

...making cycling better in northern Sydney

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Re: M2 Widening Project - Cycling Route February Response

Since our last response commenting on the M2 Alternate Cycling Route (11 December 2009) the project team has engaged specialist bicycle planners (GTA) to undertake both the route/concept design on the cycle facility and subsequently a contract to undertake the detailed design, prior to construction. This approach is welcomed by cyclists and will assist in providing the best possible solution.

At a project meeting on 11 February 2010, Cyclists were provided with a copy of "Preferred Route Analysis Report" (GTA) and were briefed on the contents with an opportunity to ask questions. The report contained very good identification of many of the issues. It also included some novel components which we had not had a chance to review and also did not answer many of the outstanding issues noted in our previous submissions.

Many questions were left hanging at the end of the 11 February meeting and we are asked to respond within 10 days in order that the "detailed design" phase can begin. This submission is in response to the request to provide feedback. Our response is in several parts attached to this letter.

Attachment A

Concept issues involved in the planning

Attachment B

General Feedback on the current route proposal

Attachment C

Specific issues to be resolved

Today's submission must be read in conjunction with our previous submissions as follows:

Initial Response (18 November 2009)

Alternate Cycling Route Response (11 December 2009)

Access Across the M2 (11 December 2009)

We thank you for involvement in the project and look forward to continuing work with Transurban and relevant consultants on this project.

Yours Faithfully,

Doug Stewart

M2 Convenor, Bike North Inc.

Attachment A

Concept Issues Involved in the Planning of the Alternate Cycle Route

Please refer also to our earlier submissions on concept issues on planning in this project.

1) Self Imposed Project Scope Limitations

- a) It is completely inappropriate for the "project" to unilaterally set a range of criteria to limit scope and then use that criteria to make critical decisions about the rest of the project.
- b) Even if government or financial decisions have been made already they may need to be reconsidered. In the area of transport the government seems to do nothing else but change their mind, and this aspect of this is another one for a rethink.

2) Project Time Constraint

- a) We have recently been advised that overall project approval is expected on 30 June 2010 and that works will commence on the M2 Widening on 1 September 2010. As the entire cycle detour must be in place prior to commencement of works this leaves a paltry 2 months to construct the cycle detour.
- b) Additionally detailed planning must be finished in the next few weeks in order to complete the documents for submission for approval.
- c) The constraint of a few weeks for planning and two months for construction shows at the least a complete misunderstanding of what is needed to plan and construct a cycle facility.
- d) This would be similar to expecting the project will complete the construction of a wider M2 in 3 months. Clearly this is not possible and you would never have agreed to such a constraint. The estimate of the time to construct the M2 was in place before the project timeline was bedded down because planning had been carried out.
- e) It is unfortunate that a similar level of planning had not taken place on the alternate cycle route. The planning for the motorway did not wait until the project was announced, so there is no reason that planning for the alternate route planning was not completed as well.
- f) It is hard to believe that there is a commitment to a good outcome when the project does not allow for it. To expect that the planning and construction will come up with a good cycling route within the project-defined constraints is a nonsense because it precludes and amount of civil construction works or even approvals needed.
- g) We do not accept this project-defined artificial constraint and it must be reviewed to allow scope and time for a reasonable route to be planned and constructed.

3) Project Budget Constraint

- a) We have been advised that allowance for the alternate cycle route is \$900k within a project budget of \$550m. With no agreement yet on the route concept, and no discussion on detailed design solutions there is absolutely no basis for this budget.
- b) Any future excuses that there is not enough budget to provide a suitable alternate cycle route will reflect on the inadequate nature of the budget planning for the project and reflect poorly on the planners who have been working on this project for at least 2 years.

- c) We insist that the detailed design stage of the project be allowed to consider the widest range of solutions including civil works and traffic light changes to deliver the most appropriate solution. To do otherwise makes a farce of the planning stages of this project.

4) Suitability of the Route

- a) At the meeting on 11 February 2010 we were shown an analysis of the route options based on an existing methodology. This process was flawed and only shows to show that none of the routes is comparable to the M2.
- b) The details of the selection methodology are probably unimportant but the only way that the existing M2 route could have come up with the figures is if the existing westbound detour were included in the analysis, which is one-way only. At the very least each direction should have been considered as a different route, due to the asymmetrical hill profile. Our comparison (see previous document) was comparing the existing M2 (which is the current eastbound route) with the alternative.
- c) The delay factors, extra distance travelled, extra metres climbed, hill gradient and traffic situation effectively means that for many cyclists there will be no real alternative. We have no doubt that the setback to cycling over the two-year exclusion will take many years to correct.
- d) The best analogy we can offer is for the M2 to be completely closed for a 12 month construction period while motor vehicles used the local streets, as cyclists are expected to do, during this period. We are sure that this would speed up the widening project and significantly reduce the risks and the cost. Why do you not do this? Because of the affect on the transport options of those who are current M2 users.
- e) As previously advised, whichever route is chosen will offer very little to cyclists -- so in order to make the route as suitable as possible significant works will be required as detailed in the following sections.
- f) No further compromises or barriers to cycling should be added in the detailed design phase which would discourage cycling for transport at this critical time. We propose works that will take time and money, but which benefit cycling in the short, medium and long term.

5) Constraint of a single route only

- a) The project team advised that the brief would be to create a single end-to-end route to replace the M2. While this may be how the motorway project is conceived, the reality is that it falls within a road network. Likewise for the cycling network.
- b) To cater to individual levels of cycling route selection and different destination choices there needs to be consideration of this route in the context of all the other cycling routes in the area.
- c) To create a viable alternate cycling route there needs to be multiple entry and exit points from north and south of the M2, feeder routes and given the cycling environment sections where the route bifurcates into options for selection depending on the time of day and time of the week.

Attachment B.

General Feedback on the Current Route Proposal.

1) General Principles

- a) We agree that with the general topography and alignments the Alternate Route should be approximately that proposed by GTA consultants.
- b) We agree that detailed design should proceed on the GTA proposal with some further route investigation:
 - i) in the area east of Lane Cove Road,
 - ii) in extra links into Macquarie Park,
 - iii) in the area from Oakes Road to Statham Road at North Rocks,
 - iv) in the area of the Cumberland Highway crossing.
- c) The final route selection in many places will depend on the detailed design because the agreed treatments may make a difference to route selection. We are requesting civil works at critical points in the route, but if these are not possible then the route may need other alignments.
- d) The changes to the route design by GTA consultants have principally been to avoid the traffic pressure on parts of the route, but it no changes have been made to avoid any of the other challenges. In fact the route is even longer and slower.
- e) We remind the project team of the table below which was provided last November and highlights the problems to be designed against. None of the issues have been addressed in the new route on.

	M2 Cycle Lane	Blue Alternate Route	Difference
Riding Time	31 minutes	60 minutes (westbound)	DOUBLE THE TIME
Stopping Time	0 minutes	approx 10 minutes	14% OF TRAVEL TIME
Length	16.5 km	22 km	5.5km or 33% LONGER
Average Speed	32 km/hour	23 km/hour	9kph or 40% SLOWER
Maximum Speed	50 km/hour	64 km/hour	STEEPER DESCENTS
Maximum Grade	5.7%	11.9 %	100% STEEPER
Sections over 7%	0	13 out of 21	MUCH MUCH HARDER
Metres Climbed	127 metres	339 metres	266% MORE CLIMBING

2) Road Speed Limits

- a) In many locations the speed limit is 50kph but the limit needs to be adjusted to 40kph on every street involved. In commercial areas with significant amounts of car parking turnover and/or non-parallel parking, the speed limit must be reduced to 40kph. As is well documented the consequences of accidents at 40kph as compared to 50kph are significant. There may be no affect on throughput of traffic in these areas and the risk assessment approach would support these speed limit applications.
- b) We note that previous speed limit changes on the existing M2 detour were agreed and implemented very quickly. We would expect the same situation to follow this precedent.

3) Design standards, detailed design, implementation, accountability and current works at Epping

- a) We note that there is a current Hornsby Shire Council project constructing a footpath between Kandy Ave and the footpath at Beecroft Road in Epping. The Armco fence has also been repositioned. As construction of any of the route can't begin before 30 June, we can only assume that a coincidence has occurred.



Corner on path is too tight



Dangerously narrowing path

- b) This new path project is very unfortunate in that it does not comply with the design requirements for a shared user (cycling/pedestrian) path. If in fact the M2 Alternate Cycling route does use this section then the newly laid concrete path will need to be demolished and replaced with a new path that complies with the guidelines.
- c) We refer you to section 6.3 of Austroads Part 14 to review the design issues:
 - i) a two way cycle path must be a minimum of 2.5m in width
 - ii) the curve radius is much too small
 - iii) the superelevation and crossfall are inadequate
- d) While some of the path can be widened and realigned, we draw your attention to the section of path less than 1m wide at the bridge and crossing point, echoing a similar constraint on the other side of the road. The path will need to be widened at both of those areas in order to create a safe facility and to allow cyclists to pass safely. The likelihood of passing cyclists is very high as the traffic light crossing (as currently envisaged) will delay cyclists in both

directions. The consequences of an incident at these points will almost certainly be a fatality on the adjacent road.

- e) The situation of the current works emphasises the importance of both having detailed design by qualified designers who can follow the guidelines as well as a sign-off on the designs by cyclists through the current consultation process.
- f) While the project team might make use of local authorities to construct the alternate route, this does not remove responsibility for the team to design and deliver the appropriate solution in time. Previous experience has shown that assuming that others will complete the work is not reasonable. Our case in point is the Pembroke Road / Epping Road intersection which still has outstanding works, due to poor design and inadequate funding.
- g) The project must be accountable for actually delivering the completed and complying Alternate Cycling Route. Handing off that responsibility is unacceptable. We would expect that there would be delays in local council and perhaps state government processes and projects. These inevitable delays must be built into the project plan so that cyclists are not excluded from the M2 until all the jobs are completed.

4) Design for cyclists

- a) All the facilities and solutions should comply with the RTA Bicycle Guidelines and with Austroads Part 14. Facilities and route audits should be carried out according to Austroads as well. This is particularly critical in sections of off-road path. In the same way that roads and motorways just are not constructed less than a critical width for two-way traffic the same issues need to be address for cycle paths.
- b) In all locations along the route, high visibility signs and logos must be prominently placed to alert motorists of the likely presence of cyclists and to reinforce the cyclist's place.
- c) The route is currently planned to use a number of traffic light crossings using bike lanterns. We request two aspects to the detailed design in these locations.
 - i) have the bike lights turn green in synch with the road phase even without a button press. This allows a cyclist to proceed safely in the same way a car would, when approaching a green light. The light should start flashing red at the normal part of the cycle. This is to minimise delays that may approach end up more than twice as long as planned.
 - ii) response to a button press of no more than 15 seconds to minimise delays for cyclists and pedestrians. The number of times a day this will happen is limited, but will assist the community to cross (and this why we have lights)
- d) The route travels through a number of single lane roundabouts which are a potential hazards for cyclists who are often just not seen by motorists. Each of these roundabouts should be assessed to ensure they provide enough deviation to really slow motorists down, so they get a chance to see cyclists. They also need major warning signs that cyclists are using these roundabouts. This request applies right across the route at all roundabouts.
- e) The detailed designs should be shown to cycling groups in a long workshop to allow for reasonable comment on the design issues. The designs should be provided to cyclists at least 7 days prior to the workshop to allow for assessment.

- f) We request you note that while "beginner" recreational cyclists don't use the M2 or the detour a significant number of "sporting" recreational cyclists of a high calibre use the motorway for training as well as transport, particularly on weekends.

Attachment C.

Specific issues to be resolved in design of the Alternate Cycling Route.

This attachment covers areas which we believe will be significant issues for the detailed design team to address. Many of these concur with the assessment in the Preferred Route Analysis Report (GTA).

- 1) Access to Macquarie Park
 - a) Our assessment is that the majority of cyclists who are using or wish to use the M2 will be entering or leaving the Macquarie Park business area. Thus access to and from the various parts of this area are critical to the solution. These accesses must be safe the direct once in the vicinity of the area. The area is quite large and access is needed in multiple locations.
 - b) We agree with the GTA assessment that Wicks Road, Waterloo Road and Khartoum Road need an off road path in order to make them safe for cyclists. As this path has been in the RTA bike plan for 10 years and is also in the Ryde Council Bike Plan and Macquarie Park DCP this is the ideal opportunity to build this path. We request that this path be costed for inclusion in the project budget.
 - c) It is essential that westbound cyclists can continue to use the short westbound section of the M2 from Delhi Road to join with Talvera Road. We know of no reason to remove this access and it provides a key westbound link to that side of Macquarie Park, linking to the off-road path.
 - d) As there is to be no works east of Lane Cove Road (except some realignment of the off ramp) we again request to route eastbound cyclists back on the M2 from Lane Cove Road as previously requested. The argument given about safety of a path down the off ramp is nonsense given that concrete barriers are routinely used to protect road users from collisions, even high speed ones. This is a completely reasonable and safe request at very low cost.
- 2) Coxs Road, Lane Cove Road and roundabouts
 - a) We agree with the GTA assessment that a cyclist who is travelling from Delhi Road to Epping is much better to take the Macquarie Park bypass as shown in the report.
 - b) The eastbound right turn from Ryrie Street to Coxs Rd can be difficult in peak hours due to traffic density and queuing back from the Wicks Road lights. Some form of crossing with a staging area, and "keep clear" paint on the ground is needed.
 - c) The traffic lights at Wicks Road should be fitted with cyclists advanced standing boxes.
 - d) The commercial area in Coxs Road is generally a low speed area but with lots of dangers and complexity for cyclists. There is two schools, shops, high parking turnover, a mix of entries/exits from off street parking, parallel parking, nose-to-kerb parking, pedestrian crossings and this is a bus route. The detailed design solutions are:
 - i) reduce the speed limit to 40kph at all times
 - ii) change nose-to-kerb parking to rear to kerb parking at 45 degrees.
 - iii) remove the squeeze points for cyclists to merge into the traffic lane

- e) The Lane Cove Road Crossing needs to cater to road and off-road options. The delay for the off road option with two separate crossings each adding a couple of minutes will not be acceptable for some cyclists. Therefore provision should be made for advanced standing boxes in both directions at both sets of lights.

3) Epping

- a) The Pembroke Road crossing of Epping Road at Epping poses significant issues in both directions as identified since before 2007. As we noted previously, the funded solution was never implemented because, as Hornsby Council advise us, it required property acquisition which was not funded. This is a bus route with a bus stop adjacent to the corner. We don't believe that an on or off road solution is viable in this location due to road crossings, likely waiting queues, etc. Due to these difficulties, we propose that the detailed design include an overbridge across Epping Road be constructed at this location. This bridge will not only be a safer and quicker solution for cyclists, and school children at the adjacent school, but better for cars and buses as well. Careful design will be required to avoid steep grades and tight curves on the bridge approaches. An elevator would be completely unacceptable, as it would be on all cycle routes.
- b) The Epping bus underpass will need special design for two-way access. All vehicles should be excluded -- at the top of the descent east-side and at the Beecroft Road exit/entrance on the west side. No bollards should be included in the cycle path itself, especially near the tunnel or near corners. The design should completely separate bikes and pedestrians, with pedestrians on the northern side of the path to maximise separation from downhill cyclists. Uphill cyclists will be less of a danger due to slower speeds. Lighting should be upgraded.
- c) The crossing of Beecroft Road at Kandy Ave is a significant problem. It is likely that if this crossing does not meet requirements that cyclists (and pedestrians) will attempt to cross Beecroft Road without control or safety. This can already be seen at that location and the project should design a safe and usable solution, to avoid fatalities. The best solution is to build a bridge spanning Beecroft Road joining the old decommissioned bus bridge. The second best option is to put a second light crossing at right Kandy Ave but as a "slave" to the crossing at the M2 exit. Thus the lights would change at the same time and provide a safe and quick crossing option. Traffic light delay must be minimised with change of lights within 15 seconds of activation. This would also benefit motorists who have poor sight lines to the existing lights. The proposed solution of using an off-road solution is badly flawed and will require significant civils works for essential bridge and path widening. Any off road solution must provide paths that meet the Austroads Guidelines for path width, particularly given the high likelihood that the traffic lights will cause cyclists to bank up. There is nowhere on the western side of the crossing for cyclists to wait to this section must be significantly widened. We note that the new path on the western side will have to be demolished and re-laid for every option.

4) Beecroft to North Rocks

- a) The report proposes changes in this area using back streets to avoid traffic pressure, but adding significantly to distance, hills and stoppages. An off road path is proposed along the northern side of Roselea Park to an existing pedestrian crossing then an off road path along past three busy commercial premises with significant driveway crossing risks. Then to use Murray Farm Road with traffic and a significant eastbound hill. Some steep back street sections, a small inappropriate lane with a corner, poor surface, hill ends on a main

footpath. The route then takes the wide New North Rocks Road past the shopping centre with pedestrian crossings and squeeze points.



Path along Roselea Park



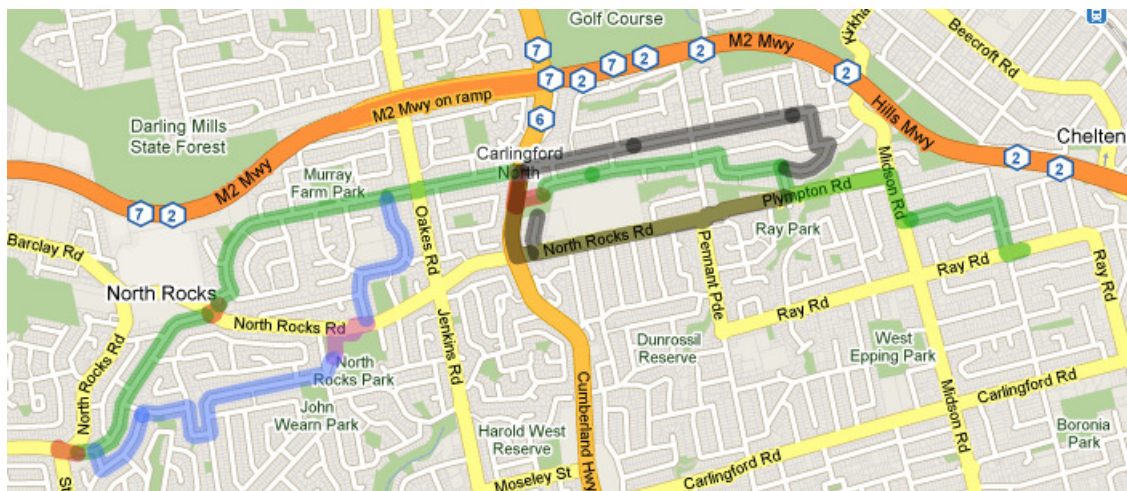
Bus stop and businesses on PH Rd



Long steep hill on Murray Farm

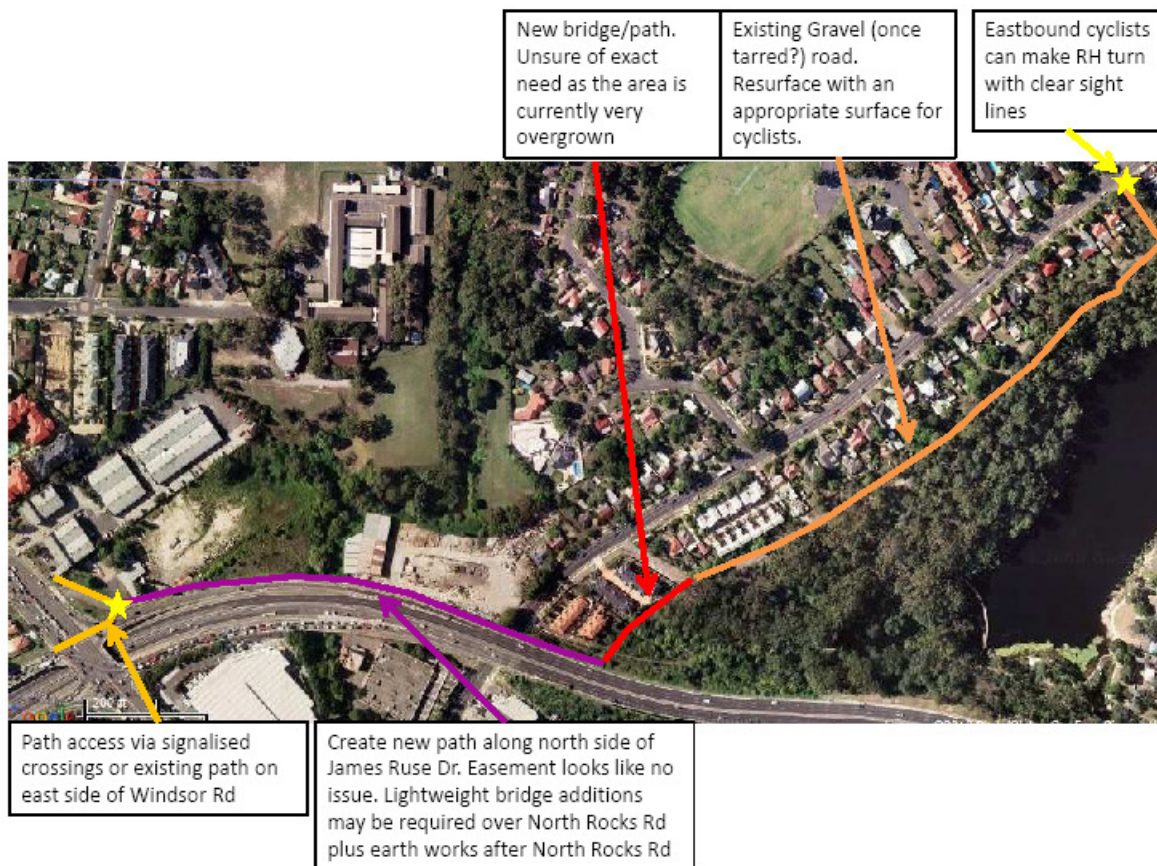


Narrow, steep lane with corner



Route options in the Beecroft-North Rocks area for consultation

- b) Other route options may be considered in this area including other back streets, using Pennant Hills Road on road for a short section. There is no good solution and it may be that a number of options are provided as conditions vary through the day and week. Further consultation is required on the detailed design and route approval.
- 5) North Rocks Road to Windsor Road area
- a) In this difficult situation even the report does not have a firm proposal. Emphasis must be on safety and minimal delay. We believe that a good option is a wide overbridge across Windsor Road bridging from Boundary Road to North Rocks Road.
 - b) An alternate solution is to turn east along the north side of Cumberland Highway on a new high quality off road path, fly over North Rocks road on a clip-on bridge then turn north behind the houses along the old road easement.



- c) Suggestions in the report of new traffic light crossings of Windsor Road and/or Cumberland Highway need to be assessed, along with using Windsor Road at various times. More homework is required before the detail design can be signed off in this area.

- d) Proposals to build off road paths along Windsor Road are a welcome option, however significant work, especially on services such as light poles, bus stops, service access covers and path constraints need to be identified and dealt with.
- 6) West of Windsor Road
- a) The area west of Windsor Road probably needs multiple routes to be designed and built. This is the area furthest from the M2 and likely destinations are widely dispersed. We are looking for routes back to the M2 directly to the north as well as connections to the T-way to the west.
 - b) The Moxhams Road bridge may be bypassed but a new dedicated pedestrian cyclists bridge at a higher level would be the obvious solution to the planners for the northbound route.
 - c) The options to get to and from the M2 at Cropley Drive needs detailed design as previously indicated including paths, ramps and fence removal. (See previous submissions).
 - d) The report proposes access to the T-way via Hammers Road and this likely to be a good solution but needs careful detailed design along the full length of Hammers Road and also to enter and leave the T-Way. Delays in traffic lights must be minimised, conflict with overtaking vehicles, removal of squeeze points, repair of pavement etc.
 - e) Following the local Council Bike Plan on Goliath Road also seems a useful additional route while it is likely some difficult design decisions will need to be made as to how to make the links.
- 7) Overall
- a) We have more information that will be useful to create or review the detailed design and are happy to work with the consultants on the creation of the design works.