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4th October, 2022

Duck River Parklands Draft Strategic Masterplan Submission

This submission has been prepared on behalf of CAMWEST, a Bicycle NSW affiliated Bicycle User Group with a focus on advocating for and encouraging cycling in the Blacktown, Parramatta, and Cumberland Local Government Areas of Western Sydney.

We would like to commend council on commissioning such a comprehensive masterplan for the Duck River corridor. Once fully realised we believe it will both enhance the amenity to the local community and provide active transport connectivity for both local communities and those from a wider geographical area.

We are excited by and look forward to seeing the plan take shape, with the improved environmental outcomes, parklets, market area and housing facing the Parklands – just to mention a few of the Masterplan features.

While not wishing to diminish the importance or significance of the Community & Culture and Environment core themes, the main focus of this submission is on the first of the three core themes – Connections – with a further honing to what could be defined as ‘mid distance’ connections. The Pipeline Corridor Masterplan also dovetails into the southern section of this study area, providing much needed future off-road connectivity west to Guildford and Prospect Reservoir.

One of the activities of most Bicycle User Groups (including CAMWEST) is to conduct organised rides taking groups of riders on led rides. Group sizes, distances, and riding conditions vary. Safety is front of mind when selecting a route. CAMWEST are currently focusing on routes that are predominantly off-road (shared path) or along quieter residential streets, with total distances of around 20-40km. Under this criterion, connectivity on a regional level is vital.

Often on the group rides there’ll be at least one ‘stopover’ point. This can be a café, market, or other ‘point of interest’. From a cycling perspective, the other ‘core themes’ can become attractive when they enhance the connectivity aspect, or maybe even as destinations in themselves. To our chagrin, CAMWEST have yet to organise a ride to probably the main current drawcard of the precinct - the Auburn Botanic Gardens during the Cherry Blossom Festival - although it is on our destination radar. Hopefully things will fall into place next year!

Note:

A number of the map images in this document are taken from the ‘Cycle Map’ layer (or rendering) of Open Street Map – see <https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=14/-33.8558/151.0179&layers=C>. The thin blue solid lines represent existing paved shared paths. The quality of the paths may vary. The dashed blue lines represent unsealed or unspecified surface paths. The background colour on some of these lines and roads supposedly represent whether they are part of ‘official’ local or regional networks, although sometimes people specify their own ‘unofficial’ routes.

➤ Existing Paths omitted from the current Masterplan:

While we applaud and look forward to the improved connectivity afforded by the new shared paths, bridges, and Mona St underpass as outlined in the Masterplan, we feel there has been a disfavour done by omitting to mention several existing shared paths within or along the border of the study area.

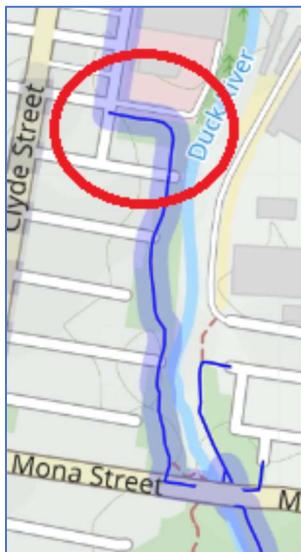
1. The most significant for us is the connection between where the shared path ends on the north side of Wellington Rd and alongside Chisolm Rd to Everley Rd (Green circled area on below image). We acknowledge that this current route is less than ideal, with the crossing of Wellington Rd and narrow paths, but it is an official path and does hold some utility.
2. The second is the path alongside Wellington Rd between Erie St and the current Duck River path (Orange Circled area). Another narrower than standard path, this one taking riders close to the roadway with no barriers in between. This path is used and useful.
3. The third is the path through New Glasgow Park, between Seventh and Factory Sts. (Red circled area).



The lower portion of the study area, taken from 'Existing Local Connections Plan', page 37 of the Masterplan



Path ending at Seventh St in 'Existing Local Connections Plan'.



Actual path continues from Seventh St through New Glasgow Park to Factory St.



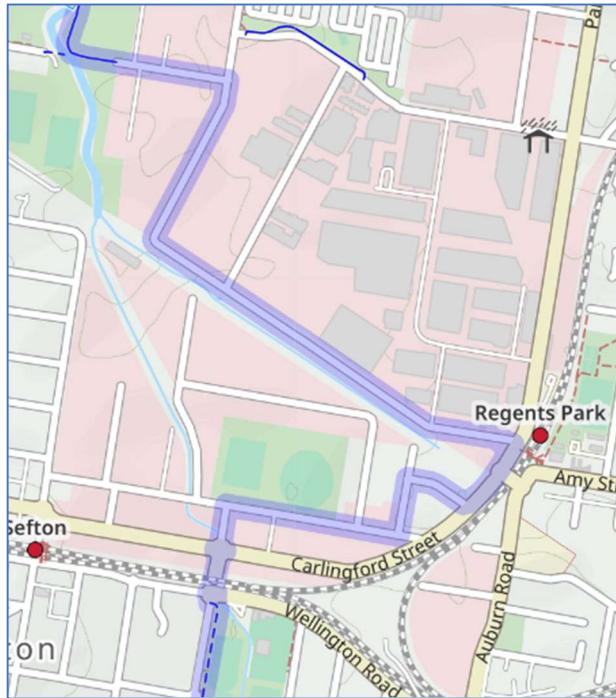
Marked image from Open Street Map

➤ Southern Connection:

The main issue with the existing corridor is connectivity, particularly with the southern section of the shared path between Everley Rd and Princes Rd West. It doesn't really lead anywhere useful for most people. This means that it doesn't attract the use that it could.

(To date CAMWEST have used this section in one of our 'self-guided' rides where we connect mainly 'on-road' in an easterly direction to Rookwood Cemetery – See <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37487335>).

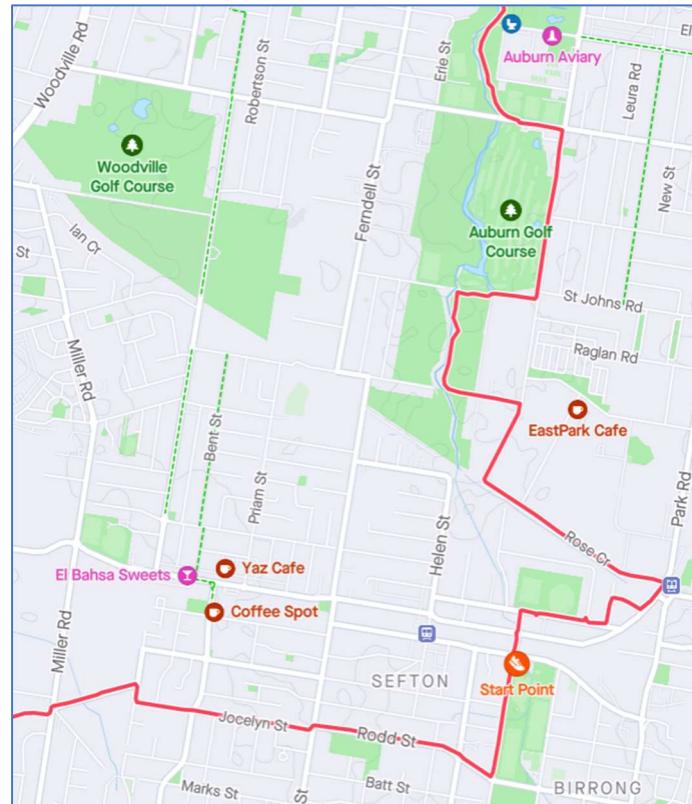
To get from the end of the path at Princes Rd West to the southern side of the pipeline is quite a roundabout route, going through the somewhat intimidating industrial area around Rose Crescent, and for some people riding illegally on footpaths through Regents Park to cross over the pipeline.



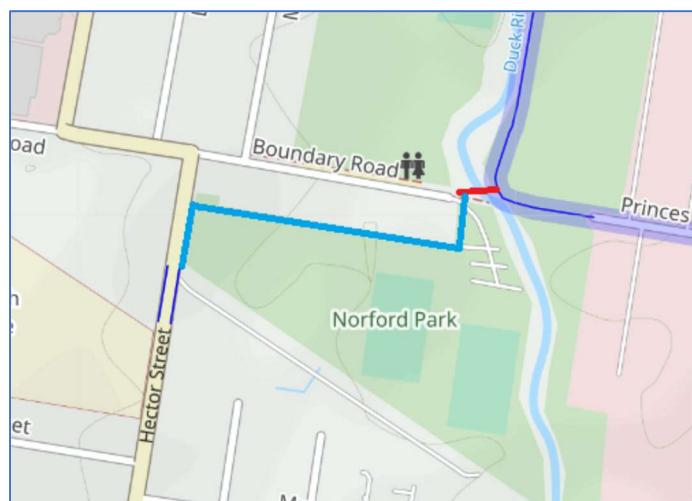
Route from Princes St West at the top of the map to cross over the railway line near Sefton Station

Rather than this circuitous route, we would love to see the bridge between Boundary Rd and the existing shared path (Princes Rd West) where the current causeway exists (Red line on map - Project ID 19 in section 5.7 of the Masterplan) fast tracked. From our perspective, this is the highest priority linkage in the Masterplan. As well as connections to the south, this would also provide an important East-West connection.

The blue route through Norford Park is shown on the Masterplan, but it is unclear to us whether it is a shared path or not. This would be a great connection with the shared path alongside the new Hector St pipeline crossing bridge.



Western Sydney Cycling Network, one of our neighbouring Bicycle User Groups, holds a 43km loop ride from their Fairfield base using this section of route. See <https://strava.app.link/vYGMz04Pwtb>.



The long wished-for bridge over the Duck River at Boundary Rd (in red) with a possible connection to the new Hector St bridge (in blue).

CAMWEST members have been dreaming of the bridge for a number of years:



(Left) CAMWEST members crossing the causeway (with bikes) in 2005. See <https://camwest.org.au/archived/projects/duck-river-valley.html>.



Current photo of crossing

➤ Northern Section ('The Wilds' precinct):

1. It's good to see a proposed route from the current termination of the shared path at Sheffield St (Bangor Park) through to Manchester Rd – see the red circled area on map to the right. There is a currently a short unofficial but widely used 'walking track' across land owned by Sydney Water which connects the two. It's interesting that there's a separate proposed path that appears to cross the Sydney Water land, while the proposed cycling route circumvents it through what appears to currently be private property.
If able to be built, this would provide both an alternative to Factory St and form the basis of a useful loop around 'The Wilds' precinct for local residents.



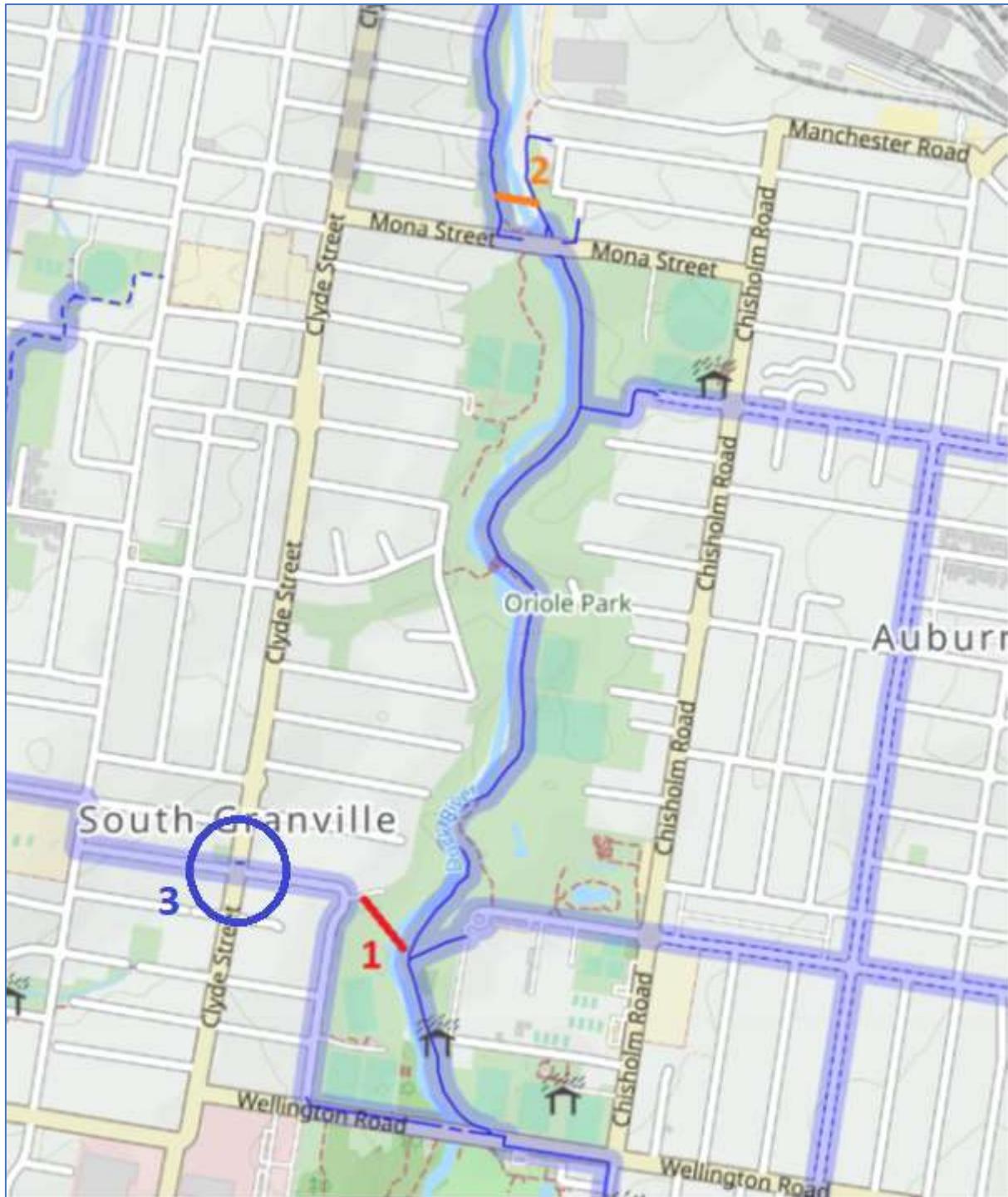
Part of 'The Wilds' precinct, north of Mona St

2. Gaining permission for riders to ride across the Clyde Station overpass bridge would be a large step toward making the path an attractive route for riders from further abroad. We understand that Council have already made an approach to Transport NSW in this regard, and we wish to commend them for this.



Clyde Station Overpass, viewed from Factory St.

➤ East-West connections:



Although slightly lower on the priority list than the Southern connection, improvements to the East-West connectivity across the Duck River is still something that CAMWEST very much looks forward to.

1. The 'Garden Bridge' (red line on above map) crossing of the Duck River at Chiswick Rd would be welcomed. Chiswick Rd is a recognised East-West route, and having the bridge would remove the current requirement to detour via Wellington Rd.
2. The current footpath crossing alongside Mona St is narrow and doesn't meet shared path standards. CAMWEST would like to see another solution found for crossing the river near this location. This may involve widening of the current bridge or constructing a new one nearby (See Orange line on map).
3. If within the scope of the Masterplan, CAMWEST would like to see shared path linkages with Chiswick Rd roadway and the pedestrian crossing of Clyde Street included. If feasible, we would encourage conversion of the current zebra crossing to a zebra and cycle parallel crossing.

➤ Amenities:

In this instance Amenities is defined in a fairly broad sense – In what some in the cycling community refer to as the Inputs (*Liquid and Food*) and Outputs (*Toilets*).

Prior to working on this submission, I knew of two toilets (1 normally closed) and one water tap within proximity to the current eastern path. I've since found 2 other toilets and another tap through this corridor, plus several on the western side of the river.

As a general rule recreational cyclists like their café stops. Locations with a good café can be a real drawcard for individuals or groups of riders. There doesn't appear to be any permanent café near the Gardens, and the Masterplan doesn't specifically mention any planned within the Parklands Reserve.

- We're wondering whether this may be an option for the Masterplan, or are there planning or other reasons why a café or similar may be off the agenda? We feel that a café set in tranquil surrounds could be quite an asset to the Parklands.

To my knowledge there are three current cafes or other places selling coffee around the study area (marked on the map to the right):

1. The Clyde Factory Café, just north of Clyde station on Berry St. It is open 6am until 2pm Monday – Friday, but closed on weekends.
2. El Rawda Bakery and Café, on the corner of Ostend St and Clyde Rd, South Granville. Hours unknown, but was open Sunday afternoon. This establishment is reasonably accessible now up Chisolm Rd and a short distance along Clyde Street. If the western path from Mona St to the Garden bridge is constructed it would be accessible from Ostend St. There is a small supermarket next door.
3. Oxygen Café, in the Wellington Rd Business Centre, 46 Wellington Rd, South Granville. Hours 6am-4pm, 7 days a week. There is a small supermarket next door and a butcher next to that, with one or two other eateries in the complex. The complex is accessible by a short stretch of footpath and a less-than-ideal pedestrian crossing of Wellington Rd from Erie St.

Prior to researching this submission, I was only aware of the Clyde Factory Café – which I've never been to as it's not open on weekends when I do most of my riding.

Just a note that in the Strava map previously mentioned, the cycling group detoured into Granville for coffee, rather than visiting any of these establishments – possibly because they weren't aware of them.

- CAMWEST would like to see water bubblers included along major shared and pedestrian paths where practicable.
- Wayfinding signage is vital for any amenities that are not readily visible from main pedestrian and cycling routes.



Café detour

➤ Wellington Rd:

CAMWEST very much welcomes the proposed crossing of Wellington Rd with the bridge. This is by far the safest way to cross this stretch of road. However, from what we can see this is probably a fair way into the future. The more immediate issue is to ensure that the current crossings are as safe as possible with the highest utility value.

- If not cost and engineering prohibitive, we believe it would be safer in the short to medium term if the current shared-path crossing of Wellington Rd could be moved to the signalised crossing at Chisom Rd. We're aware that this would require a reasonably major reconfiguring of the lights at this intersection and so may not be practicable.

If able to be implemented, this would also assist pedestrians walking along the western side of Chisom Rd. At present to cross Wellington Rd legally pedestrians need to do three crosses at the traffic signals or walk down and back to the shared path crossing.



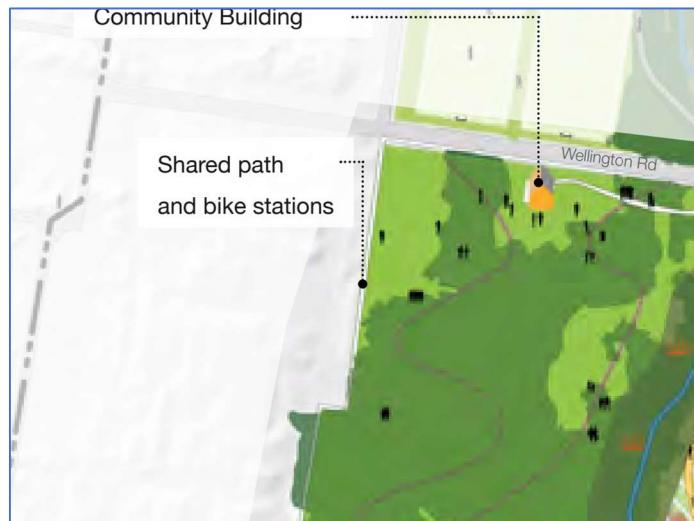
Map showing two current crossings of Wellington Rd, suggested traffic light crossing, and proposed path (from the Masterplan) along the western edge of the Wategora precinct.

There is also the crossing near Erie St and the Wellington Rd Business Centre.

- Currently, when crossing from the northern side of Wellington Rd, sight lines for both pedestrians and vehicle are partially obstructed by trees growing on the road nature strip. Riders and pedestrians need to be fairly close to the road before getting a clear view of approaching traffic. This carriageway is a single lane.
- Crossing of the westbound carriageway is more difficult as the road at this point is dual lane.

We note that there appears to be a proposed path along the western edge of the Wategora precinct, which would also border the above Business Centre.

- We're wondering how access to this path from the north side of Wellington Rd is proposed? Is the above crossing planned to be used?
- CAMWEST would like to see some consideration made to making this a safer crossing.
- We would like to see the current footpath along both sides of Wellington Rd in the immediate area of the crossing widened to shared-path width, to enable riders from Erie St to access the café and other businesses within the Business Centre and presumably in the future the path beside the Wategora precinct.



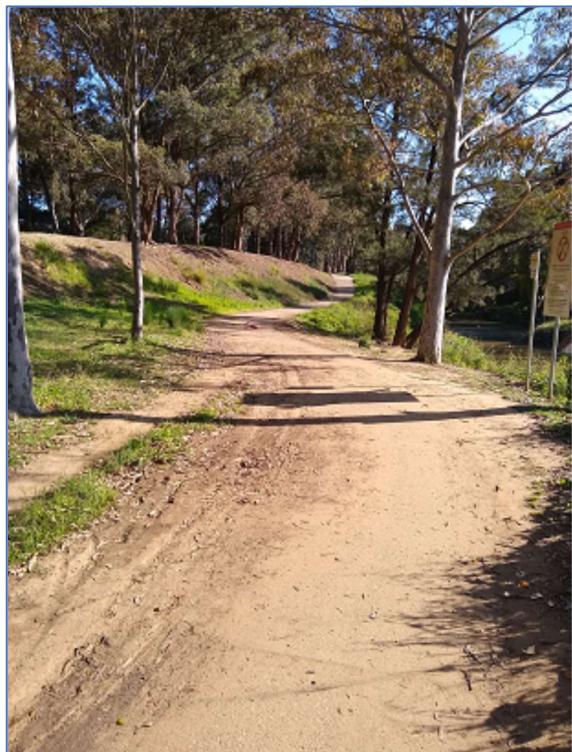
Proposed path alongside the western edge of the Wategora precinct

➤ Corrective actions on current pathway:

We note that one of the actions in the Masterplan is to upgrade the current 'East' section of pathway between Mona St and Wellington Rd. We imagine Council are aware of the following issues, but thought they were worth noting here for completeness.

Bumpiness: Firstly, it's encouraging to see that some of the 'bumpiness' (caused by height differences between adjoining slabs) has been rectified with the re-laying of some slabs. While there are still more slab height differentials that require addressing, it's great to see a start has been made.

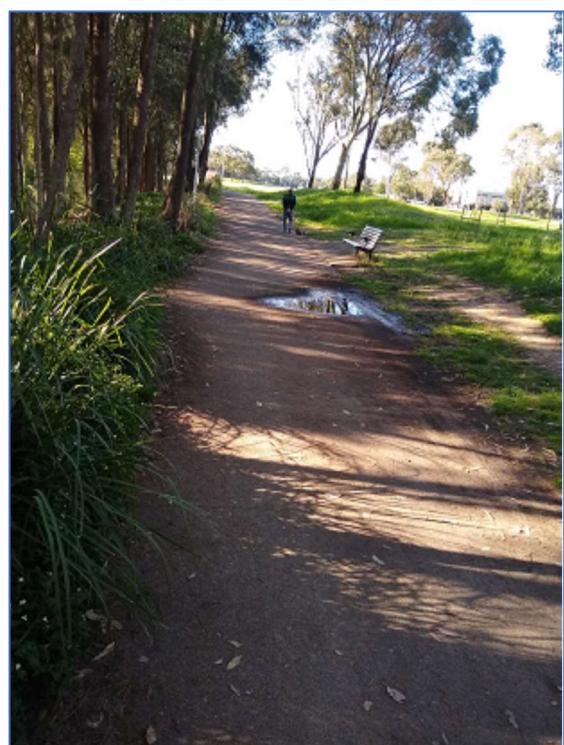
Sediment and water on pathway: This can make the pathway slippery and dangerous for riders.



Sediment across parts of the path in several locations.



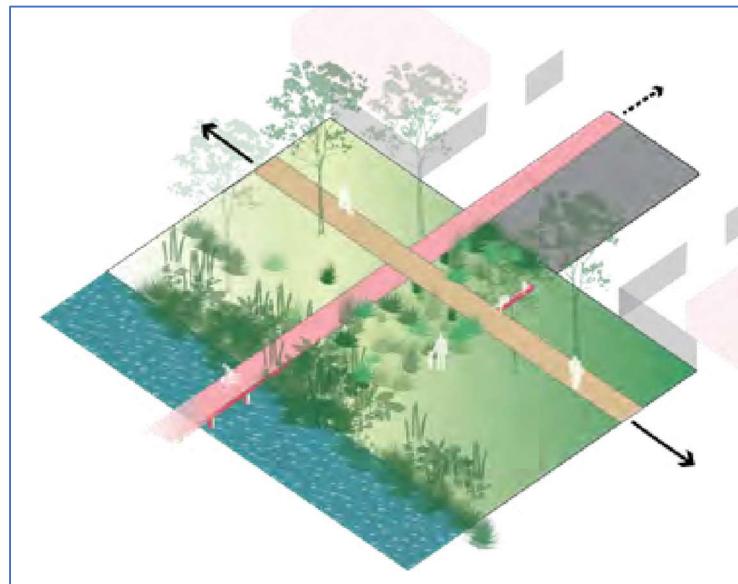
Sediment in the Mona St underpass



Water pooling across the path

➤ Closing Comments

- We are happy to clarify or elaborate on any of the points or suggestions outlined in this submission.
- CAMWEST are keen to be involved with the project as the various parts of the masterplan evolve and move into the detailed planning and construction phases. One of our members, Mark Robson, has lived in the Cumberland area for many years and as well as being a keen local cyclist, has been involved on the advocacy front with the former Holroyd council and other agencies. He would be a good 'sounding board' for any cycling related plans or ideas that you may have.
- Where possible, we would request that shared paths have a cleared verge along each side and be lit at least in the evenings and early mornings, possibly via zoned sensor lights.
- From a safety perspective, CAMWEST aren't terribly keen on 'cross' intersections. We believe it may be safer to have offset 'T' intersections. If the offset model is adopted, the challenge is to stop people creating diagonal shortcuts.
- From CAMWEST's perspective, the highest priority 'project' of the Masterplan is the bridge across the Duck River between Boundary Rd and the shared path leading onto Princes Rd West.
- This submission has been prepared with input from CAMWEST member Mark Robson. Although prepared with different emphasis, I wish to endorse submissions made by Mark and Bicycle NSW.



CAMWEST are not huge fans of 'Cross' intersections

Prepared by Rob Kemp on behalf of CAMWEST.