

30 June 2026

Dr Michelle Veljanovska
Executive Director, Active Transports, Design and Activation
Transport for NSW
Submitted via: walkingnsw@transport.nsw.gov.au

Re: Submission – Walkable NSW Discussion Paper

Dear Dr Veljanovska

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Transport for NSW discussion paper titled *Walkable NSW - Discussion Paper* (the Paper). This submission has been prepared with the input and support of our member councils but should be considered draft until it is formally endorsed by the NSROC Board.

The Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) members are the eight councils in the northern Sydney area: Hornsby, Hunter's Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney, Ryde, and Willoughby. NSROC brings these councils together to work on projects and common goals to create solutions that benefit not just individual communities, but the entire region. NSROC member councils service an area of 639km² with a population of 662,281 as of 2026 which extends from the Hawkesbury River in the north to Sydney Harbour in the south, west to Meadowbank on the Parramatta River.

NSROC is supportive of the focus areas for walking as stated in the Paper. As is recognised, walking (including running and use of mobility aids) is fundamental to how people move around and is an essential part of travelling by public transport. A focus on walking will encourage community members to consider walking longer distances while making it more enjoyable and safer. Amongst other benefits, walking helps people stay fitter and healthier, and it is an effective complement to engaging in sport and other fitness activities.

Strategies to promote walking require a sustained effort to improve the walking infrastructure in our communities – making walking safer and having a connected network of footpaths. A place-based approach that considers current state, demography and geography is essential. As our communities age, their willingness to walk will be determined in part by their perception of safety while walking. This is also true of parents encouraging and willing to let their young children walk to schools and playgrounds.

One of the critical aspects of safety that must be addressed is the inherent conflict between different users of walking infrastructure. Whether walking, running, wheeling or cycling, this conflict has been accentuated with the increasing adoption of e-micromobility devices (e-devices). Any plan and strategy to promote walking must also account for the adverse impact of rising use of e-micromobility devices in our communities.

The conflict with e-micromobility devices would be best addressed within a **singular integrated strategy that includes active transport as well as e-devices**. An integrated approach would consider how walking, cycling, wheeling and use of e-devices can co-exist with any conflicts, especially with respect to safety of all users, considered within the context of the common infrastructure used by all. This approach will also effectively guide standards for infrastructure provision – specifications of the infrastructure, regulation of users, behaviour change programs, consideration of the number of and profile of users (demography) and their requirements for safety.

Recommendation: Develop a unified strategy for walking, cycling, wheeling and e-devices recognising that they use common infrastructure.

Provision of infrastructure that promotes active living (walking, running, wheeling, cycling) is expected to be delivered by local councils as they are responsible for local roads and associated infrastructure. An acceptable rate at which such infrastructure can be provided that meets set standards will require substantial sustained investment. The financial constraints on local councils by way of the rate peg, limits the ability of councils to undertake innovative investment projects that respond to changing technology, community expectations, safety requirements and risk.

The Discussion Paper states that *“NSW has strong funding levers that can be used more deliberately to deliver connected high quality walking networks and better every day walking experiences for local communities”* (page 21 under *Strengthening walking investment*). Making these mechanisms and funding streams more responsive to the operational needs of local councils would greatly help in realising the strategic goals that all levels of government share. While it goes without saying that increased funding will help to accelerate infrastructure delivery, the approach and management of funding programs also needs to facilitate planning by councils by taking into account councils’ planning, budgeting and delivery timelines that span multiple years.

The Discussion Paper notes Active Travel England as a case study (page 29) as a way to improve capability to deliver walking infrastructure. While a focus on council capability is useful, it is not productive to financially penalise councils that are unable to deliver the requisite infrastructure. NSW councils operate under significant financial constraints that are outside their direct control (rate peg, [cost shifting](#), rate exemptions, declining Federal Assistance Grants). Adoption of a capability support model must reflect the operating reality of councils in New South Wales and must be tested carefully before it is rolled out.

Recommendation: Any model that requires local councils to deliver the infrastructure should be properly resourced to ensure timely delivery of improved walking and safety outcomes for all users of common infrastructure.

NSROC would welcome the opportunity to continue to work with the government on developing approaches to embed consideration of walking in planning, funding and design strategies to progressively make New South Wales more walkable, our communities healthier, fitter and support their getting around using all modes of transport.

For any further information, please contact Dr Meg Montgomery, NSROC Executive Director on 0401 640 823 or mmontgomery@lanecove.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Dr Meg Montgomery
Executive Director
Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils