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7<sup>th</sup> October 2024

## Epping Bridge Project Feedback

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Epping Bridge Project (*The Plan*).<sup>[1]</sup>

These comments have been prepared on behalf of CAMWEST, a Bicycle NSW affiliated Bicycle User Group (BUG) with a focus on advocating for and encouraging cycling in Western Sydney. The Epping area overlaps with our neighbouring BUG Bike North who may also provide some feedback.

### ➤ Executive Summary

*The Plan* appears to be very car thoroughfare focused, with little more than a token thought given to improving the existing challenging movement conditions for non-road users around the station precinct. The guidelines in the Road User Space Allocation Policy<sup>[2]</sup> seem to have been largely brushed aside. Although not explored here, we've heard that even the supposed benefits for road users could be questionable.

CAMWEST is supportive of the planned shared path along the southern side of a widening Epping Bridge, although our preference would be a separated bi-directional cycleway. We feel this current plan is very much a missed opportunity to improve the liveability and vitality of the Epping Station Precinct. We'd like to see the project take a more balanced approach between the needs of road and non-road users.

The lift on the shop side of the Beecroft Rd station pedestrian overpass is basically a single point of failure for the movement of pedestrians with wheeled transport/luggage or restrictive mobility issues. When the lift is out of action it's quite a cumbersome detour to access the station from Langston Place instead utilising multiple road crossings and signalised intersection crossings. *The Plan* does little to improve this. As identified in the project's Transport Impact Assessment<sup>[3]</sup> (and from personal experience), the lift has had several failures recently. We believe it is imperative that the works associated with the new bridge provide viable alternatives for when the lift is inoperable due to failure or replacement works.

Below we present comments and suggested improvements representing the spectrum from relatively minor to significant works which we believe would aid the movement of people with wheeled devices around the precinct.

### ➤ Context

The following comments consider several people movement groupings:

- People with bikes or tricycles (manual or power assisted) who:
  - Wish to access the Langston Place Opal Bike Cage or Bicycle Lockers approaching the station precinct from Epping Rd to the east or Bridge St to the west.

- Access the station to transport their bikes on either the heavy rail or Metro services.

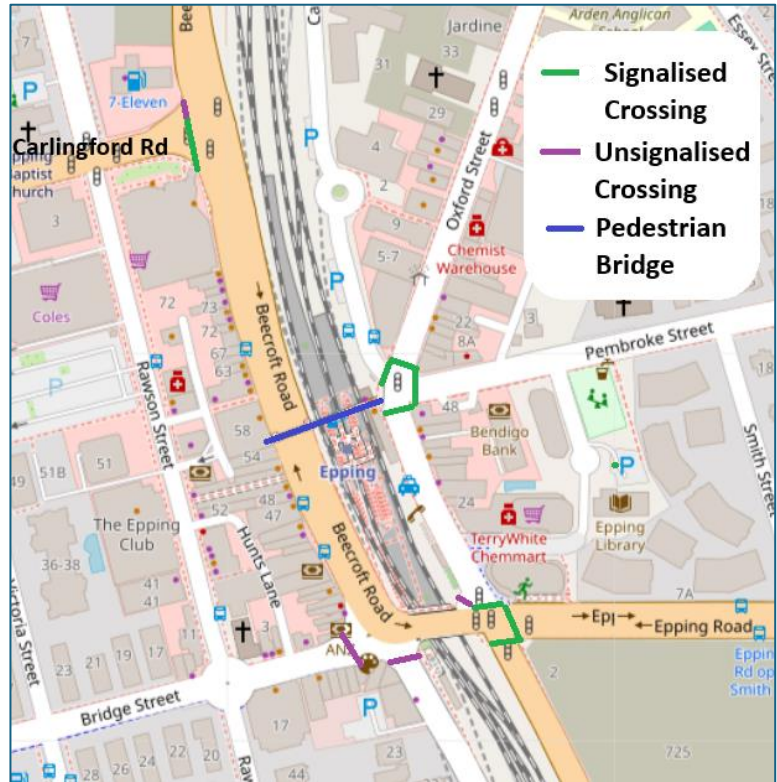
People using mobility assistance devices to:

- Access the railway station.
- Transit between the shops on the western side of Beecroft Rd and Langston Place and further east.

## ➤ Current Situation

Currently there are steps and a lift between street level and the station pedestrian overbridge on each side of Beecroft Rd. If using the steps is not an option and one of the lifts is down, there is no way to access the lift on the other side of the road apart from a fair walk around via the Epping Rd crossing and several other signalised and unsignalised crossings – or accessing the overbridge or station entrance from Langston Place.

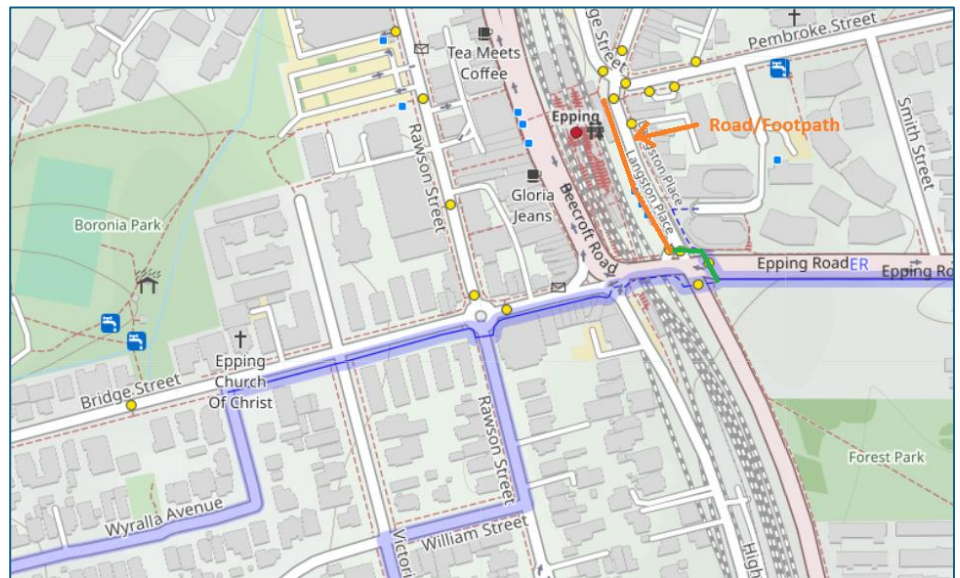
Even the Carlingford Rd & Beecroft Rd T-intersection north of the station doesn't have a signalised pedestrian crossing of Beecroft Rd – or path all the way from the crossing to the station along the eastern side of Beecroft Rd. The lift on the western (shops) side of Beecroft Rd has broken down a lot lately, leaving the only available option of doing the long walk mentioned above to/from Langston Place.



Marked-up Open Street Map image showing current pedestrian routes around the Epping Station precinct.

At present there is no recognised safe access cycling route to Epping station staying on the western side of the line, despite potential routes using Boronia Park or Victoria St through to the walkway that leads to Beecroft Rd near the pedestrian overbridge. Currently some riders walk their bikes along Beecroft Rd between the Bridge St shared path and the pedestrian overbridge lift to access the station.

On the eastern side of the bridge there is the 'missing leg' of the Blaxland Rd/Langston Place intersection, with users required to cross 3 legs of the intersection with only the Epping Rd crossing leg having bicycle lanterns. Despite containing bike parking, the path along the



Marked-up Cycling layer enabled Open Street Map image of current cycling routes around the Epping Station precinct.

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western side of Langston Place has no markings to indicate that it may be a shared path.

## ➤ Comments and suggestions relating to *The Plan*

*The Plan* appears to be almost solely focused on getting the efficient movement of motor vehicles through the precinct and reducing ‘congestion’ during peak times. While most of the CAMWEST members are also car drivers, on one level we can appreciate this goal. However from our perspective, even with improved vehicle flow, we fear that we’ll be back to similar levels of congestion in the not-too-distant future given the expected population growth in the area. We need to offer people viable alternatives so they don’t always default to car use. Putting it another way, car-use needs to be a ‘Plan B’ rather than ‘Plan A’. This travel mode-shift needs to be driven by the State Government and reinforced by local government. Local cycling groups have a role to play here by showing community members viable routes to town centres and other trip generators.

While CAMWEST welcomes the inclusion of the ‘missing cycling link’ along the southern side of the bridge which will help facilitate east-west Active Transport movements, it does very little to improve the situation for those accessing the station precinct from Bridge St.

We note in the Transport Impact Assessment<sup>[3]</sup> the low levels of cyclists measured around Langston Place. We would argue that part of the reason for this could be attributed to the difficulty of getting around the precinct safely and conveniently by bike.

The following marked-up image from *The Plan* shows some of the possible improvements that we believe would allow for a more efficient movement of pedestrians and cyclists around the planned bridge:



Marked-up copy of the map from <https://caportal.com.au/tfnsw/epping-bridge-project/map>

### 1. Staged Crossing of Epping Rd

While presently a single (un-staged) crossing, we acknowledge the benefits mentioned that a staged crossing could potentially bring:

*‘The pedestrian crossing over Epping Road will be upgraded to a staged pedestrian crossing to improve road and pedestrian safety. The upgraded crossing will make pedestrians more visible*

*to drivers and provide an opportunity for people with restricted mobility to rest and more safely cross over in two stages, if required.’<sup>[4]</sup>*

While initially un-intuitive to us, we also note the apparent advantage of the staged crossing mentioned in the Transport Impact Assessment <sup>[3]</sup> [Page 40, Section 4.4.1]:

- *With a single crossing, active transport users can only start their crossing in the first part of C-phase. That is a short 6-second ‘Walk’ window in a total cycle time of 130 seconds. The staged crossing provides more windows of opportunity to cross, particularly in the northbound direction.*
- *There are phase overlaps in the staged crossing which provides similar crossing continuity as a single crossing. For example, the southbound crossing occurs first in C-phase and the second crossing in D-phase. The northbound movement can start in B-phase and the second crossing in the following C-phase.*

We imagine that the signal phasing timings will be variable over the day and the day of the week. Pedestrians and other users must not be disadvantaged timewise by the staged crossing over the present un-staged crossing.

One potential downside to the staged crossing is that pedestrians and riders will be tempted to cross against the lights given the shorter crossing distance, thereby introducing additional risks for all users.

## **2. Path along the western side of Langston Place.**

There’s an Opal Bike Cage and individual bike lockers along the western side of Langston Place. From the artist’s impressions it looks like the path may be a little wider than the current path between Bridge St and the bike storage area. We ask that either this path be delineated as a shared path, or a dedicated two-way cycleway be created on the western side of Langston Place.

## **3. Make Slip Lane Zebra Crossing a combined Pedestrian and Cyclist Crossing.**

If reasonable from a driver’s visibility perspective, we would like to see the zebra crossing of the slip lane into Langston Place become a shared pedestrian and cyclist crossing.

## **4. Install Bicycle Lanterns on the signalised crossing of Langston Place.**

At present this crossing only has pedestrian lanterns. We ask that bicycle crossing lanterns (either combined with pedestrian or separated dedicated lanterns) be fitted.

## **5. Install Bicycle Lanterns on the signalised crossing of Blaxland Rd.**

Like the above crossing of Langston Place, at present the Blaxland Rd crossing only has pedestrian lanterns. we ask that bicycle crossing lanterns (either combined with pedestrian or separate dedicated lanterns) be fitted.

## **6. Crossing on the western side of the Blaxland Rd/Langston Pl intersection.**

From an Active Transport perspective, a crossing of the ‘missing leg’ of this major intersection would be fantastic. It would offer easier access to the bike lockers and station from the southern side of Bridge St and provide a shorter route to the station and eastern side of Epping when the pedestrian overbridge lift fails again. We acknowledge that it would drastically alter planned vehicular movements through this intersection.

## 7. Combined pedestrian and cyclist crossing of High St.

At present the crossing of High St is indicated only as a pedestrian zebra crossing. We ask that instead a combined pedestrian and cyclist crossing be placed here.

## 8. New station entrance

If platforms 1 & 2 were extended under the bridge, there may be room to build an entrance to these platforms off the new bridge shared path. This would assist most people requiring station access from the south side of the bridge. Note that passengers requiring access to platform 3 would either need to go up or down one level from platforms 1 & 2 to one of the existing concourses before accessing platform 3. Access down to the Metro platforms can be gained from platforms 1 & 2.



Current view from the end of Platforms 1 & 2 through to the south side of the existing bridge.



Looking over railing on existing bridge to grassed area in between lines where platforms 1 & 2 could potentially be extended, with lift access up to new bridge.



## ➤ Closing Comments

We understand that in the longer-term Beecroft Rd may be widened and the shopping strip reconfigured. This doesn't assist pedestrians or cyclists moving around the precinct in the short to medium term.

We believe that it's worth considering taking some of the vehicular lanes across the widened bridge to create priority bus lanes to help prioritise bus movements.

A separated bi-directional cycling path across the planned widened bridge would be an even better solution than the planned path.

We reiterate that the current Epping Bridge Plans need to be revisited to redress the current imbalance in vehicular and people movement priorities. As mentioned earlier, we can't see much evidence that the Road User Space Allocation Policy <sup>[2]</sup> has been followed - but we'd love to be proven wrong!

We would be happy to clarify any of the points outlined in this document or assist in any other way to improve *The Plan*.

This feedback was prepared by Rob Kemp on behalf of CAMWEST Bicycle User Group Inc. with input and ideas from other local bike riders.

### References

- 1 <https://www.nsw.gov.au/have-your-say/epping-bridge-project>
- 2 [https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2024/road-user-space-allocation-policy\\_july-2024.pdf](https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2024/road-user-space-allocation-policy_july-2024.pdf)
- 3 <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2024/Epping-Bridge-Project-Transport-Impact-Assessment.pdf>
- 4 Text from one of the clickable nodes on <https://caportal.com.au/tfnsw/epping-bridge-project/map>