

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Cyclesafe Network (CSN) is a system of family safe, easily navigated and usefully connected cycling, walking and shared paths across the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie local government areas. The proposal is to connect 90km of existing paths with 140km of new construction to deliver an active transport network which will encourage locals to cycle or walk every day to work, school, university, shops and other locations.

The aim of the network is to make walking and cycling for short trips – less than 2km for walking and less than 10 km for cycling – a viable alternative to car travel. With new State Government plans to increase the population of 'Hunter City', it is essential that active transport infrastructure be built to accommodate increased travel demands.

In addition, the CSN will also deliver health benefits to the population of the Hunter region by increasing physical activity as part of everyday life. This will help achieve the State Premier's goal of reducing childhood obesity by 5% over 10 years.

This document puts forward a proposal for the CSN to be developed as a co-ordinated transport infrastructure project, to be delivered in 3 phases over 7 to 10 years. In order to achieve this the CSN Project needs to be tasked to a relevant Hunter based Development Authority with a commitment to funding to completion. We believe this is now achievable due to strong community, business and local government support, a source of funding from the lease of the Port of Newcastle and overwhelming evidence of the benefits which can be achieved from implementation of the Project.

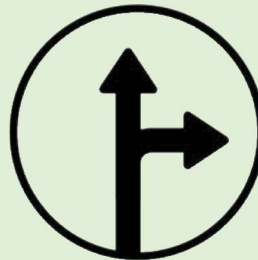
PRINCIPLES



Family Safe



Connectivity



Easy Way Finding



World Class Infrastructure Amenity

INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGNS

Shared path

Off-road shared path

Bike boulevard

Separated cycle lane on roads

OUR AREA

342 605

Total Population

63 220

Total 5 to 19 year olds

Newcastle City Council

148 531

Residents

794

Residents/km²

Lake Macquarie City Council

186 006

Residents

240

Residents/km²

OUR HEALTH

32%

Of our children are obese

63%

Of us are overweight or obese

OUR TRAVEL

88%

Of households own at least 1 car

68%

Of all travel to work journeys are single car drivers

1.1%

Of the population cycles to work

2.6%

Of the population walks to work

21%

↑ in bicycle sales since 2009

7%

↓ in child bicycle sales since 2009

Bicycles outsold cars for the **15th year running** with over **1.3 million** bicycles sold in the 2013-14 year in Australia

OUR ENVIRONMENT

3 out of 6

Air monitoring sites showed the annual average of air pollution above accepted advisory standard

Alignment with Government policy

The need to increase physical activity and encourage people to use active transport for short trips rather than personal cars is supported by policy at the Australian Commonwealth, NSW State and Local Government levels. Both Newcastle City Council and Lake Macquarie City Council have cycling and walking strategies which outline future cycling/walking/shared path development. The proposed Phase 1 of the CSN includes paths which are 'shovel ready' – where design and planning is near complete and the project only requires a commitment of funding for it to proceed.

The NSW Government has a commitment to cycling and walking which is included in key strategic documents, including the *Draft Hunter Regional Plan*, the *Draft Plan for Growing Hunter City*, the *NSW Transport Master Plan* and the *Hunter Transport Plan*.

In the NSW State Plan 2021, a goal of a 5% increase in cycling and a 5% increase in walking was set. We have set this as the indicator for the CSN and have undertaken a cost benefit analysis on the basis of achieving that figure.

Existing cycling and walking paths in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie areas have been built with a combination of Commonwealth, State and Local Government funds. Much of this has been achieved in small projects funded by local rates augmented with small grants from sources such as the NSW Roads and Maritime Walking and Cycling Programs.

This piecemeal approach has resulted in long delays with disconnected sections of cycleways which require people to move between safe cycling paths and busy roads. This is a disincentive to everyday cycling especially for children and their parents, inexperienced cyclists, the elderly and people with limited mobility. The 15km Fernleigh Track, which is now a popular and well-used walking and cycling path, took 12 years to build. This could have been more efficiently and economically completed had funding been available from the start.

We propose that the CSN be developed and delivered as a transport infrastructure project, with funds committed from the lease of the Port of Newcastle. The NSW Premier Mike Baird was reported in May 2014 as saying that the lease would see \$1.5 billion flow into infrastructure projects. Of that \$340 million would be allocated to the revitalisation of Newcastle.

We propose that further funding from the lease be committed to delivering the CSN - to honour the workers who made the industries which built the Port and for the long term benefit of current and future workers.

Why Newcastle and Lake Macquarie

There is strong community support for active travel – especially cycling and walking – across the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie areas. The area has a long history of workers cycling, from steelworkers in the 1940s and 1950s to today where the proportion of trips made by bike is double the state average.

The gentle topography and mild climate make cycling and walking attractive if safe infrastructure is available. In suburbs close to the Throsby Creek cycleway, for example, 6% of trips to work are by cycling compared to 2% across the Newcastle LGA. Data indicates that many trips in cars could be converted to cycling or walking – 40% of trips are less than 2km and 80% are less than 10km.

The work already done to develop the CycleSafe Network Project proposal has been a collaboration over many years between individuals, community organisations, local businesses, local councils and the University of Newcastle. These stakeholders are committed to continuing their support, ensuring that the CSN will be well used.

Cost benefit analysis of CSN

Preliminary estimates indicate that the CSN could be delivered for \$164 million over 8 years as:

Phase 1 – 2016-2019 – 26 km - \$31 million

Phase 2 – 2018-2022 – 55 km - \$73.3 million

Phase 3 – 2020-2024 - 42 km – \$55.9 million

Using the Bike Facility Tool developed by Transport for NSW we have calculated monetised benefits which could be achieved by a 5% increase in cycling use by residents in the area covered by the CSN, using 4 different scenarios.

Scenario 1: If 5% of all the population within the CSN catchment used cycling for trips less than 10km the total monetised benefit would be \$306 million per year, paying back the cost of building the CSN in 6.4 months

Scenario 2: If 5% of employed people aged 15 years and over used cycling for travel to and from work (less than 10km away), the total monetised benefit would be \$50 million per year, paying back the cost of building the CSN in 3.3 years.

Scenario 3: If 5% of children aged 5 to 19 years travelled to school (up to 2km for 5 to 9 year olds, up to 5 km for 10 to 19 year olds) the total monetised benefit would be \$9 million per year, paying back the cost of building the CSN in 18.5 years

Scenario 4: If 5% of all the population within the Phase 1 catchment used cycling for trips less than 10km the total monetised benefit would be \$170 million per year, paying back the cost of building the CSN in 11.52 months.

Future research potential

It is difficult to undertake cost benefit analysis for cycling and walking infrastructure in Australia as there are significant gaps in the data available. A critique undertaken by researchers from the University of Newcastle Faculty of Business of currently used guidelines and methods for analysis of active transport identified significant gaps and a variety of assumptions which impact on results.

The collaboration of the University of Newcastle and the Tom Farrell Institute for the Environment in this project provides the ideal opportunity for research to be undertaken alongside the building of the CSN to fill those gaps. This will allow more substantial data to be available to inform future active transport infrastructure projects across NSW.

An average of \$1.33 million per kilometre.

Out of 125 regional schools, 114 are within 1000m and 93 are within 500m.