



**Australian Government**  
**National Capital Authority**

# Consultation Report

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## Works Approval application WA103077

Works associated with the extension of the Light Rail network from the current southern terminus at Alinga Street to a new stop at Commonwealth Park

July 2023

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## Introduction

The National Capital Authority (NCA) has received a Works Approval application for the proposed extension of the Light Rail network at the current southern terminus at Alinga Street to a new stop at Commonwealth Park in Canberra. The proponent for the application is the ACT Government – Major Projects Canberra (MPC).

The NCA has previously approved works in relation to the raising of London Circuit that would facilitate the Light Rail extension. This previous application approved changes to road alignments, traffic management, landscape and public realm works. Other preparatory works such as surveys, relocation of Golden Sun Moth populations, soil core sampling, utilities relocations, and associated temporary fencing and structures have also been approved by the NCA.

The NCA received the Works Approval application on 16 December 2022 with further required information for the assessment of the application submitted by MPC on 8 March 2023.

Community consultation on the application was undertaken by the NCA between 28 March 2023 and 11 May 2023. The NCA received 64 public submissions by 11 May 2023, with four further submission received the following week. The NCA thanks each individual and organisation for comments and their commitment to the consultation process.

This Consultation Report outlines the NCA's review of the key issues raised during the consultation period and consideration of the Works Approval application.

Under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*, the NCA prepares and administers the National Capital Plan (the Plan) to ensure Canberra and the Territory are planned and developed in accordance with their national significance.

The Plan sets out the broad planning framework for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Areas designated as having special characteristics of the National Capital are subject to detailed planning policies and guidelines.

Any buildings or structures, demolition, landscaping, or excavation works in Designated Areas require the approval of the NCA. The NCA considers such proposals in the context of the relevant provisions of the Plan.

## Context

In September 2019, the ACT Government (the proponent) announced its plans to extend Canberra's Light Rail system from the City to Woden. Following this announcement, the ACT Government has commenced developing detailed designs for the light rail route to Woden. The design work commissioned for Light Rail to Woden has not been presented in full to, or considered, by the NCA at this time. The Light Rail to Woden proposal (Stage 2B to Woden) does not form part of this consultation process.

The proponent is seeking approval from the NCA to extend the Light Rail network from the existing Alinga Street terminus to Commonwealth Park. This application is seeking Works Approval for the proposed works in Designated Areas under the National Capital Plan. A Development Application for works located outside Designated Areas is being progressed concurrently and has been submitted to the ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA).

The pink-shaded areas below indicate Designated Areas where the NCA is the planning approval authority.



Amendments to the National Capital Plan in 2006, supported by both the ACT Government and the Australian Parliament, foreshadowed these and other changes to the City Centre, including the City Hill Precinct, Constitution Avenue and West Basin. These amendments followed a holistic urban design and planning study, known as the Griffin Legacy, undertaken by the NCA between 2002 and 2004. The project aimed to appraise the Griffins' plan and its relevance to the planning and development of Canberra in the 21st century, extend the legacy through a series of strategic initiatives to restore (where possible) the spirit and intent of the Griffins' plan, provide an integrated framework for planning initiatives in the central areas of Canberra and the approach routes, and protect the integrity of the Griffin Plan, recognising its stature as a work of both national and international significance.

The NCA's role is to carefully consider the Works Approval application as presented by the proponent in the context of the requirements of the National Capital Plan. Other ACT Government processes have considered the purpose of the proposal, the overall budget and project management staging.

## National Capital Authority

The NCA is established by the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988* (PALM Act).

The NCA's role is to ensure that Canberra is planned and designed in accordance with its role as the national capital and is a place for all Australians.

## National Capital Plan

The NCA prepares and administers the National Capital Plan (the Plan). The Plan sets out the broad planning framework for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Key objectives of the Plan are to:

1. Recognise the pre-eminence of the role of Canberra and the Territory as Australia's National Capital.
2. Further develop and enhance a Central National Area which includes the National Triangle and its setting, Lake Burley Griffin and its foreshores and the diplomatic sites and national institutions, as the heart of the National Capital.
3. Emphasise the national significance of the main approach avenues and routes.
4. Respect the geometry and intent of the Griffin's formally adopted plan for Canberra.
5. Maintain and enhance the landscape character of Canberra and the Territory as the setting for the National Capital.
6. Protect the undeveloped hill tops and the open spaces which divide and form Canberra's urban areas.
7. Provide a plan offering flexibility and choice to enable the Territory Government properly to fulfil its functions.
8. Support and promote environmentally responsible urban development practices.

The NCA assesses Works Approval applications and determines the consistency of the proposed works against the Plan.

All works applications in Designated Areas are assessed against the Plan pursuant to Section 12 of the PALM Act. The Works Approval application includes works that are located in Designated Areas and are therefore assessed against the relevant provisions of the Plan.

The Plan requires that any proposed activities defined as 'works' must be submitted to the NCA for works approval. Under the *PALM Act*, 'works' include:

- a) *the construction, alteration, extension or demolition of buildings or structures;*
- b) *landscaping;*
- c) *tree-felling; or*
- d) *excavations*

*but excludes anything done inside buildings or structures.*

Implementation of the Plan ensures that Canberra is a city worthy of its status as the national capital.

## Matters under consultation

The consultation process was undertaken to inform the NCA's consideration of the works as set out in the Works Approval application submitted by the proponent. The Commonwealth Park to Woden Light Rail proposal (Light Rail Stage 2B) does not form part of this consultation process although the proposal is related to, and will facilitate, the future transport mode as selected by the ACT Government.

While the NCA encourages planning for future public transport needs, vehicle and pedestrian movements in Canberra by the ACT Government, this consultation process did not consider the proposed long term transport mode or alternatives or the cost of the proposed works. Such matters are not matters addressed by the National Capital Plan and therefore are *not* subject to the NCA's consideration. These matters are matters for the ACT Government.

The National Capital Plan requires that the heritage assessment of all proposals subject to NCA planning approval are assessed in accordance with the provisions of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

In December 2019 the proponent referred Light Rail Stage 2A to the then Department of Agriculture Water and the Environment (DAWE) for its assessment under the EPBC Act. The Light Rail Stage 2A proposal was assessed under the controlling provision related to Listed Threatened Species and Communities and the environment of Commonwealth Land. On 2 February 2021, the DAWE decision-maker approved the proposal, with conditions. A decision to vary the conditions of approval was granted by the decision-maker from DAWE on 23 December 2021.

## NCA Public Consultation Process

The community was alerted to the opportunity to make comment on the proposal to extend the Light Rail network to Commonwealth Park through online and print advertisements as part of the works approval process. There were also signs and a 'mock-up' located in areas nearby to the proposed new Commonwealth Park light rail stop.

The NCA's *Commitment to Community Engagement* guides the way in which the agency engages with the community to keep people informed about decisions that have already been made and to offer opportunities for input to decision-making. The NCA considers how best to approach public participation processes having regard to the training curriculum delivered by the International Association for Public Participation.

The *Commitment to Community Engagement* sets out the following engagement principles:

### Intentional

- Be clear about what we are trying to achieve.
- Be clear about the scope for people to influence outcomes and where other processes have made recommendations and decisions.
- Be clear about limitations and constraints for community comment and involvement.

### Inclusive

- Use a variety of methods allowing as many Australians as possible to participate if they wish.
- Proactively seek appropriate participants where there are missing voices.

### Timely

- Allow sufficient time for the community to participate in consultation processes.
- Begin engagement at the earliest appropriate stage in the life of a project.

### Feedback

- Let people know how their input and feedback was used.
- Meet or exceed all statutory engagement requirements.

The NCA assesses whether a proposal is consistent with the National Capital Plan and if it requires public consultation. An assessment is made in relation to impacts on:

- public space and community amenity;
- environment, heritage, or landscape values;
- amenity of the locality in terms of materials, finishes, scale, massing, design, and quality; and
- consistency with an existing Heritage Management Plan.

When an application for works approval is lodged and consultation is required, consultation with the community and stakeholders may be undertaken by the applicant, the NCA, or both. Where consultation is undertaken by the applicant, the NCA may choose to stipulate specific requirements that the applicant is required to implement.

## Matters the NCA is not considering in this consultation

### Light rail as a form of public transport

The NCA received submissions that expressed opposition to the ACT Government's proposed expansion of the light rail system. A number of these submissions described alternative public transport options which, in the view of the submitter, were more appropriate to Canberra.

The NCA supports planning for the provision of accessible, reliable, and comfortable public transport in a growing city, but notes that concerns regarding the selection of light rail as the preferred transport mode are a matter for the ACT Government's consideration. The NCA has advised ACT Government officials of concerns expressed in the consultation process and suggestions for alternative transport systems which have included alternative routes, 'trackless trams' and electric buses.

### Concerns about the costs of the project

The NCA received submissions that expressed concern about the expense of the proposed light rail project, including through to Woden. These submissions generally stated that the proposal did not represent value for money.

Issues around project cost are a matter for the proponent, in this instance, the ACT Government. Project costs are not matters addressed in the National Capital Plan and do not form part of the NCA's assessment.

## Public Consultation Details

The NCA undertook extensive public consultation and community engagement on the Light Rail Stage 2A (LRS2A) proposal from 28 March 2023 to 11 May 2023, reflecting our commitment to transparency and public involvement in decision-making:

- Between 28 March 2023 and 11 May 2023, the NCA published details of the Works Approval application on the website.
- On 28 March 2023, the NCA published a public notice in The Canberra Times. The notice outlined the scope of the proposed works and details on how to make a submission to the NCA in relation to the proposal.
- To ensure as many people as possible were aware of the public consultation process:
  1. The applicant installed four (4) A1 sized colour signs for the period of the public consultation at Northbourne Place, London Circuit near University Avenue and on both sides of Commonwealth Avenue near Albert Street and the pedestrian crossing.
  2. From Monday 24 April 2023 to Friday 12 May 2023, the NCA installed six (6) A1 sized colour signs at Commonwealth Place, Regatta Place, Commonwealth Park and the northern and southern shores of the Central Basin of Lake Burley Griffin.
  3. From 21 April 2023 to Friday 12 May 2023, NCA also installed a 'mock-up' in the Commonwealth Avenue median to advertise the Works Approval application.
- Both the NCA and ACT Government held public information sessions to assist the community in understanding the proposal and the approval processes:
  1. The NCA spearheaded the sessions on 17 April 2023 (1 attendee) and 1 May 2023 (21 attendees) that focussed on the approval processes.
  2. The ACT Government spearheaded the sessions on 20 April 2023 (6 attendees), 27 April 2023 (1 attendee) and 2 May (6 attendees) that focussed on the proposal itself.
- On 6 May 2023, NCA Chief Executive Sally Barnes and Chief Planner Andrew Smith attended a public consultation conducted by Public Transportation Canberra (PTCBR) held at the Gungahlin Public Library. Together with the MPC Project Director, the NCA representatives answered questions from the public and addressed concerns about the project.
- The NCA's Chief Planner also held a few meetings with stakeholder representatives, e.g., Pedal Power, PTCBR, etc., to gain a deeper understanding of matters of concern.

The NCA's standard public consultation notification period is 15 business days. In recognition of the complexity of the project, the NCA undertook an extended consultation totalling 30 business days, in recognition of the significant public interest in the future light rail project. (This consultation period aligned with the ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA) advertised consultation period on the Development Application).

Through this process the NCA sought to ensure that the public consultation process was as transparent and inclusive as possible.

The NCA has carefully considered the public submissions when assessing proposed works in the context of the National Capital Plan. The NCA has also considered other issues raised by the community during the consultation process and referred these to MPC to address.

The advertising media can be seen at [Attachment A](#).



## Submissions

Public comments/submissions were requested to be received via the NCA's website and 'smart form' from 28 March to 11 May 2023.

The NCA received a total of 68 submissions on the Works Approval application. Of these, 63 submissions were received through the 'Have Your Say' smart form on the NCA's website. There were five submissions received by mail/email/ one week outside of the closing date that have been accepted and included for consideration. Submissions have been uploaded to the NCA website, unless submitters requested that they not be published. There are 48 submissions published on the website. Of the submissions received, 20 submitters did not consent to their submissions being published.

A list of names of submitters who agreed to be published is at [Attachment B](#).

## Analysis of Submissions – key data

In summary, the submissions revealed:

- 63% of submissions considered that the NCA should be approved as presented
- 28% of submissions considered the proposal should not proceed.
- 9% of submissions provided suggestions for changes but neither support or objected to the proposal.

## Key themes

Review of the community commentary in submissions regarding the application revealed several common themes which can be broadly categorised as:

- Active transport
- Stop design and interface
- Public transport integration
- Traffic impacts
- The Urban Realm

There were some references in the public submissions to the future stages of the Light Rail project and comments on its delivery. Some of the comments received noted:

- *'So once Stage 2A is finished. Start the next stage so eventually you finish at the finish line'. It was also noted that 'Stage 2a is a good next step on the way to having a spine of light rail from Gungahlin to Woden. I look forward to the day Canberra has matured with a light rail network that also connects Belconnen, Tuggeranong and the airport.'*
- *'I oppose any restrictions on the project on the basis of "heritage" claims. Canberra's long-term heritage and status as a world-class city and national capital will be best secured by the full completion of all stages of the light rail project.'*
- *'North South vehicle traffic should not be routed through the city. The peripheral motorway network should be the preferred corridor for north south vehicle traffic. The central travel corridor from gungahlin to woden should be transformed into a people - first destination'*
- *'Light rail is an important, once-in-a-lifetime, city-building project ... make the most of this opportunity by ensuring the active travel infrastructure, urban greenery, and materials sustainability is of world-leading standard, and cultivates an Australian character for the "bush capital".'*

## Matters for consideration

### Active transport

#### Cycle lanes

A few submissions raised concerns with the protected cycling lanes along the proposed Light Rail alignment, noting the area around Edinburgh Avenue specifically, including linkages to other active travel facilities on Marcus Clarke Street.

*'I would like to see a consistent protected and separated cycle lane throughout the project similar to the better parts of the existing City Loop cycle route. The shared lane with car traffic between Edinburgh Ave and Gordon St is not ideal.'*

*'The current proposal, insufficiently address is the needs of bicyclists, with protected cycle lanes protected cycle lane stopping between University Avenue and Edinburgh Avenue going southwards, and between Edinburgh Avenue and West Row going northwards. This will create dangerous conditions as cyclist will be forced to either merge into pedestrian or vehicular traffic.'*

*'The joining of dedicated cycling lanes with on-street shared cycling results in a built-in missing link, making the unlinked off-street lanes much less usable than if they were one complete entity.'*

The design of the light rail within the developed Canberra city environment poses similar issues to all retrofit urban projects. The key constraints are existing buildings and block boundaries, existing utilities, and existing trees in the verges. In the developed urban environment, there are competing priorities of road carriageways, road furniture, pedestrian space, and cycle paths, while also accommodating new utilities and new trees and soft landscaping.

London Circuit is subject to the above competing priorities and retrofitting the light rail is challenging in this context. However, much of London Circuit (between Northbourne Avenue and Edinburgh Avenue) is not in a Designated Area and therefore is not subject to the NCA's approval processes. The NCA notes, however, that the proposed works provide high quality paving, lighting and landscaping along London Circuit, balancing spatial requirements for pedestrians, cyclists and landscaping. This is to support the road network and the new light rail corridor positioned in the centre of the road. The design aims to provide protected cycle lanes and separate pedestrian paths where possible within the existing road corridor. Where it is not possible to provide separate facilities for cyclists and pedestrians and in order to balance requirements for landscape outcomes, the design provides legibility and connectivity for cyclists to transition to and from the shared environment. The area of greatest concern was between Edinburgh Avenue and University Avenue. Both cycle and pedestrian safety will be enhanced by a 20km/h speed limit and through this will operate similarly to a shared zone.

The project is providing 'protected intersections', the first of their kind in Canberra, at the intersection of Northbourne Avenue with London Circuit, and London Circuit with Commonwealth Avenue. The protected intersections improve safety for cyclists, providing protected dedicated areas for cyclists to navigate these large and heavily trafficked intersections. The design does not change the existing ability of more confident cyclists to utilise road lanes.

Concern was also raised about cyclist safety at the intersection of the southbound traffic lanes on Commonwealth Avenue and the Parkes Way on-ramp. Under current conditions, there are no dedicated traffic controls for people cycling southbound on Commonwealth Avenue where crossing on the cloverleaf off-ramps from eastbound Parkes Way and westbound London Circuit. To address this, the proposed works direct the cyclists off Commonwealth Avenue onto a dedicated cycle path within the verge to avoid the off-ramp cyclist conflict point. The cycle path directs the cyclists to a dedicated crossing point across the off-ramp, before leading the cyclist onto the on-road cycle lane on Commonwealth Avenue.

The Stage 2A design upgrades the cyclist dedicated crossing point to a signalised crossing while ensuring that the design does not preclude more confident cyclists from using road lanes.

### **Pedestrian crossings**

Other submissions suggested that pedestrian crossings along the alignment should be level, straight, and be able to be crossed in a single phase. These noted that crossings should avoid the chicane movement that currently exists along the Stage 1 pedestrian crossings and that pedestrian and cycleways should also be well lit.

*‘Pedestrian crossings should be level and straight, the shortest possible route, and the “green” crossing signals should endure for long enough to enable all pedestrians to cross the full width of all roads in a single signal cycle – make cars wait, not active travellers.’*

Staggered/staged pedestrian crossings are considered safer than single-stage crossings at larger intersections because they minimise the crossing length of each stage, reducing the exposure time for pedestrians and the risk of conflict with vehicles. They also provide improved operational efficiency of the signals, both for pedestrians and vehicles, and reduce the risk of vehicles turning in front of crossing pedestrians.

As part of a staged crossing arrangement, pedestrians need to be clearly informed that each crossing operates independently. This is normally done through the provision of sufficiently wide median refuge space or, where this is not possible, through the stagger of the crossing.

The lighting design has been based on relevant Australian Standards and meets the requirements of the Canberra Central Design Manual. It includes the lighting provision of a continuous accessible path and adopts Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design and Gender Sensitive Urban Design principles.

### **Stop design and interface**

Submissions raised concerns that the proposed Commonwealth Park stop was not adequately designed to accommodate events, including safety, stop width, accessibility, wait times at lights, designing for both Southern and Northern access.

*‘There just does not appear to be sufficient platform space for the substantial crowds of people who generally attend the various events at Commonwealth Park, and I consider this would certainly impact the safety aim of this area in being a showcase for the national capital.’*

*'The design of the new Commonwealth Park station should therefore support passenger entrance and exit from both ends of the platform, similar to the current terminus at Alinga Street.'*

Several submissions stated that an underpass under Commonwealth Avenue should be considered to provide access to Commonwealth Park Stop and reduce the impact to traffic.

*'Surely with the work that will be required to bring the light rail to Commonwealth Park and build the stop the pedestrian traffic lights could be removed and replaced with an underpass to improve safety and traffic flow on Commonwealth Avenue.'*

Submissions also queried some of the City South stop design characteristics including the need for the stop, and whether the stop could be extended to 45m.

*'Given the lack of conviction about the need for this stop, as evidenced by the shorter platform and canopy area as well as the 'provision for future extension to stop' notations at the end of the platform as shown in the drawings, perhaps this stop could be omitted from this stage.'*

*The LRS2A plans show the City South station is designed for the future extension of the platform to 45 metres, similar to the stations for light rail stage one... building the platforms to the full 45 metre length as part of the original build is good practice, as it avoids costly and disruptive retrofitting.'*

### **NCA Considerations**

The Commonwealth Park stop is designed to provide multiple functions. Its primary function is providing access to Commonwealth Park and Lake Burley Griffin, and can expand into a stop to cater for future development of Acton Waterfront. Due to differences in patronage between the everyday use and a large event, the design needs to consider both operational scenarios and find the functional and safe outcomes that work for both, all the while considering the ceremonial and nationally significant importance of Commonwealth Avenue and landscape surrounds.

Key considerations in the development of the stop design include:

- The overarching design principle for this significant stop location is one of minimal infrastructure, without fencing, and green track. The canopies to the stop respect this requirement and have been sized accordingly.
- The stops are a centre island stop typology (double-sided platform between the rail tracks) due to the existing constraints of the width of the median. The platform length is 45m which is future-proofed for the possibility of larger light rail vehicles on the network in the future.
- As a terminus, operational functions require a rail cross-over to the north of the stop with minimal distance between the stop and cross-over. The rail cross-over allows both platforms to be used for light rail services during an event.
- On current fleet and timetable specifications, light rail can move around 2,500 passengers per hour - oversizing the infrastructure at the stops does not immediately result in the ability to move more people.

- Oversizing infrastructure to cater for infrequent events can also lead to safety implications for regular daily use. The pedestrian crossing to the stop maintains its current width which is used for event movements to the West Basin car parks.
- As part of an integrated transport solution, event management will comprise a multitude of arrangements depending on the nature of the event being held and will be developed with key stakeholders, including the NCA, Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS), Canberra Metro Operations (CMET), Events Canberra and event organisers. The use of suitable temporary fencing, marshalling and controls may be necessary for certain special event crowd management scenarios in the future.
- The pedestrian crossing signals will be configured to respond to the prevailing traffic and transport demands. This may include bespoke arrangements for particular event modes and scenarios.

### **Northern and southern access to the stop**

Providing a dual access to the Commonwealth Park Stop would require an additional pedestrian crossing and traffic lights over both the northbound and southbound carriageways of Commonwealth Avenue.

Implementing another pedestrian crossing to the north of the stop would have several challenges to resolve including:

- Insufficient space for locating the road signals within the median and verge resulting in a further reduction in landscape amenity.
- A second set of signals within 70 metres of another could create unsafe traffic manoeuvres for the vehicles exiting Parkes Way via the off-ramp southbound onto Commonwealth Avenue. This could be exacerbated through the potential future provision (by others) of a right into Acton Waterfront at Albert Street.
- Urban design requirement to minimise the visual impact of the stop and maintain the vista between Parliament House and City Hill. The additional crossing would require a reduction in the number trees to the outside verges and the central median due to the shift north of the rail scissor crossing.

An additional crossing to the north would mean a greater distance of the wrong way running section of the light rail vehicle as the crossover would require to be relocated further to the north on Commonwealth Avenue.

The ACT Government and its Technical Advisor sought an independent assessment on the potential of an underpass as part of the works for the project. The Commonwealth Avenue Underpass Suitability Assessment report was completed in June 2022, and determined that an underpass was not suitable.

An underpass when compared with an at grade crossing of Commonwealth Avenue was considered undesirable due to:

- Personal safety considerations
- A poor outcome for customers in accessing the light rail in a timely and direct manner
- Impacts to the landscape setting of Commonwealth Avenue

- Likely capital costs associated with utilities relocation and scale of construction associated with the underpass, including the ongoing maintenance requirements of the underpass.

The City South stop is designed to cater for expected future development planned in the vicinity. Patronage expectations indicate that 33m long platform is sufficient to meet future demand. Notwithstanding, space proofing has enabled a future expansion to be undertaken without the need to relocate rail.

Submissions queried the location of the Edinburgh Avenue Stop and suggested a stop location at University Avenue. While this area is outside of the NCA's consideration, it is noted that a stop at University Avenue was investigated as part of the early concept design. This option was not pursued due to traffic impacts, intersection design and undesirable verge width conditions for pedestrians.

### Public transport integration

A number of submissions raised the point that the Commonwealth Park stop is now a terminus and there needs to be greater public transport integration in this location, including bringing bus stops closer to the stop, proposing a ferry, and a new bus stop at Albert Street.

*'Until stage 2B to Woden is built, this last stop will be a de facto bus interchange. The proposed design doesn't consider that. It has the bus stop a distance away. If I'm going south of the lake, I'll stay on the comfortable tram as long as possible, rather than the mess of Civic interchange, then get the bus to Woden. Or even walk across the bridge to the library.'*

The ACT Government has advised that currently there are no plans to change the bus stop arrangements on Commonwealth Avenue. Any adjustments to the bus network because of the introduction of Light Rail Stage 2A will be considered by Transport Canberra closer to the time of opening of the extension.

During construction works bus diversions will be required at times, as well as some existing bus stops to be temporarily relocated to another location within the City Interchange.

### Traffic impacts

Submitters stated that the car dominance along London Circuit and Commonwealth Avenue should be further decreased by lowering the speed limits and reducing the lanes of traffic along Commonwealth Avenue.

*'Car traffic dominance should be greatly de-emphasised along transit corridors to improve and encourage walkability.'*

### NCA Considerations

The National Capital Plan (NCP) describes the function and intent for London Circuit and the ongoing role it has to perform in the city context. It describes London Circuit operating as the main public transport circuit for Canberra City. Consistent with that function, it also states buildings must be set back from London Circuit a sufficient distance to establish a tree-lined boulevard character and that London Circuit must have active frontages.

The NCP within this description, provides a clear vision that London Circuit is to balance both movement and place outcomes. London Circuit is posted at 40km/hr which looks to balance the movement and place outcomes and is consistent with the remainder of the CBD environment. The section of London Circuit between Edinburgh Avenue and Gordon Street, adjacent to the light rail stop, is proposed to have a 20km/h speed limit to increase safety in this expected high pedestrian activity area.

Within the project area on Commonwealth Avenue the posted speed limit of 70km/h has been reduced to 60km/h.

### **Network impacts and modal shifts**

Proposed road network changes associated with project are expected to have a minor impact to the local road network in the short-term (to 2026). By 2036, capacity reductions impacts include increased congestion on London Circuit and to parts of Civic. This in turn, is expected to result in traffic redistribution in the network with increased travel times along several key routes.

Notwithstanding the above, modelling assumes traffic growth and travel patterns based on historical conditions and adopts a conservative position with regard to changes to travel behaviour expected with the introduction of Light Rail to Woden and other associated strategic transport initiatives. When completed, the three new stops will better connect Canberra's city south with city north and Gungahlin, and will improve access to public transport for existing and new residential and commercial activity in the city.

More information on the impacts of the Light Rail Stage 2A project on traffic can be found in the Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment appendix of the Environmental Assessment published on the NCA's consultation webpage.

## **The urban realm**

### **Green track**

Submissions raised support of the proposed green tracks along sections of the proposed rail alignment, and queried whether they could be extended to the whole alignment, and enquiring to ensure they will be consistent, and will remain green during the winter months.

*'Where possible, green track or grass median should be extended around the entirety of London Circuit West.'*

The ACT Government has advised that green tracks were investigated for use along the entirety of the alignment, however minimum sunlight availability restricted where green track could be implemented. The proposed green track sections are located where there is sufficient natural light, particularly over winter to enable green track to survive. In Northbourne Avenue, the green track will be planted with a low-lying species and forms part of the overall landscape design of Northbourne Place. Green track will be located on London Circuit in front of the Melbourne Building and the planting will be mirrored in the median in front of the Sydney Building maintaining symmetry about the two heritage buildings. Green track is proposed for Commonwealth Avenue median to maintain consistency along the highly significant avenue.

The green tracks of Northbourne Place and Commonwealth Avenue will be irrigated to ensure they remain green throughout the year.



A green track prototype is being developed by the ACT Government for the testing of grass and plant species, irrigation systems and interface with tracks and proposed stone track form.

### **Trees**

Submitters raised questions about the choice of tree species, their location and the retention of trees along Commonwealth Avenue.

A landscape strategy was developed for the Light Rail Stage 2A project by the ACT Government. An assessment of the light rail corridor identified three distinctive character precincts, being Northbourne Avenue, London Circuit and Commonwealth Avenue. A survey of existing trees was undertaken, and the condition of each tree assessed. The healthy trees were retained in the LRS2A design and helped guide species selection, with other criteria, such as visual and physical amenity, appropriateness to place, and climate tolerance.

#### Northbourne Avenue

The proposed landscape design of Northbourne Place was informed by the Sydney and Melbourne buildings, with the location of trees being aligned with the columns of the buildings' colonnades. *Zelkova serrata*, the proposed tree species, has a vase shaped canopy that will spring from a height to allow views across Northbourne Avenue, reinforcing the relationship between the two buildings. The rows of trees flanking the Light Rail tracks retain the long view to City Hill. The proposed tree species has a smooth grey bark with green foliage turning yellow and copper bronze in autumn.

#### London Circuit

The planting of London Plane trees (*Platanus x acerifolia*) at regular intervals, will create a streetscape rhythm that will emphasise the unique geometry of London Circuit. The spacing of trees, which references the Melbourne Building colonnade, will provide a continuous tree canopy, shading paths in summer and allowing sun access in winter. Trees will be planted in garden beds that will separate footpaths from off-road cycleways, enhancing safety and amenity for pedestrians. Two Tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) are proposed on London Circuit that will terminate the view along University Avenue. The paired 'sentinel' trees, located symmetrically about the courtyard, highlight the heritage significance of the Courts Precinct.

#### Commonwealth Avenue

As part of the project, a Light Rail Commonwealth Avenue Masterplan was prepared to guide the design and integration of light rail within the landscape of Commonwealth Avenue. The Masterplan was underpinned by heritage recommendations and design principles jointly developed by landscape and heritage consultants, the NCA and MPC team.

Tree layout and species selection along the verges of Commonwealth Avenue, were influenced by the Weston plantings south of Lake Burley Griffin. This provides continuity and reinforces the landscape structure of this highly symbolic and significant avenue. Evergreen trees (*Cedrus deodara*) are proposed along the kerbside with a supporting row of deciduous species (*Ulmus parvifolia* 'Yarraluma'). A wide, grassed track form arrangement has been designed for the median of Commonwealth Avenue to accommodate a single row of pin oaks (*Quercus palustris* 'Freefall') to be planted between the tracks. The intent of a shared palette of tree species is to strengthen the relationship of the three significant avenues that form the National Triangle.

**Public art**

There was a query as to where the Dream Lens for the Future artwork that currently sits at the Northbourne Avenue and London Circuit intersection would be placed, and whether there would be ornamental lighting under the proposed Parkes Way Bridge.

artsACT acquired the artwork Oushi Zokei (Dream Lens for the Future) by Keizo Ushio in 2011. The ACT Government has advised that the Oushi Zokei artwork will be relocated from Northbourne Plaza to a new location. The Light Rail project team are working closely with the artsACT team to organise the removal and relocation of the artwork. Specialist Project Managers and contractors will be engaged to apply correct methods and handling / transport practices to avoid the potential for any damage to the artwork during relocation activities.

Thematic lighting was not considered appropriate in this location, being inconsistent with the NCA Outdoor Lighting Policy for this location. The lights under the proposed bridge over Parkes Way will be a new addition to this location under Commonwealth Avenue and be of a high standard and compliant with Australian Standards.

## Other community views

Many submissions raised issues related to the wider Light Rail Stage 2 proposal. Typically, submitters stated that the Light Rail Stage 2A project should not be assessed in isolation of the wider Light Rail Stage 2 proposal. The ACT Government has confirmed that while Light Rail Stage 2A forms part of the broader Light rail network, it considers the Stage 2A project to be a standalone project which enables future development of the city. The design of the Stage 2A project will ensure that it is compatible with and future-proofs the Stage 2B planned extension from Commonwealth Park stop south to Woden.

Sustainability issues were also raised in some submissions. The ACT Government has advised that the project is registered to pursue an Infrastructure Sustainability rating, and in the Environmental Assessment identified key sustainability initiatives, including the incorporation of mitigation measures to address climate change impacts. The impacts of climate change were considered in the design, and a number of management and mitigation measures were identified in the Environmental Assessment to ensure sustainability is considered throughout delivery.

Heritage impacts were raised, specifically impacts to the Melbourne and Sydney buildings and City Hill. The Sydney and Melbourne Buildings are not in Designated Areas and therefore do not form part of the NCA's assessment under the National Capital Plan. These items require impact assessment and consideration by the ACT Government in accordance with the ACT *Heritage Act 2004*. City Hill will not be impacted by the project.

Visual impacts of the project were also raised by some submitters. A landscape structure plan was prepared by the ACT Government to support the project, underpinned by a set of heritage recommendations and design principles jointly developed by landscape and heritage consultants. The plan proposes a tree structure that unites the whole of Commonwealth Avenue, the tree set out and species north of the lake being informed by the historic Weston planting south of the lake. The proposed tree structure is intended to frame the significant views between Capital Hill and City Hill. On the bridge approaches, trees are sited to preserve the wide views across the lake, including the distant views to the Brindabellas.

## Conclusion

The NCA's consultation process was carried out in accordance with the National Capital Plan and the NCA's *Commitment to Community Engagement*.

The NCA undertook additional consultation measures, including public information sessions, more signage advertising and extending the consultation period timeframe.

As noted above, there were a number of objections in the public submissions that raised matters beyond the legislative reach of the NCA, such as the extension of light rail to Woden, the cost of the proposal and alternate public transport modes. These matters do not form part of the NCA's consideration of the proposal and have been referred to the ACT Government.

The NCA considered all issues raised and concluded the proposal is not inconsistent with the National Capital Plan.

On 6 July 2023, the NCA approved the Works Approval application.

## Attachment A: Advertising Media

 **Australian Government**  
**National Capital Authority**

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### WORKS APPROVAL

Open for Public Consultation

#### Construction of Light Rail Stage 2A - City to Commonwealth Park



The National Capital Authority (NCA) has received a works approval application for the construction of Light Rail Stage 2A. This includes 1.7 km of track, southbound from the current Alinga Street terminus to a new stop at Commonwealth Park.

Plans and supporting documentation can be viewed, and submissions can be lodged online from Tuesday 28 March 2023 at: <https://www.nca.gov.au/planning/public-consultations/light-rail-stage-2a>

The NCA welcomes feedback on this application by 5pm, Thursday 11 May 2023.

For further information, please contact the NCA on (02) 6271 2888.

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[www.nca.gov.au](http://www.nca.gov.au)

Print advertising in the Canberra Times on 28 March 2023

**HAVE YOUR SAY** 

## LIGHT RAIL STAGE 2A - CITY TO COMMONWEALTH PARK

The National Capital Authority (NCA) has received a works approval application for the construction of Light Rail Stage 2A.



The plans and supporting documentation for the application can be viewed at the NCA's website at: <https://www.nca.gov.au/planning/public-consultations/light-rail-stage-2a>

The NCA welcomes feedback on this application until 5pm on Thursday, 11 May 2023. Submissions can be lodged online via the website.

Please contact the NCA for further information on (02) 6271 2888

[www.nca.gov.au](http://www.nca.gov.au)

A1 signs posted as shown in the locations below.



A1 sign: London Circuit near University Avenue.



A1 sign: Northbourne Place.



A1 sign: Eastern side of Commonwealth Avenue near Albert Street and the pedestrian crossing.



A1 sign: Western side of Commonwealth Avenue near Albert Street and the pedestrian crossing.

NCA placed six (6) A1 sized colour signs at Commonwealth Place, Regatta Place, Commonwealth Park and the northern and southern shores of the Central Basin of Lake Burley Griffin.



A-frame - the Jetty



Northside placement



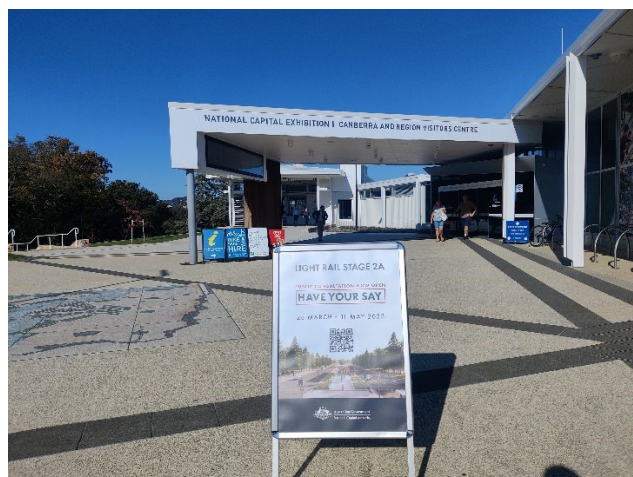
Northside placement



Southside placement



Southside placement



A-frame – Regatta Point



The NCA placed a 'mock-up' on the Commonwealth Avenue median



## Attachment B: List of Submitters

(List of names agreed to be published)

Charles Gascoigne	Penleigh Boyd
Irina	Ella Cameron
Jacob Peggie	J Watt
Colette	Malcolm Bourke
Alexander Mikheyev	Sean Coggan
John Madelly	Anne
Louise Crossman	Robyn Boyd
Andrew	Adam Huttner-Koros
Bruce Walsh	Bill Gemmell
Kristen Holzapfel	Aldith
Brendan Campbell	John Philip Dennis Ryan
Aalto Bowers	Kent Fitch
Maureen Marshall	Public Transport Association of Canberra
Stephen Cox	Robert Henderson
Chris Golding	Sukh Madiq
Chris	Heywood Jablomi
Brock	Kirsten Duncan
Martin Evans	Richard Morrison
Daniel Raca	Amy Jelacic
Tim Bray	Kathryn Body
Sean	Jack Kershaw
Andrew Berry	Octavia Whatman
Andrew Dibb	Greater Canberra Inc
John R	
Ella Cameron	