



The Public Transport Association of Canberra (PTCBBR) welcomes the Suburban Land Agency's community consultation regarding the Whitlam Local Centre.

PTCBBR is the Canberra region's peak public transport lobby group with members from all sectors of our community. We are focused on improving access to public transport and making the passenger experience better. We lobby government, business groups and stakeholders associated with public transport and planning and play a key role in the consultation process on these matters.

PTCBBR has a strong interest in ensuring that the design of the Whitlam Local Centre maximises opportunities for people to use active and public transport in Whitlam. Providing good transport connections at an early stage in a suburb's development helps residents embed active transport habits and avoid dependency on private vehicles.

We appreciate that consultation is in the early stages, and we would welcome the opportunity to further participate in consultations once the design for the local centre is more advanced. At this stage, PTCBBR makes the following observations.

### **Active shopfronts facing onto the street are highly desirable**

Canberra's local centres show how urban design has changed over the 20th and 21st centuries, and provide examples of both good and bad design.

In PTCBBR's experience, the presence of large, open air car parks is the biggest barrier to a pleasant and walkable local centre. Instead, the best local centres place their commercial activity on an active and walkable street, with car parking at the rear of the block, away from most pedestrian activity. The local centre at Forde is one of the best examples of such a 'high street' which accommodates parking behind the main shops.

Other features common to successful local centres include high quality green space, public toilets and community facilities.

### **Bus stops should be well located and designed**

The local centre will have some of the most important and well-patronised bus stops in the suburb. As well as being a destination in its own right, the area will be within close proximity to the primary school and a number of multi-unit developments, many of which will have residents who rely on public transport, either through choice or their personal circumstances (e.g. disability or the cost of owning a private vehicle). Accordingly, placement and design of bus stops should be a high priority, taking into account the following:

- **Bus stops should be located as close to shops and services as possible.** Given that the final Whitlam bus route may travel down either Hazel Hawke Avenue or Sculthorpe Avenue, Transport

Canberra and the SLA should consult to align the placement of both the shops and the bus route. It would be a poor outcome if bus passengers had to walk a long distance, potentially across a loading bay, to access the shops. It may also be better if the stops currently outside the planned school site were relocated to be closer to the local centre. As a general rule, school students will have a greater tolerance for walking slightly further than the general community, which includes seniors and people with disabilities.

- **Strong pedestrian connections with crossing facilities.** Broad, level footpaths should allow for a variety of users to easily move between the shops and bus stops (see also our comments on universal access below). Unfortunately, a number of local shops require pedestrians to walk across a car park to access the shops. Bonner and Banks are examples of this, and should not be repeated.
- **Ease of access to future rapid bus/ light rail.** The local centre is also proposed to be within close distance of the planned rapid transit corridor along John Gorton Drive / Bindubi Street Extension, and the local centre should be designed with this in mind.
- **Passive surveillance and good lighting.** Stops should be within eyesight of active shopfronts, to increase perceptions of safety. In contrast, while the Crace shops are generally an example of a successful local centre, the bus stops at the Crace shops have poor passive surveillance, as they are located along the back wall of the local shops, on a quiet street, away from most shoppers (Figure 1).
- **Pedestrian crossings** between the opposite bus stop and the shops. PTCBR supports raised (wombat) crossings as a way to prioritise pedestrian traffic, and also to calm vehicle traffic. There is no reason why there could not be multiple crossings to accommodate both the school and shops.
- **High quality bus shelters and furniture.** As the bus route will connect the local centre to the suburb, it would be appropriate to have shelters on both sides of the road.
- **Active transport facilities**, including bike rails, cages, and designated e-scooter parking (for example, the cages at Lyons, Melrose Dr). Again, these should be located within eyeshot of shops, to increase passive surveillance, and give users confidence that their bikes will remain secure.

### **It is essential that the sloping block allows for universal access**

In the planning of any open community space as part of the local centre's design, accessibility for all members of the community should be considered an essential element. Therefore, including an accessibility ramp for the use of prams, wheelchairs, trolleys, bikes, scooters, etc. would be welcomed. It has been mentioned on the YourSay webpage that the block's 6-8m slope poses a potential challenge, but this also presents opportunities to apply the use of 'Universal Access Design'. Notable examples from around other parts of Canberra include but are not limited to:

- Tiered paths and ramps incorporated into landscaping, as is demonstrated along Easty Street adjacent to Woden Green in Philip;

- The Accessibility Lift located in the Woden bus interchange access to Woden Plaza/Square;
- The upgraded southern Concourse at the University of Canberra; a highly efficient example of incorporating a tiered path into the surrounding landscape design (Figure 2);
- The recently completed Kambri precinct at the Australian National University has direct access to University Avenue via a ramp from the shared path along Sullivan's Creek and in turn, the Greater Canberra shared path network (Figure 3).

PTCBR is available to discuss any of the matters identified in this submission further if required.

Regards,

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Public Transport Association of Canberra

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## Gallery



[Figure 1: Bus stop near Crace local centre, with poor passive surveillance]



[Figure 2: Side view showing southern Concourse elevation, University of Canberra]



[Figure 3: Ramp ascension facing University Ave, Badger & Co. exterior and Kambri bicycle facilities, ANU]