



CAMWEST

CYCLISTS' ACTION MOVEMENT

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CAMWEST M7 Widening submission

I have prepared this submission 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.

In this submission I'm focused on shared path access and continuity during the proposed works in the 9km section of the M7 between Richmond Rd and Old Wallgrove Rd. I also make some proposals that are outside the immediate works corridor but which could enhance existing routes to make them viable detours during the works and as a lasting legacy to the cycling community post completion.

The M7 shared path is one of the central pieces of cycling infrastructure in Western Sydney, used by a wide spectrum of riders – groups of faster riders to slower individual recreational riders and the whole gamut in between. It is used for training rides, recreational rides, and commuting.

Some riders ride the full length, while others use it as a linking 'bridge' between other local paths or networks. While the majority of cyclists ride 'standard' bikes, there are also people that ride recumbent bikes and trikes, tandems, and other cycle variations.

Diversions that work for one group may not suit other groups. The proposals and comments in this submission are made primarily with the recreational cyclist in mind. Those that are happier to mix with a bit of traffic will often find a route that they're happy with – maybe using some of the nominated diversions but mixing that with some on-road riding. For example, while some riders may be happy to ride along Rooty Hill Rd Nth as the most direct detour route around some of these works, others are not.

A few of the M7 path's advantages over other key pieces of cycling infrastructure in Western Sydney are that it is:

- Continuous (Riders don't need to stop for road crossings);
- Wider than a lot of other paths;
- Designed for higher riding speeds;
- Lit for those who ride at dawn/dusk or at night;
- Open and accessible 24 hours a day.

Any diversions will have a tough time meeting all those criteria. However, I don't believe that should be a barrier to attempting to get the best outcome for riders.

The diversions may have the consequence of turning some riders away from the M7 path and onto other paths that were designed with lower rider numbers and speeds in mind. It will be interesting to see whether this does in fact occur.

This submission is broken down into several main sections:

1. Questions regarding works that may require further shared path detours.
2. Possible alternative routes that would take riders outside the works corridor, including proposed path segments that would increase the utility of these routes.
3. Comments on the officially nominated detours.
4. Closing Comments.

Notes:

- 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/-33.7507/150.8572&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 represent whether they are part of local or regional networks.
- All photos were taken in August 2022.

➤ **Questions regarding works that may require further shared path detours:**

I'm not convinced that we're seeing the complete picture regarding shared path detours in these documents.

- In table 4-10 'Haulage Routes' (*page 44 of 50, of Chapter 4 – Proposed Modification*) one of the entries is 'Westlink M7 shared path, Great Western Hwy'. It doesn't state which side of the highway, but either way there is no listed shared path diversion around this area.
- Another entry in this table is 'Mavis St, Rooty Hill Rd South' for 'Bridge Widening over Rail Bridge'. This has the potential to have some impact on at least the M7 access path to Mavis St. There is a gate at the end of Mavis St into a paddock that could potentially be used to access the bridge which wouldn't impact the shared path – but a reasonable length access road would need to be created.

Can you please confirm if these works will in fact require detours/closure of the main path and/or the respective access paths. If they were to impact the main M7 path then I think Proposal 3 below would need to be given serious consideration.

➤ Shared Path Alternative Routes, including proposed sections:

Before considering the proposed individual segment diversions, I'd like to take a wider overview and examine whether relatively minor additions to the existing shared path network may be able to provide usable diversions away from the proposed works corridor. The map below shows two existing shared path routes either side of the M7 that are potential detour routes around some or all the nominated work areas between Richmond Road and Woodstock Avenue or the Great Western Highway. Suggestions are made below as to how these routes could be enhanced during the works.

- Notes:
- In the below map the red coloured area of the M7 is the stated diversion area where as the green area doesn't have any specified diversions.
 - The below descriptions describe the routes North to South.

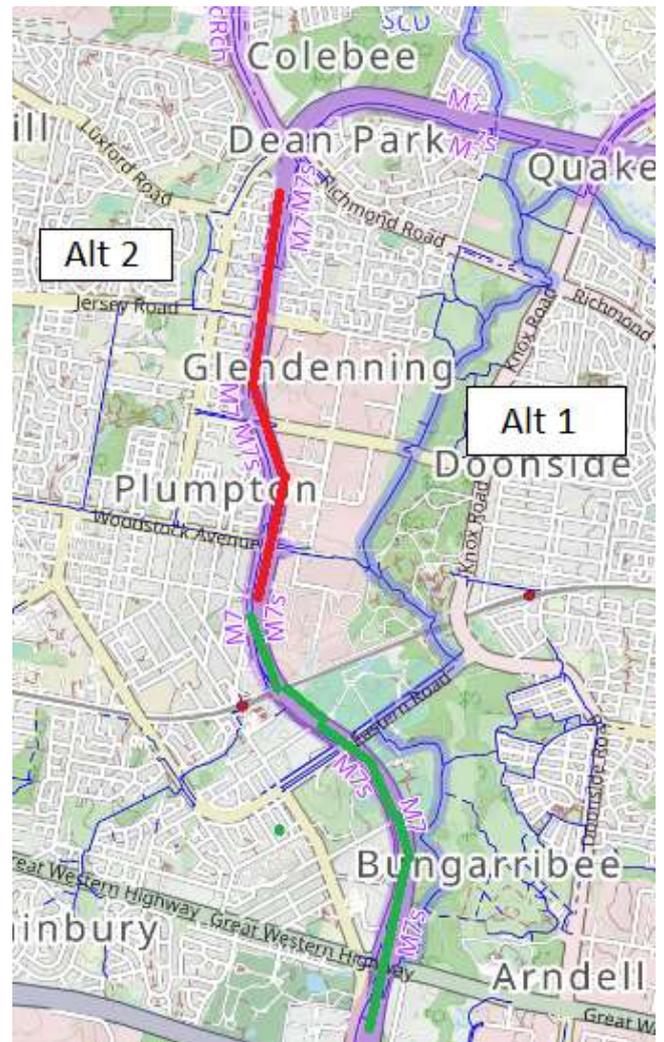
Alt 1 : (Thin blue lines with wider blue background) Western Sydney Parkland Track, which can be entered from the M7 path at two points in the Quakers Hill area, and can be exited at Woodstock Ave, Eastern Rd or followed down to the Great Western Hwy. One advantage of this route is that a lot of it is wider than the recommended minimum width of 2.5m. The route is a lot flatter and quieter than the M7 path, but not as suited to higher speed cycling.

There are traffic light crossings of Richmond Rd, Eastern Rd and the Great Western Hwy (if required), with an uncontrolled crossing of Power Street (dual lanes in each direction with a sign-posted speed of 60kmph and a centre refuge island). This is not always the safest of crossings, as a slight curve in the road partially obscures traffic travelling west from Knox Rd. The centre refuge can't accommodate too many people at once.

As is stands this route passes through Nurranginy Reserve (between Woodstock Ave and the railway line). The park has controlled opening hours, and the path through the park can get busy with walkers, strollers and children playing or learning to ride at certain times. Although the open hours for the park are nominally 7am to 5pm in Winter (and extended in outer seasons), the stated times for the Western entrance used to exit to Woodstock Ave shared path is between 9am and 3pm Monday to Friday all year round, with extended openings on weekends and public holidays.

Proposals 1 to 3 below address some of the limitations that the Nurranginy controlled opening hours impose on this route.

Alt 2: (Thin blue line on map) Richmond Rd to Woodstock Ave shared path via Rooty Hill Rd Nth, Luxford Rd, the Bells Ck reserve corridor, Jersey Rd and Hyatts Rd. This path is longer with traffic light crossings of major roads, plus some uncontrolled crossings of minor roads, driveways and the fairly major Jersey Rd (with a centre refuge). There is a shared path along Woodstock Ave to get back to the M7 path or the Western Sydney Parklands Track. The Hyatts Rd section of the path runs parallel to Rooty Hill Rd North, but west by around 720m. It goes past Plumpton Marketplace Shopping Centre, Plumpton High School and Plumpton Park. Proposal 5 below presents a possible alternative to some of this route.



Alt 1 and Alt 2 are existing paths either side of the M7 path in this map.

Proposals:

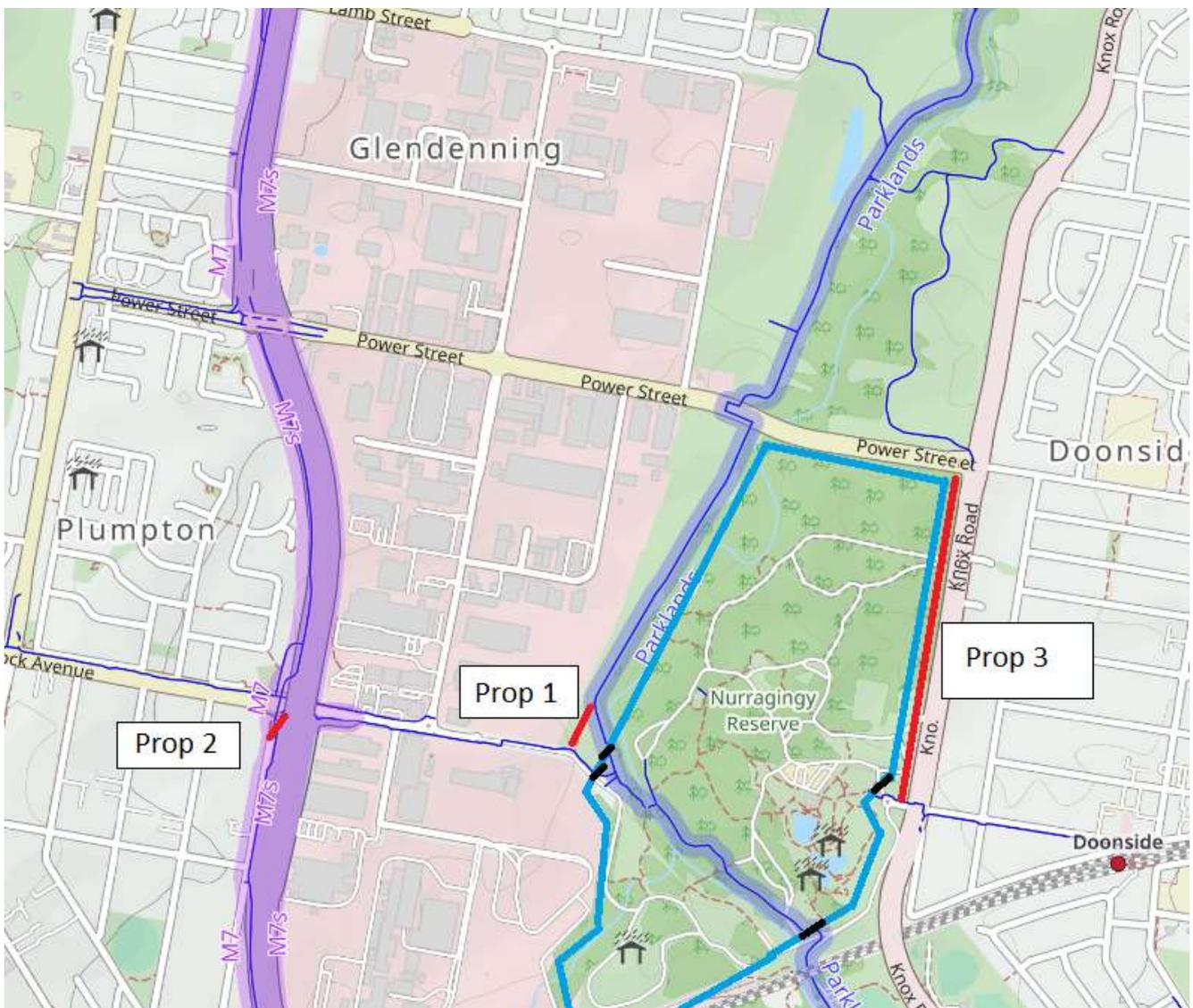
A total of five proposals are outlined here.

Please note that

- On the maps the proposed shared-paths are marked in red.
- No attempt has been made to investigate who owns or is responsible for the land used in these proposals. I suspect Proposal 1 is Western Sydney Parklands, as there is a Parklands sign just inside the gate.
- I acknowledge that the engineering works for some of these proposals may make them impractical.

The first three are related to the above Western Sydney Parklands 'Alternative 1' path. I believe they would increase the amenity of this route by ensuring that it is usable 24-hours a day, even when Nurragingy is closed.

Note that Proposals 1 and 2 utilise the shared path on the southern side of Woodstock Ave under the M7 bridge. This may become unusable for the period Woodstock Ave is closed for M7 bridge widening.



Map showing the location of the first three proposals. Approximate boundaries of Nurragingy are in blue, gates in black, with red lines being the shared-path proposals described below.

Proposal 1:

The access road to the Western entrance of Nurragingy Reserve is virtually an extension of Woodstock Ave. There is a shared path which runs alongside the access road and Woodstock Ave, joining the Western Sydney Parklands track within Nurragingy Reserve to the M7 shared path and further west to Rooty Hill Rd North, Hyatts Rd shared path and the Lethbridge Park to Mt Druitt path. There are shared paths on both sides of Woodstock Ave under the bridge and east of the bridge.

There is a 130-metre-long vehicular access track which joins this shared path just outside the Nurragingy access gates with the Western Sydney Parklands Track. The track has a gate at the Nurragingy access road end. Riders can squeeze through the posts beside the gate (if riding a standard bike). The track is composed of dirt/clay and blue metal, and is rideable on bikes with wider tyres, depending on track condition and rider skill level.

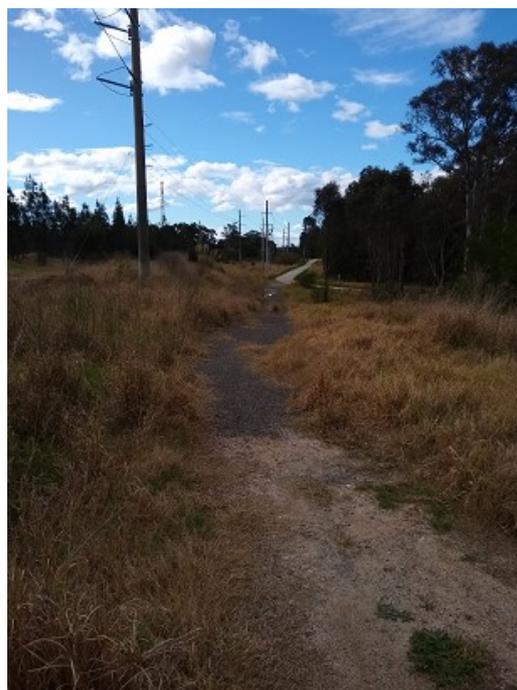
The proposal is that the vehicular access track either be converted to a shared path or bitumen surface with a more cycle-friendly entrance at the gate. If this path was in place riders could have ready access between the shared path on Woodstock Ave and the Parklands Track north of Nurragingy Reserve 24 hours a day, without having to pass through the Nurragingy controlled gates.

Gated entrance to track off existing shared path. The photo was taken from the Nurragingy access road. Note the narrow gap between the posts to squeeze through.



Photo below: Standing part way along the track, looking back towards the gate. There is a section of blue metal near the gate which can be tricky to negotiate.

Photo below and to right: Standing in the same location, but looking towards the existing Parklands Track concrete path.



Proposal 2:

There is a section of dirt/grass approx. 50-60 metres in length between the intersection of the M7 off-ramp at Woodstock Ave and Station St roadway cul-de-sac. This path runs off the southern side of Woodstock Ave, and provides a shorter and quicker route from the Parklands Track to Rooty Hill than crossing Woodstock Ave via the traffic lights to the existing M7 access path, then back over Woodstock Ave on the shared path bridge. Access onto the main M7 shared path can be gained 360m along Station St just after the Wolseley St intersection.

The proposal is that this section of dirt/grass be converted to a concrete shared path. This could be further enhanced if an additional kerb ramp from Station Street roadway on to the M7 path could be built closer to this end of Station St.



View from Station St looking towards Woodstock Ave, with shared path ramp on right. The kerb ramp from Station St on the right used to be a concrete footpath through to Woodstock before the ramp went in. The path was not reinstated after construction of the M7.



Further along the grassed area.



A bit further on, looking underneath the Woodstock Ave shared path bridge to the intersection of the M7 Woodstock Ave off-ramp with bicycle crossing lanterns.



Looking back the opposite direction from the Woodstock Ave/M7 off-ramp intersection crossing island.



Proposal 3:

This proposal is for a concrete shared path of approximately 820m in length along the verge on the western side of Knox Rd between Power St and the main access road into Nurragingy Reserve and Charlie Bali Reserve.

Together with existing paths and an access roadway, a route would be provided around the eastern side of the fenced sections of Nurragingy Reserve. This route could be useful if either Woodstock Ave was closed due to bridge widening, or the shared path between the railway line and the Great Western Hwy was impacted by the works (as previously posed).

On the north side of Power Street there is a bitumen path (part of the Binyang Matta trail) that joins with the main Parklands Track. This track is narrower than the main Parklands track at 2.5m with some tighter turns but should be acceptable for riders prepared to ride at a slower pace.

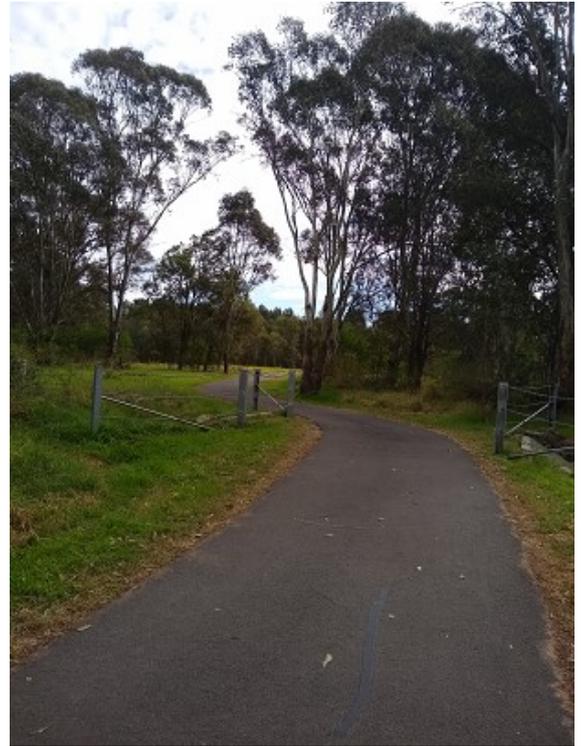
There is signalised crossing of Power Street at the Knox Rd intersection.

There is a reasonably wide verge along most of the western side of Knox Rd. As well as crossing the original Nurragingy access road (kerb ramps required), there are three points where the verge narrows:

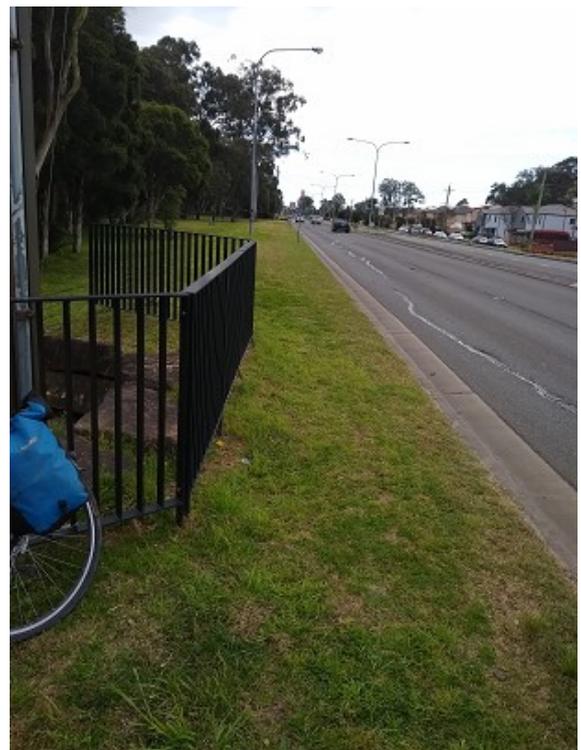
- One, opposite Evoe Pl, is quite a bit wider than 2.5m;
- The second, just north of the old entrance to Nurragingy, is around 2.5m;
- The third, just north of the main Nurragingy access road is narrower.

Engineering solutions or path re-routing would need to be investigated for at least the third narrowing if this route was to be considered.

After reaching the Nurragingy entrance road, cyclists could ride along the access road which skirts around the fenced section of the reserve and re-join the Parklands Track to head under the railway line alongside Charlie Bali Reserve. The Parklands Track could be followed to the Great Western Hwy and crossed at the traffic lights there if needed.



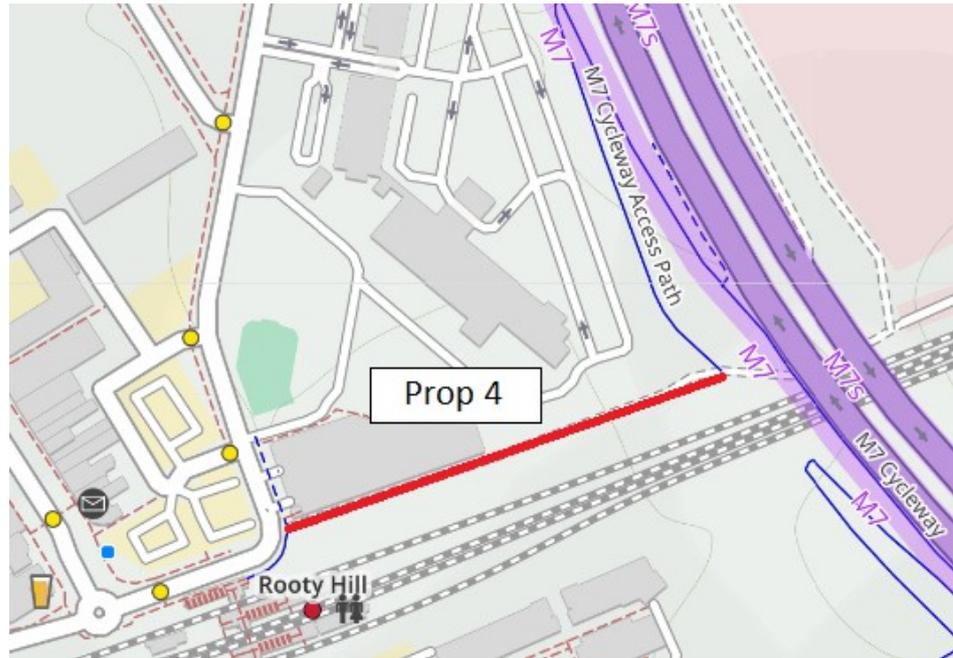
Binyang Matta trail



Narrowest verge section along Knox Rd.

Proposal 4:

If within scope of the project, this proposal is to replace the existing access track along the northern side of the railway line between Station St Rooty Hill and the bitumen M7 access path with either a bitumen road or shared path. The current access track is around 220m in length. A combination of the recent rains and the construction of the multi-storey commuter carpark has led to a deterioration in the condition of the track.



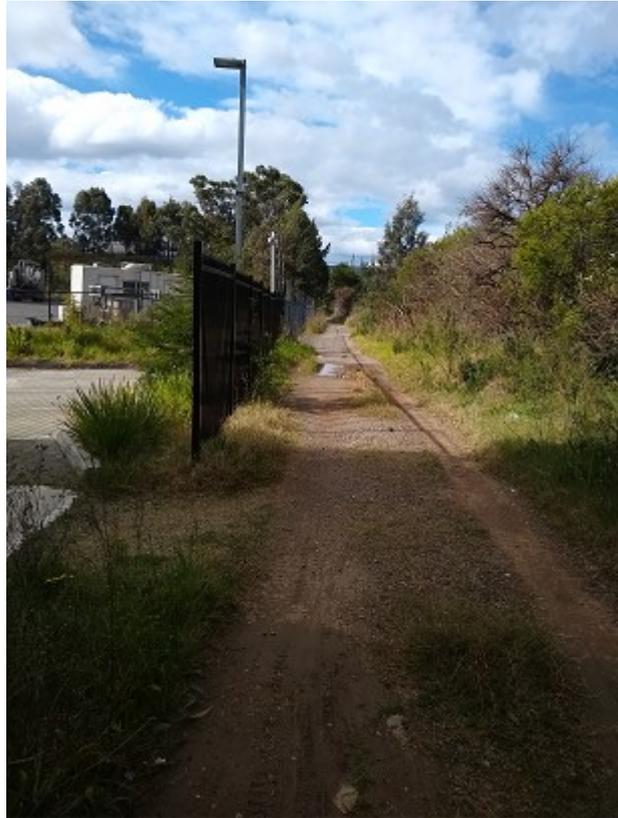
I was wondering whether this track may be used during the widening of the M7 bridge over the railway line. If so, it may be in the project scope to upgrade it.

I've had two people independently ask me in the last 4 weeks how to go about getting improvements made to this track.

Station St end of track, alongside the Multi-storey commuter car park. Note the puddles along the track. The condition of the track was worse after the prolonged rains.



Further along the track, on the approach to the back of the council depot.



Towards the end of the track, with the sealed M7 access track going off to the left, and the track continuing under the M7 to a locked gate.



Proposal 5:

This path may be an alternative to building some or all the diversions along Rooty Hill Rd North. It is approx. 1.7km long if built in its entirety and uses the Bells Ck reserve corridor.

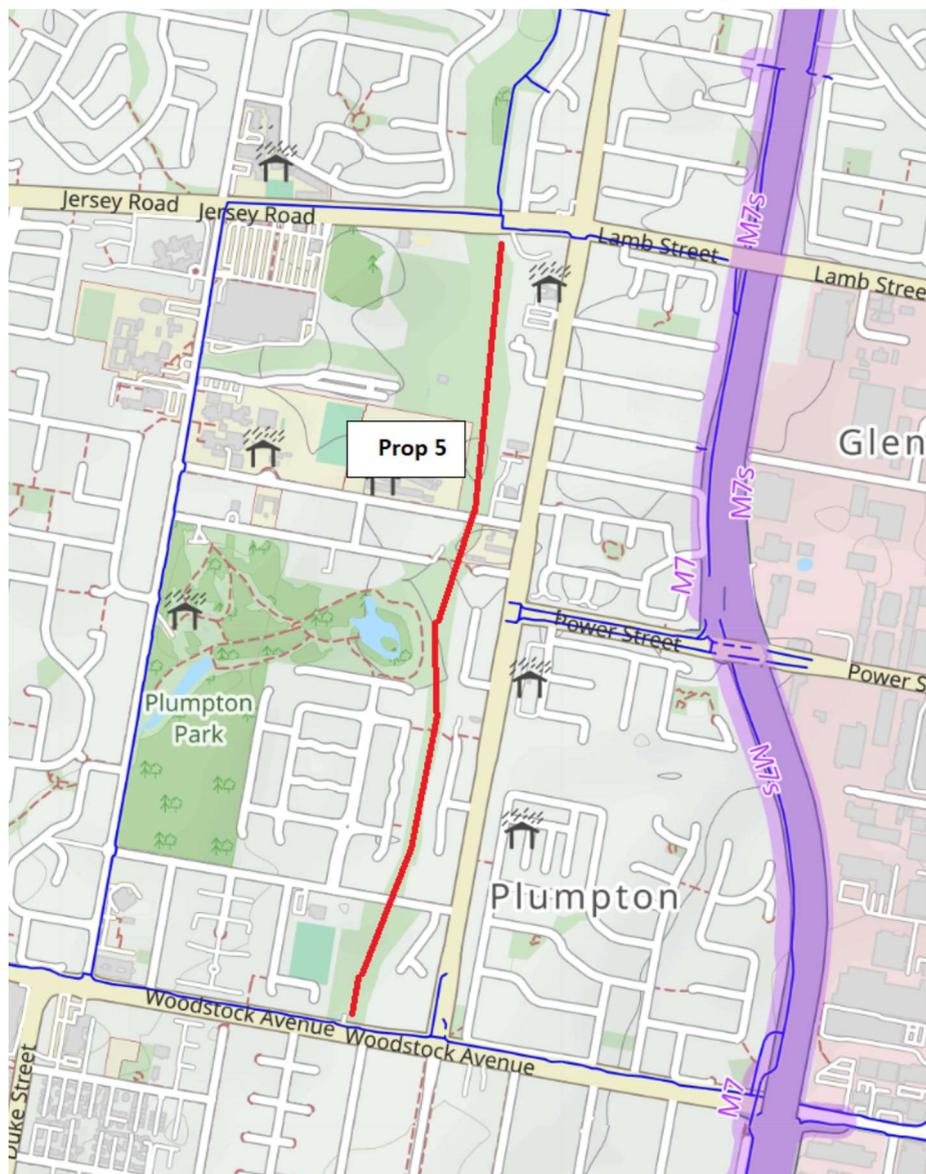
One option to shorten this route may be to widen the footpath along Rooty Hill Rd Nth between Woodstock Ave and Power Street, then divert onto this proposed path from near Power St to Jersey Rd.

There are already shared paths along Lamb St/Jersey Rd and Woodstock Ave at either end of this proposed route.

Those using this route to divert from the M7 shared path would need to cross Rooty Hill Rd Nth twice, which is less than ideal.

If coming from Richmond Rd, the crossing of Jersey Rd is uncontrolled (although there is a centre refuge).

Although appealing to ride during the day, there may be safety concerns for some at night.



➤ Comments on the officially nominated detours

I must confess to having difficulty seeing the point to a number of these individual diversions. I would've thought that maybe a couple of adjoining segments would be done concurrently (which is partly why I made the proposals above).

There are some differences and doubling up of listed diversion points between the Chapter 4 'Impacts on Shared paths' (Page 46 of 50) and table 6-13 (page 101 of Appendix D, 'Traffic and Transport').

Part of Table 6-13:

6	Between Old Wallgrove Road and Wonderland Drive	Old Wallgrove Road, Hannibal Street, Wonderland Drive	1,250	Recommend a new shared path to be constructed on Hannibal Street between Old Wallgrove Road and Wonderland Drive
7	Between Woodstock Avenue and Power Street	Woodstock Avenue, Rooty Hill Road North, and Power Street	400	Uses existing shared path infrastructure, except Rooty Hill Road North where footpath widening is recommended
8	Between Lamb Street and Florence Street	Lamb Street, Rooty Hill Road North, and Florence Street	200	Uses existing shared path infrastructure, except Rooty Hill Road North where footpath widening is recommended
9	Between Florence Street and Simms Road	Florence Street, Rooty Hill Road North, and Simms Road	800	Uses local roads with low traffic volumes, except Rooty Hill Road North where footpath widening is recommended
10	Between Florence Street/Woodley Crescent and Simms Road	Woodley Crescent, Armitage Drive and Simms Road	290	Uses local roads with low traffic volumes

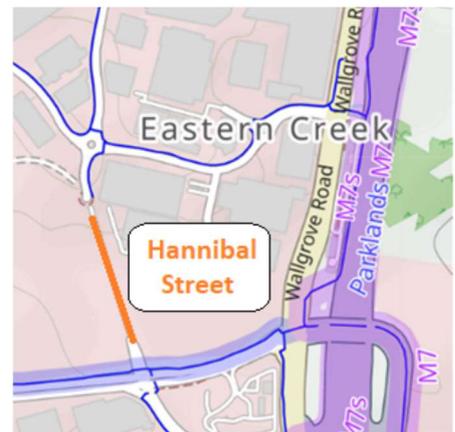
Points 1-5: (Not copied from the table) Outside the nominated area of this submission.

Point 6: **Comments:**

I'm assuming there must be a construction compound along this section of path to necessitate the closure. Some users may find this detour feels eerie or desolate. Although practically it may be the only option (unless building a new path alongside Wallgrove Rd), I think it could be a disincentive for some riders to use this section of the M7 path.

Hannibal St was once part of a private access road, but is now a disused no-through road. The Wonderland Dr end is a reasonably new cul-de-sac named Blue Metal Rd. Although only a short road, it has a shared path part of the way down one side, and safety railings all around.

The no-through-road end of Hannibal St starts just beyond the safety railing and is at a slightly lower elevation. There are presently blocks across the road (which you can squeeze through) before traffic lights at the intersection of Old Wallgrove Rd. There are existing shared paths along Wonderland Drive and Old Wallgrove Rd. Any continuation of the Blue Metal Drive shared path would need a gap in the safety railing to be created and then a ramp built down to Hannibal St. Hannibal St may require a re-surface rather than construction of a shared path.



The end of the shared path on Blue Metal Rd, approaching the actual cul-de-sac section.



Looking down from the Blue Metal Rd cul-de-sac onto Hannibal St.



The other end of Hannibal St, with the blocks (and rubbish) across the road before the traffic light intersection with Old Wallgrove Rd.



Point 7:

In 'Impacts on Shared Paths' the nearest equivalent is 'Path Entry points off Power Street and Station Street'. By station Street, I'm assuming the reference is to the access ramp near the intersection of Station St and Wolseley St, Rooty Hill – although it could also be the access point just north of the railway line, near the multi-storey commuter car park (See Proposal 4).

Comments:

The current footpath is along the western side of Rooty Hill Rd North between Woodstock Ave and Power St. If widened and used, this would necessitate users crossing Rooty Hill Rd Nth at both Powers St and Woodstock Ave. These are both controlled crossings/intersections, with existing bicycle crossing lanterns. There are a few residential road crossings, a few driveways, a 7-11 Service Station and a Mower repair business along this section.

There is no existing footpath on the eastern side of Rooty Hill Nth along this stretch. While it appears possible to construct a path along part of this section, there's also an undeveloped parcel of land. It may not be feasible to build a path along this section. However, if possible, riders would only need to cross Power St at the bicycle lantern lights. No crossing of Rooty Hill Rd Nth would be needed. There is one dirt access track along this section, but no other roads, driveways, or businesses.

If constructed, Proposal 5 may be an alternative, but would still involve the two crossings of Rooty Hill Rd Nth to reach the M7 path.

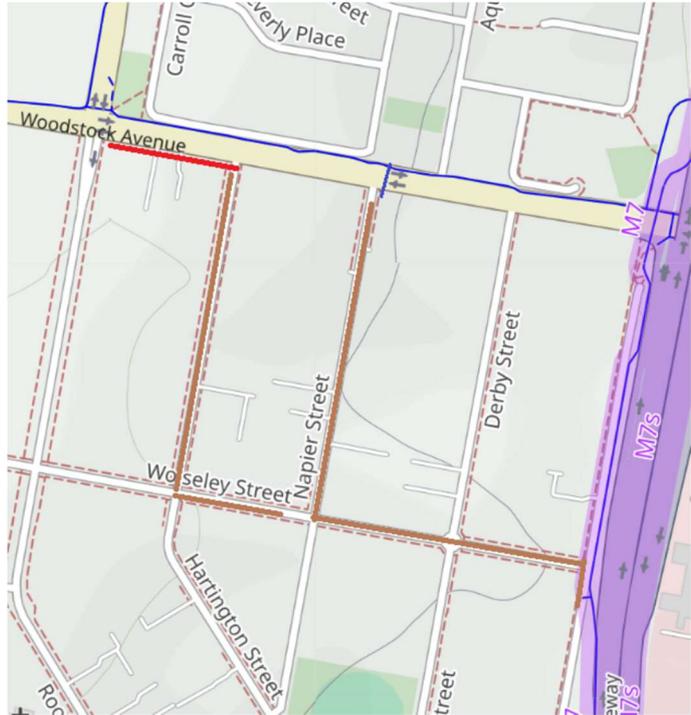
If riders did need to get to Station St instead of Woodstock Ave (maybe because of the works associated with the M7 crossing of Woodstock Ave) there are several options available, but each would require on-road riding along residential streets:

- If not too close to any works at the bridge, riders could cross from the north side of Woodstock to the south using the lights at the corner of the Woodstock Ave M7 exit ramp, then use the path in Proposal 2 to Station St. This is the option with the least traffic.*
- There is an uncontrolled crossing of Woodstock Ave at Napier St with a small refuge island in the middle. Riders could use Napier St and Wolseley to get to Station St. Note that the southern side of Woodstock at this crossing terminates on a footpath. A few metres of path would need to be widened between the crossing and Napier St. Also note there is a new roundabout at the Napier/Wolseley intersection.*



View from the shared path on the north side of Woodstock Ave looking across Woodstock Ave at the crossing to the start of Napier St.

- *If crossing Woodstock Ave at Rooty Hill Rd Nth lights, I'd suggest widening of the footpath to shared path width along the southern side of Woodstock to Hartington St, then on road along Hartington St to Wolseley and then along Wolseley to Station St. Note there is no roundabout at Wolseley/Hartington.*



Map showing two of the possible routes to Station St described above.

Missing:

There is no mention in the above table of the section between Lamb St and Power St, although this is mentioned in the 'Impacts on Shared Paths' section.

Comments:

- *I'm assuming that a shared path along the eastern side of Rooty Hill Rd Nth may be suggested here. There are a number of driveways and residential streets to cross.*
- *There is an existing shared path connection between Lamb St and the Alt 2 path previously mentioned, but this involves crossing Jersey Rd at an uncontrolled crossing with a centre refuge island. The Alt 2 path doesn't connect via shared path to Power St.*
- *Also See Proposal 5.*

Point 8:

Comments:

The suggested route is probably the best.

Points 9 & 10:

Comments:

These are the same point, but with different suggested diversions. I can understand why the underpass between Florence St and Woodley Cres may be impacted but can't see why the diversion via Armitage (Point 10) was suggested. Assuming that the Simms Rd underpass is open, wouldn't Chilton Ave on the western side of the M7 be the appropriate option?

➤ Closing Comments

Finally,

- I am happy to clarify or elaborate on any of the above suggestions.
- CAMWEST are happy to be a 'sounding board' for proposed shared path detours, particularly within the area covered by this submission, but also possibly for the southern parts of the project area as well.
- Where possible, CAMWEST would like to see phasing of traffic lights altered on detoured sections to give shared path users a shorter wait to cross major intersections, particularly on Saturday and Sunday mornings when a larger number of riding groups typically use the pathway.
- The diversions have the opportunity to highlight the Western Sydney Parklands Track and some of the other great cycling infrastructure in place near the M7.
- CAMWEST request that adequate notification and signage be put in place to notify shared-path users of their options. This includes signage that can be read while riding along, and that is 'robust' enough that it isn't adversely impacted by the weather. Some previous detour notices have not met these criteria.
- CAMWEST would like to be given the opportunity to be involved with the development of the Active Transport Strategy regarding shared path detours and the Construction Contractor's Pedestrian and Cyclist Management Plan (*As mentioned in Appendix D of the project documentation*).
- Is there a formal Community Liaison Group or similar process proposed for the construction phase? Or is this up to the preferred contractor to organise? CAMWEST would like to be given the opportunity for a representative to be involved with any such group. I was personally involved with Community Liaison Group 6 during construction of the M7, representing cyclists and residents in the Rooty Hill area.
- CAMWEST endorses the submissions by Bicycle NSW and Bike North.

Rob Kemp, on behalf of CAMWEST.