

# City of Sydney

## Safe travel during COVID-19

### Introduction

As an early response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the City of Sydney collaborated with Transport for NSW to introduce a range of road safety solutions that would support commuter safety and sustain social and economic activity.

Solutions included temporary cycleways and footpath widening, that were designed, approved and ready for construction within a period of four weeks.

### COVID-19 response

Cycle ways and pedestrian paths were extended into and within the City of Sydney. Active travel, including walking and cycling, became COVID-safe travel options.

Making the city more pedestrian friendly had long been a priority for the Sydney City Council. Prior to the pandemic it had been estimated that 92 per cent of travel within the City of Sydney took place on foot. The sudden need for social distancing forced swift action to create more physical space for pedestrians.

As pandemic restrictions eased and more people returned to Sydney's CBD, the temporary measures outlined possibilities for a more permanent shift in travel behaviours.

Creating more scope for moving about on foot supports improved mental and physical health and wider sustainability benefits.

### Snapshot

- ▶ The City of Sydney encompasses a 26.72km<sup>2</sup> area with a resident population of more than 240,000.
- ▶ Prior to the pandemic around 800,000 people commuted to the City of Sydney area each day.
- ▶ About 92 per cent of travel within the City of Sydney takes place on foot.
- ▶ There were 3784 casualty crashes on City of Sydney roads between 2014 and 2018.
- ▶ City of Sydney has a highly specialised and well-resourced Transport and Planning and Development team, which includes a dedicate Road Safety Officer.

## Partnering with the NSW Government

The City of Sydney worked closely with the NSW Government to deliver changes as fast as possible. Transport for NSW funded just over half of the costs of extended pedestrian and cycleway tracks, expedited Ministerial approvals, and ensured modifications could be quickly implemented.

## Data-led evaluation

The City of Sydney's Transport Planning team installed more than one-hundred pedestrian, cycleway and road counting-monitors. Data collected from these devices, along with Opal card travel data and other information, enabled the Sydney City Council to measure the impact of temporary routes. This information will help shape City of Sydney planning for the long-term.

## Project outcomes

- ▶ Active transport supported social and economic activity throughout a challenging period.
- ▶ Resulting from collaboration to plan and deliver complex data-driven solutions, the City of Sydney has a blueprint to test and extend cycleways.
- ▶ Success of the project potentially accelerates a vision for more active transport connections across the City of Sydney.

- ▶ More active transport options align with improving the health and safety of local residents, and commuters to and from the city.

## Summary

### Issues

- ▶ Strict social distancing rules, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, caused the usual ways of moving around the city (walking and public transport) to be problematic.
- ▶ It urgently became important to improve safe ways to move about and support social and economic activity.

### Solutions

- ▶ Six pop-up cycleways, with physical barriers to roads, connected with new cycle 'highways' between areas that are relatively inaccessible by public transport.
- ▶ Widened footpaths and pedestrian pathways.
- ▶ Free parking for essential workers.
- ▶ Commuters caused to reconsider how they travel and whether some trips are even necessary.
- ▶ More free tune-ups and low-cost cycling courses.