

BOROONDARA

Bicycle Users Group

Boroondara Bicycle Users Group
Submission Regarding

City of Boroondara
Open Space Strategy

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All feedback on the Strategy must be sent to Council by 6th March 2009

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Introduction

BBUG thanks Council for providing us with the opportunity to provide input into the strategy. BBUG may make this submission available on its website.

Executive Summary

In a densely populated, inner-urban environment such as Boroondara has now become, open space is an extremely precious resource. There are many competing demands by users of open space in Boroondara as in other municipalities. One very important use of open space is for linkages and corridors for use by both cyclists and walkers. These linkages and corridors include those that extend beyond the boundaries of Boroondara. Any development of Boroondara's open spaces must take due account of both existing and possible future shared paths passing through or around them. No development should occur that blocks or downgrades through routes for cyclists and walkers.

Introduction

While we appreciate that Council must consider the needs of various groups in planning the use of open space, the main focus of the BBUG submission is the potential for linear paths to provide through routes for both utility and recreational cyclists and walkers.

We strongly believe that no existing open space should be sold, or otherwise alienated from public use, without the most thorough investigation of its potential future use for the public benefit, and in particular of its potential to form part of a link that could be used by cyclists or walkers. There are far too many examples around Melbourne of corridors for linear paths being blocked by private land ownership, and of lost opportunities for linkages. In addition every effort should be made to take up any opportunities that arise for adding to existing open space, particularly if this facilitates the creation of new linkages between existing linear paths or parks.

Proposed East-West Link

A high priority identified in Boroondara's Bicycle Strategy is the provision of an east-west link through the centre of Boroondara. The precise route for this link is still to be determined, however there is a high likelihood that it will pass through a number of Boroondara's parks. For example Grace Park currently has a path running through it that could form part of the link. Additional parks that may form part of the link include Central Gardens and Fritz Holzer Park. Any developments proposed for these parks should take account of this possibility.

Other Strategic Links

Several other parks are strategically positioned to provide important connections in the metropolitan shared path network. The most obvious example is the current proposal to connect the Darebin Creek Trail to the Main Yarra Trail via Willsmere Park. Another very important link needed is that in the Gardiners Creek Path between Solway Bridge and Warrigal Rd. A shared path is currently proposed linking the Anniversary Trail to Warrigal Rd via Markham Avenue and Markham Reserve, however the need will remain for a more direct link closer to Gardiners Creek. Developments, including planting, in this park should be planned with a view to the possible construction of this link at a later date.

Toilet facilities

Another issue that concerns us is that of access to toilets along shared paths. The obvious place for such toilets is in parks, where they are available all types of users. It is important that toilets are available for cyclists and pedestrians at all times they are likely to be using the paths. A single Exceloo is no substitute for multiple toilets. Both walking and cycling groups use shared paths quite frequently, and plan toilet stops at regular intervals for their mainly mature age members. For a group of up to 30 walkers or cyclists a single toilet is quite inadequate.

Bike Parking Facilities

Cycling as a mode of access to local sporting and recreational facilities needs every encouragement. Apart from providing safe routes to access parks that include such facilities it is important that adequate numbers of bike parking rails are provided. The siting of such parking rails needs careful thought. They need to be in a location that is close to the facilities, and as secure as possible, which generally means that they need to be highly visible.

Dogs and Cyclists

It is inevitable that many open spaces must be shared by cyclists and dog walkers. In some cases shared paths run through dogs off-lead parks. This creates the potential for serious accidents. Both cyclists and dog walkers have a responsibility to take measures to avoid such accidents. Cyclists need to slow down and be alert, and dog walkers need to control their pets on and near paths and keep them well clear of paths while off-lead. Signage in parks should make this joint responsibility clear rather than putting all responsibility on one group, the cyclists, as has occurred at times.

Pedestrian-Cyclist Conflict on shared paths

There is widespread concern about pedestrian-cyclist conflict on shared paths. One possible solution is to build wider paths; another is to provide segregated paths on strategic routes carrying commuter and high volume traffic. We are moving into a new phase in the level of funding for cycling facilities in the light of the greater recognition of the community benefits to be gained from increased cycling levels. Designers need to think "quality" and leave behind the mentality of providing cycling facilities from a shoe-string budget. Narrow shared paths have been the compromise solution because of budget constraints. This should no longer be assumed to be the case in all instances.

It is of critical importance that this new thinking to be embraced with respect to the current study to identify the optimal east-west route through Hawthorn; also for the proposed bike link beside Glenferrie Oval proposed in the Grace Park plans whether or not this forms part of the strategic east-west route