

SUBMISSION ON HOXTON PARK ROAD UPGRADE BY LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL (October 2019)

Introduction

This is a submission by Liverpool City Council on the Community Update released by the NSW Government in relation to the Hoxton Park Road Upgrade on 2 October 2019. The submission sets out Council's recommendations in relation to this project.

For more information on this submission, please contact Ed Steane, Project Lead – Fifteenth Avenue Smart Transit (FAST) Corridor on steanee@liverpool.nsw.gov.au or 8711 7891. Liverpool City Council consents to this submission being publicly released.

Summary of Submissions

- 1. Council recognises this design investigation as a next step in the NSW Government delivering on its City Deal commitment to connect Liverpool to the Airport by high-quality public transport.***
- 2. Council encourages RMS to provide more information on timing for delivery of this proposed upgrade.***
- 3. Consistent with the Premier's 1 million trees priority, Council requests that - before proceeding further with this project - RMS share with the community a design framework for the upgrade that clearly articulates the landscaped greenway urban design outcomes being sought and methodologies that will be used to achieve these.***
- 4. Council recommends that the NSW Government revisit the decision to use share paths. These are not best practice for cyclists or walkers. A separate cycleway in each direction would be safer and therefore preferable.***
- 5. Council requests that the NSW Government revisit signal priority on the Liverpool-Parramatta T-Way.***
- 6. Council requests a copy of the analysis undertaken by RMS on the existing T-Way and the relative function of centre-running and side-running sections.***
- 7. Council request that the NSW Government provide further information to the community on cross-section design to maximise pedestrian safety, and to ensure the project helps achieve the NSW Government's Vision Zero objective.***
- 8. Council recommends that the NSW Government not make a final decision on centre-running vs side-running until after further design work on Fifteenth Avenue is completed by Council and Transport for NSW.***

Detailed Discussion

Commitment to rapid transit

Council is very supportive of the City Deal commitment to provide a rapid transit connection between Liverpool CBD and Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport in

time for the airport's opening. Council is pleased to see, through this community update and the design investigations under way, that this City Deal commitment is being delivered.

Potentially more than 70% of airport workers will come from the Liverpool LGA,¹ and it is crucial that they have access to a great public transport connection to the airport from the day it opens. Liverpool expects that Liverpool CBD (and surrounds) will be an attractive destination for in-bound tourists, particularly the 'friends and family' market. Liverpool is emerging as Sydney's third CBD and, for visitors as well as residents, we want the CBD connected to the airport by public transport.

The commitment to upgrading Hoxton Park Road forms an important 'missing link' in providing a connection between the new airport and Liverpool's CBD. The upgrade is also consistent with Liverpool City Council's ongoing work to deliver rapid transit along Fifteenth Avenue (the Fifteenth Avenue Smart Transit [FAST] Corridor project) and work that Transport for NSW has under way to plan a rapid transit connection from Fifteenth Avenue to the airport.

Figure 1 from the Community Update represents current work by each level of government to deliver this crucial link:

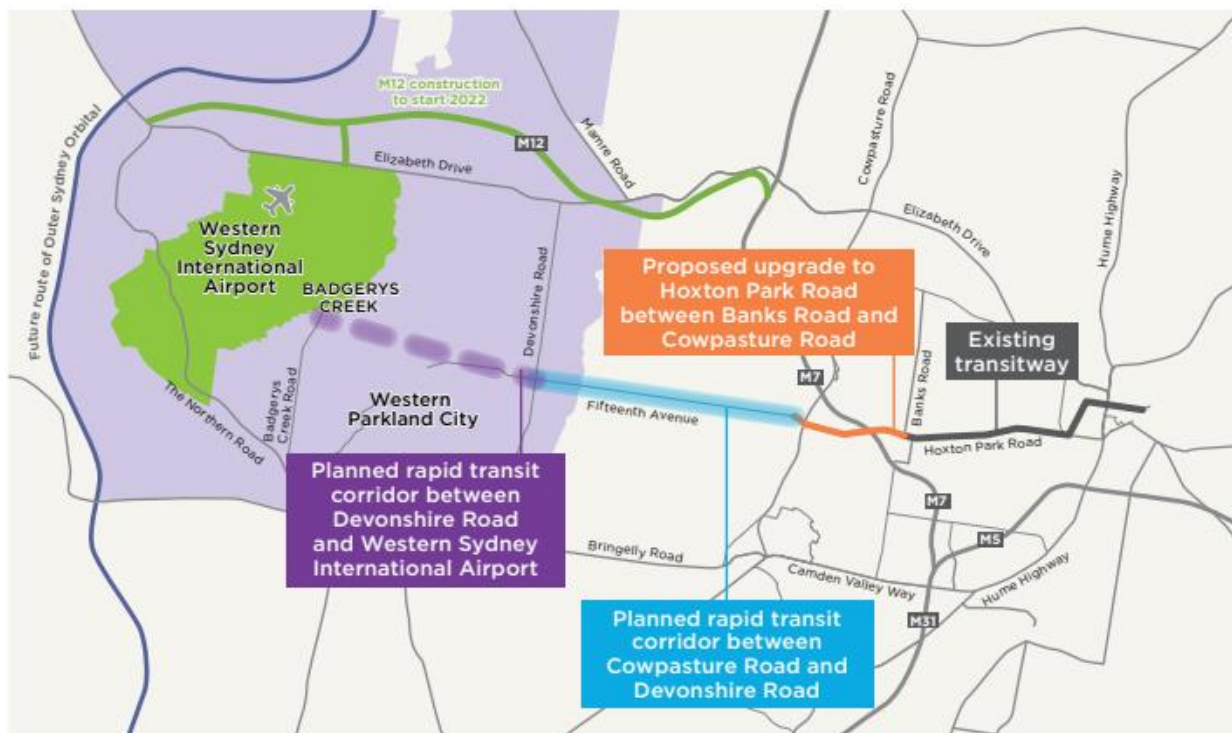


Figure 1 - Planned rapid transit corridor (courtesy of RMS)

While the City Deal commits to the rapid transit connection being in place by the time the airport opens, Liverpool City Council stands ready to work with the NSW Government to deliver this connection earlier if possible. Not only would this improve connectivity for rapidly

¹ <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/finance/deloitte-au-fas-economic-impact-western-sydney-airport-240914.pdf>

growing suburbs in the west of Liverpool LGA, it would also provide public transport for workers at the new airport as it prepares for opening. Council recommends that RMS provide further information on the timing for delivery of the Hoxton Park Road upgrade and the potential for early completion.

Submission 1 – Council recognises this design investigation as a next step in the NSW Government delivering on its City Deal commitment to connect Liverpool to the Airport by high quality public transport.

Submission 2 – Council encourages RMS to provide more information on timing for delivery of this proposed upgrade.

Importance of place-making

It is critical that this corridor is a high-quality urban environment and Liverpool City Council encourages the NSW Government to make excellence in place-making a priority for this corridor. This project provides an important opportunity to improve the urban environment in Western Sydney. This will, however, require a deliberate strategy by government.

For example, Council was concerned to observe that no trees or vegetation are shown in the cross-sections used in the Government's options report or community update. While these might only be early 'indicative' designs, Council believes vegetation and place-making should be included right from the start of the planning process. Council encourages RMS to design this project from the ground up as a great place to live in and visit.



Figure 2 – Artist's impression of potential FAST Corridor showing place making and urban greening

In particular, it is important that this corridor gives effect to the Greater Sydney Commission's vision of a landscaped boulevard between Western Sydney International Airport and the Liverpool CBD. This will help ensure that the proposed upgrade helps deliver on the Premier's priority to increase the tree canopy and green cover across Greater Sydney by planting one million trees by 2022.

Ensuring quality vegetation and place-making will make this corridor a more appealing place for all users (including pedestrians and cyclist). This includes, particularly in the summer months, ensuring there is adequate shade and vegetation to provide some respite from the sun and urban heat island impacts.

Council stands ready to work with the NSW Government to ensure that the Government's best practice 'landscape-led' approach is applied to this upgrade project (this is the approach Council is taking with the FAST Corridor).

Council recommends that, before producing a submissions report and proceeding with further development of this corridor, RMS prepares a design framework for the corridor and seeks community input on this document.² This work should be undertaken consistent with NSW Government policy and international best practice, including the Government Architect's Office publication "Aligning Movement and Place".³ This corridor has important movement and place functions that need to be incorporated into the project's design.

Submission 3: Consistent with the Premier's 1 million trees priority, Council requests that – before proceeding further with this project – RMS shares with the community a design framework for the upgrade that clearly articulates the landscaped greenway urban design outcomes being sought and methodologies that will be used to achieve these.

Active transport – walking, cycling, micro-mobility

Liverpool City Council supports the NSW Government's intention to include high-quality active transport infrastructure along this corridor. Council is concerned, however, that the proposed infrastructure does not represent best practice for either cyclists or pedestrians.

Council requests that the NSW Government revisit the proposed design along this section. In particular Council considers the NSW Government should investigate the inclusion of separated cycleways. This will make the route more appealing and safer for cyclists, pedestrians and other micro-mobility users.

The inclusion of high-quality vegetation, and resultant cooling of the corridor, will also encourage active transport. Desire paths along sections of the existing T-Way where vegetation exists reinforce the community's preference for vegetated walkways when moving to and from transit stops.

² For example framework, see <https://westernsydneyparklands.com.au/assets/Southern-Parklands-Framework.PDF>. Note that Liverpool City Council will also shortly release a Design Framework for the FAST Corridor.

³ <https://www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/resources/ga/media/files/ga/other/framework-better-placed-aligning-movement-and-place-2019-06-27.pdf>.

Submission 4: Council recommends that the NSW Government revisit the decision to use share paths. These are not best practice for either cyclists or walkers. A separate cycleway in each direction would be preferable.

Cross-section design

Liverpool City Council notes that the NSW Government has prepared two alternative cross-sections for the upgrade of Hoxton Park Road – a centre-running option and a side-running option.

International best-practice for rapid transit corridors is for centre-running to be preferred. Centre-running is generally found to have an improved service frequency and reliability compared to side-running.⁴ Centre-running, by being physically separated from general traffic lanes, also can have improved legibility. This can increase the perception of quality and effectiveness of the service, helping to attract both users and transit-orientated development to the corridor.

Busway Alignment

8 points maximum

The busway is best located where conflicts with other traffic can be minimized, especially from turning movements from mixed-traffic lanes. In most cases, a busway in the central verge of a roadway encounters fewer conflicts with turning vehicles than those adjacent to the curb due to alleys, parking lots, and so forth. Additionally, while delivery vehicles and taxis generally require access to the curb, the central verge of the road usually remains free of such obstructions. All of the design configurations recommended below are related to minimizing the risk of delays caused by turning conflicts and curbside access.

BRT Basics: this is an element of BRT deemed essential to true BRT corridors. A minimum score of 4 must be achieved on this element for a corridor to be defined as BRT.

Scoring Guidelines: this scoring is weighted using the percentage of the corridor of each particular configuration multiplied by the points associated with that configuration and then adding those numbers together.

Corridor Configurations	POINTS	WEIGHTED BY	
TIER 1 CONFIGURATIONS			
Two-way median-aligned busway in the central verge of a two-way road	8	% of corridor with type of dedicated right-of-way	
Bus-only corridor where there is a fully exclusive right-of-way and no parallel mixed traffic, such as a transit mall (e.g., Bogotá, Colombia; Curitiba, Brazil; and Quito, Ecuador) or a converted rail corridor (e.g., Cape Town, South Africa, and Los Angeles)	8		
Busway that runs adjacent to an edge condition like a waterfront or park where there are few intersections to cause conflicts	8		
Busway that runs two-way on the side of a one-way street	6		
TIER 2 CONFIGURATIONS			
Busway that is split into two one-way pairs on separate streets, with each bus lane centrally aligned in the roadway	5		
Busway aligned to the outer curb of the central roadway on a street with a central roadway and parallel service road	4		
Busway aligned to the inner curb of the service road on a street with a central roadway and parallel service road. Busway must be physically separated from other traffic on the service road to receive points	4		
Busway that is split into two one-way pairs on separate streets, with each bus lane aligned to the curb	3		
TIER 3 CONFIGURATIONS			
Virtual busway that operates bidirectionally in a single median lane that alternates direction by block.	1		
NON-SCORING CONFIGURATIONS			
Curb-aligned busway on a two-way road	0		

BRT BASICS

BUSWAY ALIGNMENT

Figure 3 - ITDP et al (2016) 'The BRT Standard'

⁴ See, for example, ITDP (2013) 'More Development for your Transport Dollar: An Analysis of 21 North American Rapid Transit Corridors' or ITDP et al (2016) 'The BRT Standard'.

Council notes that RMS analysis found that the existing Parramatta-Liverpool T-Way is more reliable in its side-running sections than its centre-running sections. This is a surprising conclusion given that international experience has found that one of the advantages of centre-running is that it is more reliable. This is because whereas a side-running transit lane is also shared with left-turning traffic, a centre-running lane is used exclusively for rapid transit.

In Council's view, the likely explanation for the reduced reliability of centre-running sections on the existing Parramatta-Liverpool T-Way is due to how the priority signalling system is operating. In order to resolve this anomalous situation, Council requests that the NSW Government urgently investigate opportunities to revisit priority signalling on the T-Way to ensure all buses receive appropriate priority (without unnecessarily impeding safe and effective intersection operation).

Council would welcome the opportunity to review the analysis underpinning RMS's recommendation including to consider further opportunities to include the existing T-Way experience. Council would also like to confirm that the sections of the T-Way analysed are similar to the section of Hoxton Park Road now being designed for rapid transit upgrade.

Council notes RMS's concerns about stop location safety with centre-running. Council agrees with the NSW Government's vision zero approach to pedestrian safety, but notes that regardless of centre or side-running, pedestrians will need to cross a number of lanes to reach their service on Hoxton Park Road. Council suggests that careful design of the public domain should be made a project priority to ensure that the service is inviting, attractive and safe for the community to use. This is also likely to include ensuring that signalised pedestrian crossings are close to proposed rapid transport stops. Future cross-sections released by the NSW Government should clarify this.

Submission 5: Council requests that the NSW Government revisit signal priority on the Liverpool-Parramatta T-Way.

Submission 6: Council requests a copy of the analysis undertaken by RMS on the existing T-Way and the relative function of centre-running and side-running sections

Submission 7: Council requests that the NSW Government provides further information to the community on cross-section design to maximise pedestrian safety, and to ensure the project helps achieve the NSW Government's Vision Zero objective.

Corridor design

As the NSW Government is aware, Council is currently preparing a strategic concept design for the FAST Corridor. This will include, among other things, a preferred centre-running vs side-running lane arrangement for the portion of Fifteenth Avenue from Cowpasture Road to Devonshire Road. Council is concerned about the potential for major intersection

modification requirements (and reduced service performance) if the rapid transit service needs to transition multiple times from centre-running to side-running.⁵

If the design shown in this community update is built there is a risk that the FAST corridor will be centre-running for its full length except for this short Hoxton Park Road section. The need to link these alternative alignments could adversely affect intersection performance, require further property acquisition and cause additional signalisation challenges. These need to be considered.

Liverpool City Council expects to complete FAST Corridor strategic concept design by mid-2020. Council encourages the NSW Government to not make a final decision on centre-running vs side-running until after Council's preferred position on Fifteenth Avenue is known and Transport for NSW has completed its analysis for the western section of the corridor connecting to the airport. This is particularly important given that international best practice for rapid transit would, generally, be to have centre-running services.

Liverpool City Council remains 'mode agnostic' regarding the best option, in the long term, for the vehicle on this corridor. As part of Council's current investigations, a number of different options are being considered for the FAST Corridor (including autonomous bus, trackless tram and light rail). Design work by Transport for NSW for the section of the rapid transit corridor from Devonshire Avenue to the new airport is also still under way.

Council recommends taking a precautionary approach to designing the corridor, noting that the existing T-Way has been designed to a functional specification that enables future conversion to light rail. A centre-running corridor is potentially more easily 'future proofed' than a side-running corridor, but this benefit does not appear to have been examined by RMS in the work to date.

Submission 8: Council recommends that the NSW Government not make a final decision on centre-running vs side-running until after further design work on Fifteenth Avenue by Council and Transport for NSW is completed.

⁵ For example, Iswalt, M., Wong, C., & Connolly, K. (2011). 'Innovative Operating Solutions for Bus Rapid Transit through a Congested Segment of San Jose, California'. *Transportation Research Record*, 2218(1), 27–38. <https://doi.org/10.3141/2218-04> notes the challenges of transitioning from median to kerbside dedicated lanes and the potential time penalty