

Decarbonisation - Supporting active and public transport

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Policy Stream



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About Roads Australia

[Roads Australia](#) (RA) is the peak body for roads within an integrated transport system, representing an industry that contributes \$236 billion annually to the economy and supports 1.4 million jobs. RA brings industry, government, and communities together to lead the evolution of Australia's roads, integrated transport and mobility.

RA's members include all of Australia's transport agencies, road owners, major contractors and consultants, material suppliers, service and technology providers, and other relevant industry groups. RA's policy focus extends across five activity streams: Safety; Capacity; Transport Reform; Customer Experience; and Sustainability. Diversity and Inclusion is a commitment across each stream.

Decarbonisation through active and public transport

The climate emergency means that integrated land use planning, reducing car trips and electrification of transport all need to be addressed. Enabling mode shift to public and active transport modes (such as walking and cycling) are a key part of delivering substantial

emissions reductions. To do this in the finite road space we have in our congested cities, available road space needs to be prioritised to give the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people and goods movement. This will not only help with decarbonisation but will optimise the use of our assets and deliver healthier outcomes.

This Webinar explored real-world examples being implemented by Transport for NSW and the City of Sydney that will support and promote the switch from in-vehicle trips to walking and cycling. It showed how road use space allocation, along with movement and place, will lead to mode shift that has real impact on decarbonisation.

Event summary

Around 130 people registered to join the webinar to hear from the following speakers:

[Sara Stace](#) – Director of Cities, [WSP](#)

[Yanos Fill-Dryden](#), Transport Planning Manager, [Transport for NSW](#)

[Tegan Mitchell](#) – Manager, Major Transport Projects, [City of Sydney](#)

The webinar was moderated by [Mandi Mees](#), Deputy Chair of the RA Transport Reform policy stream and Head of National Rail Skills and Reform Design at the [National Transport Commission](#).

Walking and cycling: global and local

Enabling walking and cycling remains a challenge for many Australian transport agencies. According to the 2019 Australian Infrastructure Audit the number of Australian children regularly walking or cycling to school has halved in the last 40 years, with less than one-third now regularly walking, cycling or scooting to school.

About 5% of Australia's journey-to-work trips are undertaken solely by walking or cycling, with a further 8% to 12% by public transport which usually includes walking to or from the station or stop. Whereas 30% of trips in Sweden, Germany and Denmark are walked or cycled and over 50% in the Netherlands.

Insufficient infrastructure is one reason given to explain this. For example, TfNSW and City of Sydney have found that about 70% of people in New South Wales would cycle more if they had access to safe, separated cycleways. But in congested and densely populated cities reallocating motor vehicle lanes to walking and cycling can be very difficult.

So how will Australia tackle the climate emergency through investing and integrating active transport with the rest of our transport networks? As **Sara Stace** asked: what are we genuinely doing across the transport industry to mitigate our impacts and make our transport systems more resilient?

On a local level, City of Sydney is tackling decarbonisation with its vision to be a city for walking, cycling and public transport.

In a city where 34% of residents do not own a car, 90% of all trips in the city centre are already on foot. There are around 140,000 people walking on George Street daily and over a million trips walked every day on the city streets. Sydney plans to extend the George Street pedestrian zone to Bridge Street and eventually Circular Quay, and achieve a 27% tree canopy target by 2050 (up from the current 19%).

Tegan Mitchell said the city also expects to spend \$40-\$50 million over the next five years providing separated cycling infrastructure. It will change signage so that 139 one way streets can provide convenient and safer two-way passage for bikes. Such measures can have a significant impact in a city where 1.2 million residents are within a half hour ride (10km) of Sydney Town Hall and there are already more than 2 million private car trips of less than 2km taken daily. Tegan said such trips are ideal to convert to riding or walking.

'The City of Sydney has a vision... and there is certainly a cultural element as well...[For cities] there has to be a policy framework to follow through, led from the top.'

- **Tegan Mitchell, City of Sydney**



Why our approach must change

Sara Stace's hypothesis was that while strategic guidelines and visions are in place, in practice, Australia's "business as usual" isn't achieving decarbonisation fast enough.

For example, whilst car travel per person is dropping, there has been a subsequent increase in trips by "white goods vans" delivering products and packages. Overall, total vehicle kilometres travelled in all our cities is increasing as well as total emissions, and this looks likely to continue.

We need to fundamentally change what we're delivering and how. Sara said it was very clear from the recent federal election that people across many electorates in Australia want strong action on climate change and this demand will continue in the face of more floods and fires.

The United Nations recommends that governments spend 20% of their transport budget on walking and cycling infrastructure. Ireland, for example, spends £300m per year. NSW, by contrast, spends less than 0.5% of its transport budget on walking and cycling.

Policy, incentives and actions

Sara argued that the significant drop in Australian transport emissions during Covid shows it is possible to successfully reduce our emissions if we have the right settings and incentives to do so. She revealed two good news stories to support that. The number of car kilometres travelled per person in Australia peaked in 2004 and the downward trend is continuing. Further, growth of travel by car is rising slower than population growth.

However, more investment is needed to enable and encourage walking and cycling throughout our suburbs, towns and cities. This means safe cycling infrastructure that is separated from both motor vehicles and pedestrians in high-volume walking areas.



Other initiatives include replacing vans with cargo bikes for last-mile deliveries and safety changes such as implementing 30km/hr speed limits in all local streets.

Yanos Fill-Dryden described actions in the TfNSW Future Transport Strategy. These included:

- ensuring business cases consider and assess their impact on passenger vehicle kilometres travelled in project development;
- establishing more "15 minute neighbourhoods" where most of a person's daily needs can be accessed close to home;
- planning connected cycleway networks as key strategic corridors across local government boundaries and effectively integrated with public transport;

- ensuring all transport projects deliver walking and cycling infrastructure as part of their scope through measures such as consultation with local government and inclusion of skilled specialists in the project team;
- allocating physical and temporal road user space safely and equitably, putting pedestrians first and cars last;
- developing an open source data set for walking and cycling kilometres travelled to allow projects to benchmark forecast benefits against current usage;
- ensuring new developments address parking, with public and active transport accessibility; and
- improving walking trips in centres, towns and villages, by reallocating road space to wider footpaths and making more frequent and longer pedestrian crossing at traffic signals.

Yanos said TfNSW is increasingly ensuring walking and cycling is considered during a project's early problem definition phase. Through this TfNSW seeks to improve its ability to quantify the significant benefits of delivering active transport infrastructure prior to investment decisions being made.

Tegan also described City of Sydney's non-infrastructure bike initiatives. These include developer encouragements to provide end of trip facilities, community engagement to support more people riding, free bike tuneups, cycling courses and providing a much-riden bike fleet for City of Sydney employees.

Opportunities and obstacles

But will such measures be enough? Tegan pointed out that 84% of Sydney's potential and infrequent bike riders say due to safety concerns they want cycling infrastructure

separated from traffic before they will ride more.

Other challenges raised by Tegan include:

- road space reallocation is taking too long;
- strategy and operational areas of state government do not always agree;
- changing traffic signals sequences to favour active transport takes years to be approved and implemented;
- lack of knowledge and experience in engineering consultancies about what good walking and cycling infrastructure looks like; and
- it can be difficult to harness the positive voices of the many instead of focusing on the few people who are unhappy.

New approaches needed

Yanos said TfNSW's business cases are now starting to see place and active transport benefits outweigh traditional criteria such as vehicle kilometres travelled and speed reduction. As a result, projects are delivering critical active transport links based on such changing perceptions of value.

'People are used to doing things a certain way...in business cases. I think the onus is on us in the active transport team... to make sure practitioners are aware that things like active transport have real, significant economic benefits and should be considered when documenting a project's investment logic.'

- Yanos Fill-Dryden, TfNSW

However, after decisions have already been made Yanos said it was very hard to have additional active transport scope added.

Sara saw the need to think of walking and cycling in terms of customer experience as part of a whole door-to-door journey. She said TfNSW is starting to think beyond a bus or train journey in isolation. Rather, it is considering the whole customer journey before the traveller even leaves their front door. She said that helps ensure a customer journey lens enters the planning and design lexicon and flows through to the actual investment. Practitioners need to persistently consider that whole experience.

Moderator **Mandi Mees** posed the question of whether practitioners of engineering and construction organisations need to act more as stewards or ambassadors for the decarbonisation agenda?

Yanos said consultancies play a key role to shape major projects and can be highly effective at making sure that active transport scopes get considered in project definition and delivered.

'When we look back in 25 years to the year 2022 and ask what did we fundamentally change about how we plan, prioritise, fund and deliver projects, there has to be something quite drastic.... But often we take two steps forward and one step back. We need to keep pushing.'

- Sara Stace, WSP



Sara said there is a fundamental need for government to scope walking and cycling in its larger transport projects, and to shift investment towards more public and active transport overall. Conversely, she said it was incumbent on industry to assure government that industry is ready to rapidly decarbonise, with both the will and the skills to deliver on those projects.

Event outputs and next steps

A post-event survey was sent to attendees and the webinar received a +55.6 NPS rating.

This overview of the event and the broad themes addressed by each speaker was circulated via [RA's Web site](#).