

Merri Creek Trail Review

Submission by Brunswick, Darebin and Yarra Bicycle User Groups

The following recommendations are put forth for the initial public input phase to the Merri Creek Trail Review. Community input is vital to ensure the success of the Merri Creek Trail.

General Recommendations

In bringing the trail up to shared path standards, cyclists' interests will be well represented. The following list reflects our recommended priorities.

- The entire trail should be sealed, widened and given a centre line.
- Drainage should be improved in areas prone to collecting sediment during flooding. (One possible: incline the trail slightly in these areas.)
- Blind spot areas should be improved (i.e. near CERES).
- Some of edges are precarious due to combinations of steep gradients, sharp turns and poor visibility; these should be improved.
- Night time lighting isn't necessary or appropriate; it would be expensive and diminish the trail's value as urban green space.
- Improve the scenic nature of the trail with plantings, etc. where appropriate, but choosing plantings that won't obstruct the trail given normal maintenance.

Signage

We recommend better, more consistent signage across the entire trail, including:

- At major crossings and underpasses
- For on-road sections
- At creek crossings, particularly on-road crossings (i.e. Moreland Rd.)
- Use of recently adopted signage standard for Darebin Creek

Maintenance

The trail suffers from the lack of regular inspection and maintenance. We recommend that a plan of maintenance be developed, including inspection and cleaning after flooding of prone areas.

Bridges

While bridges are high cost items, the trail would benefit in many places from new pedestrian/bicycle bridges. Blyth St./CERES is one such place.

Concerns regarding Specific Points

St. Georges Rd. Underpass/Crossing: This is probably the worst point of the heavily used southern section of the trail. Following the creek trail is confusing, the signage is poor, and connecting with the nearby St. Georges Rd. path is confusing and often dangerous. In the short term, improved signage would greatly help. In the long term we would like to see a better connection developed at this site.

Heidelberg Rd. Underpass: The ramp on the south side of the underpass is very steep ramp, and the situation should be improved. Potentially the trail could climb the bank at a less steep incline and reach the top of the hill further south than it currently does.

Rushall Station Underpass: This underpass is a major connection and is very busy during peak hours. An alternate train line crossing would be desirable.

For all major capital improvements, it is especially important that Bicycle Users Groups (and other community groups) be consulted.

Compromising Interests of Different Users

The trail caters to many different users whose interests aren't inherently compatible. One opportunity to reduce conflict is to straighten (or otherwise separate) the main trail, while maintaining side trails at lower level of development. In this way cyclists would have a shorter route while users seeking less trafficked areas would have the side paths. This has already been done to various degrees in many places along the trail. The current review process should incorporate this strategy formally and more fully into the routing of the trail.