

BOROONDARA

Bicycle Users Group

Boroondara Bicycle Users Group
Response to:

Eddington Transport Study

5 June 2008

All feedback on the Eddington Transport Study must be submitted by 15 July 2008.

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Introduction

BBUG thanks the State Government and the Department of Infrastructure for providing us with the opportunity to reply to the Eddington Transport Study. BBUG will make this response available on its website. A copy of this response has also been sent to Boroondara City Council and VicRoads.

BBUG has the expertise to provide more information, details or help if requested.

Referenced documents

Investing in transport – overview. New cross city cycle links - Recommendation 7 – page 80

Executive Summary

We note that many of the recommended routes have been proposed for years. Some already exist in more “limited” forms and some are already a work in progress. The recommended routes need the finance as detailed in the report rather than the occasional crumbs they receive at present.

It is clear the time has come to spend substantial amounts of money on sustainable transport in Melbourne, as is currently being done in many other major cities around the world.

We agree, that as stated by others – it’s time for action and that includes facilitating the sustainable activity of commuting to work by bicycle. The implementation of the majority of the routes could and should start immediately.

The routes should be dedicated safe cycling boulevards/highways. They must be an improvement over lines painted on the ground, next to parked cars, where getting “car doored” is a daily possibility.

We support a dedicated cycling agency within Government. But we warn that this agency must be appropriately financed. It would require the appropriate checks and balances, so what needs to be done on the ground, gets done and gets done properly.

Scope of the report

The scope of the report was limited to east west routes. Consequently the report does not give consideration to north south links. They also need the same sort of financing as suggested for the east west routes. The amounts required are effectively nominal when compared to the amounts being suggested to implement other recommendations in the report.

The Eddington report has considered some east west links and they need to be put in place now. However, there is a need for other routes and Bicycle Victoria has detailed many of these in its recently released publication: *Quick. Easy. Cheap. Our Answer to Traffic Congestion in Melbourne*. See:

<http://www.bv.com.au/change-the-world/41217/>

Costs

The suggested costs of the road and rail tunnels alone amounts to 16.5 billion dollars. Cycling is cited as 1.4% of trips to work. This figure would be higher for inner Melbourne. Looking at the costings in a proportional manner implies cycling should be financed to say 231 million dollars ie 1.4% of 16.5 billion dollars, rather than 60 million dollars. Either cycling is being badly underfinanced or cycling represents a good return on investment. We believe both these points are true.

Boroondara

The City of Boroondara is a key municipality when it comes to encouraging cycle commuting into the CBD, lying as it does directly east of the CBD and ranging from only 5-12km from the city centre – practical cycling distances.

Already significant numbers of cycle commuters use both the Koonung and Yarra Trails along the city's northern boundary and the Gardiners Creek Trail along its southern boundary. According to the VicRoads cycle counter the latter handles 1000 to 1500 cyclists per day.

The recent 2008 Super Tuesday bike count also showed hundreds using east-west roads such as Whitehorse, Barkers and Burwood Rds, despite the very limited protection offered to cyclists on these roads, most particularly on the Yarra bridge crossings these roads connect to.

Problems needing urgent attention in order to improve commuter routes through Boroondara include:

1. The Gardiners Creek Trail between the Yarra River and Glenferrie Rd consists of a gantry suspended under the Monash Freeway. The path carries some 300 to 400 cyclists/hour (VicRoads data) during peak periods. However the path is narrow and risk of cyclist/pedestrian conflict is high. The freeway is currently being widened at this point. As part of this widening, a path could be added to the embankment running along the north bank of the creek. This would result in a second high capacity path and facilitate segregation of pedestrians from cyclists on one of Melbourne's busiest routes.

Why not take advantage of the heavy machinery already positioned at this site to build this path. The current situation is an example of an Eddington recommendation, page 80, being ignored ie.

“The EWLNA has noted the importance of ensuring that all new infrastructure projects in Melbourne accommodate walking and cycling access at the very early planning stages.”

The construction of EastLink failed in this very manner. The Ferny Creek Trail was to follow Corhanwarrabul Creek to meet with the Dandenong Creek trail. This was State Government policy:

<http://www.alpvictoria.com.au/media/docs/Outer-Eastern-Suburbs-c57fe824-d7d2-49bd-a860-783a6d8e8a43.pdf>

However no underpass was put in. Instead pipes are in place and the route will never be built – a great loss to the community.

2. In Boroondara there is a need for a central east-west link through Boroondara and extending into Whitehorse municipality. See:

http://www.boroondarabug.org/wiki/index.php/Eastern_Rail_Line_Trail

3. Also in Boroondara we are yet to see the construction of the bridge linking the Darebin Trail and the Yarra Trail. This link is State Government policy under 2030 – refer to Direction 5.7.5

http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/melbourne2030online/downloads/2030_parts/direction_5.pdf

http://www.boroondarabug.org/wiki/index.php/Darebin_Creek_Trail

4. Furthermore there is a major gap in the Gardiners Creek trail on the borders of Boroondara and Stonnington councils. Stonnington Council are somewhat hesitant when it comes to cycling matters. The Gardiners Creek trail being but one example.

http://www.boroondarabug.org/wiki/index.php/Gardiners_Creek_Trail

5. The Monash Highway is currently being widened and a perfect opportunity to link the Waverley Rail Trail, recently upgraded by Monash Council, to the Gardiners Creek Trail is being thrown away by Stonnington Council. They believe it may affect the playability of the Malvern Golf Course, although a third of the 600 metres of path needed would be located next to the golf course car park. This is clearly at the expense of the general community, 2030 planning directives and it's a failure of proper process.

6. There are a number of well-documented problems with the Yarra Trail. Problems in the Boroondara section include the pipe bridge at Fairfield, which is too narrow and has an unreasonable grade at the bridge approach on the east side. Plus the Chandler Highway stairs and the Chandler Highway crossing. See:

http://www.boroondarabug.org/wiki/index.php/Yarra_River_Trail

The report, page 81, specifically says that its recommendations:

“Provides much improved cycling connectivity around the central city addressing specific and longstanding gaps in the bicycle network”

This point would equally as well apply to notes 3, 4 & 5 above.

Creating a dedicated Government agency would no doubt lead to all cycling routes being considered and implemented in a more coordinated manner rather than the fragmented and rudimentary approach currently in place.

BBUG response and recommended actions

The original Eddington recommendation is in *black* type and our response is in *red*:

Recommendation 6

Increased funding to significantly expand Park & Ride facilities along the DART routes to capitalise on the increase in express bus services, including adding a deck to the main Park & Ride facility at Doncaster Road.....

Further still all the parking areas for Park & Ride should also provide bicycle parking. If the Park & Ride facilities can be connected to local bicycle paths, then so much the better. At a minimum, bicycles paths should have signage to Park & Ride facilities – which would in its self, “advertise” an alternate way to travel to work.

The Koonung Creek Trail is a case in point. The trail passes directly by the Doncaster Park & Ride facility on the south side of the Freeway. The later trail has a good collection area with the ingress of the Bushy Creek trail nearby. As part of the Public Bicycle Network (PBN) is the nearby Greythorn Rd, which has Exclusive bike & parking lane (EBPL) marked.

In fact we note that Boroondara council have heard complaints from residents re: car parking problems. Cyclists drive to and then park in their residential streets, then ride the rest of the way to work. There appears to be a need for “Park & Ride” for cyclists.

Recommendation 7

A number of specific links should be progressively built to improve cross city cycle connections and cater to the growing number of Melburnians cycling to work.

Agreed – in fact providing more routes will not only “cater” for existing demand but will increase demand – which is a good outcome as it implies trip replacement of cars by bicycles, which by definition will diminish congestion for road users.

Cycling is growing in popularity across Melbourne, with something of a ‘boom’ taking place in the numbers of people travelling to work by bicycle. The EWLNA has found that there are compelling reasons for encouraging greater take-up of cycling – including health, environmental and neighbourhood amenity reasons, as well as making a contribution to reducing congestion – and that opportunities exist within the Study Area to tackle bottlenecks, improve the connectivity of the cross city bicycle network and generally provide a better environment for cycling.

Agreed – it also makes good financial sense. Providing cycling infrastructure is relatively inexpensive and reduces expense in other areas – a reduction in health costs being just one example. Refer “Cycling - Getting Australia Moving” - a report funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

<http://www.cyclingpromotion.com.au/images/stories/downloads/CPFHlthRpr08V3prf1.pdf>

Route connectivity and legibility is currently a problem that should be resolved. The cycling environment can also be made safer than it currently is.

The EWLNA has investigated a number of projects that would significantly improve east-west cycling connectivity, improve safety for cyclists and cater for the growing number of Melburnians commuting to work by bicycle.

The scope of the report is limited to East - West linkages. More East West links can be suggested such as the East West link being promoted through Boroondara and Whitehorse council areas.

http://www.boroondarabug.org/wiki/index.php/Eastern_Rail_Line_Trail

It is clear that the scope of the report should have covered the whole of Melbourne. There are certainly other cycling routes that need to be looked at, which connect the north and the south of Melbourne. Examples would be the proposed north south corridor that roughly runs parallel to Church St and Chapel St. Others include St Kilda Rd and the proposed route through Albert Park. Further afield Oriel Rd and the Darebin/Yarra trail bridge come to mind. The Upfield Bike Path could be improved further.

Bicycle Victoria has made it clear that there are many routes that need to be put in place:

<http://www.bv.com.au/change-the-world/41217/>

Other groups have also suggested improvements eg.

<http://www.melbournebug.org/campaigns.html>

Building a ‘cycling culture’ across Melbourne is hampered by a fragmented approach to cycling policy and infrastructure within government, with responsibility for cycling initiatives spread across several agencies. The EWLNA recommends that cycling be treated as a separate, distinct traffic category, with a coordinated, whole of government approach adopted to planning and financing cycling initiatives. To achieve this, the Victorian Government should establish a long-term, strategic program for walking and cycling, supported by significant and reliable recurrent funding and located within one central department or agency. A key aim of such a program should be to make cycling an acceptable alternative to cars and buses as a transport choice for shorter trips.

Totally agree with the above recommendation. Cycling should be encouraged as a viable alternative as appropriate. A whole of Government approach is required.

We can provide numerous examples of where cycling routes disappear or degrade considerably as they cross municipal boundaries. In other instances there is just about open warfare between councils resulting in projects stagnating for years!

BikeWest in Perth WA (Department of Infrastructure) has made great progress in providing a coordinated city wide infrastructure. Our only concern is that the department must be properly funded and have direct contact with grass roots organisations ie cyclists who will use these facilities. Certainly these groups would hold an interest:

Darebin BUG
Banyule BUG
Boroondara BUG
Manningham BUG
Maroondah BUG
Melbourne BUG
Moonee BUG
Moreland BUG
Whitehorse Cyclists
Yarra BUG

The EWLNA has noted the importance of ensuring that all new infrastructure projects in Melbourne accommodate walking and cycling access at the very early planning stages. Should the Victorian Government proceed with the major infrastructure projects recommended by the EWLNA, every effort should be made to ensure that walking and cycling opportunities are enhanced by these projects.

Agreed – We can provide examples of where opportunities have been lost due to simple oversights. In many cases city planners are simply just not aware of the location of cycling routes in the vicinity of the locations they are working on. Often these routes are just not available on the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) systems used by the planners – particularly in council offices. Cycling should be considered when any new infrastructure is put in place as recommended above.

Project details

The EWLNA recommends that priority be given to seven small scale projects designed to enhance east-west cycling connectivity.

Small scale but big returns.

Project 5

A separated bike lane along Highett and Crown Streets in Richmond to the Capital City Trail, then onto a new river crossing into Hawthorn. This new bridge would provide a high quality link from the eastern suburbs to the central city along Crown, Highett, Lennox and Albert Streets. Estimated Cost: \$5 million Total Length: 2 km

Agreed – This route and associated bridge will help commuters already using Church St and Burwood Rd in Boroondara by decreasing cyclist dependency on the nearby existing road bridge at Hawthorn bridge at Burwood and Bridge Rds. Likewise for Victoria bridge at Barkers Rd. Both bridges are not safe for cyclists.

The recommended route would sit well with proposed East West link through Boroondara and Whitehorse municipalities. This later route effectively acts an extension of the route being recommended.

http://www.boroondarabug.org/wiki/index.php/Eastern_Rail_Line_Trail

Such an extension may encourage cyclists to make less use of Burwood Rd, which has a very high rate of cyclist crashes – refer VicRoads crash stats.

Please note that the banks of the Yarra River at the location of the proposed bridge are quite elevated, particularly on the west side at Crown St. The path(s) to the bridge on the east side must also be thought through very carefully. All effort must go into a design that minimises grades as much as possible at this location. The bridge approach on the east side may require a switchback style of path.

If the implementation results in unsatisfactory grades, cyclists will continue to use the nearby Hawthorn Bridge.

Perhaps a bicycle elevator may be appropriate – seem far-fetched? Norwegian example:

<http://www.trampe.no/english/photogallery.php>

The bridge width must be sufficient to cater for a lot of cyclist traffic moving at speed. If it is intended that pedestrians would also use the bridge (likely), then there should be segregated paths over the bridge. During peak hours the bridge would be heavily trafficked by commuters – the nearby Gardiners Creek Trail cyclist bridge carries 300 to 400 cyclists/hour. Cyclist/pedestrian conflict must be eliminated from the outset.

Recommendation 14

The Government should continue to implement Melbourne 2030 and take stronger action to accelerate the development of vibrant suburban hubs in Melbourne's west....

Agreed – while many may dislike and/or fear “2030” – as it will impact on our existing lifestyles – the fact is that Melbourne’s population is increasing. The key issue is how well 2030 is implemented. Under 2030, cycling is heavily promoted. That is something we can agree with. It goes hand in hand with walkability and high local amenity, at the expense of less sustainable transport methods. Stronger action, re: cycling, should be taken throughout Melbourne, not just in the west, as suggested in the report.

Appendix follows

Appendix

The projects discussed below are outside Boroondara Council's area. However Boroondara BUG members are typically constrained to commenting only on Boroondara matters. This is just any example illustrating the need for a dedicated cycling agency within Government as suggested in the report, page 80.

“The EWLNA recommends that cycling be treated as a separate, distinct traffic category, with a coordinated, whole of government approach adopted to planning and financing cycling initiatives.”

The following is a personal opinion of one of the authors of this document and does not necessarily represent the combined view of Boroondara BUG. However, having cycled these routes and being familiar with these routes, personal comment is appropriate. Boroondara BUG has agreed to have this additional information attached as an appendix to its main submission.

Outside of the Report's Scope

Numerous other failings in the network, not mentioned in the report, can be cited – a few mainly off road needs are listed here in no particular order:

- Consistent trail signage
- Need to extend the River Gum Walk Trail in Watsonia to the Western Ring Rd Trail
- Gap between the Skeleton Creek Trail and the Federation Trail
- Gap in the Darebin Creek trail near Settlement Rd
- Gap in the Kororoit Trail
- Gap in the Mullum Mullum Creek Trail
- Gap between the St Georges Rd Trail and the Western Ring Road Trail
- Construction of the Syndal Heatherdale Pipe Reserve Trail
- Taylors Creek Trail to Maribyrnong River Trail connection
- New bridge near the mouth of the Skeleton Creek Trail to replace the existing ford

Returning to addressing the report:

Project 1

Extend the Federation Trail (which runs from Werribee to Millers Road, Brooklyn) from Millers Road to Hyde Street (around 4.2 km) and upgrade the existing facility from Hyde Street to Footscray Road (around 3 km), which links with the Riverside Park bike path to Williamstown. This extension would provide a high quality western link all the way from Werribee and Williamstown to Docklands and the central city. Estimated cost: \$17 million Total length: 7.2 km

Agreed – Currently the Federation Trail effectively ends in the east leaving cyclists not only in “limbo” but in area that is really quite threatening for cyclists given the number of heavy vehicles using the area: ie around Altona North, Yarraville and Spotswood. This considerably limits the route’s appeal to cyclists, who would like to use this route to access the CBD. It’s dangerous.

It is specifically noted in the report that the recommendations:

“Supports the strong growth in commuter cycling (especially from the west).....”

The section from the eastern end of the Federation trail to at least Williamstown Rd or further still to the Bay trail, beneath the Westgate Bridge at Hyde St, should be started immediately.

The section from the Westgate Bridge along Hyde St meeting with Footscray road needs careful consideration. As recommended in the report, it is also suggested that a new road entrance to the West Gate Bridge may be built in this area as an option: Refer Stage 1, Option (b). Consequently the exact routing needs to be considered further – regardless the general theme is fine. It’s noted that the Maribyrnong Council has been working on this route only just recently.

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/story/59137>

The punt across the Yarra River should also become a full time service, as it could expect increased patronage due to the extension of the Federation Trail. Regardless of increased patronage or not and even if the punt is a loss-making venture, costs are effectively recovered in other ways – car trip replacement, public health etc. More casual surveillance by the general public, of the underside of the Westgate Bridge, could actually be considered a security benefit. That may be a worthwhile investment in its self.

<http://www.westgatepunt.com/index.php>

Project 2

Upgrade to a separated or ‘Copenhagen’ standard the eastwest cycling link from the Maribyrnong Trail at Footscray to the northern CBD and on to the Capital City Trail at the Abbotsford Arts Precinct and the Collingwood Children’s Farm. This route extends from the former stock bridge on the Maribyrnong Trail along Hobsons Road and Childers, Arden, Queensbury, Gertrude, Nicholson and Abbotsford Streets to the Capital City Trail. This upgrade would provide a high quality parallel link to Footscray Road, connecting the northern part of the central city to the Maribyrnong and Capital City Trails. It would provide a separated east-west cycling link across the city, giving access to Footscray, Kensington, North Melbourne, Carlton, Fitzroy, Collingwood and Abbotsford. Estimated cost: \$7 million Total length: 8.8 km

Agreed – Note that the footbridge over the railway line at the west end of Arden St must be replaced with one that can be cycled over. Currently it utilises steep steps.

Linking Queensbury St to Gertrude St via the Exhibition Building car park should proceed immediately. There is ample room for all.

Project 3

A separated cycling trail linking Melbourne University to the Capital City Trail via Johnston Street or Alexandra Parade (in conjunction with the development of the EWLNA recommended road link). This would provide a high quality eastern link to the Yarra River from Parkville and Melbourne University through Carlton, Fitzroy, Collingwood and Abbotsford. It would link with the Swanston Street 'Copenhagen' bike treatment and intersect with the important north-south cycling routes of Brunswick, Canning, Rathdowne and Napier Streets. Estimated cost: \$3 million Total length: 3.3 km

Agreed – However we don't see why this route is linked in with the EWLNA recommended road link. Assume the EWLNA will result in reduced traffic along Johnston St? This route may be the hardest to “get up” as it were.

Project 4

A separated bike lane ('Copenhagen' style) along Albert Street, East Melbourne, into Elizabeth Street, Richmond to Church Street. This would provide an eastern link for CBD commuters that crosses Lennox Street – an important north-south route. Estimated Cost: \$2 million Total Length: 2.5km

Agreed - Note how this “East West” study has been forced to mention North South routes. The scope of the study should have been broader.

Project 6

Bridge and trail upgrade around Merri Creek in the vicinity of Rushall Station (North Fitzroy/Northcote). While this is an area of high pedestrian and cycling traffic (including pedestrian access to the rail station and a popular commuter cyclist route), the narrow paths, rail underpass and bridge are unsuitable for the existing high levels of use. This project untangles and improves a significant cycling route to the north eastern suburbs of Northcote, Fairfield and Thornbury. Estimated Cost: \$4 million Total Length: 0.4 km

Agreed – The concept is fine but we would like to see the routes detailed.

All effort must go into a design that minimises grades as much as possible. The bridge width must be sufficient to cater for a lot of cyclist traffic moving at speed. If it is intended that pedestrians would also use the bridge (likely), then there should be segregated paths over the bridge. During peak hours the bridge would be heavily

trafficked by commuters – the Gardiners Creek trail carries 300 to 400 cyclists/hour where it crosses the Yarra. Cyclist/pedestrian conflict must be eliminated from the outset.

Project 7

Upgrading the North Bank of the Yarra Trail (Charles Grimes Bridge to Princes Bridge), providing an alternative for cyclists to avoid pedestrian conflicts in Southbank and the Yarra Promenade. This project addresses a longstanding concern for cyclists by separating them from heavy pedestrian traffic around the Southbank entertainment precinct and providing quality access to and through the CBD. The project involves some construction complexities in building the new path along the northern bank of the river. Estimated cost: \$22 million Total Length: 1.9 km

Agreed – Conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists at Southbank have been problematic. If the recommended north bank route is intended to reduce cyclist/pedestrian conflict then it must be designed to do so. This clearly means it must be a cycle only route or at an absolute minimum, clearly signed as a high speed route, that pedestrians need to be well aware of. Not doing so will just result in the proliferation of the problems encountered at Southbank.

Regardless, implementing the above north bank route must not be seen as justification for eliminating cyclists from Southbank as this provides many useful links for cyclists including the most direct link with the Sandridge Trail to Beacon Cove and links to St Kilda via Albert Park. However, it would justify clear indications to cyclists that they must cycle at very reduced speeds along Southbank itself.

Cyclists will still need north south access by utilising the many road and pedestrian bridges that currently exist over the Yarra River.