

Western Sydney Health Alliance

For healthy communities in the Western Parkland City
An initiative of the Western Sydney City Deal

Walking and Cycling Workshop 3 - 7 October 2023

Summary of workshop session

Presentations focused on what councils are doing in relation to walking and cycling in the Western Parklands

1. Adam Hogan – Strategic Planner – Wollondilly Shire Council

Presented an examination of publicly available active transport programs and policy for each of the WPC councils.

Barriers to cycling research – Number 1 barrier for a large number of “almost cyclists” is safety, but the carrying capacity of bikes and the complexity of family care trips were also raised as relevant for Western Sydney

Enablers research identified factors to look for in council policies and programs –

- **E-Bikes** can overcome many barriers in Western Sydney such as distance, hills, sweatiness, load and kid-carrying. There are many ways for local governments to subsidise and promote the use of ebikes (subsidies, employer programs, 1-1 consultancies).
- **Behaviour change programs** such as traffic skills, bike equipment seminars, maintenance courses and trip guidance have been proven to increase cycling uptake, but only if adequate infrastructure has been provided.
- This infrastructure, recommended by every single piece of research is **a connected network of separated cycleways**.

Findings

- Some programs are not being communicated
- Limited online resources for the community
- Community priorities almost universally support cycling and walking which is reflected in Local Strategic Planning Statements.
- Planning priorities are not translating to Delivery Programs and Operational Plan actions.
- Reporting on AT programs and projects was minimal, often restricted to footpath/cycleway delivery and maintenance.
- Bike Plans – most older than 10 years, however identified enablers haven't really changed – network of separated cycleways, with supporting behavioural change programs
- Active travel staffing and advisory groups generally seem to be non-existent

Recommendations

- **Monitoring** mechanisms for priorities and actions into policies and strategies
- Active Transport **Staff** to implement plans
- Creating an **Advisory Group** with community members to monitor and report on progress of AT priorities. If community members unavailable, use BNSW? Or who you have
- **Update bike and walking plans more regularly** – network progress, new issues such as ebikes, evidence, case studies

- **Provide more current online resources** to enable walking and cycling for community. See City of Sydney

2. Alison Dunshea – Senior Project Officer – Healthy Place, Population Health - South Western Sydney LHD

Presented a summary of the planning and policy information returned via Council spreadsheet survey request.

Community Strategic Plans

Broad support across councils for active transport, including for accessibility and connectedness, promoting use of rec walking, active and healthy lifestyles, inclusive neighbourhoods, and safe affordable sustainable transport

Local Strategic Planning Statements

Objectives echo the CSP priorities and also mention integrated walking and cycling networks, integrated public transport, mode-shift targets, behaviour change, prioritising pedestrian movement, stronger centre economies, bike and walking plans, blue-green grids and tourism

Local Environmental Plans

Some included aims to provide built environment that contributes to health and wellbeing, specifically increase the use of public and active transport, integrate transport with development. Objectives cover amenity and safety, active street frontages, encouraging PT and AT, providing density in accessible locations, and specifically mentioning health and wellbeing being supported by walking and cycling enablers.

Development Control Plans

Cover pedestrian and cycling amenity as well as walkable neighbourhoods, access, slow speed streets as well as air quality. Western Sydney Street Design Guidelines are also referenced.

Infrastructure Delivery

Get NSW Active Grants and WestInvest, and other federal grants are providing funding in the WPC. Why are some councils getting more grants than others?

Walking and Cycling Plans

Lots of actions recommended to encourage walking and cycling, but not much in operational plans

Evidence and data

Very limited data available, but Liverpool Council has a webpage showing city bike and walking counts from their CCTV footage

UNSW research on cycleway connectivity to parks and high schools, attitudes and behaviours for cycling has led to the development of the **Cycling Infrastructure Scenario Builder** – a tool to help with planning new cycling infrastructure. We are looking to work with UNSW and to follow up Penrith Council who have been involved in this tool's development.

Discussion

Breakout groups discussed what is missing, what is working and how we could monitor priorities

1. What are the gaps across the region supporting walking and cycling? (think about short (1yr)/medium (4yr)/long term (10plus))

- Distances are larger, and there is poor integration with public transport. Parking at stations and bus stops, ability to take bike on trains/buses to deal with radial nature of train system
- Perception that it is too far or too inconvenient, which could be addressed with some awareness programs to show that it is actually possible.
- Gaps in networks across the WPC
- Communication by councils on walking groups, resources. Some community groups are being missed. Cultural diversity, need to approach different groups in other ways
- Need for consistent approach to awareness, communication, mapping, how to get to council assets by walking and cycling
- Need more resources - staff who can cross between silos of traffic, planners, etc, to update walking and cycling plans, implement and monitor. PM skills would free up overburdened traffic engineers. Officer for the promotion of walking and cycling. It's outside the Road Safety Officer's remit, and they lack capacity anyway. Unique skillset
- Difficulty in sourcing traffic engineers, let alone for AT
- Funding - lack of, how do we keep track of the sources, which change every year, and how can we be more supportive and efficient in applying for grants?
- Injury data to help apply for black spot funding, and to help justify and prioritise projects. How do we get data for near misses for example?
- Shading, rest areas for hot western Sydney – protection for cycleways, footpaths
- Coordination of walking groups, schools and other groups to do behaviour change programs that are needed with new infrastructure
- Educating internal staff about cycleways – need support, clear lead in cycleway planning, how to embed cycleways properly, upskilling engineers
- Implementation capacity
- TfNSW revisiting the same thing over and over and not making much progress
- TfNSW red-tape
- Retrofitting suburbs is difficult and expensive. Need for infrastructure, including lighting to be delivered upfront in new developments
- Knowledge of Traditional walking routes

2. What are some successful activities/initiatives that we can leverage?

- Website showing healthy activities and groups available in the area
- Great recreational paths network
- Penrith PATH approach – How to prioritise infrastructure for grants
- Using businesses for support
- Stakeholder relationships
- Need to do best planning we can, so we're ready and agile when opportunities arise
- Promotional material for schools
- Promotion/communication for traffic committee items
- Road safety officers – school liaison, schools can promote active school travel as solution to parking and traffic issues. Can free up capacity for other active transport advocacy and work
- VicHealth - Guide to framing walking and cycling

- WestInvest projects have a lot of possibilities – value add with Healthy Streets
- Leveraging communications between our existing networks
- New release areas – working with schools infrastructure on AT network planning, drop-off areas etc Kiss n drop – do they work? Analysis of true parking use and requirements leading to better PT and AT infrastructure
- Central London Walking Plan – Health outcomes focused. Useful approach for advocacy
- Building capacity for project management and delivery, to complement planning
- Blue Mtns have an Active Transport Taskforce – BUG RideBlue, CEO, Director of Infra, Manager, city engineer, population health to be involved, plus other authorities
- Joint initiatives – e.g. Penrith with Blue Mtns
- CARES programs
- Health data – near misses and low-level data
- Street design guidelines – undertaking a review currently with the PPO; always need to be thinking about where we're creating future gaps

3. What existing activity/initiatives could be scaled across WPC?

- Anything that could help link up routes between LGAs; having conversations and thinking regionally at an early stage
- Data E.g. sharing GIS data
- governance measures as well as direct built form interventions
- dedicated, separated network
- E-bikes to overcome the tyranny of distance
- E-bike, scooter share schemes, depends on the area – where do they go? Will they be used and by who? Do we need trials? ebikes are just like bikes.
- CARES safety programs

4. How do we measure and monitor outcomes of the Strategy?

- Usage, counters, heatmaps and surveys
- Regular simple consistent surveys across the LGA – specific to PT and cultural issues for Western Sydney to identify gaps, barriers enablers
- School programs a good source for data
- Who is going to measure this?
- Health professionals and businesses as sources?
- Need for subjective and objective info
- Lots of experts have done this a million times before; don't need to reinvent the wheel, e.g. - Australian Government's national wellbeing framework measuring what matters (2023)
- How can we ensure that the work keeps getting progressed regardless of changes to the Health Alliance?
- Specific monitoring / reporting required for grant programs – WestInvest requirements
- Ensure consistency in reporting
- End game is to improve health outcomes – long-term. What are the health KPIs?
- Healthy Streets Metrics - Quant and Qual data

Next Steps

Feedback from the three workshops will be combined in a discussion paper late January and circulated within the group.

Key themes will be identified to inform our Walking and Cycling Strategy for further investigation.