



# Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

PO Box 589 Sutherland NSW 1499 | office@ssec.org.au  
www.ssec.org.au | ABN 96 127 431 611

[projects@transport.nsw.gov.au](mailto:projects@transport.nsw.gov.au)

19 December, 2021

**Re:** Sutherland to Cronulla Active Transport Link

To whom it may concern,

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre has been campaigning for a shared path between Sutherland and Cronulla starting with a suggestion in 2006 that the path be constructed as part of the Cronulla Rail Duplication project. Over the past 15 years, we have continued to advocate for this badly needed infrastructure, meeting with local MPs and the Minister for Transport, attending community consultation sessions and lodging submissions.

The reasons for building SCATL, as provided in the Review of Environmental Factors 2021 are sound. If built properly, it will alleviate traffic congestion, reduce particulate and greenhouse gas pollution and improve the health of residents. To achieve the stated goal of a 5% mode-shift from private vehicles to active transport will rely on providing a path that is safe, efficient and enjoyable to use.

All consultations to date have indicated a strong preference by the community and council for a route alongside the rail corridor as it provides the greatest safety, efficiency for users and minimises the loss of trees and parking spots.

In 2015, a commitment was made by the Transport Minister and local State MP's to build the Sutherland to Cronulla Active Transport Link (SCATL) with over half of the length within the rail corridor<sup>1</sup>. The sudden announcement earlier this year that the route would no longer be alongside the corridor and would end at Gannons Road was dismissive of the long-term efforts of community and council to ensure that the project would best serve the needs of residents now and into the future.

The Consultation report from October (SCATL Information Booklet V15 WCAG) shows the community has great concerns about the dangers introduced by this change in route. The top comment with regards to safety was:

*You told us: that if the path runs along the road and across busy side streets, driveways and intersections it will be unsafe and you won't use it.*

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<https://www.theleader.com.au/story/3118871/sutherland-to-cronulla-cycle-walk-link-more-than-half-will-be-in-rail-corridor/?fbclid=IwAR0Zyon5nYgJd8CF4KvAyXJ6YMnDIFtRWYu2ZHAnKC6-Zuc4MVNwM YoDQSA>

Despite this finding, Transport NSW appears to be intent on building infrastructure that the community says it will not use. It is with a giant sigh of resignation that we lodge yet another submission to tell Transport NSW what needs to be changed for SCATL to be successful and entice residents to use it instead of motorised forms of transport.

### **Proposal Objectives and Criteria**

As stated in the REF 2021, construction of SCATL speaks to the objectives of the Future Transport Strategy 2056, Metropolis of 3 cities and Transport for NSW Walking and Cycling program. However, all objectives would be better met with the rail-corridor aligned route (1a in table 2-3).

In fact, several of the objectives are unlikely to be achieved with the current proposal as the route (2a in table 2-3) is unsafe, unpleasant and inefficient and will do little to entice people to use it instead of private vehicles and existing footpaths.

Objective 3 from the South District Plan (Greater Sydney Commission 2018) is to plan infrastructure that will adapt to future needs. Indeed, State Government has facilitated a huge increase in the population density of the Shire exacerbating traffic congestion which will continue into the future as 41,000 additional residents are expected over the next 20 years<sup>2</sup>. An effective active transport network is one of the least costly ways to address the problem. Previous REF's (Nov 2015, Oct2018) estimate 4200-9500 daily trips will be made using SCATL, doubling to nearly 20,000 in the future.

Objective 3 also flags the need to anticipate the increasing use of e-bikes and scooters and to cater for on-demand deliveries. However, the selection of route 2a fails to take into account the high likelihood of user conflict and injury when these heavier and faster forms of transport are routed through congested areas such as South Village and Miranda Westfields. As population grows, these centres will become even more crowded and will make the path unsafe and unable to accommodate the projected number of users.

The Urban Design Principles (2.3.3) are not being properly addressed with the choice of route 2a:

**Timeliness** is compromised by the introduction of inclines, travel through highly congested areas and waiting for signals and traffic at intersections and driveways. **Connectivity** has been decreased with the change of route. The previous route 1a not only provided direct access to the Cronulla CBD, but it was far better at facilitating a combined use of train and active transport. It is a furphy to say that the change of route enhances **accessibility** when the routing is so undesirable that existing footpaths along alternative roads (ex. Karimbla Rd) will continue to be preferred to avoid the detrimental elements introduced with route 2a. A box may have been ticked for consulting **stakeholders and community** by holding consultation sessions and receiving submissions but this is meaningless when all substantial input from stakeholders and community is ignored.

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<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/-/media/Files/DPE/Factsheets-and-faqs/Research-and-demography/Population-projections/2019-Sutherland.pdf>

The weighted rankings in table 2-4 result in route 2a being selected over route 1a, but we question the methodology of the multi-criteria analysis. In particular, the assignment of '2' for *Customer Experience and Place* (criteria 2) for route 2a appears to be inaccurate when the serious flaws of the route are so obvious that the community has said they will not use it. If a '3' or '4' were assigned for *Customer Experience and Place* instead of a '2', route 1a would outrank route 2a.

Justifications provided in the 2021 REF for selection of route 2a are dubious. Transport NSW states that route 2a provides better connectivity to key destinations than the previous route, 1a. However, routing **all** users through congested centres compromises safety and efficiency. The 'spine' that SCATL is intended to provide for the Shire's active transport network should facilitate travel with minimum interruptions from signals, road crossings and driveways. The previous route alongside the rail corridor provides the most efficient, safe and pleasant way for a large number of people to travel between village centres, much like highways do for our road network. Connectivity to schools, sporting grounds and business centres should be provided with short arterial sections from the main spine of the network.

The new route ends at Gannons road a major need for connectivity to the Cronulla CBD is not being met.

The selection of route 2a has introduced many undesirable features that will impact greatly on the safety and efficiency of SCATL. We do not accept the justification provided in the overview of the Consultation report (SCATL Information Booklet V15 WCAG) that the new route will make women and children feel safer due to increased passive surveillance. It is blatantly obvious that the proposed route greatly increases the likelihood of users being struck by cars as it crosses 27 intersections and hundreds of driveways. The preferred route alongside the rail corridor would attract sufficient users and provide the passive surveillance required to make people feel safe.

### **Specific comments on the proposed route**

The two proposed routes that proceed East from Oak Road in Kirrawee are both unsuitable.

The first option, utilising Flora Street alongside South Village is hazardous due to congestion from pedestrians, shopping trolleys and vehicles frequenting the shopping precinct, high density housing and Kirrawee Public School on Clements Pde. The second option alongside President and onto Bath and Avery Roads, south of the rail corridor is also unsuitable as it includes the hazards of numerous driveway crossings for residential properties as well as introducing an incline.

The rail corridor between Kirrawee and Gymea seems to have been dismissed as an option despite indications that it would be quite straightforward, requiring fencing to be moved by half a metre. The answer provided to our query related to this during the LiveStream event on December 9 was opaque and unsatisfactory.

The choice to use Kingsway between Gymea and Caringbah is detrimental to enticing people to use active transport because the speed and volume of traffic make it unpleasant, noisy, inefficient and

unsafe compared to the rail corridor. Existing footpaths already provide pleasant, efficient options for pedestrians to travel between Gymea and Caringbah.

Along the South side of the Kingsway, Between Hotham Road and Jackson Ave, the route becomes increasingly problematic as it nears Westfields in Miranda, crossing driveways for high density housing blocks between Sylvania and Wandella Roads and requiring users to navigate the hazards of frequently used driveways, large numbers of pedestrians and shopping trolleys in front of the heavily used Westfields mall.

Another undesirable feature that is part of the proposed route is the large gully between Jackson Ave and Kareela Rd. Pedestrians and many cyclists will continue to use Karimbla Road to avoid the gully and traffic on the Kingsway.

The choice of Kingsway not only makes the route exceedingly unpleasant to use, it also greatly amplifies the likelihood of injuries and death, particularly for young users who are forced to negotiate complex, busy intersections such as Kareena and Taren Point Roads. Crossings like these are also undesirable for cyclists as it requires them to dismount and wait for signals.

### **Lack of Transparency**

A ministerial promise to build the majority of SCATL alongside the rail corridor was broken and has left the community with many unanswered questions.

Since the announcement was made to change to route 2a in April this year, we have endeavoured to obtain a satisfactory explanation from Transport NSW as to why the previous route 1a was rejected. This includes attendance of the livestream event on April 22, a community drop-in session on May 5, 2021, and a zoom meeting with Lewis Haig and Mark Speakman on April 30. Most recently, we attended the livestream event on December 9 and were disappointed again by the opaque answers provided to questions. Some of the answers were downright misleading. When asked whether bicycle user groups had been consulted, the answer was 'yes, including Bicycle NSW'. However, what wasn't mentioned is that little to none of the advice has been taken on board.

To understand the justification behind the change in route, we wish to know the following:

1. The actual cost of building the previous route alongside the rail corridor, including a breakdown of key line items.
2. If any of the costs could be deemed unnecessary or could be deferred and added at a later date.
3. If the costs for route 1a, which is far superior to all other options and is preferred by the community and council, could be accommodated over a longer time-frame.
4. What specific issues pertained to accommodating the needs of Sydney trains.

There are numerous examples of shared paths operating successfully within rail corridors including:

- Sydney Harbour Bridge (including its approaches between Sydney CBD and Milsons Point)

- Chatswood to Artarmon (along the western side of the Northern line tracks from Albert St to Nelson St)
- Rhodes to Meadowbank across the Parramatta River (alongside the Main Northern rail line tracks)
- 50% of the 17 K Liverpool path which was finished in 2000 and cost \$5 million
- Between Oatley & Como across the Georges River (on the eastern side of the Illawarra Line rail tracks)

Given the successful implementation of these other paths, why are the requirements for use of the corridor for SCATL considered to be unachievable?

There has been a dearth of information provided to the community to justify the change of route from the clearly superior option 1a alongside the rail corridor. We ask State Government to listen to the advice from council and community and build SCATL infrastructure that will meet the intended goals of motivating mode-shift and provide an amenity that will be appreciated long into the future.

Sincerely,

Dr Tassia Kolesnikow

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tassia Kolesnikow', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chair, Sutherland Shire Environment Centre