



Active Travel Plan and Design Guide

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD

The ACT Government is refreshing its strategic plan for walking, cycling and micromobility. The community has been engaged in the preparation of two strategic documents:

- draft *Active Travel Plan (the Plan)* is a commitment of the *ACT Transport Strategy 2020* to supersede *Building an integrated transport network: active travel* (known as the Active Travel Framework), and
- draft *Design Guide: Best practices for intersections and other active travel infrastructure in the ACT (the Design Guide)*, presents non-technical principles and examples for best-practice design of intersections and streets for active travel, which has been shaped and informed by best-practice examples and research from cities around the world.

Together with the *ACT Planning Strategy*, *ACT Climate Change Strategy* and the *ACT Preventive Health Strategy* they all seek to get more people walking and riding more often, making Canberra a more liveable and sustainable city.

Walking and riding are very popular activities in Canberra, and most people walk even if it is just from the carpark to work, school or the shopping centre. Walking and riding can help many of us to meet our short trip needs and to access public transport for longer trips. We also do it for recreation and for sport. Canberra has a great legacy network of paths and a strong culture of walking, riding and being out in nature, but we know that there are improvements we can make. The Plan outlines a number of actions to enhance that network and address other barriers people face to doing more.

Increasing rates of active travel will help Canberra to address several immediate challenges.

As Canberra grows, it risks becoming more congested if we continue in our current driving habits. Some of our popular paths are also getting busier and are in need of repair or replacement and our streets could work better for people so they can enjoy them and get where they need to be safely, comfortably and on time.

We need to reduce emissions from the transport sector to help reach our goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2045. We cannot do this just by adopting low emission cars and buses.

The lack of physical activity and the opportunity for children to travel independently can contribute to the risk of chronic disease and lack of connection with the people and places where we live.

The Plan aims to help address these challenges so we can enjoy a high quality of life and minimise our environmental impact. Reducing our reliance on cars and using active travel wherever possible can have a positive impact on our health and the livability of our city. The Plan seeks to unlock more trips that people of ordinary fitness and ability from 8 to 80 can make using active travel. Active travel is not suitable for every trip. The Plan complements other transport choices so that they all work together.

The Design Guide will be used to complement the Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS) to inform all new infrastructure to improve the safety and priority for people walking and cycling based on their 'movement and place' classification. Future updates to the Standards will be informed by these new guidelines.



THE CONVERSATION

From 17 July to 24 August 2022, we asked the ACT community to comment on the Plan. We provided a range of formats to encourage greater engagement. From 5 May 2023 to 2 June 2023 we asked the ACT community to comment on the Design Guide.

We released three components of the Plan to the broader ACT community for feedback:

1. The Plan– we asked you to comment on the strategic intent we have outlined, to get more people walking and riding more often. It identifies a number of actions against five key priorities:
 - Priority 1. Safe infrastructure for walking and cycling
 - Priority 2. A better connected and maintained path network
 - Priority 3. Supporting new and emerging types of active travel
 - Priority 4. Making active travel and bicycle parking easy
 - Priority 5. Supporting behaviour change and partnering with the community
2. We asked people to place pins on two maps that outline our spatial approach to planning and delivering environments and networks that support more walking and riding:
 - The *Priority area walking map* recognises the human-scale needs for different areas from **Central, walking areas** in the busy town centres and lake foreshores, to **High Intensity walking areas** about 400metres from significant destinations such as shops, education facilities, significant transport hubs, hospitals and tourist precinct. **Low Intensity walking areas** are not featured on the map, but include streets and networks on local and collector streets with less activity than primary areas, and are within the boundaries of suburbs, within 20 minutes walking of where people live.
 - The *Cycle network map* that shows the routes that will be necessary to better connect people to the places they need to get to by bike, within their local area (**Local cycle routes**), to get to group centres and other major destinations (**Main cycle routes**) and between districts and town centres (**Principal cycle routes**). It also shows works in progress as well as potential future routes.
3. As part of the Yoursay consultation we undertook a survey to get a snapshot of other travel preferences and behaviours.

The Design Guide was released for comment between 5 May and 2 June 2023. It complements the Plan and the maps. It will help designers, decision-makers and other interested people deliver paths and intersections consistent with the Plan and other infrastructure projects that mediate walking and riding within other goals. The Design Guide will be finalised and released at the same time as the Plan.

WHO WE ENGAGED

Feedback was sought from all over ACT and some was received from interstate.



Just over half of the **survey** respondents were **male** (53 percent) and 40 percent were **female**. Thirty-four percent of **respondents** were **aged** 25-39 years. People responded from all over Canberra, but the responses corresponded with the regions with the highest participation. Nearly half of responses came from the Inner North and Belconnen (27 and 20 percent respectively). Then Tuggeranong (14 percent), Woden and Weston (11 percent), Gungahlin (10 percent), and the Inner South (6 percent).

Preparation of the Plan

As part of the development of the Plan we engaged with key active travel stakeholder groups and professional practitioners in March and April 2022 to seek their priorities for the update of the Plan.

There were three meetings of a technical working group which included active travel practitioners (designers and decision makers) from inside and outside of government in 2022:

- 3 March – intersection design
- 22 March – cycle network plan
- 5 April – decision making principles for active travel infrastructure

There were two meetings of a strategic working group in 2022 which included active travel policy and advocacy groups from inside and outside of government:

- 4 March – strategic priorities for the Plan
- 7 April – refined strategic priorities and decision making principles for active travel infrastructure

There was a subsequent meeting of the technical working group on 4 February 2023 on the Design Guide prior to public consultation.

The working groups included:

- Pedal Power
- Living Streets
- The Heart Foundation (ACT)
- Auscycling (ACT)
- See-Change
- The Conservation Council of the ACT and Region
- The National Capital Authority
- Relevant ACT Government Directorates



Yoursay community engagement

The ACT Government invited the community to engage with the consultation on the Plan through the Yoursay platform as well as the July edition of the Our Canberra Newsletter.

57 written submissions were received from a range of active travel organisations, community councils, residents groups, schools, professional practitioners and interested members of the community. Submissions commented on the Plan document, with general comments about the maps.

There were 312 individual responses to the survey. 49 unique users provided 336 comments on the priority area walking map and 161 unique users provided 1702 comments on the cycle network map.

In addition to the Plan engagement, we received 72 submissions for the Design Guide. Broadly, and likely because of the interlinked nature of the Plan and the Design Guide, the key insights, feedback and nature of the submission were similar to the earlier engagement on the Plan, particularly around:

- general support for implementation aims, and the need for the Design Guide,
- concerns around the timeliness of delivery, and equity across different regions, and
- an emphasis for the need to consider, and provide for, the needs of all road and path users.

Specific insights from the Design Guide consultation have been included below, and where appropriate have informed the final drafting process.

Key insights

The broad vision for the active travel is supported

1. There was strong support for the broad vision '*More Canberrans walking and cycling more often to improve quality of life*'. Submissions reiterated the importance of movement that fosters community care for others no matter the mode of movement which requires special provision for the most vulnerable road and path users.
2. There was recognition that the Plan is a high-level strategic document. Feedback also indicated the importance of an appropriate level of investment in capital works and behaviour change activities in order to achieve the vision of the Plan.
3. A range of comments were received that the Plan was strong on cycling and micromobility but could be strengthened with further information on walking. Some concerns were expressed that the broad range of user experience was not reflected, for example the needs of elderly people as path environments become busier, recreational users (including equestrians) and sports cyclists and visitors to Canberra. The concept of 20-minute trips was highlighted (i.e. being able to access needs in 20 minutes on foot, or a bit further by bicycle).
4. A small number of submissions from individuals, and survey responses expressed concern that increased focus on active travel might impact negatively on the operation of car-based transport.



Canberra is starting from a high baseline of provision for active travel but there is still much work to be done

5. Most submissions acknowledged the strong legacy shared-path network that was established in the 1970s that today combines original footpaths, shared paths, some separated footpaths and bicycle paths, and on-road cycle lanes.
6. Submissions noted this mix provides a great deal of choice for people depending on their priorities (commuting, recreation and/or sport, travelling through green belts or following direct routes aligned with roads). Some cautioned against co-locating all new paths adjacent to busy roads to ensure the continuation of this mix.
7. There was support for a range of measures that recognise the role of local neighbourhood streets in facilitating the majority of short trips by bike and that need to be crossed when walking, such as streets designed and retrofitted for slower speeds.
8. There was acknowledgement that the ACT Government is good at articulating and planning for active travel, but that further accountability for maintenance and replacement is needed. The community consistently provided similar examples and specific locations of where the network does not meet expectations of safety or comfort.
9. Some submissions noted that recent projects have fallen short of community expectations, noting that they have not succeeded in providing greater priority or safe and comfortable facilities that would attract more people to active travel.
10. Related to this, the community highlighted aspects of the network where the Design Guide could be retroactively applied and noted the importance of a complete network – particularly around intersection treatments – and how fragmented paths, with inconsistent treatments, can make active travel dangerous and uninviting.

A complete and coherent network enhanced with appropriate amenities

9. The walking areas were broadly supported, with some suggestions for additional areas and with more graphic detail to show the centres and overlapping density of attractors/ destinations in these locations, for example a school, shops and a Rapid stop. Submissions highlighted the conditions that support human-scale movement including even surfaces, lines of sight, continuity of routes, short waiting times and short crossing distances, non-threatening speeds in local areas and good lighting. A significant number of walking map pins highlighted features that should be replicated to increase both place value and walkability.
10. The principal and main routes proposed in the Cycling Network map were broadly supported. Missing links were identified in two categories: those making up the **strategic path network**, and the granular **local** links that logically connect local destinations, both of which will be reviewed against current lists of missing links that have already been assessed.
11. Submissions and map pins identified locations for amenities to complement the network including secure bike parking, with charging in town centres and public transport interchanges to support the uptake of e-bikes and cargo bikes. Wayfinding, particularly in south Canberra was identified as a need.



12. Key organisations and practitioners identified a need for greater integration with the planning review process.
13. There is a need to have specific attention to the design needs of all path and road users, including the language and framing used when designing projects and program delivery. Design should be foremost user-centric in nature, and policy, standards and guidelines need to meet the diverse needs of all users.

People need to feel and be safe when walking and riding, but there are other barriers

14. It is a common perception that crossing roads and cycling in mixed traffic is not safe due to the risk of collision with motor vehicles. However, one submission provided research and analysis in support of the view that cycling is very safe compared to other sports and that most serious cycling injuries are associated with higher risk sports cycling activities (such as road cycling and mountain-biking).
15. When asked about what features made contributors feel safe, separated paths were rated much higher than intersections (where most collisions actually occur).
16. Similarly, with the interaction between faster moving bikes and personal mobility devices (PMDs) and people walking, the perception of risk is more about surprise where a rider comes from behind.
17. Some people reported feeling unsafe in the path environment due to the mix of users, in particular faster moving cyclists and PMD users (e-scooters etc), particularly the elderly for whom a collision can have serious health consequences.
18. When we asked about barriers to increasing active travel, safety continued to be a strong theme. Contributors also raised concerns about convenience in terms of time, distance, end of trip facilities and having to carry goods or people. Submissions from organisations and individuals suggested solutions such as financial incentives to increase the rapid uptake of e-bikes and public transport and the operation of the network to prioritise walking and cycling (programming traffic lights for pedestrian priority, regulatory reforms and temporary traffic measures).
19. Regulatory reforms were suggested included: allowing e-scooters to use bike lanes and lower speed roads, laws that would allow more efficient movement at intersections for bikes where it is safe to do so (i.e. rolling at stop signals), strict liability, and the review of parking both the enforcement of parking requirements where people are obstructing paths as well as disincentives for parking.
20. Generally, safety factors that were highlighted included the overall design of streetscapes that favour faster through traffic (eg wide collector streets with a lack of mid-block crossings) dangerous points of the road network (eg crossings and intersections), dark paths that are remote from well lit streets.
21. People seemed to have an innate understanding of the logic of the [Movement and Place](#) concept and the role that speed plays in making 'places for people' feel safer and more inviting to walk and ride a bike. Survey respondents indicated a willingness to slow down on streets that prioritise place such as schools and shops and less willing on roads that prioritise fast vehicle movement (arterials). There was general support for a lower default urban speed limit with individuals indicating that 40km/ hr seemed appropriate. On the other hand, active travel, road safety,



transport groups and professional practitioners quoted the domestic and international research literature that supports 30km as the benchmark for environments that prioritise human-scale activity.

22. A number of submissions from individuals and organisations indicated support for education of all road and path users of their responsibilities and the needs of others, in particular in relation to speed and courteous behaviour. All road and path users includes: people in motor vehicles; people walking, riding bikes and PMDs; vulnerable road users; vulnerable path users and horse riders.
23. There needs to be a concerted effort to harmonise ACT Government standards, policy and project implementation to ensure that the strategic aims of the Plan are reflected in project delivery.
24. The community, while supportive and emphasising the need for network infrastructure improvements, also highlighted the importance a range of design elements and thinking that are outside of the scope of the Design Guide. This includes the need for the ACT Government to consider aspects including shade, public facilities, parking and other amenities the support and complement the formal network. In practice, this necessitates collaboration across agencies to deliver holistic design outcomes.
25. Professional engineers, planners, designers and other transport practitioners provided technical comments and suggestions to improve the Design Guide, to ensure that it is responsive to and able to be applied within the ACT-context. These included ensuring the references to existing regulations, standards and other material were included.

Equity in timeliness and quality in project delivery across regions

26. Some submissions complemented the ACT Government's ability to articulate the issues and actions required to achieve greater rates of participation, but that elements included in the Plan had not been delivered from previous plans.
27. Concerns were raised about the detail of delivery, seeking a specific implementation plan, identification of targets for delivery of actions. They also sought accountability mechanisms for maintenance by the ACT Government and the obligations of developers to maintain and enhance network connectivity and places for people where their projects impact public spaces where people walk and ride.
28. A perception was expressed that projects take too long to deliver from the funding announcement through to officially announcing facilities open for use and at a pace that would support the uptake required for climate action.
29. Submissions supported the use of community knowledge and resources to undertake 'tactical urbanism' initiatives, to implement solutions that have proven to work in other contexts and to be experimental with temporary infrastructure improvements to test demand but take measures to ensure community acceptance.
30. A small number of submissions perceived a disparity in delivery between regions with more delivery in the inner regions of north and south Canberra.



31. There was clear community support for the accelerated delivery of active travel infrastructure across the ACT, particularly at key intersections and busier routes. There was a general perception that network delivery has been too slow, and that the ACT Government should deliver more quick build solutions as was seen in other cities early in the COVID19 pandemic.
32. The community broadly support the intent of the design guide and raised concerns that these designs are existing government policy that have previously been under-delivered. There was consistent feedback that the ACT Government should be more proactive at responding to identified issues across the network, and retrofit existing infrastructure based on this approach.
33. There was an awareness that provision and design outcomes can vary depending on the agency responsibility, and the community noted the importance of consistently accessible and appropriate design, in particular in providing enough space for all paths users, to be considered across the entire ACT.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Feedback from this engagement will help us to refine these documents prior to being adopted by the ACT Government as policy. Your feedback will then be used by ACT Government agencies who have a role in delivering aspects of the Plan and the Design Guide on an ongoing basis.

You can register to receive project updates at communityengagement@act.gov.au.

To find out more about the Plan, the Design Guide and other initiatives, policies and projects in Canberra visit www.yoursay.act.gov.au.

Key Timings

14 July 2022 - Draft Active Travel Plan released

24 August 2022 – Draft Active Travel Plan consultation closes

4 February – Technical Working Group consideration of the design guide

5 May 2023 – Draft design guide for active travel released

2 June 2023 - Draft design guide for active travel consultation closes

2 February 2024 – What We Heard Report released

2 February 2024 – Updated Active Travel Plan and Design Guide released

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK****6,900+**

We reached 6902 people via
YourSay

11,900+

We reached a social media
audience of 11,932

312

A total of 312 people
completed the YourSay
survey

69%

people engaged were
supportive of the
engagement process

2,131

We received 2,131 items of
feedback in total via the
YourSay cycling and walking
interactive maps

130

130 submissions received
across both consultations