popular bypass of the traffic lights on Stewart Ave and King St for cars intending to travel East along King St. Unless access to King St is closed or seriously impeded the volume of traffic will negatively affect the feeling of safety for pedestrians and cyclists in this space. Access should also be granted for cyclists to access the signalled pedestrian crossing of King St and National Park St to allow cyclists to connect from the shared zone to the cycling route along National Park St.