



CAMWEST

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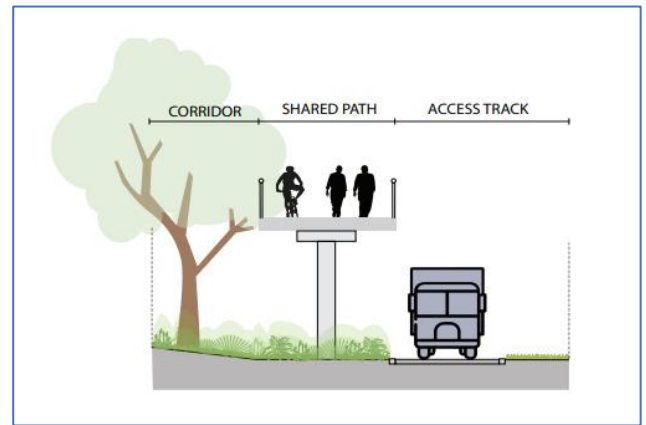
Pippita Rail Trail Masterplan Feedback

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Pippita Rail Trail masterplan (*The Plan*).^[1]

These comments have been prepared on behalf of CAMWEST, a Bicycle NSW affiliated Bicycle User Group with a focus on advocating for and encouraging cycling in the Penrith, Blacktown, Parramatta, and Cumberland council areas of Western Sydney.

We are encouraged to see the development of the plans since the initial concept plans were released in late 2022.^[2] Some of the design elements of the project look quite impressive – like the elevated pathway, boardwalk sections, and the additional tree canopy and plantings.

We do however have some reservations. The main one – connectivity - was laid out in our feedback to the initial concept plans.^[3] Unfortunately not too much appears to have changed since, despite the release of the Draft Cumberland Walking and Cycling Strategy.^[4]



From Page 59 of *The Plan*

This map is referenced in the following pages:

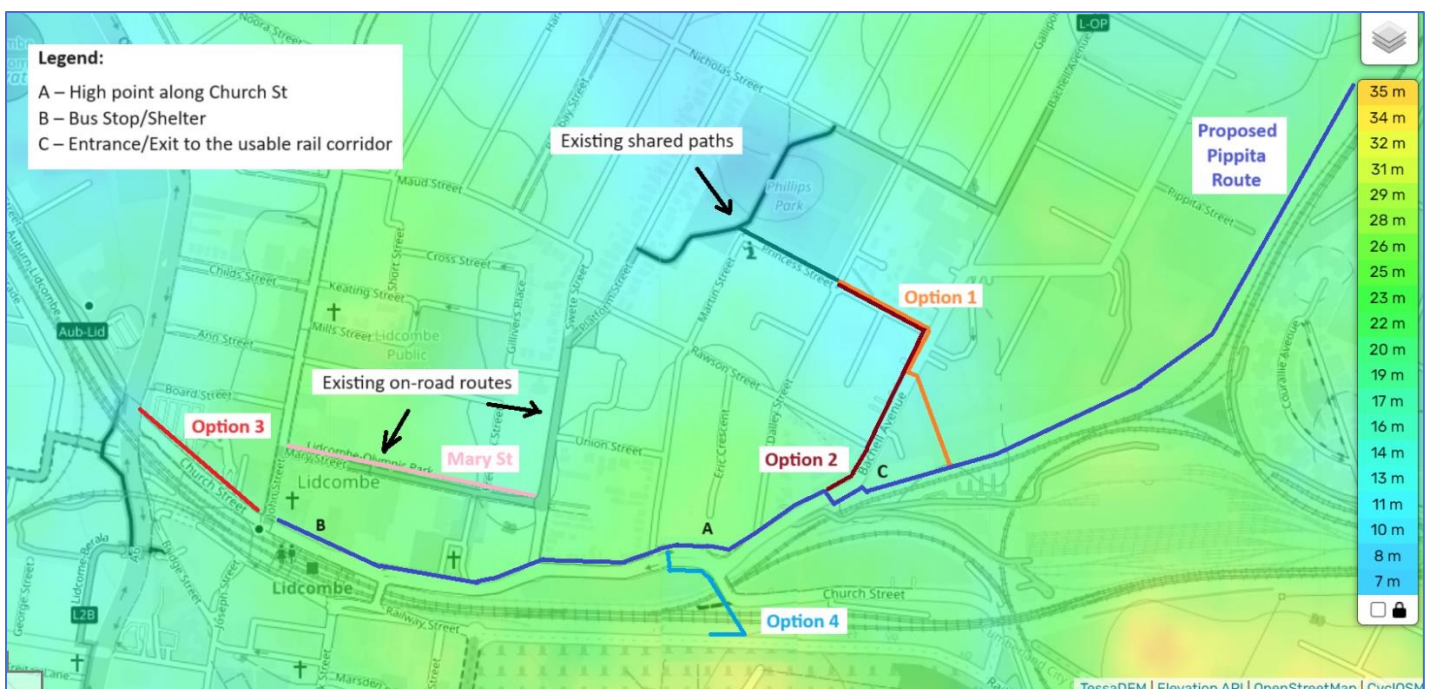


Figure 1 - Marked-up topographical map of the Lidcombe end of Pippita Rail Trail.^[5]

➤ Reservations:

While the plan for the Pippita Rail Trail looks impressive, we do have reservations which revolve mainly around connectivity and a few of the design details. These are outlined below.

Connectivity:

We are still struggling to see how the Pippita Rail Trail really fits in to encouraging the uptake of Active Transport (AT) in the wider area. The below map in *The Plan* which reflect the AT corridors in the Draft Cumberland Walking and Cycling Strategy are very broad brush. As has been pointed out in our feedback of Town Centre Public Domain Plans for Guildford^[6] and Merrylands,^[7] there really needs to be 'mid-level' planning of AT routes around precincts in the Cumberland Local Government Area.

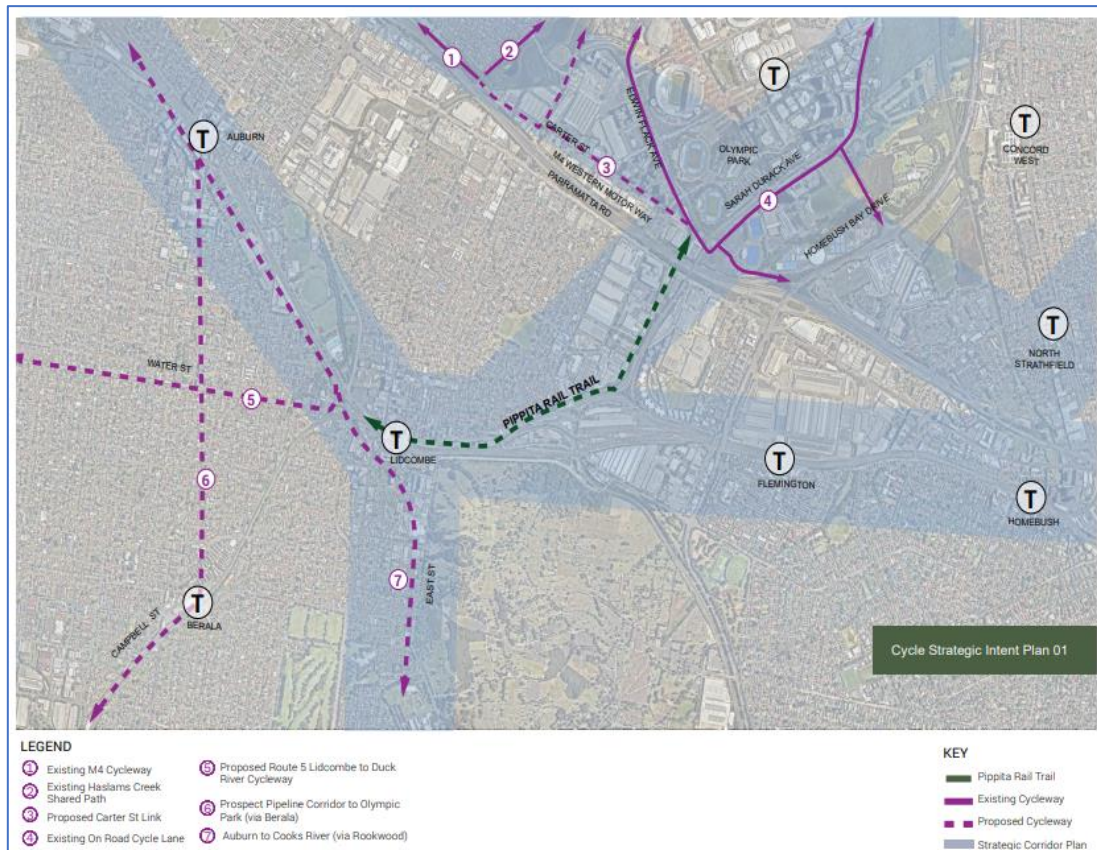
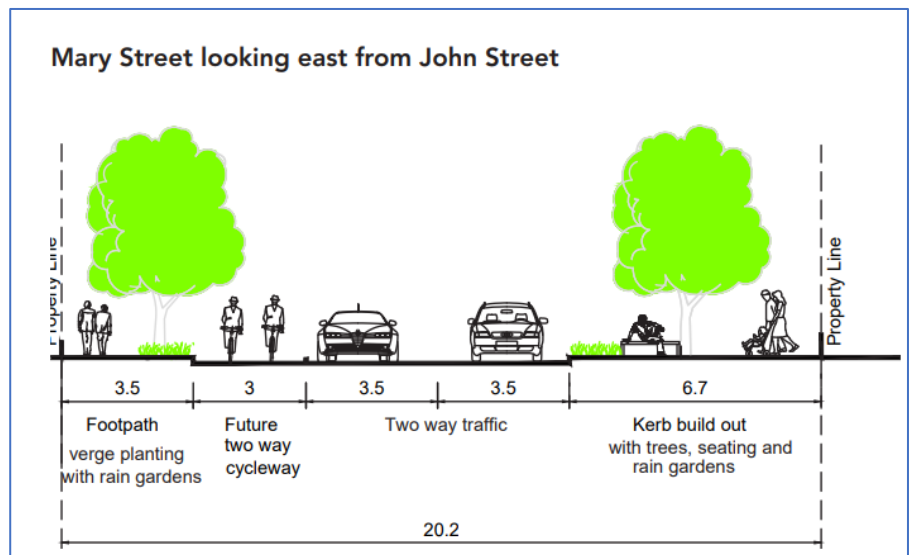


Figure 2 - Map from Page 9 of *The Plan*.

This image from the Draft Lidcombe Town Centre Public Domain Plan^[8] shows a proposal to construct a 3m wide cycleway along Mary St, but there are no indications that we can locate of how this will interface with John St and Swete St at either end. We see very little evidence of this 'mid-level' planning for Lidcombe either. We make several suggestions below.

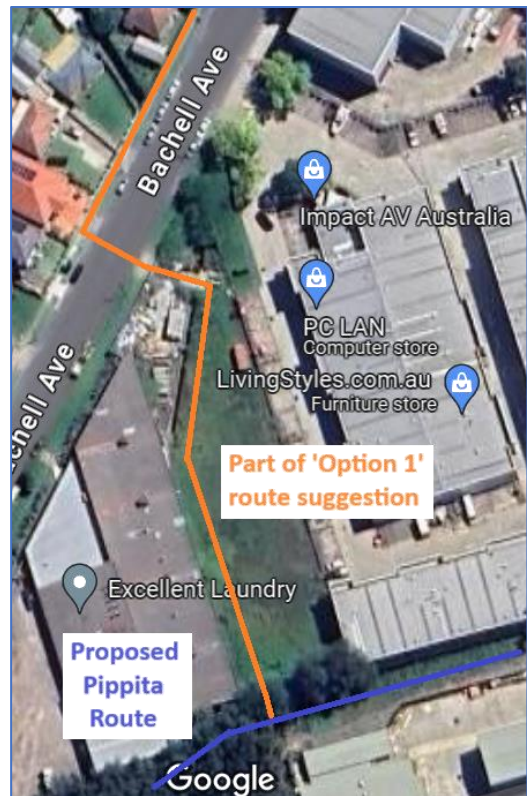


From the Draft Lidcombe Town Centre Public Domain Plan. ^[8]

Route Options/Suggestions from the above map (Figure 1):

1. One of the traditional advantages of a “Rail Trail” is the use of the rail corridor which provides a very gradual change in gradient. Between Lidcombe station and Point C on Figure 1 (near the corner of Bachell Ave and Rawson St) it’s not possible to use the rail corridor. The scope of the project between these points appears to have been limited to Church St and Bachell Ave corridors. While the route is quite direct, we feel it’s more undulating than a more circuitous option consisting of John St, Mary St (which as mentioned above is proposed to have a separated 3m wide bi-directional cycleway and goes past St Joachim’s Catholic Primary School), Swete St, Platform St, the existing shared paths alongside Phillips Park and through what we presume is a creek easement (although the section near Bachell Ave is currently being used for storage). See the Orange route marked ‘Option 1’ on Figure 1.

Some advantages of this route over the current proposed route are that it’s flatter (and more rail-trail like), it bypasses the problematic bus stop on Church St, and since it passes through more of the Lidcombe residential area rather than skirting around the edges, it would potentially have a wider local ‘catchment’.



Marked-up Google satellite view image showing part of ‘Option 1’ through what we presume is a creek easement between Bachell Ave and the Pippita corridor.

2. If Option 1 is ruled out, we’d like to see Option 2 considered – at least initially between the proposed crossing of Bachell Ave and Rawson St. This would provide some reasonably direct connectivity to the rail-trail corridor from the broader residential areas of Lidcombe.
3. Starting the route at Lidcombe station may be suitable for those catching the train, but it may preclude some of those who would like to ride to/from the Lidcombe end of the route. While confident riders may readily handle the 240m slight to moderate road incline along Church St from Olympic Drive to John St, we feel that a fair proportion of the riders that would be attracted to the Pippita Trail would feel uncomfortable riding this section. The cycling network on the western side of Olympic Drive is not great, but there is at least some connectivity there – particularly along the railway line to Auburn. We believe this link along Church St should be built to coincide with the opening of the rail trail which would increase its attractiveness to a larger pool of riders.
4. We’re not sure how feasible this proposition is, but one potential advantage of using Church St is that there may be scope for providing a much-needed crossing of the main east-west railway line to Railway St by constructing a ‘ramped’ bridge from the Church St/Bachell Ave intersection on the western side of the existing Olympic Park line crossing to the northern side of Railway St. Crossing Railway St to Rookwood or East St would likely require a signalised crossing. Access into the rail maintenance corridor on the opposite end of the bridge to the photo may pose some challenges though.



Poor mock-up of a ramped bridge over the railway lines from the Church St Olympic Park line overpass immediately after the Bachell Ave intersection to Railway St. Railway St is at a higher elevation than Church St.

Other Links:

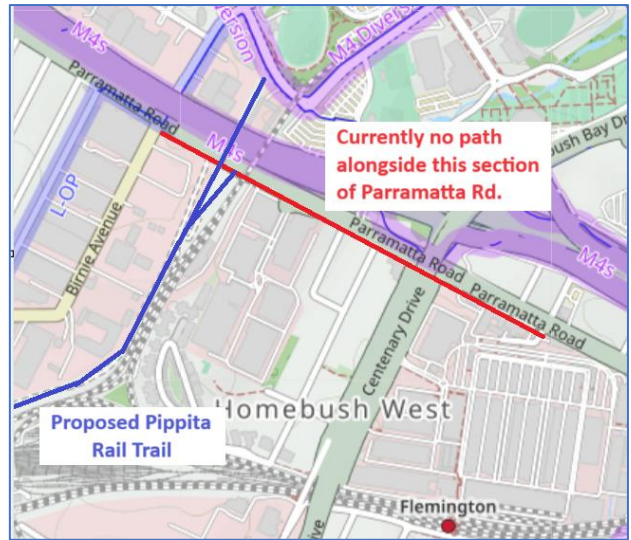
- One of the links in *The Plan* is for the Pippita Rail Trail to link with a shared path along the south side of Parramatta Rd – which doesn't currently exist. We're assuming the plan is to build the path between Birnie Ave intersection and the housing developments in Homebush West and possibly on to Flemington Markets. This is mentioned again below.
- We are disappointed that the bridge over Edwin Flack Ave is only proposed, and that once AT users descend from the embankment to Edwin Flack Ave, riders heading northwest towards the Birnie Ave/Shane Gould Ave intersection are expected to use the on-road cycle lane, while riders heading southeast from the intersection are able to use the 1.8m wide path along with pedestrians.

If the bridge doesn't proceed, we would like consideration given to installing a crossing of Edwin Flack Ave under where the proposed bridge would go in order to access the wider path on the opposite side. As shown by one of the purple lines in the diagram to the right, there is no direct crossing at the signalised intersection of Edwin Flack Ave and Shane Gould Ave, with AT users needing to cross Birnie Ave first.

We believe that some of the paths marked as green on this diagram are not currently recognised by Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA) as shared paths. This is an area that requires clarification.

As the Pippita Rail Trail is being promoted as Lidcombe to Olympic Park, we would be interested to know what the intended safe legal routes are to the main destination points of the Olympic Park precinct, including Bicentennial Park. We acknowledge that these are in both the City of Parramatta and the SOPA areas, but as the main project driver we believe Cumberland Council should have the capacity to adequately answer these sorts of questions, as they will ultimately have an impact upon the user uptake of the completed project.

We'd suggest wayfinding signage outside the corridor should be part of the plan.



Marked up Cycling-layer-enabled Open Street Map^[9] view of possible new path alongside Parramatta Rd.

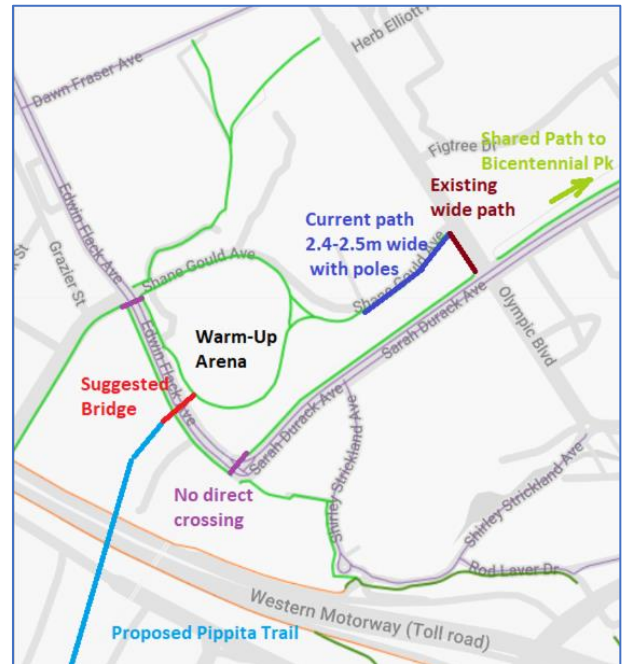


Diagram from CAMWEST's initial Pippita Rail Trail feedback.^[10] The preferred route (with the bridge) is around part of the Warm-Up Arena and along the marked blue and brown paths.

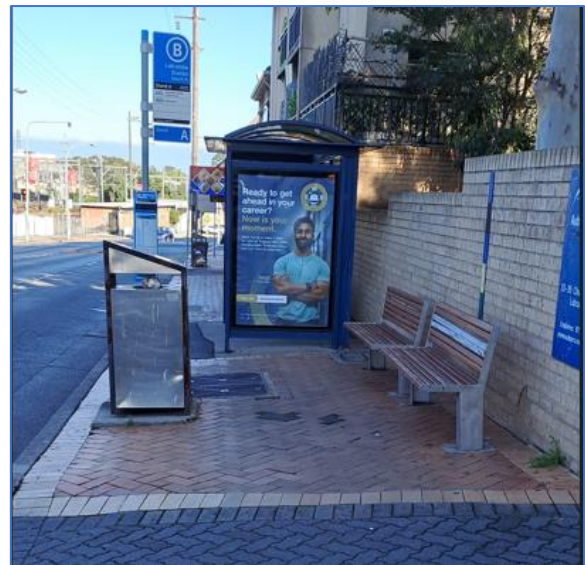


Tree-lined Pippita line embankment in the background approaching Edwin Flack Ave, with parked cars for perspective.

Design:

- The only mention of lighting in *The Plan* appears to be for the main bridges. Are there any plans for lighting the rest of the route? We'd like to see sensor-activated lighting in use throughout the rail corridor.

- As mentioned in *The Plan*, there is a bus shelter on Church St (opposite the station) that is problematic. The proposal is to convert it to a narrower profile version. We feel this is only a partial solution. We've been there late afternoon with lots of people trying to get onto a bus, and there's no way you can ride through. This has the potential to be a significant conflict zone between different path users. Although it pains us to suggest this, we believe the safest option at least for when a moderate number of people are waiting for buses is for riders to dismount and walk through this area. One advantage to using the suggested John St and Mary St route is that it would avoid this conflict zone.



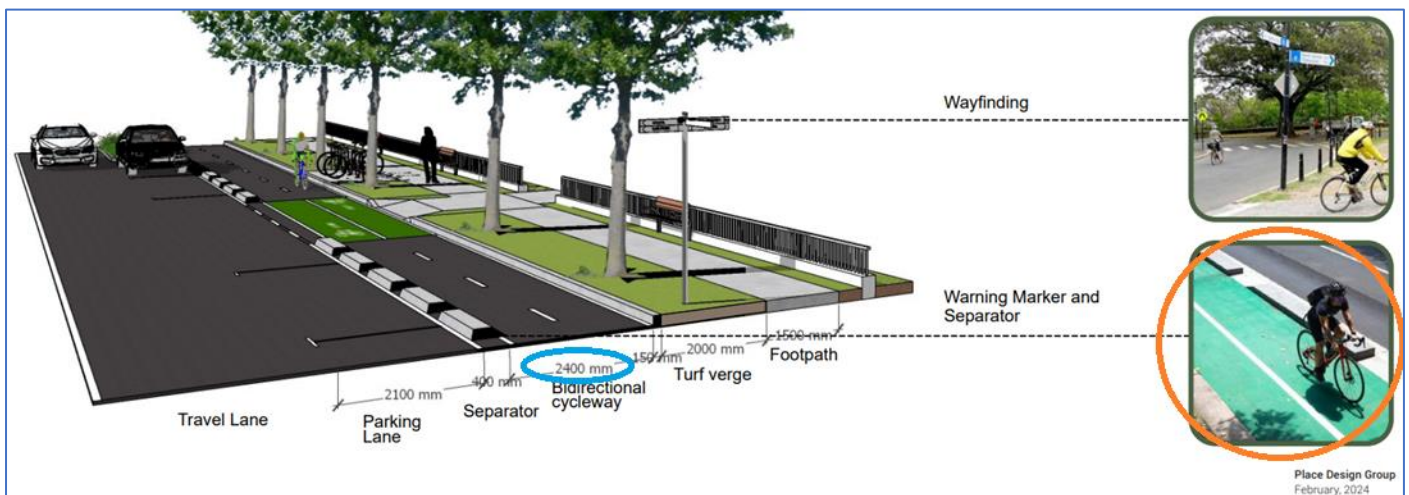
Existing Church St bus shelter, seating, and bin.

- We are disappointed to see that although a lot of the path is specified as 3 and 4m in width, according to the diagram below the separated cycleway has a width of 2.4m, which is less than the desirable minimum of 2.5m.^[11]

If the artist impression to the right and the orange circled image below are any guide, this width appears to include the road gutter as well. As a gutter is a place where road debris tends to gravitate and should be the wettest place during and immediately after rain events, we believe it should be excluded from any path width calculations. Surface height differences between the concrete gutter and road surface need to be carefully managed to minimise the risk of cycleway users catching their tyres and falling.



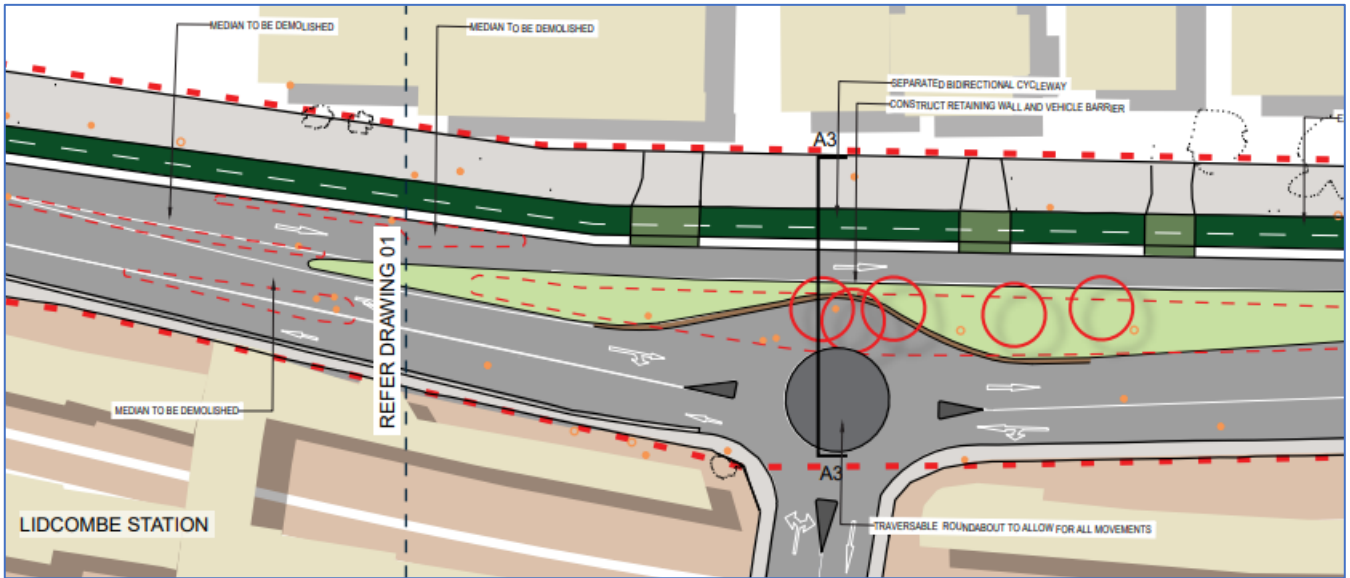
'Artist Impression' image of the separated Church St cycleway from page 44 of The Plan.



Marked up image from Page 49 of The Plan.

➤ Additional Church St over-bridge roundabout proposal:

We quite like the option of a roundabout at the Church St overbridge (Drawing 02B) intersection instead of the largely current option (Drawing 02). We understand there may be some issues with this option though.



Drawing 02B, page 54 of The Plan

From our perspective, for Active Transport users this option would:

- Be advantageous as it converts some of the proposed shared path along Church St to separated path, although it is unclear as to the width of this path and exactly how and where it would integrate back to the shared path on the western end.
- For those riders comfortable to ride on-road with moderate traffic levels, it would slightly increase the ease of using the overbridge crossing to Railway St. Note however that only some riders may be comfortable with this option; it would not suit a lot of current and potential riders.

➤ Wider Context:

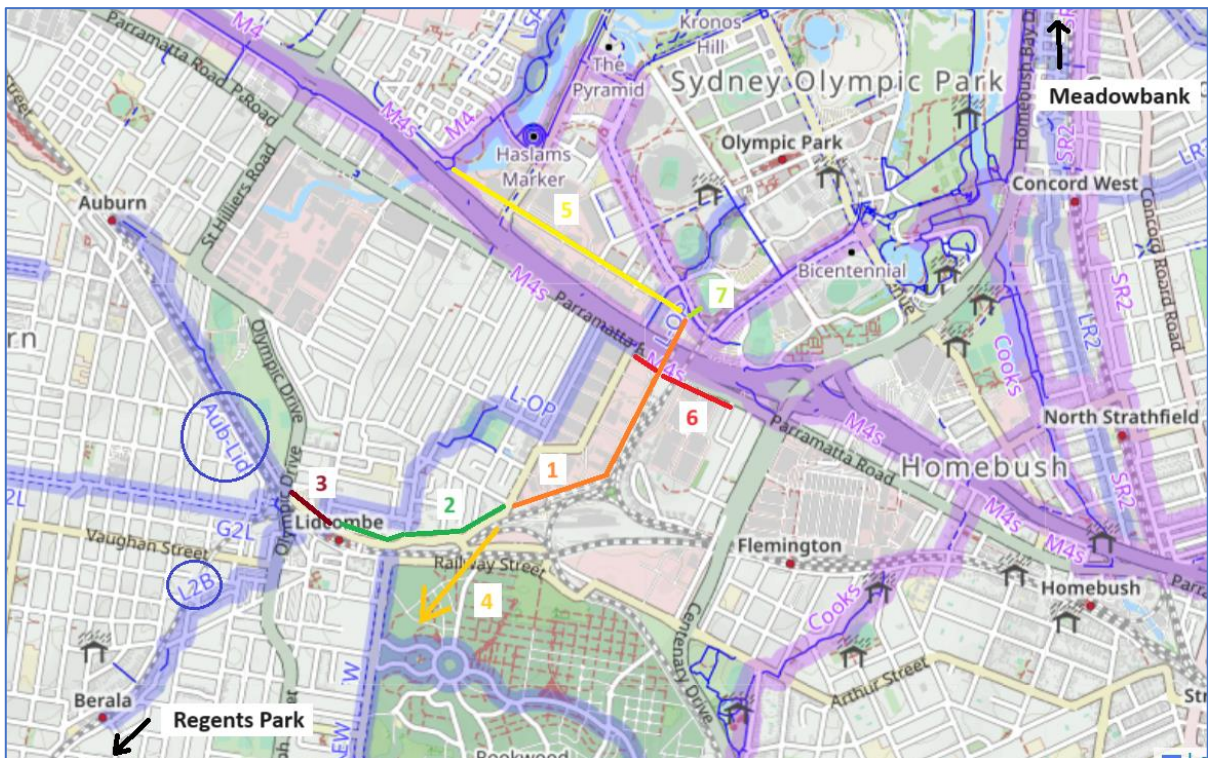


Figure 3 – Marked-up Cycling Layer enabled Open Street Map view of the area.^[12]

We don't view the Pippita Rail Trail project in isolation. The following points refer to the numbered corridors in Figure 3:

1. (Orange) - We prefer to view the section of the Pippita Rail Trail within the rail corridor and through to Edwin Flack Ave as part of the active transport north-south 'trunk'.
2. (Dark Green) - The section of the Pippita Rail Trail alongside Bachell Ave and Church St between the rail corridor and Lidcombe station can be viewed as one of the 'branches.'
3. (Brown) – An extension to [2] along Church St between John St and Olympic Drive (as previously mentioned).
4. (Light Orange) - The 'unknown' link across the railway line which could potentially form part of the north-south trunk. The current railway underpass at the eastern end of Church St is already a tight fit widthwise for heavy vehicles, so without major works we can't see how a shared path could be squeezed in there as well. We believe a new bridge further back towards Lidcombe is the best option for crossing the railway line.
5. (Yellow) – Across Haslams Ck and along Carter Street linking the current M4 path to the Pippita Rail Trail. This could be considered part of the 'East-West' trunk.
6. (Red) - Shown alongside Parramatta Rd between Birnie Ave and Telopea Ave in Homebush West (and possibly extending to Flemington Markets), this is another branch off the Pippita north-south trunk.
7. (Light green) – Bridge over Edwin Flack Ave would form an integral link in the north-south trunk heading to Bicentennial Park, Rhodes, Meadowbank and beyond.



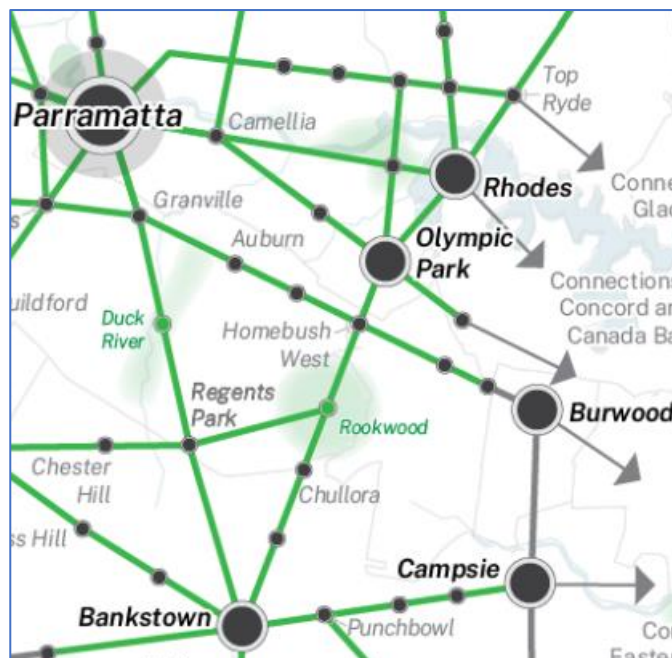
Google Streetview image of the Church St railway underpass.

The concept of the north-south trunk can be seen in the Central River City (CRC) Strategic Cycleway Corridor document,^[13] stretching from Bankstown through Rookwood to Olympic Park, Rhodes, and continuing north across the Parramatta River.

We think Figure 3 routes 3 and 6 together with the Rail Trail approximate the vision laid out in the CRC strategy document.

Even without the corridor 4 bridge over the railway line, a reasonable on and off-road route heading southwest to Berala and Regents Park could be possible if Corridor 3 was completed and some of the footpaths alongside Olympic Drive widened to shared path width as in the Figure 3 unofficial 'L2B' Lidcombe to Berala route.

We note that the Auburn to Regents Park corridor in Figure 2 (Cumberland Council Route 6) is not identified as aligning with the CRC strategic corridors. Together with the 'Aub-Lid' route in Figure 3, the L2B route may be a viable contender for a large part of this Auburn to Regents Park route, with the bonus of virtually including Lidcombe in the route.



Part of the Central River City Strategic Cycleway Corridor document.^[13]

➤ Closing Comments:

CAMWEST look forward to the day when the full length of the Pippita Rail Trail opens to the public. We hope funding can be sourced to accomplish the build sooner rather than later. We believe it would align more closely with the Central River City Strategic Cycleway Corridors if at least Routes 3 and 6 from Figure 3 were built as well – which may help attract funding. Connectivity wise routes 3 and 6 would have moderate value if constructed before the Pippita Rail Trail – although that value would be amplified by the linkages provided when the full project is completed.

Our strong preference is for the Edwin Flack bridge to be built at the same time as the Rail Trail. We believe it will significantly enhance the attraction and utility of the route to current and potential Active Transport users. If the bridge cannot be built, we would like to see an additional crossing of Edwin Flack Ave under where the proposed bridge would go.

We acknowledge that some of these corridors have multiple stakeholders, and negotiations can be time consuming and challenging. For example, Figure 3 Route 6 along Parramatta Rd goes into Strathfield Council area, but likely involves TfNSW. The suggested path widening along Olympic Drive would likely involve TfNSW. Any development or changes around Olympic Park would likely involve Parramatta City Council and SOPA. We just want to acknowledge that we're aware that although these requests may seem simple, they're often not.

We are happy to clarify or elaborate on any of the above points and are willing to assist in any way we can with the development of Active Transport in the area.

This feedback was prepared by Rob Kemp on behalf of CAMWEST Bicycle User Group Inc.

References:

- 1 <https://haveyoursay.cumberland.nsw.gov.au/projects/download/16470/ProjectDocument>
- 2 <https://haveyoursay.cumberland.nsw.gov.au/pippita-rail-trail>
- 3 <https://camwest.org.au/docs/CAMWEST-PippitaRailTrail-Feedback.pdf>
- 4 <https://en-au.topographic-map.com/map-hhxn/Sydney/?base=6¢er=-33.86079%2C151.05147&zoom=16>
- 5 <https://haveyoursay.cumberland.nsw.gov.au/projects/download/15430/ProjectDocument>
- 6 <https://camwest.org.au/docs/CAMWEST-Guildford-Town-Centre-Public-Domain-Plan-Feedback.pdf>
- 7 <https://camwest.org.au/docs/CAMWEST-Merrylands-Town-Centre-Public-Domain-Plan-Feedback.pdf>
- 8 <https://haveyoursay.cumberland.nsw.gov.au/lidcombe-public-domain>
- 9 <https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=15/-33.8581/151.0690&layers=C>
- 10 <https://camwest.org.au/docs/CAMWEST-PippitaRailTrail-Feedback.pdf>
- 11 Austroads Guide to Road Design Part 6A, Paths for Walking and Cycling, Table 5.4.
https://austroads.com.au/publications/road-design/agrd06a/media/AGRD06A-17_Guide_to_Road_Design_Part6A_Paths_for_Walking_and_Cycling_Ed2.1.pdf
- 12 Cycling Layer enabled Open Street Map image of area: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=14/-33.8588/151.0511&layers=C>. Thin blue dashed and solid lines with and without blue or pink shading represent Shared User Paths (SUPs). Blue and pink shading represent on and off-road cycling routes.
- 13 <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2023/Strategic-cycleway-corridors-Central-River-City-overview.pdf>