



The Mayor and Councillors
City of Banyule
PO Box 51,
Ivanhoe,
Victoria, 3079

DAREBIN CREEK TRAIL

Submission to the City of Banyule by Bicycle Victoria re planning permit application Ref No. P635/2007

Dear Mayor and Councillors

Bicycle Victoria strongly supports the permit application by Parks Victoria for the completion of the construction of the Darebin Creek Trail. As highlighted by many users of the existing nearby trail network it is an exciting opportunity to provide the missing final link to the Main Yarra Trail. Bicycle Victoria members, many of whom are residents in your municipality, are among those who will utilise the Trail including school children and commuters during the week and recreational walkers and cyclists particularly on the weekend.

The benefits in health, fitness and sustainable transport are significant and are further discussed below.

BENEFITS OF THE DAREBIN CREEK TRAIL LINK

1. Network Continuity

The Metropolitan Trail Network consists of over 600 km of shared use trails across Melbourne. These trails provide safe and accessible recreation and transport facilities to the majority of Melbourne's residents.

The Darebin Bridge project will link six of Melbourne's most popular trails: the Darebin Creek Trail and the Metropolitan Ring Road Trail linked to the Main Yarra trail, The Outer Circle or Anniversary Trail, the Koonung Creek Trail and the Capital City Trail.

The project will connect people in Melbourne's north-east suburbs (including Heidelberg, Preston, Ivanhoe and Bundoora) to the existing network of shared trails throughout the metropolitan area via the Main Yarra Trail and others.

The City of Whittlesea is on record as strongly supporting the extension of the Darebin Creek Trail from its current southern termination at Darebin Parklands in Alphington to join

the Main Yarra Trail at Willsmere Park in Kew. “Once the remaining links in this trail network are constructed, it will be possible to cycle or walk from Findon Road in Epping to the Yarra River in Kew and from there to the City via the Main Yarra Trail, a distance of approximately 35 kilometres, predominantly off road”.

Continuation of the trail from Heidelberg Road across the Yarra River to the Main Yarra Trail is critical to the linking with the existing Metropolitan Trail Network.

2. Recreation and Health

Completing the Darebin Creek Trail and linking it to the Main Yarra Trail will result in a large increase in walking and cycling within the community and so open up a great opportunity for residents to have healthy exercise in a relaxing natural environment. The completed Darebin Creek Trail will have local and regional significance as an open space asset that links people to places, to regional and local parks and to other primary trails.

Sports and Recreation Victoria research shows that over 50% of people participate in unstructured recreation such as walking the dog or riding on a trail with friends and family. Melbourne is fortunate to have an extensive walking and cycling trail network facilitating unstructured recreation; however the suburbs of the north and north east are not well connected to the network.

Linking the Darebin Creek Trail to the Main Yarra Trail will provide access to the metropolitan trail network for the north east. This link will increase participation in recreation, which is currently restricted due to a lack of facilities.

The link will lead to a healthier and more active community and can contribute to relieving pressure on health care services. It has the potential to increase exercise and reduce the health risk in specific groups such as overweight/obese people, adults at risk of heart disease and type-two diabetes, and people suffering from mental illness and social isolation.

3. Transport to work, university and school

Bicycle Victoria strongly believes that the completion of the Darebin Creek Trail in will deliver many transport benefits to individuals and to the community as whole. The project will link northern suburbs to Melbourne’s CBD and eastern suburbs as well as linking the eastern suburbs and CBD with Latrobe University.

The link will provide a safe off road commuting route for people living in the north eastern suburbs and this new car free route will take pressure off the Chandler Highway bridge as workers cycle commute into the CBD.

Southern students will be able to access LaTrobe University by cycling along a safe route, for example university students living in Kew, Hawthorn and Collingwood will be able to ride their bike to Latrobe University.

School children will have a safe route that will promote walking and riding to school. Kew High School students, some of whom reside on the north of the Yarra, will have the opportunity to cycle safely to school. This increased exercise can be expected to have significant health outcomes including a decrease in overweight children and potential obesity.

There are at least 14 primary and secondary schools within 2.5 kilometres of the missing link. All of these schools could be accessed by trail users once the link is complete. Currently many students cannot cross the Yarra River and Heidelberg Road to reach their school creating unnecessary driving, traffic congestion and less active children.

The resulting increase in active school and commuter transport will benefit traffic congestion, health, environment and wellbeing.

4. Community and Sustainability

It can be expected that there will be community building through communal usage of the trail.

Experience on other trails throughout Victoria shows that informal groups will develop such as mothers' walking groups and informal exercise groups. More formal community building will occur through events such as fun runs, organised walks/rides and community group activities.

Once completed the Darebin Trail will contribute to sustainable activities in a very natural environment. On offer will be readily accessible non-polluting recreation and commuting.

5. State Planning Policies and Strategies

The state government has made clear its continued commitment to cycling facilities in Victoria with the Premier announcing in May 2006 a significant commitment to cycling and walking facilities in Melbourne including \$8 million for Parks Victoria to deliver major projects for Melbourne's bike paths. This link was specifically mentioned by the Premier.

6. Environmental Safeguards

Bicycle Victoria appreciates that the Darebin Bridge over the Yarra and connecting paths have been designed to minimise impacts on significant vegetation. The Concept Design plan

illustrates that the trail will cross the northern finger of Willsmere Reserve, avoiding Kew Billabong and all areas of environmental significance areas identified in Dr Lorimer's report, commissioned by the City of Boroondara, (Lorimer, 2006). The report states that the Darebin Bridge and associated shared path will not negatively impact on the vegetation or animal life in Willsmere Park or the Kew Billabong.

The report highlighted increased pedestrian use and dog traffic along the banks of the river as the biggest threat to the environment. The report also states that these can be managed if they eventuate.

Landscape and environmental studies have been undertaken by stakeholders to date addressing the trail alignment, screening, drainage and flooding management, as well as protecting and enhancing the natural environment with revegetation. Bicycle Victoria therefore has full confidence that the project will meet any related environmental conditions.

7. Conclusion

Bicycle Victoria is in strong support of the Parks Victoria planning permit application and for the many reasons outlined above requests that the City of Banyule gives full commitment to assisting completion of the Darebin Creek Trail.

Yours sincerely



Harry Barber
CEO