Subject: Council Submission to RMS on Sydney Harbour Bridge North Cycle Ramp Proposal

Author: Lindsay Menday, Sustainable Transport Projects Coordinator

Endorsed By: Duncan Mitchell, Director Engineering and Property Services

Executive Summary:

The Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) publically exhibited a proposal to construct a ramp providing step free access to the Sydney Harbour Bridge Cycleway, the “North Cycle Ramp”, late in 2017.

The proposal included two potential ramp options landing in Bradfield Park to the western side of the approaches to the Harbour Bridge, one which landed to the north of Burton Street past the entry to Milsons Point Station, and the other to the south of Burton Street.

A submission on the proposal was prepared based on contributions from each of the divisions impacted, and community feedback, and was submitted to the RMS in December 2017. The submission noted that matters raised were yet to be considered at a full Council meeting, but that this was likely to occur in February 2018.

A copy of the submission is attached.


Financial Implications:

Nil

Recommendation:

1. That Council note the submission made by Council to the RMS on the North Cycle Ramp proposal.
LINK TO DELIVERY PROGRAM

The relationship with the Delivery Program is as follows:

Direction: 2. Our Built Environment
           4. Our Social Vitality

Outcome: 2.5 Sustainable transport is encouraged
         4.7 Community is active and healthy

DETAIL

The Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) publically exhibited a proposal to construct a ramp providing step free access to the Sydney Harbour Bridge Cycleway, the “North Cycle Ramp”, late in 2017.

The proposal included two potential ramp options landing in Bradfield Park to the western side of the approaches to the Harbour Bridge. One option involved a circular ramp landing on the former bowling greens to the south of Burton Street, the other a ramp running parallel to the Bridge approaches before landing in Bradfield Park mid-block between Lavender Street and Burton Street. The latter was identified by the RMS as the preferred option.

Advocating for step free access to the Bridge Cycleway is a commitment in the North Sydney Integrated Cycling Strategy, adopted by Council in 2014. The Cycling Strategy notes that the steps to the Sydney Harbour Bridge Cycleway are a major barrier to the further uptake of cycling as a day to day transport option. Members of the community have made clear that having to dismount and push bikes up the 55 steps provides a significant disincentive for people to cycle, and some groups, such as parents with child seats and a growing group of older people with electric bikes, report feeling unable to safely negotiate the steps. In this context, Council’s submission on the North Cycle Ramp identified support for the intent to provide step free cycle access to the Harbour Bridge Cycleway.

While Council’s submission offered support for the intent of providing improved access, it also detailed a number of significant concerns regarding the proposed design and sought that these be priority considerations in future design development on this project. An extract from the submission detailed the concerns as follows:

- **Heritage Impact**

  Council is concerned that the current design will have unreasonable impact on the heritage value of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and related items and emphasise that provision of cycle access to the Bridge must ensure that the heritage value of significant items is not diminished.

  The Sydney Harbour Bridge, its approaches, and views to and from the Bridge are listed by a number of agencies in recognition of their international iconic status. The proposed design will impact upon elements of the Bridge defined as having ‘exceptional’ and ‘high’ heritage significance including the Bridge approaches and
arches as described in the RMS Sydney Harbour Bridge Conservation Management Plan 2007. The proposal is in conflict with a number of policies in the CMP.

Bradfield Park has state significant historical, aesthetic and social value. The ramp will impact on all aspects of this value. The park forms part of the curtilage to the Bridge as defined by the National Heritage Register, and is therefore a critical contributor to the Bridge significance. Views of the Bridge and approaches from Bradfield Park are an essential component in conserving the cultural value of the Bridge and should remain unobstructed. In addition, there are significant Victorian archaeological sites within the park, that would be threatened by construction in the park.

The Milsons Point Railway Station includes state listed heritage items such as the Alfred Street entrance, awning, walls and abutments. These proposed ramp will obstruct these where it crosses in front of it and therefore impact on the aesthetic and historic values of these items.

- **Open Space**

Bradfield Park is a highly significant open space that provides a physical and visual retreat for the North Sydney community and visitors to the area, particularly in the context of dense residential and commercial development in the surrounding area.

Bradfield Park North (north of Burton Street) is the most vulnerable part of Bradfield Park given that is it constrained by the Bridge wall and South Alfred Street. The proposed ramp will significantly impact on the availability, quality and amenity of space in this important section of the park. In particular, it will:

- Reduce the amount of usable open space.
- Damage the visual amenity of the park and interrupt significant views available north south through the park and on to the Bridge and Harbour.
- Impact on solar access in the park.
- Require the loss of a number of significant mature trees, and impact landscaped areas beneath the ramp through sun shadow/rain shadow effect.
- Disrupt the interpretive scheme for the subsurface archaeology that was developed in cooperation with the NSWHO in 2003.
- Alienate sections of the park, creating areas of low amenity and unusable space, particularly near to the ramp landing point.

Concerns are also raised about the potential for conflict at interfaces between pedestrian and cyclist areas.

Council is further concerned about the cumulative impact of the loss of open space along the Warringah Freeway corridor due to major transport projects currently being developed by the NSW State Government.
• **Transport Network Integration**

While the steps to the Bridge are the most significant cycle network barrier in this area, cycle links beyond the Bridge should also be considered in the context of an integrated network approach. We note that the RMS has been in contact with Council staff to commence discussions about further regional network connections and we look forward to assisting with further development of these projects.

We are concerned that the current design does not include any proposal to upgrade the existing cycleway access over the Bridge, as this falls well short of the level of service required to cater for existing demand or allow increased participation in transport cycling along this critical regional connection. We note the inadequacy of the exiting connection will be more acute in the likely event that improved access to the Bridge is successful in attracting significant increases in cycling participation.

We are further concerned that cycling links to and over the Bridge are not receiving sufficient attention in the development of Significant Infrastructure projects with a relationship to the Bridge – such as the Sydney Metro, B-Line, the Western Harbour Tunnel, Beaches Link and the associated Warringah Freeway re-design – and seek that integrated and high quality cycling access be developed as part of these projects. When considered cumulatively, these projects may affect travel demand significantly enough to consider major re-allocations of road space on the bridge deck, including accommodating cycling movements.

• **Submissions from Lavender Bay Precinct/Community**

Lavender Bay Precinct has provided a submission to Council to emphasise strong opposition to the current proposal. The submission in particular raised concerns that the design will have unreasonable impact on the amenity of Bradfield Park and heritage value of the Bridge and sought that any ramp not extend north of Burton Street. The submission also put forward a view that the proposal did not sufficiently meet cyclist needs and that a more an integrated network approach, which considers how riders will move further beyond this area, be a primary consideration.

The concerns raised by the Lavender Bay Precinct have been echoed in other community feedback provided to Council.

A further submission received by Council expressed strong support of the proposal as a way to increase participation in transport cycling and sought that construction of the project as a priority.

The submission noted that matters raised were yet to be considered at a full Council meeting, but that this was likely to occur in February 2018 and that any further matters raised following consideration by Council would be forwarded to the RMS.

A copy of the submission is attached.

Ms Lily Wu  
Project Development Manager  
Greater Sydney Program Office  
Roads and Maritime Services  
71-79 Pyrmont Bridge Road  
PYRMONT NSW 2009  

E: Lily.Wu@rms.nsw.gov.au  

22 December 2017  

Dear Ms Wu  

RE: SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE – NORTHERN CYCLE RAMP  
COMMUNITY CONSULTATION  

The North Sydney Cycling Strategy identifies the steps to the Sydney Harbour Bridge Cycleway as a major barrier to the further uptake of cycling as a day to day transport option. Having to dismount and push bikes up the 55 steps provides a significant disincentive for people to cycle, and some groups, such as parents with child seats and a growing group of older people with electric bikes, report feeling unable to safely negotiate the steps. The North Sydney Cycling Strategy makes a commitment to support step free access to the Bridge Cycleway, and in this regard Council supports the State Government in seeking a solution to this issue.  

While Council supports the intent of this project, we have a number of significant concerns regarding the proposed design and seek that these be priority considerations in future design development on this project. Concerns are raised specifically in regard to the following:  

- Heritage Impact  

Council is concerned that the current design will have unreasonable impact on the heritage value of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and related items and emphasise that provision of cycle access to the Bridge must ensure that the heritage value of significant items is not diminished.  

The Sydney Harbour Bridge, its approaches, and views to and from the Bridge are listed by a number of agencies in recognition of their international iconic status. The proposed design will impact upon elements of the Bridge defined as having ‘exceptional’ and ‘high’ heritage significance including the Bridge approaches and arches as described in the RMS Sydney Harbour Bridge Conservation Management Plan 2007. The proposal is in conflict with a number of policies in the CMP which are listed in Appendix A.
Bradfield Park has state significant historical, aesthetic and social value. The ramp will impact on all aspects of this value. The park forms part of the curtilage to the Bridge as defined by the National Heritage Register, and is therefore a critical contributor to the Bridge significance. Views of the Bridge and approaches from Bradfield Park are an essential component in conserving the cultural value of the Bridge and should remain unobstructed. In addition, there are significant Victorian archaeological sites within the park, that would be threatened by construction in the park.

The Milsons Point Railway Station includes state listed heritage items such as the Alfred Street entrance, awning, walls and abutments. These proposed ramp will obstruct these where it crosses in front of it and therefore impact on the aesthetic and historic values of these items.

A summary of items listed by various agencies is available in Appendix B

- **Open Space**

Bradfield Park is a highly significant open space that provides a physical and visual retreat for the North Sydney community and visitors to the area, particularly in the context of dense residential and commercial development in the surrounding area.

Bradfield Park North (north of Burton Street) is the most vulnerable part of Bradfield Park given that is it constrained by the Bridge wall and South Alfred Street. The proposed ramp will significantly impact on the availability, quality and amenity of space in this important section of the park. In particular, it will:

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- Alienate sections of the park, creating areas of low amenity and unusable space, particularly near to the ramp landing point.

Concerns are also raised about the potential for conflict at interfaces between pedestrian and cyclist areas.

Council is further concerned about the cumulative impact of the loss of open space along the Warringah Freeway corridor due to major transport projects currently being developed by the NSW State Government.
- **Transport Network Integration**

While the steps to the Bridge are the most significant cycle network barrier in this area, cycle links beyond the Bridge should also be considered in the context of an integrated network approach. We note that the RMS has been in contact with Council staff to commence discussions about further regional network connections and we look forward to assisting with further development of these projects.

We are concerned that the current design does not include any proposal to upgrade the existing cycleway access over the Bridge, as this falls well short of the level of service required to cater for existing demand or allow increased participation in transport cycling along this critical regional connection. We note the inadequacy of the exiting connection will be more acute in the likely event that improved access to the Bridge is successful in attracting significant increases in cycling participation.

We are further concerned that cycling links to and over the Bridge are not receiving sufficient attention in the development of Significant Infrastructure projects with a relationship to the Bridge – such as the Sydney Metro, B-Line, the Western Harbour Tunnel, Beaches Link and the associated Warringah Freeway re-design – and seek that integrated and high quality cycling access be developed as part of these projects. When considered cumulatively, these projects may affect travel demand significantly enough to consider major re-allocations of road space on the bridge deck, including accommodating cycling movements.

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The concerns raised by the Lavender Bay Precinct have been echoed in other community feedback provided to Council.

A further submission received by Council expressed support of the proposal as a way to increase participation in transport cycling and sought construction of the project as a priority.

A copy of the submissions is attached at Appendix C.
Recommendations

Noting that the design as exhibited is a concept, it is recommended that further design development on the Northern Cycle Ramp prioritise the investigation of design options/revisions which:

- do not impact on the heritage and cultural value of the Bridge and surrounding items
- will preserve and enhance the value and amenity of public open space in Bradfield Park
- integrate with the regional cycleway network and compliment other transport projects being undertaken in the Warringah freeway corridor.

Please note that the matters raised in this submission are yet to be considered at a full Council meeting, which is likely to occur in February 2018. Council will forward further correspondence relating to the position of Council on this project subject to the outcome of this Meeting.

Should you wish to further discuss this matter, please contact Michaela Kemp, Manager of Traffic and Transport Operations on 9936 8243.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Adrian Panuccio
A/General Manager

Policy 11.9 ‘Buildings or large plantings on the northern or southern sides of the harbour should not obscure or detract from the views from the Sydney Harbour Bridge toward Sydney Harbour and the city.’

Policy 12.1 Retention of existing open space for public use/recreation states that, ‘The existing park areas adjacent to the Sydney Harbour Bridge should remain public parks for passive recreation and unimpeded views to the bridge’ and

Policy 12.2 ‘The future management of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, approaches and parklands should appropriately conserve its character and the scale whilst retaining the existing open spaces historic viewing areas.’

Policy 13 Integrity of original design 13.3 Views of the original form of the rendered masonry approaches will be maintained and not obscured.

Policy 13.4 The fabric and design integrity of the main components of the bridge, comprising the arch, hangers, roadway, pylons, approach spans, piers and approaches including tunnels, tenancy spaces and Milsons Point railway station, will be conserved, where practicable.

Policy 19.1 New development should enhance the function and use of the bridge without obscuring or damaging the integrity of the original design or significant fabric.

Policy 19.2 New work should be designed to respond to the character of the existing significant design and fabric.

Policy 19.3 Before committing to any proposal for change to the bridge, including the introduction of new uses, the impact of the proposed changes on the cultural heritage values of the bridge as a whole, any operational and security requirements, and other relevant agreements regarding the use of the bridge, should be assessed.
Appendix B – Summary of listed heritage items

1. National Heritage List

Sydney Harbour Bridge, Bradfield Hwy, Dawes Point - Milsons Point, NSW, Australia
Item 105888

The Statement of Significance refers to its aesthetic, social and technological values, that it is an engineering achievement and internationally significant and ‘has become a famous and enduring national icon and symbol of Australia.’ The physical description includes the northern and southern approaches and also notes that ‘the picturesque blending of the natural environment and man-made structures around the harbour foreshores’ that ‘has proved an inspiration for generations of artists and writers’. It also notes that ‘no other bridge in Australia compares in its technical significance with the structure of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and its pylons and constructed approaches between Argyle Street in the south and Arthur Street in the north. The Conservation Management Plan outlines other measures to conserve the integrity of the bridge, including that:
the fabric of the rendered masonry approach structures not be obscured or damaged, the visual form and setting of the bridge not be obscured by buildings or large plantings on the harbour foreshore, views and vistas be maintained

2. NSW State Heritage Register

a) Sydney Harbour Bridge Road Approaches and Viaducts (Road and Rail) Item 00781
– The statement of significance notes that the ‘bridge, its pylons and its approaches are all important elements in townscape of areas both near and distant from it. The curved northern approach gives a grand sweeping entrance to the bridge with continually changing views of the bridge and harbour’.

The physical description includes the bridge approaches. the archaeological relics found in Bradfield Park including the well/cesspit and sandstone walls at Bradfield Park North and are assessed as having 'moderate' heritage significance at a local level in the context of the overall established significance of Bradfield Park.

b) State Heritage Listing for Milsons Point Railway Station Group- Item 01194- The Statement of Significance notes 'Milsons Point station has state historical significance as an essential component of the northern approaches to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The form and detail of the subway and tunnels in particular are significant as part of the overall design and specifications for the bridge as set down by Chief Engineer JJC Bradfield. The Milsons Point station retains a number of original features and decorative elements from its original construction phase including the platform building and entrance way awning from the Alfred Street side.' This state listed item is assessed as meeting six of the seven criteria for heritage listing including historical, associative, aesthetic, social, rarity and representativeness. The listing description includes the Alfred St entrance, Alfred St entrance awning, the Bridge walls and abutments as well as the Burton street underbridge.
3. State Rail Authority Heritage Register

a) Milsons Point Railway Station Group – Item 4801059 – The Statement of Significance notes the ‘the Bridge (and the viaducts, tunnels, bridges and stations incorporated into the approaches) are symbolic of Australia’s industrial maturity. The physical description includes the underbridges and arches.

b) Milsons Point Railway Station - Item 4801026 – The Statement of Significance notes ‘Milsons Point station has state historical significance as an essential component of the northern approaches to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The form and detail of the subway and tunnels in particular are significant as part of the overall design and specifications for the bridge as set down by Chief Engineer JJC Bradfield. The Milsons Point station retains a number of original features and decorative elements from its original construction phase including the platform building and entrance way awning from the Alfred Street side.’ The physical description includes the Alfred St entrance, Alfred St entrance awning, the Bridge walls and abutments as well as the Burton street underbridge.

4. Roads & Maritime Services Heritage & Conservation Register

Sydney Harbour Bridge Approaches & Viaducts Item43301067 Bridge No 226 – The Statement of Significance includes views from the harbour, the significance of the approach spans and roadways as well as the archaeological values of Bradfield Park. The physical description does not itemise the approaches, arches or Milsons Point Station but refers primary to the steel arch and pylons. The Bridge has a Conservation Management Plan (CMP). The cycleway proposal is contrary to conservation policies within the CMP as noted in my earlier email.

5. Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005

Sydney Harbour Bridge (Item 67)- Regulation 15 notes the planning principles for heritage conservation are that heritage items in and Sydney Harbour should be recognised and conserved and that ‘significant fabric, settings, relics and views associated with the heritage significance of heritage items should be conserved.’ Heritage item No 67 includes ‘Sydney Harbour Bridge, including approaches and viaducts (road and rail)’ and notes that they are of state significance.

6. North Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2013

This has separate heritage listings and inventory sheets for the following:

a) Milsons Point Railway Station Item I0531– The Statement of Significance notes the station has ‘state historical significance as an essential component of the northern approaches to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The form and detail of the subway and tunnels in particular are significant as part of the overall design and specifications for the bridge as set down by Chief Engineer JJC Bradfield. The Milsons Point station retains a number of original features and decorative elements from its original construction phase including the platform building
and entrance way awning from the Alfred Street side’. The physical description includes the Alfred St entrance, Alfred St entrance awning, the Bridge walls and abutments as well as the Burton street underbridge.

b) **Sydney Harbour Bridge Approach Viaducts and Bays Item I0530** – The Statement of Significance notes the Bridge as an icon and for its social and aesthetic significance. It notes that the inventory sheet is basic and incomplete. The physical description does not provide a schedule of components.

c) **Sydney Harbour Bridge Approach Viaducts and Bays Under the Warringa Expressway Item I0530** – The Statement of Significance notes that the Bridge is an ‘important example of period design which includes a number of significant road overbridges of aesthetic and technical merit.’ The physical description includes the viaducts, underbridge arches, Burton St underbridge.

d) **Bradfield Park Item I0541** - The Statement of Significance notes that it is an ‘important local park with extensive views of Sydney harbour and the city skyline’ and ‘associated with the harbour bridge construction and named for J.J.C. Bradfield.’. The physical description notes the Bridge pylons that are in the park but does not note the Bridge approaches or arches. The inventory sheet notes that it is incomplete.
Appendix C – Community Submissions

Submission A – Lavender Bay Precinct
Submission B – North Sydney LGA Resident

Re: Sydney Harbour Bridge – Community update
Cycleway Access Proposals

My wife and I have lived at the above address for over 17 years and I now refer to the above Proposals released to the Community in November 2017.

Respectively I suggest that the premises upon which the proposals for the northern side of the Bridge are based are totally flawed. You assume that cyclists should have unrestrained continuity of use without limitations and with priority over pedestrians and vehicles. The position you take is opposed by residents in Milsons Point and I suggest also by the large majority of the population.

Referring specifically to the RMS statements:

‘At the northern end of the cycleway cyclists are required to stop, dismount and climb/descend 55 steps, near Burton Street.’

The current access point for cyclists clashes with pedestrians and vehicles at Burton Street. It is imperative that cyclists dismount before reaching this point for the safety of all parties. North Sydney Council failed to reinstate calming barriers at this location after carrying out minor works some years ago and pedestrians have been injured as a result of this failure.

On the eastern side of the Bridge many thousands of pedestrians use the steps on a daily basis. To suggest that cyclists should have special consideration by the installation of a ramp, is preposterous.

‘the steps limit access to the cycleway’

The steps slow down the movement of cyclists at this point which, due to safety considerations, is exactly what is required at this location.

‘create a pinchpoint in the cycle network’

Your proposals assume that cyclists should have continuity of use of an exclusive corridor. Such a proposition for usage is contrary to the interests of pedestrians and vehicles that are required to stop and give way to other traffic at stop lights, roundabouts and crossings in their normal daily activities.

‘can provide a safety hazard if cyclists choose to ride down the steps’

If there isn’t already there should be signs at the top of the ramp advising cyclists that riding down the ramp is not permitted and they will be fined. If they then choose to do so they should be fined accordingly. This system of fines and punishment that currently applies on our roads should be equally applied to the activities of cyclists.

The ‘security guard’ currently located at the top of the stairs should be relocated to the bottom and authorised to fine cyclists riding contrary to the permitted use.

‘can lead to queuing across a pedestrian path during peak traffic times.’
Pedestrians and vehicles are aware of the queuing issue on every road within Sydney. Are you suggesting that cyclists should be excluded from this common problem?

What is required immediately is (a) reinstatement of the calming barriers that North Sydney Council realigned several years ago (b) dedication of one of the parking spots in Burton Street for cyclists to dismount when riding from the north and for cyclists coming off the bridge to remount (c) installation of warning signs that pedestrian have the right of way along the footpath.

Each of the RMS proposals for a choice of location for a new ramp increases the problems for pedestrians and vehicles in this area. The movement of cyclists at speed on and off a ramp anywhere in this vicinity creates a safety nightmare. Such a decision may have the full support of the cycling community but exacerbates the current safety issues and ads further major concerns for the safety of pedestrians.

All of the proposals by RMS create the same basic problems and don’t address the major issue which is the potential link of the bridge cycleway with other cycle corridors already in place in the northern section of the North Sydney area.

What the RMS should specifically address is how to link the current bridge cycleway with the disused tram corridor on the north eastern side of the bridge adjoining the Harbourview Hotel. From there the challenge is to link with an overbridge across the Pacific Highway to a cycleway on the western side of the Freeway past St Leonards Park to Falcon Street. At various stages along the way there should be safe ingress and egress points. The cyclist steps should remain at Burton Street for local cyclists with the safety measures referred to above put into place.

As an integral part of any policies related to cyclists must be the registration of the cycle with distinguishable plates so that pedestrians and drivers of vehicles are able to identify the cycles and the rider.

Submission C Submission B – North Sydney LGA Resident

ATT: RMS – SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE PROJECT

As a North Shore resident and regular commuter having used the Harbour Bridge cycle facilities in excess of 1,000 times over the past 10 years, I have reviewed the proposed new proposed cycleway design (refer: http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/sydney-inner/sydney-harbour-bridge/access-projects/cyclist-access/cycleway-access-proposals.html)

I am of the option that this is a well considered design that will provide convinient access on both sides of the bridge and will motivate an increased number of cycle commuters to and from the CBD over the next 30 years . This will reduce peak hour road congestion and the demand on bus / train services, and the NSW tax payers’ increasing health burden resulting from raising rates of obesity plaguing our State .
As this modification is well overdue, I recommend that the RMS, supported by all levels of Government and local authorities, expedite the approval process and commence with construction as soon as possible.