

**Report to General Manager**

Attachments: Summary of Submissions

**SUBJECT:** Proposed North Sydney Centre Traffic and Pedestrian Management Plan and Miller Street/ Victoria Cross Masterplan - Exhibition summary.

**AUTHOR:** Joseph Hill, Senior Strategic Planner, 16 August 2005

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting on 27 January 2004 Council adopted the Public Domain Strategy for the North Sydney Centre. The Strategy consists of strategies, actions and design principles to guide the future upgrade of the public domain in the North Sydney Centre. It ensures that the quality, diversity and capacity of the public domain will be enhanced, in tandem with the anticipated growth and regeneration of the Centre.

Following the adoption of the Strategy, stage two was developed. Stage two is comprised of the North Sydney Centre Traffic and Pedestrian Management Plan (the Management Plan) and the Miller Street/ Victoria Cross Masterplan (the Masterplan). Council adopted the above plans for exhibition at Council meeting 14 June 2005. The plans were exhibited in accordance with Council's resolution from Thursday 23 June 2005 to Thursday 14 July 2005. Eleven submissions were received. This report details and responds to the issues raised in the submissions. It further outlines the likely direction required to further progress the public domain strategy.

It is noted that some Councillors have raised concerns with the detail of the two plans. It is suggested that these concerns can be worked through and resolved as detailed implementation which is undertaken in consultation with Councillors.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** Council consider the submissions.
2. **THAT** Council adopt the North Sydney Centre Traffic and Pedestrian Management Plan and Miller Street/Victoria Cross Masterplan as policy documents.
3. **THAT** the policy be implemented incrementally through further detailed work to be undertaken in discussion with Councillors.
4. **THAT** Council further consider both plans following a response from the Roads and Traffic Authority on the additional traffic modelling.

**Financial Implications**

There are no additional financial implications.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Endorsed by \_\_\_\_\_  
Manager Strategic Planning

## **INTRODUCTION**

At its meeting on 27 January 2004 Council adopted the Public Domain Strategy for the North Sydney Centre. The Strategy consists of strategies, actions and design principles to guide the future upgrade of the public domain in the North Sydney Centre. It ensures that the quality, diversity and capacity of the public domain will be enhanced, in tandem with the anticipated growth and regeneration of the Centre.

The anticipated growth is provided under North Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2001 (Amendment No 9). This amendment allows for an additional 250,000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial floor space and 200 additional dwellings within the commercial and mixed use zones of the North Sydney Centre. This growth will accommodate an additional 12,500 workers and 374 residents.

Following the adoption of the Strategy, stage two was developed. Stage two is comprised of the North Sydney Centre Traffic and Pedestrian Management Plan (the Management Plan) and the Miller Street/ Victoria Cross Masterplan (the Masterplan). Council adopted the above plans for exhibition at Council meeting 14 June 2005. The plans were exhibited in accordance with Council's resolution from Thursday 23 June 2005 to Thursday 14 July 2005. Eleven submissions were received. This report details and responds to the issues raised in the submissions. It further outlines the likely direction required to further progress the public domain strategy.

A short background detailing the key elements of the above plans is provided.

## **BACKGROUND: TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN MANAGEMENT PLAN**

North Sydney Council engaged URaP-TTW Consulting Engineers to prepare the North Sydney Centre Traffic and Pedestrian Management Plan. The Management Plan takes into consideration the recommendations from the North Sydney Centre Public Domain Strategy.

The draft Management Plan identifies relevant traffic management and pedestrian issues and establishes actions to implement the public domain strategy and accommodate growth. The following is a summary of URaP-TTW's findings.

The Management Plan provides the following:

- The current and future traffic situation and the identification of deficiencies in the road network and traffic system. It includes measures to improve these deficiencies. Such deficiencies are:
  - The Centre is principally affected by the adjacent major roads i.e. Warringah Freeway and Pacific Highway;
  - The Centre has developed without a city centre focus;
  - Past developments have emphasised frontages to main streets, neglecting laneways. Neglected laneways are prime pedestrian spaces and the potential exists to improve their safety and amenity;

- Pacific Highway and Berry Street function as divisive elements to the CBD; and
  - Miller and Walker Streets are used as through traffic routes instead of serving the Centres' commercial, recreational, cultural and civic needs.
- Measures to provide an effective and practical road network system aimed at resolving vehicular and pedestrian conflicts for a 10 to 20 year period.
    - Urap–TTW assessed the existing land use and traffic flows. They forecast and evaluated future scenarios for the Centre and estimated future traffic flows by developing a trip matrix model. The road network scenarios were assessed using EMME/2 program and intersection analysis was carried out by using SCATES program.
  - A Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP) in accordance with RTA guidelines. This highlights pedestrian desire lines and the necessary pedestrian facilities to cater for existing and future demands.

URaP–TTW provided a number of vehicular traffic management measures to accommodate the present and future needs of the Centre. Street specific strategies are outlined in the table below:

Street	Measures
Miller Street	To reduce vehicular traffic along Miller Street by; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Banning right movements for northbound vehicles from Pacific Highway onto Miller Street;</li> <li>• Introducing one lane traffic movements in each direction along Miller Street, between Berry Street and the Pacific Highway, while maintaining bus lip lanes in each direction;</li> <li>• Introducing a south bound 'bus only' lane on Miller Street, from Falcon to Berry Street.</li> </ul>
Pacific Highway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain Pacific Highway as an arterial route with its current lane configurations;</li> <li>• Ban left turn for private vehicles from Pacific Highway onto Blue Street to prohibit unsafe merging movements and improve the Blue Street environment, and reduce bus/vehicle conflict from the Pacific Highway;</li> <li>• Redesign the intersection at Berry Street to allow for easier right turn movements onto Berry Street, north bound;</li> <li>• Reduce left turn along Pacific Highway into Berry Street from two lanes into one. Establish a bus only lane during the morning peak.</li> </ul>
Berry Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downgrade Berry Street's road function classification from arterial to major route;</li> <li>• Reduce one lane of traffic along Berry Street to protect its civic and commercial environment and needs.</li> </ul>

Street	Measures
Arthur Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rationalise the Pacific Highway, Arthur Street and High Street intersection to promote more use of Arthur Street with two right turns facility from High Street onto Arthur Street;</li> <li>Establish a permanent one way traffic movement, north bound, along Arthur Street between Pacific Highway and Mount Street;</li> <li>Introduction of two way traffic system along Arthur Street between Mount Street and Berry Street;</li> <li>Ban southbound right turn from Arthur Street onto Mount Street to facilitate intersection operation at Mount and Berry Streets;</li> <li>Installation of traffic signals at intersection of Berry and Arthur Street.</li> </ul>

Proposals under the PAMP Plan include the following:

- Introduce a shared zone along Little Spring Street, Mount Street (west of Walker), and Gas Lane with a threshold treatment at entry points;
- Improve pedestrian lighting along Spring Street, Little Walker Street, Little Spring Street and Gas Lane;

Street specific strategies are outlined in the table below:

Street	Measures
Miller Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities for footpath widening between the Pacific Highway and Berry Street</li> </ul>
Berry Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased pedestrian phase time at the intersection of Berry and Miller Streets</li> <li>Footpath widening at intersections along Berry Street between Miller and Walker Street</li> </ul>
Arthur Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce landscape design measures to prevent pedestrian crossing at mid block locations</li> </ul>
Blue Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve lighting and ambience during night time</li> <li>Improve pedestrian access at eastern end of Blue Street</li> <li>Provide a pedestrian refuge near the North Sydney Station entrance</li> </ul>
Walker Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement footpath widening at intersection and midway on the west side of Walker Street (north and south sections of Mount Street)</li> <li>Introduce pedestrian scrambled phase crossing as part of the traffic signals at intersection of Mount Street and Walker Street</li> </ul>

Further initiatives have been investigated that will assist in the above traffic management measures and encourage a higher use of public transport within the centre. These include:

- introducing a bus stop on the western side of Arthur Street, north of the Pacific Highway
- introducing a bus stop on the western side of Alfred Street North near the intersection of Mount Street
- introducing “real-time” timetabling for buses on Miller Street, and
- extending the existing bike routes to include Little Walker Street and Ridge Street.

## **BACKGROUND: MILLER STREET/VICTORIA CROSS MASTERPLAN**

Miller Street and Victoria Cross are the physical crossroads of the Centre and have the potential to represent a 'heart' for the North Sydney Centre. The six way intersection is a commercial nucleus, and transport hub with continuous flows of pedestrians which has the potential to become a symbolic focus.

The Masterplan follows the recommendations from the Traffic and Pedestrian Management Plan. The Masterplan outlines proposals for the enhancement and upgrade of Miller Street and Victoria Cross Intersection.

North Sydney Council engaged McGregor Partners to prepare the Miller Street/ Victoria Cross Masterplan. The Masterplan outlines proposals for the enhancement and upgrade of Miller Street and Victoria Cross Intersection. The plan is based on existing site conditions, urban context, Council's strategic direction and the needs and aspirations of key stakeholders.

The key elements of the Masterplan include:

- Widening of the footpath on both sides of Miller Street to enhance the provision of pedestrian public space;
- Downgrading the traffic role of Miller Street to one lane north and south bound;
- Establishing bus slip lanes on either side Miller Street;
- Incorporating a dedicated bus stop area on the northern bus stop (on the west side of Miller Street). All bus stops will have all weather protection;
- Upgrading and improving street tree planting; the design intends to keep the MLC plane trees and gradually replace the remaining trees with native trees;
- Repaving with a high quality natural sandstone unique for North Sydney Council;
- Introducing a pedestrian crossing across Miller Street between Berry Street and Pacific Highway;
- Upgrading lighting to improve visibility and pedestrian safety. Includes signature catenary lighting at Victoria Cross;
- Incorporating environmentally sustainable design features, including using:
  - a regional stone for the paving;
  - local resources and therefore less energy; and
  - native species for the landscaping.

The Masterplan proposes to establish a continuous landscape treatment from public space into private space. On-going negotiation with private owners is required where private open space is in the public domain. The key design principles for a continuous landscape treatment include:

- Activating 189 Miller Street, the Commonwealth Bank forecourt;
- Building on the Tower Square environment through tree clusters and extended outdoor dining areas;
- Activating 105-153 Miller Street, MLC building frontage, by using more public seating.
- Refurbishing the Greenwood Plaza entrance.

- Activating 62 Miller Street, the Victoria Cross building forecourt (Starbucks) by establishing shared access with Mount Street; a plaza with seating and grass; and public art.

The Masterplan further proposes to develop iconic multifunctional bus stops on Miller Street. This is the focus of a bus shelter design competition.

## **SUBMISSIONS**

For detail aspects of the submissions a summary of submissions is attached to this report. This section summaries the main issues arising from the submissions and provides appropriate comment.

### **Issue: Miller Street reducing from four to two lanes**

#### **Miller Street functioning as a north-south regional route**

Three submitters challenged the functioning of Miller Street where it is reduced down to two lanes. The submissions suggested an unacceptable level of traffic congestion due to the lane reduction and the resulting congestions in that area of Miller Street.

Also identified in several submissions is the impact of the changes on north-south travel between McMahons Point and Cammeray and the apparent lack of alternative travel routes.

#### **Comment**

Traffic modelling undertaken indicates that there will not be a bank up of traffic in Miller Street under the proposed changes.

Proposed changes will decrease traffic in the subject area by reducing through traffic in Berry Street and banning the northbound Pacific Highway right hand turn into Miller Street. Changes also include banning the right hand turn from Miller Street into Berry Street. These changes will improve traffic light phasing times at the Berry and Miller Street intersection and therefore facilitate north-south travel. There will still be two lanes at the intersections.

### **Issue: Lack of alternative routes around the CBD**

#### **Impact on roads and residents surrounding the CBD**

Plan does not take into account current traffic patterns and provides no alternative routes around the CBD.

#### **Comment**

The reduction of traffic in Berry and Miller Streets will allow local traffic to move through Miller Street, whilst regional traffic is directed onto Pacific Highway and Arthur Street. Alternative routes are therefore not required.

With final approval from the Roads and Traffic Authority to be obtained, further detailed work on the Traffic Management Plan will be required. In the interim detailed local traffic management will be undertaken.

**Issue: Greenwood Car Park ingress and egress**

One submission detailed several effects of the traffic changes affecting the Greenwood Car Park traffic movements. Firstly, the banning of the right turn from Pacific Highway into Miller Street would force car park patrons further up the Pacific Highway. At present, patrons exit the car park on Pacific Highway and drive across three lanes to access this right turn into Miller Street.

Secondly, banning the left turn from Pacific Highway into Blue Street for private vehicles would force delivery vehicles to access the Blue Street loading bays via Miller Street. This would in turn create unsafe practices i.e. reversing up hill. The current practice is to access the Blue Street loading bays via Pacific Highway and reverse downhill across the eastbound lane.

**Comment**

It is noted that the Council does not consider the above two practices ideal particularly the current merging at Blue Street and that the proposed changes would represent a significant improvement on this situation. The proposed changes will force patrons to drive one block further north on Pacific Highway and access Miller Street via Berry Street. It is considered that this will not have a significant impact on patrons.

**Issue: High Street and Pacific Highway northbound merge point**

Two submissions specifically express their concern with the existing and dangerous merge. Vehicles access Blue Street from High Street concurrently with vehicles accessing Walker Street from Pacific Highway. In addition to these, Council officers received several informal queries.

**Comment**

At present, physical constraints prohibit the use of a median strip as a traffic measure, as adequate lane widths cannot be maintained.

The intersection configuration of High Street, Arthur Street and Pacific Highway will be rationalised under the proposals. This will promote more use of Arthur Street with two right turns from High Street into Arthur Street. To access Walker Street, two left hand turns from Pacific Highway into High Street are provided. This will reduce the current level of conflict, as traffic currently using Walker and Miller Streets to travel north of the CBD will have more effective routes through using Arthur Street.

Further analysis is recommended in respect to using a median strip.

**Issue: Arthur Street and Berry Street reconfiguration**

The reconfiguration will create traffic congestion during peak periods for those accessing the Warringah Freeway and Bradfield Highway.

**Comment**

Traffic modelling indicates a very high level of service for the proposed changes.

**Issue: Loss of car parking in the CBD**

One submitter opposes the loss of on-street parking in Miller Street arguing that it will be detrimental to local business.

**Comment**

It is considered that the proposed public domain improvements will increase pedestrian patronage of the area and therefore be beneficial to local business. Included in the proposals are increased footpath area and extended outdoor dining areas in Tower Square.

Parking losses have been accommodated elsewhere in the CBD, for example Denison Street.

**Issue: Demonstration of commitment**

Council should provide an accelerated delivery of the public domain works.

**Comment**

It is Councils intention to complete the public domain strategy in a timely manner. Consideration is currently being given to undertaking several elements of the exhibited masterplan in this financial year. Such initiatives require the finalisation of the traffic management plan to which Council is currently working with the RTA.

**Issue: Access to Northpoint Car Park**

The Property Council of Australia noted that access to the Northpoint carpark would be compromised by the removal of the right hand turn from Pacific Highway into Miller Street.

**Comment**

Access to the car park will not be prevented but may be more difficult. This matter warrants further investigation as part of the detailed local traffic management.

**Issue: Lack of consideration given to bicycle access and movements through the CBD**

Council received a detailed submission from Bike North. Several recommendations for change have been made in relation to the provision of bicycle infrastructure and route networks within the Centre. In short, these include:

- Bicycle laneways on Miller Street and Pacific Highway
- Pacific Highway bicycle lanes and associated treatments
- Miller Street bicycle lanes
- Contra flow lane on Berry Street
- Head start, hook, and double expanded storage boxes at various sites
- Stronger policy wording

**Comment**

Council is unable to accommodate some of the requests by Bike North, such as dedicated bicycle lanes on Miller Street. Some requests can be accommodated such as the installation of linemarking and head start storage at intersections, with RTA approval.

While the importance of bike travel in North Sydney is recognised, there are competing demands for limited space on the roads in the Centre. There is a need to focus on the existing shortfall for pedestrian space and actively accommodate an additional 12,000-15,000 pedestrians and maintain traffic flows.

It is therefore difficult to accommodate more dedicated bicycle paths in the streets as suggested due to the physical constraints of footpath widening and lane width requirements for maintaining traffic flow.

As a policy level document the TPMP has not identified the actual specifics of bicycle infrastructure. Detailed designs will be prepared on the finalisation of the TPMP. Policy wording will also be enhanced on the finalisation of the TPMP, the finalisation being dependant on the final RTA approval.

## **PROJECT DIRECTION AND STAGING**

Additional modelling work is being undertaken at the request of the RTA to determine how the proposed changes affect the regional network. The RTA is undertaking this modelling at present, using a highly sophisticated traffic modelling software – Paramics. It incorporates RTA existing data, the Management Plan modelling data and additional information provided by Council.

Initial projects that can be undertaken prior to the RTA sign off on the major traffic changes include:

- Victoria Cross
- Commonwealth Bank forecourt
- MLC Centre

Intersections requiring major traffic changes are scheduled for January 2007 to coincide with reduced traffic flows over the holiday period. Further initiatives include:

### **Sandstone Paving Trial**

A sandstone paving trial is to be carried out shortly. Design Engineer, Rob Lenferna reported to Council Meeting (Property) 27 June 2005 on this subject. The paving trial is to be constructed on the southwest corner of West and Emmett Streets, North Sydney.

This trial is an important project that will give Council the necessary feedback and assurance in developing technical specifications. Over the next 10 years we expect to construct about 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of this new pavement in the CBD area.

A test pot of the paving will be constructed within the next week. Following that the trial area in West Street will be constructed.

### **Bus Shelter Design Competition**

Council is currently working with the Royal Australian Institute of Architects - Young Architects to finalise a design brief for the bus shelter design competition. Invitations for the competition will be sent out in September.

### **CONCLUSION**

RTA approval is required to progress the significant traffic management changes proposed under the Management Plan and the associated public domain upgrade works. Several aspects of the Masterplan can be initiated before such approval is granted. It is recommended that Council adopt the subject plans as policy documents and continue to progress the implementation of the public domain strategy.

Further detailed work will be resubmitted to Council as prepared and scheduled.

It is noted that some Councillors have raised concerns with the detail of the two plans. It is suggested that these concerns can be worked through and resolved as detailed implementation which is undertaken in consultation with Councillors.