

Submission made by Mr Nathan English,

Urban problem solver & Resident of Balmain.

Attention: Mr Fadi Shakir, DPIE

Senior Planner in charge of submissions regarding:

The Rozelle Interchange Mod 2 – The Crescent overpass and active transport links.

Dear Mr Shakir,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the second attempted modification to the WestConnex Rozelle Interchange approval, focussing on a proposed Crescent Overpass and associated Active Linkages.

In my past submission (related to RMS's first attempt at a Crescent Overpass modification), I made it clear I was not objecting to this overpass itself – but urging TfNSW/RMS to expand their plans and create an active Green-Link connection in the form of a direct viaduct that could link the Rozelle Bay light rail stop with Rozelle itself, via Gordon Street. It was my view that such a viaduct could be reminiscent of the existing brick-arched viaducts that carry light rail to the east of the currently proposed Crescent Overpass site. I also discussed the poorly co-ordinated active transport provisions put forward, which were indirect and looked like an afterthought to all other efforts made around traffic flows. Finally, I wrote of the need to reserve a future light rail corridor within the overall interchange plans – light rail is something flagged in key state strategies that propose its investigation into The Bays for the future, which could also hold regional importance given the confirmation of a west metro station to be built at White Bay. The key strategies discussing an extension of light rail to the Bays through the footprint of the Rozelle Interchange project in future are INSW's State Infrastructure Strategy (2018), Future Transport 2056 and the Eastern City District Plan (2018).

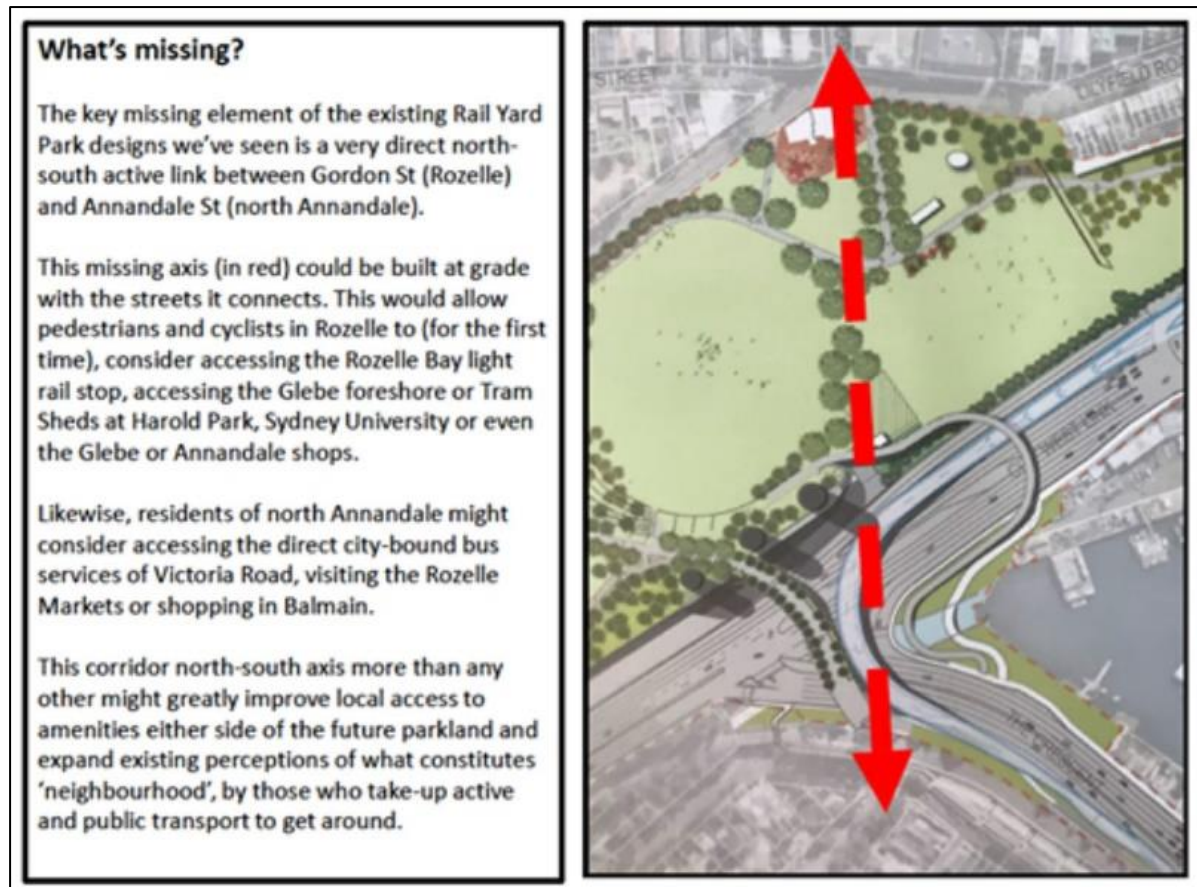
Having now read the "The Crescent Overpass and Active Transport Links Design Amendment Report" produced to support the resubmission for a Crescent Overpass modification, I regrettably see my suggestions have fallen on deaf ears – so I will try again...

In writing this submission, I seek to correct the clumsiness of the current design and bring back elements of connectivity that should never have been lost from the first modification attempt. I would also like to appeal to DPIE and the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, to consider the possibilities of imposing a broader scope on this project – that being the need for it to serve far more than just the needs of the approved motorway project, and the very limited local linkages for active transport users which were first approved. This modification could hold the key to transformative regional public and active transport improvements. There are also issues of connectivity which need to be re-dressed across interchange project more broadly, if we really want it to work for all communities who are tolerating its lengthy construction phase. There is currently a window to provide properly reserved corridors such for modes such as light rail (extended to White Bays) and to deliver on all of the Minister's original conditions of approval, which have been somewhat weakened by the impost of the contractors to include a Crescent Overpass on top of that initial approval of the M4-M5

Link – The Rozelle Interchange project. This submission will therefore propose a slight alternative to the proposed Green-Link design, future proofing it for all such possibilities, should a forward-thinking Government seek to pursue them over the longer term. My alternative offers a more generous version of the Green-Link bridge crossing the CityWest Link, which will set the scene for the forthcoming UDLP to comprehensively re-unite long separated communities around the project's site. Doing so will greatly expand people's existing access to quality greenspaces and forge new social ties between residents, encouraging people to adopt more public and active transport moving forward. It is my hope that my suggestions make this possible if for no other reason, that the changes I advocate will enhance the appeal of crossing an expanded CityWest Link or The Crescent by foot on a sensory level. Noise pollution is an inherent hindrance to human activity along most amplified roads – but built structures which help separate traffic from pedestrians can reduce such noise and create a seemingly better and more separate experience for the pedestrian. I make these suggestions fully aware of what the previous designs sought to achieve for traffic movements - and I will not seek a compromise in relation to this. If anything, I believe my proposed changes can reduce the need for active movements through otherwise rushing traffic and therefore streamline TfNSW's motoring objectives.

Comment on a key missing link for both cyclists and pedestrians: Gordon Street/Lilyfield Road to Rozelle Bay LRT/Pritchard Street, Annandale (at grade).

The existing proposal and the proposal before it, failed to realise one transformative provision that is crying out to be made: an 'at grade' active link between Gordon Street, Rozelle and Pritchard Street in north Annandale. While the proposed 'Green-Link' bridge seeks to connect the planned ventilation stacks and its westbound pedestrian link to Denison Street in Rozelle with the Rozelle Bay light rail stop, it fails to capitalise on the more valuable linkages that could exist between north Annandale and Victoria Road. Victoria Road hosts regular buses west to Drummoyne, Gladesville, Macquarie Park and Parramatta – as well as frequent buses travelling east to the Sydney CBD. Linking north Annandale to important bus stops – and potentially the West Metro station planned at White Bay – while also providing reverse connectivity to the Glebe Foreshore for residents of the Balmain Peninsula. This simple direct link would change the way locals view both the local transport options available to them and open up new possibilities between communities previously estranged by urban barriers and inefficient active transport routes. An 'at grade' green-link extending between the Gordon Street-Lilyfield Road intersection, and the Rozelle Bay LRT stop embankment near Pritchard Street would transform regional cycling allowing those on Victoria Road to travel to and from the Camperdown Health and Education Precinct - or beyond, and provide a much faster and safer connection which is traffic-free to promote cycling and walking across the local area. Gordon Street to Pritchard Street therefore conquers the CityWest Link and become a very important traffic-free, active connection for Sydney's future. I urge the Crescent Overpass designers to add provisions to their current Green-Link designs, which can be adapted to accommodate this direct active link in future, (see **below**).



Comment on the need to further widen the proposed Green-Link Bridge

The so-called Green-Link Bridge has been widened in this second modification design - but it is not yet wide enough – ideally, it should also be built wide enough and strong enough to host light rail alongside separated pedestrians, cyclists and tree plantings.

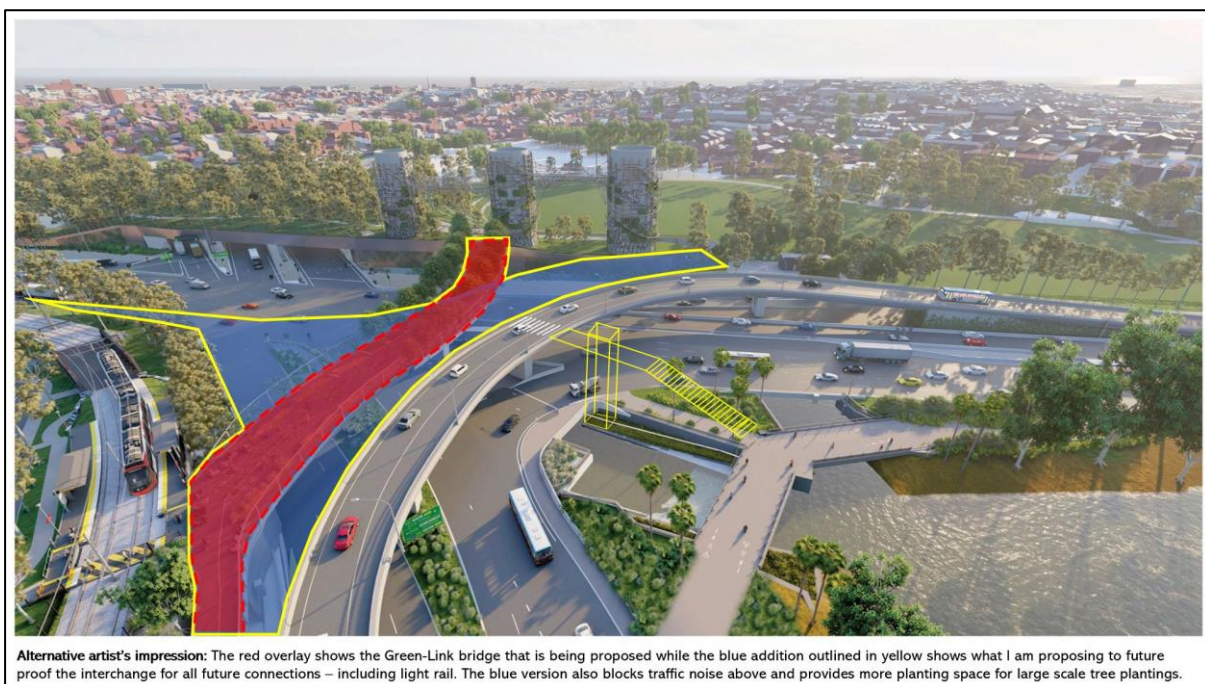
Rationale: Pedestrians and cyclists should not be forced to share any path within this Green-Link viaduct space. Local cycling groups will simply opt to stay on local roads if there is any chance of conflict on a shared path that also hosts prams, pets or small children. As this bridge is bound to become an important regional connector, active users should really be given separated corridors to reduce conflict - and this will promote its long-term use by all. If there remains any suggestion that high-speed cyclists won't deter vulnerable pedestrians from using this space, look no further than the shared path carrying cyclists over the ANZAC Bridge or those shared paths which were conflict points around the Bay Walk of Iron Cove in recent years. I would therefore suggest that the Green-Link bridge needs to be twice as wide as the currently proposed design – as this will allow room to maximise the comfort of pedestrians through a more vegetated experience. Further widening will also provide room enough for a potential light rail provision, should our Government ever follow-through with its flagged investigations to extend that mode to The Bays, like it suggests it might in the current State Strategies of note, ie:

1. Infrastructure NSW's 'State Infrastructure Strategy' (2018);
2. TfNSW's Future Transport 2056; and,
3. The Eastern City District Plan.

I wish to make this very clear - that I am not suggesting the current contractors of the Rozelle Interchange be expected to provide a light rail service now – that would be outside of the project's

scope. Instead, I'm simply saying to TfNSW and DPIE, that it will be far wiser (given the use of taxpayers' money) to build a Green-Link viaduct that provides ample room and comfort for active users now - which can still provide the option of a light rail link to White Bay over the longer term. Such a generous upfront provision, built into the design of an approved Green-Link, could support a cost-effective extension of the Inner West light rail catchment northbound to the Balmain Peninsula. It could provide a streamline way of bringing it over the CityWest Link and eventually through the Railyards Park, to interchange with the confirmed West Metro Station at White Bay in the future. This would be greatly enhance the potential catchment of *that* project, feeding into it and the redevelopment opportunities of The Bays themselves. This additional access will help with procuring cashed-up tenants to spur on long-term investment in the Bays West Precinct. The key point for Government, is that any approved design of a Crescent overpass cannot be allowed to jeopardise that ease of access – because integrating a reservation for light rail into this design now will avoid costly duplications in future, if they choose to pursue it. State strategies do suggest they might.

I would encourage both high-end TfNSW strategists and the Minister for Planning and Public Places to consider my attached concept designs. Please see below, my **Alternative artist's impression** of what the interchange might look like with a multi-modal Green-Link in a decades time, along with my Alternative Crescent Overpass design (page 6 of this submission) depicting how all discussed elements and additions (still operate within the current project objectives), could not only enhance but future-proofing this modification.



Comment on the Removed 'Horseshoe Bridge' (previously proposed for cyclists)

In the most recent design for the Crescent Overpass, the unsightly 'horseshoe bridge' was removed – which is indeed an improvement visually on the original modification design. However, this removal now means there is no longer a direct, traffic-free link between the proposed Rozelle Interchange Park and the future Crescent foreshore walk which will be built on the edge of Rozelle Bay. This fails to deliver on the Minister's own conditions of consent imposed as part of the M4-M5 Link asking to provide a seamless active connection between Rozelle, the Rozelle Bay LRT stop and the bay which

bears Rozelle's name. The change (made for visual amenity improvements alone) proves highly unsatisfactory given it now forces pedestrians to interface with the amplified traffic conditions of a widened Crescent carriageway whenever they wish to visit the Rozelle Bay foreshore.

I propose that the Crescent Overpass be given a zebra crossing at its highest point, that can link the Overpass to a direct bridge and set of stairs, as well as an elevator for those wanting to access foreshore from the Green-Link. The idea that active transport users will be happier crossing a widened form of The Crescent under an overpass is misguided in the extreme. The latest street crossing of several lanes and several changes of lights as an alternative to a bridge was clearly cooked up by the mind of a traffic engineer who sees the needs of pedestrians as an afterthought, rather than the experiential approach that would've been employed by a skilled urbanist wishing to create an attractive experience for active users, despite the likely traffic amplification that will come about from this recalibration of The Crescent. I urge the designers, wherever possible, to consider the experience of pedestrians in equal measure to that of motorists.

Any separation of transport modes should cover the separation of both pedestrians and cyclists too – but primarily, designers of this modification must strive at all times to separate pedestrians from the sensory effects of an amplified traffic regime, which will otherwise be brutal in its impact to their user experience.

On this note, I would like to suggest that a new foreshore connection be instated as part of this current modification design, one which will prove both iconic and complimentary to any active user's experience trying to reach the bay foreshore. Such a connection could be achieved in one or several ways, but here are the two I'm proposing:

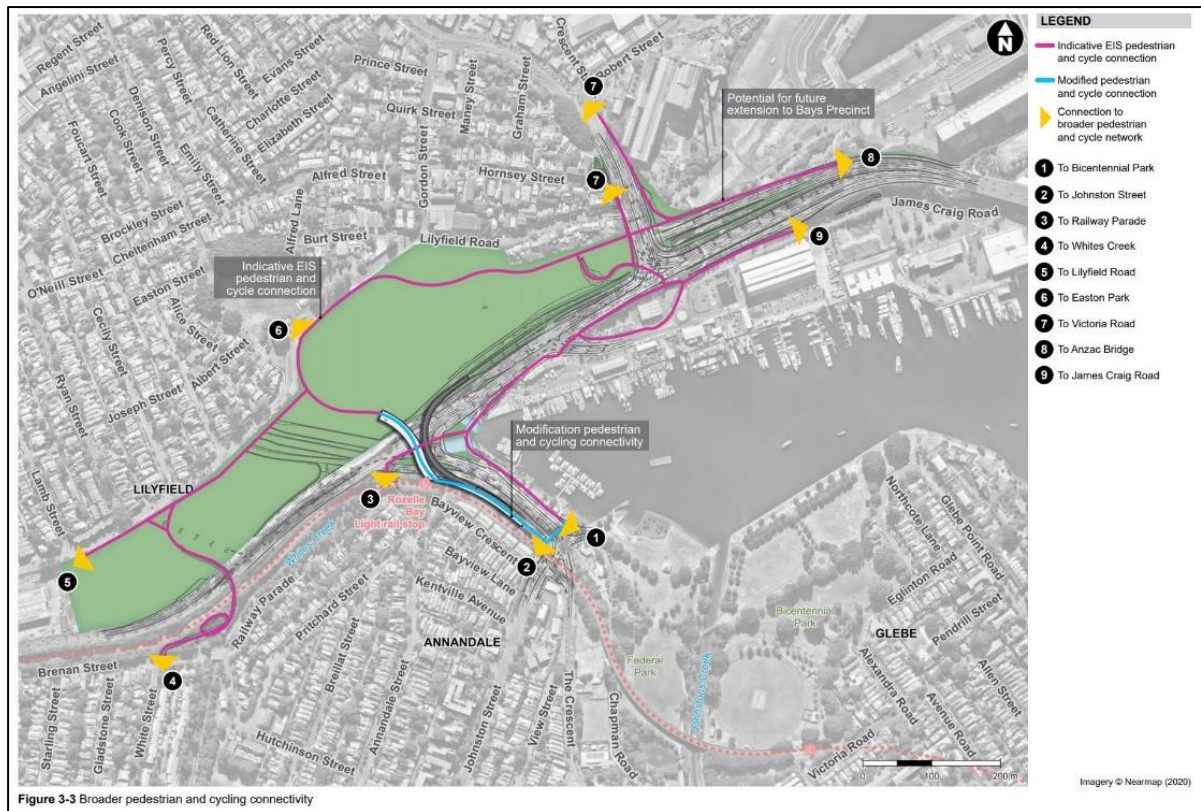
4. A footbridge could be extended north-east off the proposed Crescent Overpass which would need to butt up next to an expanded Green-Link. The bridge would be reached via a new risen zebra crossing over the Crescent Overpass, allowing users to reach the foreshore parklands by crossing only one lane of traffic and descending via a set of stairs or an elevator;
5. A second active bridge could be extended from the eastern end of Bayview Road in north Annandale, out over Johnson Street and The Crescent, following the contour of the existing light rail bridge built above that intersection. A small bridge could also offshoot north in perpendicular fashion across the light rail tracks allowing people traffic-free access to Chapman Street and Bicentennial Park. If people don't cross the tracks and instead head east, they could descend to the eastern side of The Crescent via a ramp, allowing access to Glebe and the Tram Sheds of Harold Park. For this system to work, Bayview Road (which has excellent views and is well sheltered from the traffic noise of the Crescent) would need to become local access-only for when it comes to motorists, and otherwise serve as a shared corridor for both cyclists and pedestrians, allowing a visually appealing link between the Green-Link bridge with the new bridge I describe, hypothetically, to the east.

For a quick outline on how these two proposals could work within the current project objectives, please refer to my **Alternative Crescent Overpass design** below. My changes are always about lessening the conflict between modes, be they different active modes or traffic and active modes more generally. I'm conscious of the impact large-scale traffic has on reducing the appeal of active transport uptake – so every time I propose a change, I'm trying to find ways to improve the pedestrian or cycling experience. Nothing I propose will adversely affect planned traffic operations - on the contrary – the removal of pedestrian crossings between Johnson Street and Chapman Street (superseded by the new active bridge suggestion) allows buses to have wider turning circles as they enter the Crescent overpass and some additional space to ease a complex calibration of planned traffic lanes.

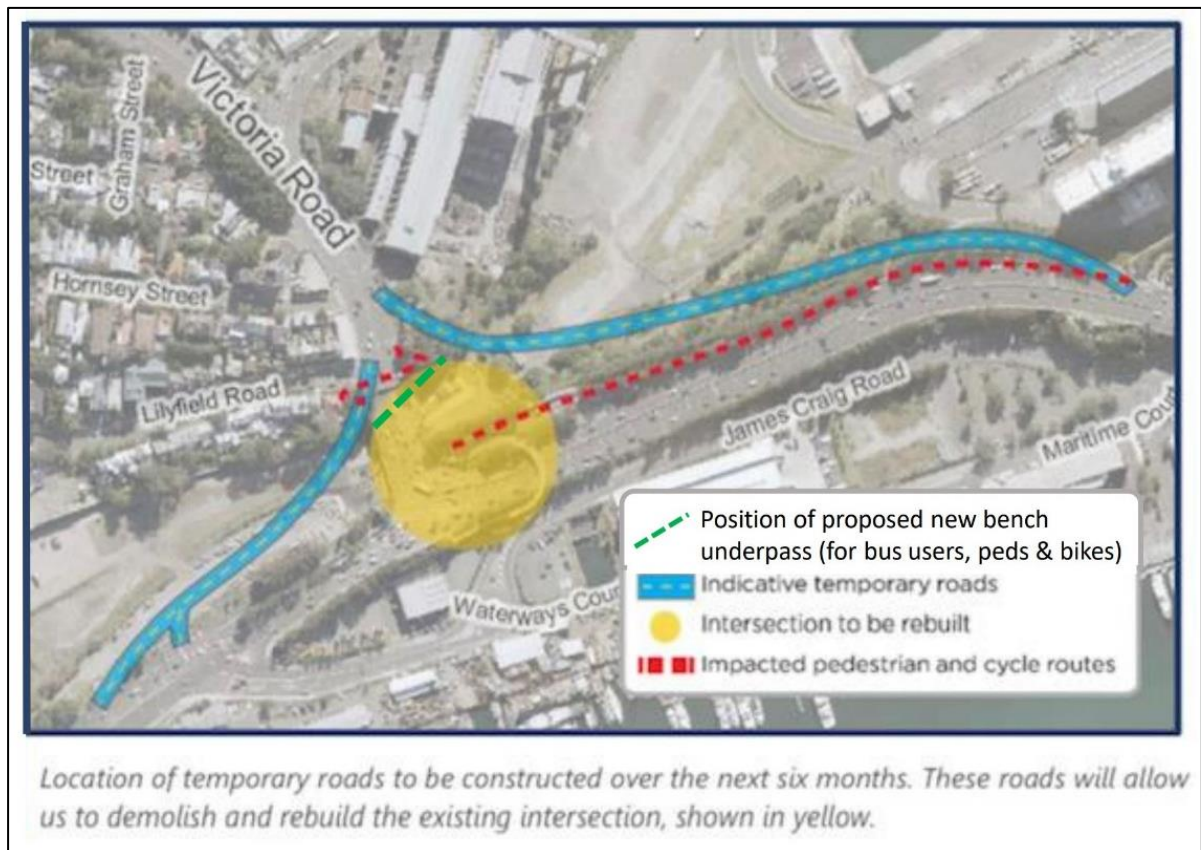


Comment on righting past wrongs already approved that will greatly impact active connectivity unless addressed soon.

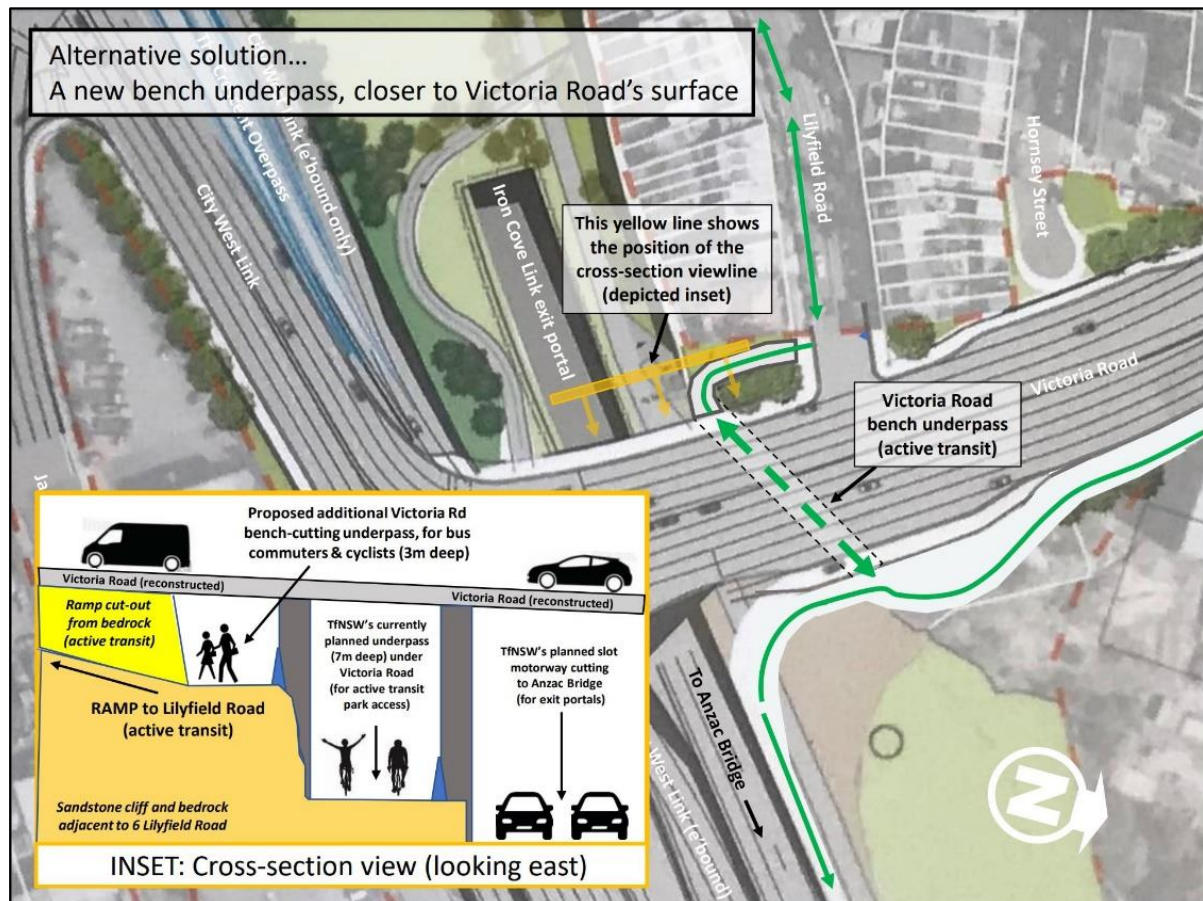
Figure 3-3 Broader Pedestrian and Cycling Connectivity (below, taken from page 37 of the recent Amendment Report) suggests a direct crossing of Victoria Road is possible for those using future planned bus stops at the bottom of Hornsey Street and on the opposing side if Victoria Road, at the old White Bay Hotel site. The map looks comprehensive (aside from no crossing between Gordon Street and the Rozelle LRT stop), but this is misleading. It does not clarify differences in topography of the unappealing efforts involved in crossing a Victoria Road of the future once the Rozelle Interchange project is complete. There will be no straight-forward crossing of Victoria Road once the Interchange is complete, because the footbridge as the southern end of Victoria Road – which was the only way to cross Victoria Road safely, was recently removed. Those who wish to cross quickly to access future bus services will need to travel down 7m deep into the Rozelle Interchange Parklands – even at night – and re-emerge having climbed up the other side by using rather indirect paths that in some cases will add metres to the pedestrian experience.



The next image below shows where a new crossing (in green) might be created using a simple ‘bench underpass’ scraped out of the existing cliff face that will support the Victoria Road platform heading towards the CityWest Link.



For an indicative cross-section view and additional context surrounding this idea, please see the image below. It a view of the bench underpass (once complete) from the west. The aerial view shows plans for the intersection and where the underpass would fit within them. The restoration of that all-important practical connectivity to compensate locals for the loss of their old pedestrian bridge, should be considered by DPIE and the Minister now - because reconstruction of the Victoria Road platform and how it interchanges with the CityWest Link to the south, is due to begin soon. It won't be possible following that construction. My hope is that the Minister will impose this simple change on contractors - as an added condition of approval, which will enhance the regional active transport success of the Crescent Overpass and its proposed active connections.



Submission summary

In summary, I have asked for the Minister and DPIE to expand the scope of this project to ensure that active transport users are catered for in a comprehensive fashion. If a scope change is not possible, then it becomes imperative to place conditions of consent on the Crescent Overpass and its Active Connections, which leave the door open for future light rail expansion and don't obstruct them. A larger version of the Green-Link will allow for a pedestrian and cycling experience which is far safer and more pleasant on a sensory basis. An alternative to the once proposed Horseshoe Bridge's connectivity would be to allow for a risen zebra crossing over the single-laned Overpass carriageway, and a short footbridge with descending stairs and elevator to the foreshore on the northern side of The Crescent.

I am available for comment if DPIE or TfNSW would like to discuss any of my proposed changes further. Like so many in this local community, I realise the potential for The Bays and for this project. We all know this interchange is going ahead – mostly as it has already been designed, but certain things those

plans lack must be addressed if the project is to satisfy the greatest number of people, providing efficient movement, great places and the economic windfalls this area beckons to deliver for the State.

Kind regards,



Nathan English.

Resident of Balmain,
MPlan, Grad Cert Jour, BComms / Media.

Email: NBE.plan2succeed@gmail.com