

Best Practice: Cycle Strategy to Build Network of Bicycle Paths

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CITY: SYDNEY

POLICY AREA: TRANSPORTATION

BEST PRACTICE

In April 2007, the City of Sydney Council adopted the **Cycle Strategy and Action Plan 2007-2017**, a commitment to build a 200 kilometer (124 miles) bicycle network to achieve the ambitious target of increasing the number of trips made in the city from 2% to 10% of all trips.

ISSUE

The City of Sydney acknowledges that it must catch up to other Australian and international cities in cycling mode share and infrastructure provisions. The City's narrow roads, some hilly topography and a fairly hostile attitude towards cyclists, where traffic fears deter most people from cycling as a means of commuting, makes promotion of bicycle use even more difficult.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Though the City of Sydney Council area covers only a small, central part of Sydney, it aims to make cycling a normal transport choice, similar to how bicycles are used in European cities. By investing in high quality infrastructure that separates bicycles from other traffic, and through city leadership efforts, the City of Sydney is working to influence residents in the greater metropolitan area to make cycling a normal transport choice, equal with walking and public transport and preferred to private motor vehicle travel.

Additionally, by increasing the proportion of cycling trips from 2% [in 2006] to 10% [in 2016], the program aims to improve the livability of Sydney and the health of its citizens.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation is focused on the construction or upgrading of the ten high priority regional routes first, connecting destinations within and beyond the council area.

There are approximately twenty staff members directly working full time or for the majority of their time on bicycle infrastructure and other cycling projects. External contractors are engaged in design and construction work or event planning on an as-needed basis. The City of Sydney cannot build cycleways without state government approvals, so development of the bicycle infrastructure involves working closely with the state road authority and transport agencies, particularly on design innovations.

The construction of the bicycle network is supported and complemented by the following projects led by the City of Sydney:

- Development of a regional bike plan with fourteen neighboring councils and efforts to secure funding to enable surrounding councils to build networks to feed the City of Sydney's.
- Commissioning of a demand assessment and economic appraisal for a regional bike network that calculated a healthy average 3.88 AUD (4.05 USD) in economic benefits for every dollar invested. This cost benefit ratio supports the case for federal funding.
- Provision of on-street bicycle parking, secure parking in council-owned car parks as well as new development controls to ensure new and renovated buildings have better end-of-trip facilities.



Advertisement featured on street banners and bus shelters in mid 2010.

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- Free cycling confidence courses run every weekend, as well as free bike maintenance courses each week. In order to allow use of the corporate fleet staff specific courses are run twice a month.
- Planning for a public bicycle system in 2017 when more of the bicycle network is complete, and contingent on a change to the national compulsory helmet legislation.
- Running cycling events (including Sydney Rides Festival, Ride to School Day and Ride to Work Day) and encouraging cycling to other city events by providing free valet bicycle parking as well as events for people to try riding a bike.
- Providing cycling information on a dedicated SydneyCycleways.net website, Facebook and Twitter feed, plus on the City of Sydney website and City of Sydney City resident guide.
- Printing and distribution of a bike map for inner Sydney through over 400 retail outlets such as book shops and cafes.
- Education programs for bicycle riders, pedestrians and drivers with safety messages, and distribution of bicycle bells, lights and high visibility slap bands.
- Commissioning of a behavior change strategy aimed at getting more people riding, as well as improving relations between path and road users. The program has funding and staff allocated, with projects currently underway including Share the Path (ongoing), Sydney Cycleways Try2Wheels (2012) and a community grants program.
- Regular infrastructure and social research projects inform decision making.

COST

The City of Sydney is investing 16 million AUD (about 10.5 million USD) in the 2012/13 financial year. Over four years the budget is more than 56 million AUD (39.7 million USD) for the bicycle infrastructure. There is an additional budget for the social programs.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Outcomes are measured in terms of kilometers of bicycle network constructed (reported to council annually) and mode share (available every five years from the census and annually from state travel surveys). Increases in cycling trips are measured by twice-yearly intersection counts at 100 intersections throughout the council area, and by permanent bicycle counters on cycleways. The 100 intersection count shows an average of 89 percent increase in bike trips across the council area, though sites with good infrastructure have doubled and tripled (and in one case quadrupled) over the two and a half years between March 2010 and October 2012.

Social research is being done every two years to measure cyclists' level of confidence on city streets as well as to collect data on barriers, enablers and attitudes.



Sydney high priority regional routes

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TIMELINE

2006	Development and consultation phase of the Cycle Strategy
April 2007	Council adopted the Cycle Strategy and Action Plan 2007-2017
May 2009	Opening of first separated cycleway on King Street in the Central Business District (CBD)
March 2010	Opening of three kilometers (almost 2 miles) of separated cycle way in the southern industrial area
Sept 2010	Opening of Union Street separated cycle way on the western edge of the CBD
Dec 2010	Opening of College Street and Kent Street separated cycle way in the CBD
March 2011	Opening of Bourke Street separated cycle way in the east, from Sydney Harbor to Redfern
2013	Construction of a separated cycle way from Central station to Green Square in the south on George Street
2013	Other city center cycleways have been placed on hold by state government.

LEGISLATION

State government controls what happens on City of Sydney streets, limiting the ability to build cycleways.

LESSONS LEARNED

Innovative design involves some refining in the process, and some challenging negotiations to balance the competing needs for every inch of road space. Any car parking losses generate strong opposition and require a comprehensive community engagement strategy. Wide community consultation well before, during and after construction is essential to success. It is important to build connectivity and to convey messages of connectivity within the community. It is beneficial to encourage and support community initiatives and activities that help build cultural change.

TRANSFERABILITY

For cities starting from a low cycling base, Sydney offers a template for rapid improvement with strategies for connectivity, design innovation, communications, community education, political will and funding commitment.

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Facts and figures in this report were provided by the highlighted city to New York City Global Partners.