

BOROONDARA

Bicycle Users Group

Boroondara Bicycle Users Group
Response to:

VicRoads
Chandler Highway Yarra River bridge upgrade

1 Nov 2010

All feedback on the proffered options must be sent to VicRoads by 12 November 2010

To: chandlerstudy@roads.vic.gov.au

CC list:

Fiona Richardson, member for Northcote fiona.richardson@parliament.vic.gov.au

Andrew McIntosh, member for Kew andrew.mcintosh@parliament.vic.gov.au

Anne Martinelli anne.martinelli@vic.greens.org.au

Cr Geoff Barbour Geoff.Barbour@yarracity.vic.gov.au

Cr Stephen Jolly Stephen.Jolly@yarracity.vic.gov.au

Cr Amanda Stone Amanda.Stone@yarracity.vic.gov.au

Cr Phillip Healey Phillip.Healey@boroondara.vic.gov.au

Cr Diana Asmar Diana-Asmar@cr.darebin.org

Cr Trent McCarthy Trent-McCarthy@cr.darebin.org

Cr Steven Tsitas Steven-Tsitas@cr.darebin.org

Mayor Tom Melican tom.melican@banyule.vic.gov.au

jim.hondrakis@boroondara.vic.gov.au

mark.donnellan@yarracity.vic.gov.au

che.sutherland@darebin.vic.gov.au

Boroondara Bicycle Users Group (BBUG) – Contact:

Att: Julia Blunden & Graeme Stone

boroondarabug@gmail.com

Introduction

Boroondara Bicycle Users Group exists to promote cycling and to advocate for improvements to cycling infrastructure in Boroondara and surrounding areas. BBUG thanks the VicRoads for providing us with the opportunity to reply to the proposed options. BBUG will make this response available on its website.

Referenced documents:

- 1) Six page document titled “Chandler Bridge Improvement Proposal” and dated Oct 2010 presented by VicRoads at a meeting convened by Fiona Richardson, the member for Northcote.
- 2) BBUG’s web page on the subject:
http://boroondarabug.org/wiki/Yarra_River_Trail#Yarra_Trail
- 3) Various Governmental Strategies as discussed further below.

Executive Summary

BBUG has appraised the plans provided by VicRoads. We do not discuss the need for a bridge as such or whether any of the designs presented are in fact appropriate at all. We have focused on the plans, as provided, solely from a cycling point of view, without prejudice to other possibilities or bridge designs that may be offered up in the future by VicRoads.

Our preferred options are Options 4 and Option 2 - a new four lane bridge on the west or east side of the existing bridge with the existing bridge utilized as a pedestrian/cycling bridge. The term underpass in the following just means grade separation, whether that be using a tunnel or open boardwalk.

We highly recommend including as part of the project:

- A pedestrian/cyclist underpass for the Yarra Trail at Chandler Highway and a link to the pedestrian/cycle bridge. It would be of the utmost folly not to include an underpass on the south side of the river as part of the project.
- Extend the Anniversary Trail to Fairfield Station in Darebin Council area via Yarra Council. This would be highly desirable and be of great financial benefit to any future developers of the area.

- Instigate a shared path running under the bridge on the north side, linking the pedestrian/cyclist bridge to both Coate Park and Alphington Park. Given gradient issues and possible property title issues Coate Park may be best accessed by Rex Ave.
- All paths to be suitable for cyclists utilizing the lowest gradients possible and be designed to minimise changes in elevation along the path. Paths to be in accordance with “Austroads Guide to Road Design Part 6A: Pedestrian and Cyclist Paths” with widths no less than 3m, with appropriate shy zones either side, to reduce potential pedestrian/cyclist conflict. No staircases or wood structures.

Pedestrians or cyclists utilising pedestrian crossings result in the flow of traffic along a major thoroughfare being interrupted – underpasses are good for pedestrians/cyclists and motorised traffic.

Discussion

Selection of our preferred option – cycling - the north south route

New two lane bridge:

We have immediately dismissed Options 1 & 3, that just call for a new two lane bridge and continual usage of the existing bridge as follows.

- 1) sometime in the future, the existing bridge may need to be replaced regardless. It’s probably best to implement the four lane solution in one go – intuitively this seems appropriate from an economic point of view and would minimise disruption to the area. The four lane solution would provide the best outcome for cyclists as it results in a pedestrian/cyclist facility ie the existing bridge.
- 2) the two lane solution would only allow an on road cycle lane in just one direction, as the existing bridge cannot accommodate two car lanes and an on road cycle lane for the other direction. A new four lane bridge could be designed from the start to have cycle lanes in both directions – as shown in the provided VicRoads plans.
- 3) in Option 3 – with the new 2 lane bridge on the west side of the existing bridge – we question how one would access the existing “outrigger” shared path located on the west side of the existing bridge? It would effectively be located in the middle of the highway.

There is no denying that the old bridge would make a good crossing for cyclists and pedestrians – especially the recreational cyclist and those not so confident in heavy traffic. Regardless competent road riders and commuters will ride on the road in heavy traffic but they need lanes across the bridge in both directions.

This is especially important where gradients may result in a large differential in speed between the cyclist and motorised traffic. This is currently the situation when heading from the south to the north over the existing bridge. We would go as far to suggest that the standard 1.5m on road lanes should be made wider to say 1.8 m - noting that on a bridge there is nowhere to escape to, such as a footpath, in an emergency situation. The extra 300 mm would provide more of a shy zone on this highly trafficked bridge. The use of vibraline for the lane marking should be considered.

New four lane bridge:

Having eliminated Options 1 & 3 we are left with Options 2 and 4 ie a new four lane bridge either on the east side or west side of the existing bridge.

We note for both the four lane Options, the existing “outrigger” shared path located on the west side of the existing bridge would be removed. This appears to introduce no new difficulties as the existing bridge itself will become a recreational shared path.

To maximize the use of the existing bridge it needs to be well connected to the immediate vicinity:

Cycling - the north south route:

There is a great opportunity here to extend the shared path to the north along Chandler Hwy and link it to Fairfield Station via the land on which the Outer Circle rail line once traversed. Currently this land and the existing footpath at the north end of Broomfield Ave and Hanslope Ave are poorly utilised. There is also an pedestrian underpass of the train line at Fairfield station and an at grade crossing at Perry St (northern section).

Such a strong off road shared path link would allow many residents of north Kew, easy access to the station, via a short bike ride. ie ten minutes to the Willsmere Road or Kilby Road vicinity via the Anniversary Trail or Yarra Trail. This area is poorly served by Public transport and this link would be invaluable to local residents.

This would also give good access to any new development at the Amcor site and to the parkland located at Parkview Rd. A underpass on the north side of the river would link Coate Park and Alphington Park and be of great value to local residents. Ultimately a Public link between Coate Park and Park Cres and the Kew boathouse but property issues would appear to confound this.

Cycling - the east west route – south side:

All four Options make no mention of the Yarra Trail that crosses Chandler highway on the south side of the Yarra River in Boroondara. Currently cyclists using the trail, can cross the highway in one of three ways:

- 1) cycle under the bridge and then climb a large set of stairs with your bike in tow – a difficult operation especially for family groups or those with tandems or “tag alongs” for the kids – let alone wheelchairs and electric scooters.
- 2) risk life and limb by crossing at the Yarra Blv directly opposite the entrance to the Guide Dogs Center. This a common and probably the quickest way to cross but is accompanied by the greatest risk given the speed and the amount of traffic passing by at this point during times of less congestion ie off peak periods.
- 3) using the two stage pedestrian crossing. This is the slowest method. It also has the disadvantage of halting traffic on an already highly congested route. Why hold up the substantial traffic in this manner? A two stage pedestrian crossing is not appropriate.

Given the above, BBUG and others including Bicycle Victoria have always pressed for an underpass at Chandler Highway. It is absolutely essential that an underpass is part of the bridge project. This will greatly increase the usage of the Yarra Trail as a means of transport to the CBD. Looking at the site it appears there is ample room to access an underpass from road level and from the Yarra River level, with shared paths that have reasonable gradients and turn radii.

Counts taken in 2009 indicate that some 600 cyclists a day use the Yarra Trail Chandler Hwy intersection. Many of those riders could benefit from an underpass. Given the growth in cycling, the figures for 2011 could well be over a thousand per day. Improvements to the trail in general could easily double these figures while maintaining path safety for all.

Further still the Yarra Blv from Chandler Highway to Walmer St in Kew is regarded as a prime training area for those involved in cycling as a sport including some of our potential Commonwealth and Olympian Champions.

A shared path running under the bridge on the north side should also be instigated. Any underpass that eliminates pedestrians or cyclists stopping traffic unnecessarily at pedestrian crossings in this region has got to be a positive step.

Typically any improvement to shared paths will also benefit pedestrians. It's a win win. Any improvement to shared paths in the area will also benefit pedestrians & those using electric scooters such as the elderly, giving good access to the parklands on both sides of the river.

Applicable governmental strategies and studies

Good cooperation between the three local Councils (Boroondara, Yarra & Darebin) can generate a sufficient synergy to produce an outcome that will also benefit those three Councils. We look forward to the Councils working together on this project as would be typically be dictated by each Council's Municipal Strategic Statement.

There are a number of strategies that endorse significant improvements to the cycling routes in the vicinity of the Chandler Highway bridge.

These routes are:

- 1) the east west Yarra Trail
- 2) the north south route ie Anniversary trail across the bridge and onwards to Fairfield station

Some applicable strategies – to name a few:

- 1) The National Cycling Strategy 2011-2016 has the stated aim of doubling the number of people cycling in Australia in five years: “2 (i) All jurisdictions will continue to invest in developing local on-road and off-road cycling networks to key destinations in both urban and rural areas that are consistent with national standards, and should commit to the identification of required funds in the relevant budget processes.”
- 2) The application note “Providing bicycle facilities as part of transport projects” describing the “..five overarching criteria for assessing cycling in transport projects..” as part of the Victorian Cycling Strategy must be taken into consideration.
- 3) The “Victorian Cycling Strategy” directly speaks of improving cycling routes in this area, p28 describes "Link the Chandler Highway to Wellington Street" (Collingwood) as a desirable aim.
- 4) At Council level the Boroondara Cycling strategy also looks to progress cycling in the immediate vicinity of the bridge.
- 5) The Eddington report, page 81, specifically says in its recommendations: “Provide much improved cycling connectivity around the central city addressing specific and longstanding gaps in the bicycle network”
- 6) The draft “Metropolitan Melbourne Principal Bicycle Network (PBN) shows the east west and north south routes as being part of the PBN.
- 7) Parks Vic "Linking People and Spaces (2002) - Metropolitan Trail Network (MTN) – shows the Yarra Trail as primary route.