

8.3. Miller Street Popup Footpath widening

AUTHOR: Lindsay Menday, Sustainable Transport Project Co-ordinator

ENDORSED BY: Duncan Mitchell, Director Engineering and Property Services

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

This report provides an update on the Miller Street component of the “Streets as Shared Spaces” grants program. It provides details on a proposed landscape plan for the project and seeks Council endorsement to construct the works.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At its meeting of 24 August 2020, Council resolved:

THAT Council notes that grant funding of \$1,040,000 has been awarded to Council through the NSW State Governments “Streets as Shared Spaces Program” which compliments and supersedes a number of the initiatives outlined in the 27 July 2020 Council Report. Further reports will be brought to Council on the status of the projects that are being funded through this program.

This report provides an update on one project covered by the grant: *The Pilot pedestrianisation of Miller Street – between Pacific Highway and Berry Street – North Sydney.*

A design has been developed for this project and is attached to this report. The design proposes to increase pedestrianisation of Miller Street through footpath widening and landscaping treatments in two locations which will inform and support the longer-term vision for the implementation of ‘Miller Place’ as part of the North Sydney Public Domain Strategy.

The project is anticipated to have some impacts on the road and transport network function, however these impacts are considered to be minimal and can be managed.

The project is designed to have a very short ‘popup’ construction period, and a six (6) month duration (which can be extended if required).

A condition of the grant is that construction contracts must be commenced in the 2020/2021 Financial Year. The project is on schedule to meet that milestone.

This report recommends that Council endorse the project for construction.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Council was successful in receiving \$369,710 of funding for this project under the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), “Streets as Shared Spaces” (SaSS) Program.

RECOMMENDATION:

1.THAT Council endorse construction of the proposed Miller Street (Berry Street to Pacific Highway) popup footpath widening and associated landscaping.

2.THAT procurement of a contractor to construct the project take place via the NSW Local Government Procurement Panel. (LGP).

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment

1.4 Public open space and recreation facilities and services meet community needs

2. Our Built Infrastructure

2.1 Infrastructure and assets meet community needs

2.2 Vibrant centres, public domain, villages and streetscapes

2.3 Sustainable transport is encouraged

2.4 Improved traffic and parking management

3. Our Future Planning

3.1 Prosperous and vibrant economy

3.2 North Sydney CBD is one of NSW's pre-eminent commercial centres

3.4 North Sydney is distinctive with a sense of place and quality design

4. Our Social Vitality

4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe

BACKGROUND

On 18 August 2020, Council was awarded \$1,040,000 for the implementation of temporary or 'popup' public space projects under the "Streets as Shared Spaces" (SaSS) program which is run by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. The program is (in part) intended to deliver new 'rapid response' public space projects in a short period of time as a social and economic response to the impacts of COVID-19. Providing improved pedestrian access and public open space on Miller Street is one of projects funded under this grant.



Figure 1 Example footpath widening project completed under SaSS program in Coogee Bay Source: Plantabox

The portion of Councils overall \$1,040,000 grant for the Miller Street component is \$369,710 of the total grant value, The balance of the grant is to be used for the trial Burton Street closure and Bligh Street shared zone in Kirribilli. Payment of the grant is scheduled to take place in two (2) stages, the first upon endorsement of the project by TfNSW and the second upon entering a construction contract for the project. Endorsement by TfNSW is anticipated to take place on 18 March 2021. The DPIE grant requires that the construction contract be in place by May 2021. The project program is on track to meet this milestone.

The full closure of Miller Street to create ‘Miller Place’ in the block between Berry Street and the Pacific Highway is proposed in the North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy.

This project supports that vision by expanding the pedestrian environment on Miller Street and providing an opportunity to trial design elements and landscaping concepts to inform the development of permanent pedestrianisation projects in the area. The project is also anticipated to play a role in supporting social and economic recovery from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic by stimulating pedestrian activity on Miller Street.



Figure 2 Artists impression of Miller Place

This project can be delivered under recent Special Covid-19 traffic regulation delegation to Councils (s31 delegation of the Transport Administration Act 1988), which delegates Councils to implement temporary popup projects under a more streamlined approvals process (s115 of

the Roads Act 1993) designed to facilitate ‘rapid response’ projects that assist in recovery from the impacts of Covid 19.

A Councillor briefing was held regarding this project on 8 March 2021. Based on feedback some amendments to design elements shown in the initial concept plans were made including:

- Revisions to the furniture specification
- The addition of larger planting areas/pots
- Further detailing and revision of the location of noise screens
- Revision of some of the proposed art installations.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement will be undertaken in accordance with Council’s Community Engagement Protocol and requirements under S115 of the Roads Act and the Special Covid-19 traffic regulation delegation to Councils. Further details of consultation activities are provided in the following section of this report.

DETAIL

This report provides details of proposed footpath widening/public space expansion on Miller Street North Sydney. A map of the block where the project is located is provided below.

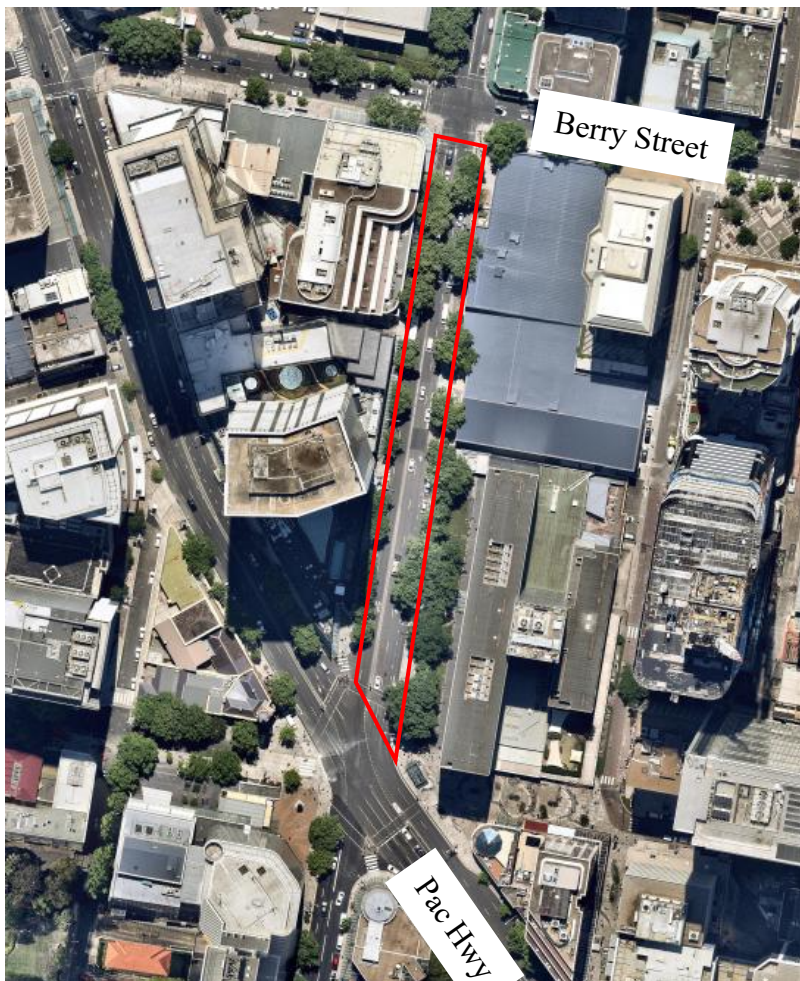


Figure 3 Project location Source: Nearmap

The project is being developed with funding and program support from the NSW State Government (DPIE) under the “*Streets as Shared Spaces*” (SaSS) program. The aims of the SaSS program relevant to this project are as follows:

- contribute to NSW economic recovery in our local centres by creating vibrant streets and additional safe space to support local business
- activate high streets to create better quality public space
- support physical distancing requirements and encourage safe social connection
- support the well-being of local communities and their ability to exercise
- attract people back into public spaces in a safe way, when appropriate to do so.

The landscape plan is designed and aligns with these aims. It seeks to deliver quality temporary public space that will increase pedestrian circulation space, provide opportunities for passive recreation and social interaction (for e.g. lunch spots), and contribute to placemaking outcomes.

It is envisaged that the popup will also offer opportunities to test ideas and provide key learnings towards the development of permanent pedestrianisation projects on Miller Street in the future – for example the use of movable furniture in the popup can provide flexibility to test multiple settings and inform decision making over permanent locations in the future.

Landscape Plan

The landscape plan for the project is attached to this report.

The central aims in developing the design were to increase pedestrian space; affirm the status of Miller Street as the primary 'High Street' in the North Sydney CBD and strengthen the identity of Miller Street as a pedestrian oriented place; create places for people to socialise and interact with place; and to support the economic and social function of Miller Street.

Key features of the design include:

- Areas of deck constructed at the same level as existing footpaths to expand footpath/public space areas out into Miller Street by repurposing areas currently occupied by car parking/loading areas
- Various types of seating, including informal seating areas for people to stop and take short breaks, and café style seating near existing food retail outlets. Seating has been positioned to provide additional lunch time eating space (in support of food outlets that have been impacted by capacity reduction under the Covid pandemic) and increase activity in Miller Street by providing places for people to stay and sit
- Landscaping throughout the newly created public space areas, including 'giant' pot plants. Plantings have been located to increase a sense of shelter from road and construction areas and to improve amenity for people walking on Miller Street or using newly provided seating areas
- An area on the east side of Miller Street designed to accommodate food truck or other mobile eating or event vehicles. This has been located on the east side of Miller Street so as to minimize impact on existing food retailers on the west side of Miller and offset the loss of lunch time food outlets on the eastern side of Miller due to retail vacancies.
- Screening and umbrellas to provide shelter and protection from weather and noise – these elements will contribute to the creation of nooks in the newly created public space designed to act as 'refuges' in the context of the busy setting
- Sculptures and an outdoor public piano contribute to sense of place and encourage interaction with the project and area. Sculptures will be translucent and lit with warm light to increase place outcomes and amenity (particularly through winter when the project will be initially commissioned). The outdoor piano will be publicly accessible to allow for impromptu use by members of the public and will also allow Council to support local musicians by commissioning performances. Sculptural elements are still in development and liaison will be undertaken with Councils Team Leader of Arts and Culture on what the final sculptural elements will look like.
- A painted mural on a section of road area repurposed as pedestrian space via the closure of the left turn slip lane from the Pacific Highway onto Miller Street. A contemporary mural using bold colours is proposed to encourage public awareness of and engagement with the project (Refer Figure 4). Paint will be appropriate non-slip.
- An augmented reality website, where people can view a model of a full road closure vision towards 'Miller Place' in situ using a smart phone or device
- Increased pedestrian space and a bus stop relocation to reduce crowding in front of the existing supermarket on the west side of Miller Street, where pedestrian crowding has previously been observed
- Informal traffic calming works in the form of lane realignment (including the removal of sections of the existing median)

- 5% of the total project budget is also proposed to be allocated to activation of the space between July 2021 and November 2021.

Extracts from the landscaping plan showing each of these features are provided below.

The design comprises a series of modular components allowing the bulk of fabrication to occur off-site. This in turn allows for the project to 'popup' on site in a short time frame with construction estimated to be five (5) days. Each modular section would be built to function independently so that it would be open for use immediately rather than being dependent on the whole project being completed before opening. This construction method also allows for the project or sections of the project to be amended or demobilised ('pop-down') in a short time frame if needed.

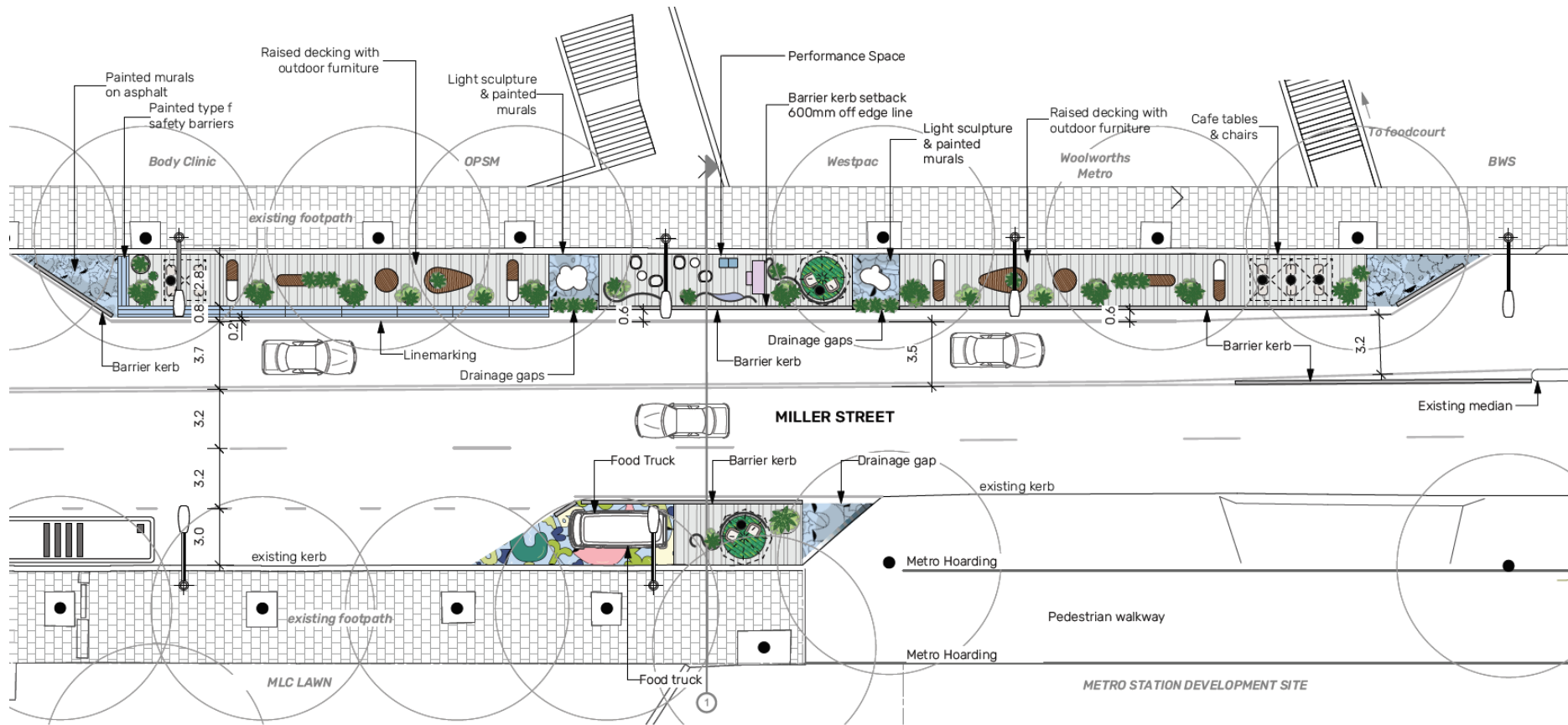


Figure 4 Extract from Landscape Plan

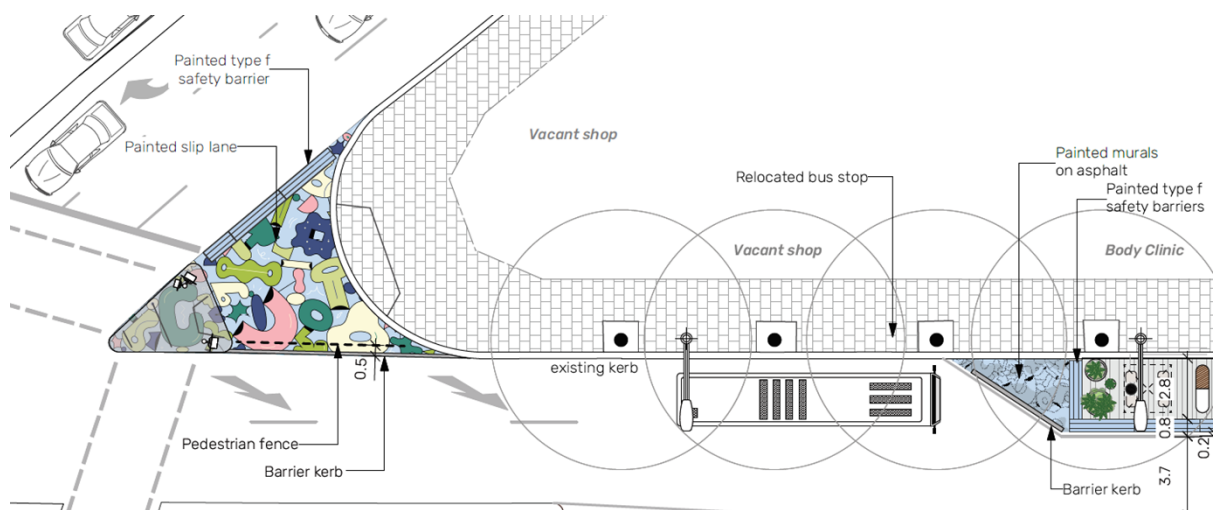


Figure 5 Extract from Landscape Plan



Figure 6 Furniture and pots

Transport Network Impact

The project has been designed to improve pedestrian access and place outcomes while having minimal impact on other parts of the existing transport network. The existing layout has been developed in consultation with TfNSW to ensure impacts on the network and bus operation are appropriately mitigated

The footpath widening primarily takes place in areas that currently provide parking or loading outside of clearway hours.

A Traffic Management Plan for the project providing further details of network changes is attached to this report.

Left turn slip lane closure

The existing left turn slip lane off the Pacific Highway (southbound) into Miller Street will be closed and the left turn movement banned. Existing pedestrian access arrangements at this intersection – where pedestrians are required to cross the slip lane and wait on islands – do not meet contemporary pedestrian safety and accessibility requirements and lead to a significant reduction in pedestrian accessibility and amenity. Overcrowding of the islands, resulting in people overflowing onto road areas is frequently observed during peak periods.

The popup will repurpose this area as dedicated pedestrian space by closing the lane using concrete barriers and address this current pedestrian safety and access issue.



Figure 7 Existing pedestrian access at the intersection between Miller St and Pacific Hwy

The slip lane provides for a very low level of vehicle movements at a network level (varying between 42-65 vehicles per hour depending on the time of day) and alternative access options exist, such that this change is highly unlikely to result in any discernible impact on the operation of the overall road network.

Relocation of existing bus stop

An existing bus stop on Miller Street, located south of the driveway entry to 100 Miller Street and directly in front of the entry point to the existing supermarket, will be relocated approximately 60m south of the existing location.

This change will facilitate footpath widening in this area, where pedestrian volumes and combination of uses (entry/exit to supermarket/food court/buildings, bus stop, and general pedestrian through movement) lead to footpath congestion.

The location of the bus stop was determined in consultation with TfNSW and is considered unlikely to disadvantage current bus customers, noting that the stop catchment falls predominantly south of the location.

The new bus stop location will have sufficient space to allow a bus to stop at the bus stop with sufficient room for a second bus to store in the kerbside lane of Miller Street at the rear of the bus stop, without affecting the traffic signal operation at the

intersection of Pacific Highway/Miller Street.

A maximum of fourteen (14) buses per hour currently use this bus stop during the 3.00pm-4.00pm peak hour on a weekday. Figure 7 below demonstrates that buses will have sufficient room to safely exit the relocated space.

All other bus network conditions will remain as existing.



Figure 8 Bus Swept Path

Parking and loading zones

The proposal will repurpose existing parking and loading zone spaces on both sides on Miller Street in the block between Berry Street and the Pacific Highway. The bulk of spaces on the east side have already been removed as part of Sydney Metro construction. The spaces being repurpose are all currently part time only due to existing clearways on both sides of Miller Street.

Three (3) loading spaces on the east side and four (4) spaces on the west side of Miller Street will no longer be available for use during business hours. The impact of this is likely to be minimal or offset as follows:

- the bulk of retail premises fronting the site on the east are currently vacant and alternative loading options both within buildings and on-street are available
- an alternative loading zone on the Pacific Highway – in the location of an existing bus layover – has been endorsed by TfNSW to be used for the duration of the project and will cater for businesses on the east side of Miller that currently utilize the existing loading zone. (refer Figure 8)

Longer term, given that the footpath widening is a staging or trial towards permanent expansion of the pedestrian environment on Miller Street, the removal of these loading zones provides an opportunity to test alternative loading locations for these retail uses.

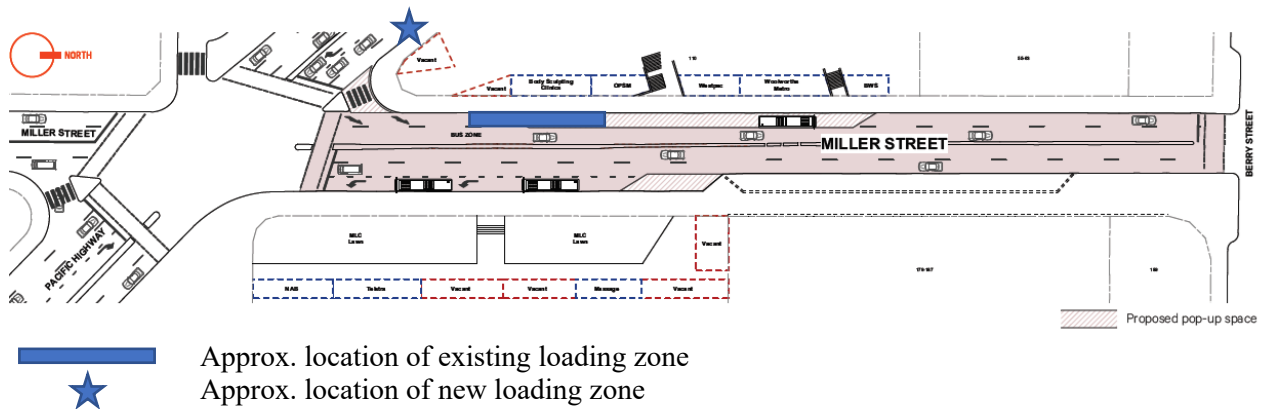


Figure 9 Existing and proposed loading zones

Existing Clearway

Existing clearways are in place on both the east and west of Miller Street. These fall in the areas to be repurpose as popup footpath areas.

Modelling of the traffic impacts of this change indicates that this is unlikely to lead to adverse road network impacts, as the traffic volumes (warrants) required to justify a clearway in the location are not met. The clearway conditions are a residual traffic management strategy from pre Sydney Harbour Tunnel network conditions.

Construction site and property access

The popup footpath widening has been designed to ensure access for the range of vehicles that need access to the metro construction site and 100 Miller Street.

Figure 9 below demonstrates that service vehicles will have sufficient room to safely enter the 100 Miller Street driveway.

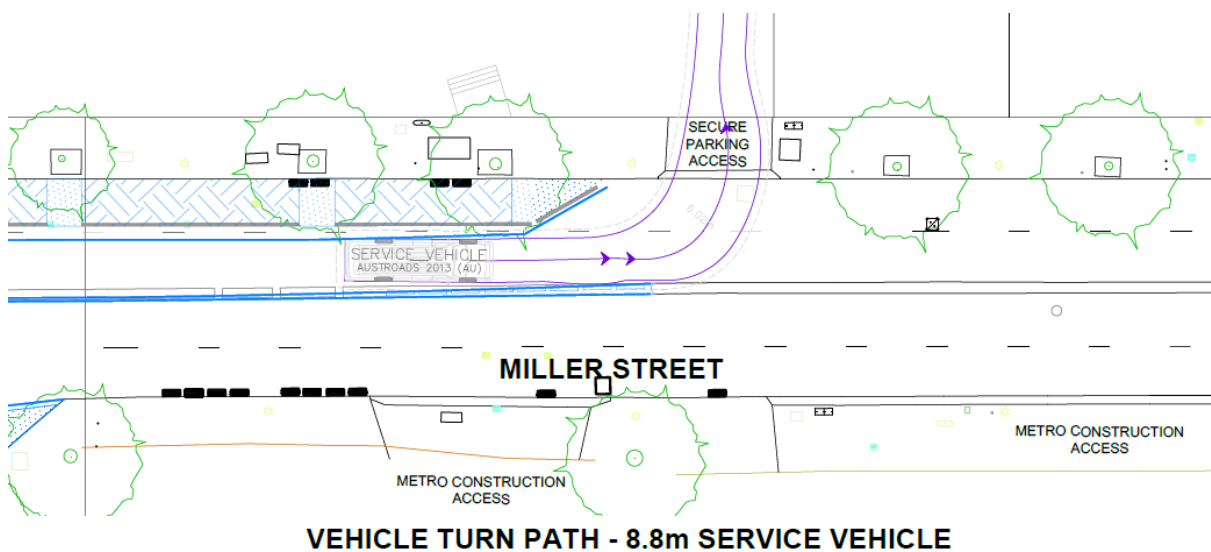


Figure 10 swept path for Service Vehicle to 100 Miller St

Stakeholder Engagement

As the popup is being undertaken as a ‘rapid response project’ consultation programs have been tailored to fit this context. The popup nature of the project also provides for flexibility in that sections of the project can be amended over the project lifespan in response to community feedback over the project lifespan.

The nature of popup project also provides a unique opportunity to run consultation at ‘life size’, where people can see a trial project in place and provide feedback on what works and what can be improved with a view towards maximising outcomes in any subsequent permanent designs.

The following engagement activities will be undertaken prior to and during the project:

- Notification and project information via Council’s print and social media channels
- One on one stakeholder engagement with directly adjacent businesses/property owners. As the most directly impacted stakeholders, these groups will have the opportunity to discuss the project directly with Council staff to work collaboratively towards partnership projects within the public space and strategies to manage impacts. These stakeholders will be directly contacted by mail and invited to a community information and feedback session on the project (open to broad community participation)
- Online Feedback mechanism via Councils Have Your Say page throughout the project lifespan to evaluate outcomes and inform the design directions of future permanent works on Miller Street.

Summary and Recommendation

This report provides details of proposed footpath widening and landscaping interventions aimed at increasing public space and supporting a ‘High Street’ function in Miller Street.

The project will increase pedestrianisation and trial a range of landscaping interventions to inform and support the longer-term vision for the implementation of ‘Miller Place’ as part of the North Sydney Public Domain Strategy.

The project has been designed to deliver significant pedestrian and public domain improvements while also having minimal impact on road and transport network function.

The project is designed to have a very short ‘popup’ construction period, and a six (6) month duration (which can be extended).

A condition of the grant is for construction contracts to be commenced in the current Financial Year. The project is currently on schedule to meet that milestone.

This report recommends that Council endorse the project for construction.

Program

Timing	Action
22 March, 2021	Report to Council
Following subject to project endorsement at 22 March 2021 Council meeting.	
Early April 2021	Social and Print Media community engagement Direct/one on one engagement with business community and directly impacted property owners
April 2021	Request for Quotations for construction of the project via Local Government Procurement
(late) May 2021 Milestone requirement under DPIE funding agreement	Commencement of construction of Stage 1 (repurposed slip lane)
Early June 2021	Stage 1 (repurposed slip lane) open for use
June/July 2021	Remaining construction stages (up to 5 stages at 1-3 days each)
Mid July 2021	All works completed and open for use
July to November 2021	Activation/events program
July to November 2021	Community feedback via Have Your Say portal
October/December 2021	Project evaluation and reporting to Council and DPIE
January 2022 (pending community feedback and Councillor review)	Decommissioning or extension of project