

Boroondara BUG Submission Re Parks Victoria Planning Permit Application for a Bridge Linking the Darebin Creek and Yarra Trails via Willsmere Park

The Boroondara Bicycle Users Group supports the application for the following reasons.

This bridge is a crucial link in the metropolitan off-road network, and was identified as such in the Parks Victoria strategy document *Linking People and Spaces*, published in 2002. Currently the only river crossing in the vicinity is the very busy and narrow Chandler Highway Bridge, which has a narrow path on one side only. It offers access to streets in the north only via busy Heidelberg Rd. The proposed link will enable cyclists and walkers to move safely between the Darebin Creek Trail and the Main Yarra Trail, which in turn connects with various other trails. These include the Koonung Creek Trail (soon to be connected via the Eastlink path to Frankston), the Outer Circle (Anniversary) Trail, the Greensborough Bypass Trail, the Plenty River Trail, the Merri Creek Trail and the Gardiners Creek Trail.

The link will be used by utility and recreational cyclists travelling both north and south, including students travelling from Alphington to Kew High School and from Kew to Latrobe University. VicRoads counts on other paths in the area suggest that usage by cyclists can be expected to be in excess of 500 trips per day. The link will also be used by the many individual walkers, including dog walkers, and walking clubs who frequent the urban off-road trails. The bridge will enable walkers to move between Willsmere Park on the south side of the Yarra and Napier Waller and Sparks Reserves and the Darebin Parklands on the north side via a pleasant off-road route.

Parks Victoria have investigated the various alternative routes that have been proposed for the link. They have chosen this option for the following reasons:

- entirely off-road
- has the most favourable gradients
- involves the least intrusion on land owners, particularly golf clubs
- provides the safest intersection for two busy paths – flat and with good visibility
- provides a direct link with the Outer Circle (Anniversary) Trail

We believe that objections raised concerning the environmental impact of the path have little substance. The path will be well clear of the environmentally sensitive billabong which is in much greater danger from off-lead dogs. In fact an unsealed path, used by walkers and cyclists, already exists along the eastern edge of the billabong close to the alignment of the proposed link. The bridge is designed to withstand predicted flood levels and will be sufficiently high above the bank to permit walkers and their dogs to pass underneath as they complete a circuit of the parkland to the north of the billabong. Dog walkers will need to control their pets as they approach the path, as they must in the many other areas where shared paths pass through dogs off-lead areas.

This important project has been in limbo for well over ten years but is now making real progress at last. We urge Council to approve the bridge now so that residents of both Boroondara and neighbouring municipalities, including those to the north, can benefit from it without further delay.

This submission was endorsed at the Boroondara BUG meeting on Wednesday 10/10/07.