

Works Approval
National Capital Authority
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PEDAL POWER ACT INC: SUBMISSION TO COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Light Rail Stage 1 - Alinga Street Stop and Northbourne Plaza Design

Summary

Pedal Power ACT supports the proposal to replace the existing Northbourne Avenue on-road cycle lanes with kerb-protected cycleways in the block between Alinga Street and London Circuit, and also supports the general access arrangements to the Alinga Street light rail stop. However, members have some concerns regarding the detailed design. These concerns are:

1. insufficient differentiation between cycleways and pedestrian areas;
2. insufficient horizontal separation between cycleways and traffic lanes;
3. insufficient clearance from trees and streetlight poles; and
4. conflict with parked cars between Rudd and Alinga Streets.

Pedal Power ACT also asks for a 40 km/h limit to be applied to Northbourne Avenue between London Circuit and Barry Drive.

1. Differentiation

The proposed kerb-separated cycleway and adjoining pedestrian areas on the verge have been designed as a contiguous space. They are shown at the same level and surfaced with the same paving. The only visual signal to pedestrians that the cycling part of the verge has a different use to the rest is a line of granite setts. Pedestrians are likely to walk or stand on it while waiting to cross the road mid-block. Riders may choose to use the traffic lane instead if they see people walking or standing on the cycleway ahead, or if they experience that it happens frequently.

It is crucial to the credibility of this path, as a replacement for the current on-road cycle lanes, that it be differentiated by incorporating a small kerb between bicycle and pedestrian areas consistent with best practice. Surfacing with a different material such as asphalt consistent with the Marcus Clarke and Rudd Street cycleways would be an alternative.

This is a safety issue as well, because without clear signalling of the cycleway built into its design, pedestrians will have no prompt to look out for oncoming bikes before stepping onto it.



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Cycling Advocacy

Recreational Rides

Five Peaks Challenge

Centenary Trail Blaze

Fitz's Challenge

Amy's Big Canberra Bike Ride

Ride to Work

Ride or Walk to School

Ride Safe to School Day

Cycle Facilities Rating

New Horizons

Bicycle Maintenance

2. Horizontal separation

Pedal Power ACT was concerned the drawings did not show sufficient separation between the cycleway and the traffic lanes. We have now been advised by Transport Canberra – Light Rail (Steven Sancbergs) the following cross section will apply:

- 300m back of kerb to cycleway edge;
- 1700mm paved cycleway;
- 300mm granite sett demarcation; and
- 700mm to centre of plane tree from edge of granite setts, giving 500mm offset between the edge of the granite setts and mature trunk.

Kerb-only separation between the cycleway and the traffic lanes is acceptable in a constrained urban situation where there is limited space (which this is), but only if the speed limit and traffic volumes are low (which here they are not). It is tolerable on the Marcus Clarke and Rudd Street cycleways because the speed limit there is only 40 km/h and there is much less traffic, especially heavy vehicles, than on Northbourne Avenue which has a 60 km/h speed limit and a far greater volume of traffic. With kerb-only separation along such a road, there is a high risk that any cyclist who accidentally drops off the kerb will land in the path of heavy fast-moving traffic and be seriously injured or killed. This is especially likely in the event of a collision or conflict with a pedestrian, the risks of which are high for the reasons described above.

However, it is recognised that available width is limited and that the objective of creating an active pedestrian-friendly verge as wide as possible is of primary importance to the project. So to mitigate the risks posed by the minimal horizontal separation proposed, we ask that the speed limit on Northbourne Avenue between Barry Drive and London Circuit be reduced to 40 km/h. This would be consistent with the ACT Government's policy of 40km/h in "high pedestrian precincts".

3. Clearances

The Municipal Infrastructure Standards require a minimum clearance between a cycle path and vertical obstacles such as trees and poles of 1 metre. As noted above, we are advised there will be a 500mm offset between the edge of the granite setts and the side of a mature tree. The standards allow the clearance to be reduced to 500 mm in a retrofit situation where no alternative exists. However, in this case the cycleways, poles and trees are all proposed and not existing and their locations are not fixed and therefore it should be possible to comply with the 1 metre clearance requirement.

4. Conflict with parked cars

Between Rudd and Alinga Streets there are existing indented parking bays on both sides of Northbourne Avenue which produce conflict and the risk of 'dooring' for users of the on-road cycle lanes, especially on the Jolimont Centre side where the interstate bus terminal and Novotel generate a high turnover of parked vehicles and a lot of taxi activity. This project is an opportunity to improve the situation, but it appears from the drawings that no work is proposed to the verges or adjacent roadway in these blocks. Pedal Power ACT urges the adoption of best practice by rerouting the cycle lanes to be inside the parking zones, so that they become protected cycleways with the parked cars acting as a buffer between bicycle and general traffic, as has been done on the Marcus Clarke and Rudd Street cycleways.

Alternatively, consideration could be given to removing or relocating these parking bays, as this would free up a lot of space for verge improvements to the benefit of both cycling and pedestrian amenity.

Conclusion

In early design, two main bicycle user groups were identified for the facility to serve – commuters who currently use the on-road lanes on their way through the city, and local residents seeking to move about within the city centre as its residential population increases. We believe the facility proposed in the works application will not meet the needs of either group as well as it might. For through-riders, it will be too much like riding on the footpath with its inherent risk of conflict with pedestrians, and many may choose to ride in the general traffic lane in preference. For local riders, many will be uncomfortable riding so close to heavy traffic and choose the footpaths instead, or go by another route entirely.

Differentiating the cycleways from the pedestrian areas by a small kerb, or different surface treatment such as asphalt, would be a major improvement as would the introduction of a 40km/h speed limit.

Pedal Power ACT invites the NCA to consider our suggestions for improving this design against the National Capital Plan principles set out in parts 2.4 Liveability and 2.5 Accessibility aimed at facilitating pedestrian and cycling movements.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Armstrong', is placed over a light grey rectangular background.

John Armstrong
Executive Officer
7 September 2017