

4.3 Support for Bicycle Riding

File: 55/60/05/01-02 (I07/1581)

Responsible Officer: Transport Coordinator

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Council about a number of possible ways for Council to support bicycle riding.

Background

2. On Tuesday 18 September 2007, Council passed the following resolution (item 7.2, Support for Bicycle Riding):

1. *That a report be prepared for the November cycle of council looking at options for:*
 - (a) *increasing bicycle parking in the City of Yarra, including through:*
 - (i) *converting some car parking spaces to bicycle parking spaces in supermarket shopping areas (for example in the proximity of Swan Street Richmond Coles and Piedimonte's in North Fitzroy) and in strip shopping areas; and*
 - (ii) *introducing a minimum number of bicycle parking hoops per 10 meters in activity centres;*
 - (b) *implementing a car free day in 2008, possibly in partnership with other IMAP councils;*
 - (c) *implementing a 'Cyclovia' activity in 2008, possibly in partnership with other IMAP councils;*
 - (d) *making facilities at the Richmond Leisure Centre (and other City of Yarra facilities) available for bike riders who would like to use the showers and bike-lock up facilities available (e.g. for a small fee);*
 - (e) *supporting activities that encourage hesitant riders to ride more often (such as the Absolute Beginner Chicks group, a women-only group which supports women to ride more, through riding activities and social events); and*
 - (f) *invite Critical Mass to extend their activities or conduct an activity in the City of Yarra.*
2. *That the report includes advice on how to control bicycle speed and cycling behaviour on shared pedestrian/bike paths under the control of Council.*

3. The resolution by Council followed a public forum held by the Yarra Bicycle Users Group (Yarra BUG) on Sunday 16 September 2007 at which Council was called on to consider various initiatives on cycling.

Members of Yarra BUG are also members of Council's Bicycle Advisory Committee. A report from Yarra BUG on the forum was considered at the Bicycle Advisory Committee meeting on Wednesday 17 October 2007.

Bicycle Parking

4. Council currently installs up to 100 bicycle parking rails each year in response to requests from members of the public, business operators and staff suggestions. These are funded through council's \$160,000 annual capital allocation for cycling.

In some cases, banks of parking rails have been installed in high demand areas. These include Highett Street, Richmond near Gleadell Street to serve the Saturday market. Council's Sustainable Transport officer also works closely with Yarra schools to encourage cycling and assists where possible in providing advice on bicycle parking.

5. Council has previously investigated converting car parking spaces to bicycle parking, including in the vicinity of Best Street, North Fitzroy. A specific proposal for the North Fitzroy location was not developed because of several factors. These included cost, the design difficulties of converting angled parking bays to bicycle parking and lack of support from adjacent businesses for the removal of car parking bays.

6. Swan Street in Richmond is not a possible location for installing bicycle parking in a car parking bay because the road is subject to clearways which would not be able to function if bicycle parking was installed there.

7. The introduction of a minimum number of bicycle parking rails per 10 metres in activity centres may lead to an increase in the amount of bicycle parking in Yarra. However, it is not considered that this would be an efficient approach for several reasons.

Council's footpaths are the location of various fixed assets (bins, signs, seats, etc.) as well as footpath trading activities. It would not be feasible to apply a 10 metre rule rigorously. An alternative approach would be to discuss with Yarra BUG and other interest groups about specific locations where extra bicycle parking may be needed and evaluate whether these are feasible locations. These discussions can occur at Council's Bicycle Advisory Committee.

Car Free Day

8. A Car Free Day developed in association with other IMAP councils will provide a more powerful sustainable transport statement than one with City of Yarra acting in isolation. The impact will be felt across a wider area and there will be cost sharing, as with other IMAP projects, with councils working together.

9. In May 2004 a report was presented to Council on the feasibility of the City of Yarra supporting a Car Free Day in September 2004. The 2004 report noted that there are many factors that need to be both considered and achieved in order to provide a successful Car Free Day to ensure that a positive statement on sustainable transport is achieved. If a major statement is made by Council in this regard, then it is considered that the closure of a shopping strip is necessary.

10. Key issues to ensure the success of a Car Free Day include:

(a) having businesses in affected streets involved and committed to the project;

(b) highlighting the positive side to closing a street i.e. creative use of public space and using alternative transport;

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(c) promoting the event well in advance allowing, for example, businesses to stagger their work start and finish times and alter delivery times and commuters to plan alternative routes or modes of transport on that day; and

(d) building successful partnerships e.g. with residents' groups, Yarra Trams, MetLink, local businesses, local cycle shops and BUGs.

11. If Council is to have a Car Free Day it must have sufficient resources allocated to it. Planning, fundraising and getting businesses on board are integral to the success of such an event. All of these aspects are labour intensive and would require a worker dedicated to the event for a number of months.

Cyclovia

12. An IMAP Cyclovia will provide people with the opportunity to use a space normally dominated by cars in a completely different way. People will be able to walk, ride, scoot, blade, skip and simply enjoy a space without cars. The Cyclovia held by Moreland (May 2006) was a huge success and much can be learned from it.

13. The key difference between a cyclovia and a road closure as would be used in a street festival type setting is that cars are permitted though discouraged. Cars that need to enter the street (such as a delivery van) are permitted to access what they need at walking speed whilst the cyclovia is on.

14. In many respects Cyclovias are continuations of Car Free Days but differ in that they are established to work on a very regular basis and not as one off events. The most successful Cyclovias e.g. Bogota, operate every Sunday (7am – 2pm) and every public holiday with times to midnight at Christmas.

15. The set up for an initial IMAP Cyclovia will involve an extensive planning and training stage for route marshals and helpers. The actions would include but are not limited to:

- (a) forming the IMAP Cyclovia Working Group;
- (b) conducting extensive consultation with stakeholders;
- (c) designing the IMAP Cyclovia concept for the inner region;
- (d) conducting a pre-project evaluation;
- (e) preparing the road management, risk management and other plans;
- (f) developing the supportive information for example TravelSmart maps;
- (g) developing volunteer recruitment and training schemes;
- (h) developing sponsorship schemes; and
- (i) conducting Cyclovias.

16. Once the initial work is undertaken the Cyclovia in effect runs itself as it becomes integral to the area which hosts it. More limited training would need to occur as new helpers were recruited as the Cyclovia grew.

17. If Council is to proceed with an IMAP Cyclovia it must have sufficient resources allocated to it. Planning, fundraising and getting businesses on board are integral to the success of such an event. All of these aspects are labour intensive and would require a worker dedicated to the event for a number of months.

Use of Leisure Centres for Changing and Showering

18. A shower can be paid for as a separate item at all Yarra centres for \$2.40 and people can bring their bike into the facility to lock up while they shower. Currently the centres do not offer a bulk pass for showers as it is not common. However, if there was significant demand Council could look at introducing a bulk pass for e.g. 10 or 25 visits which would give a further discount.

Supporting Activities

19. There are opportunities for Council to run activities that would support and encourage more cycling in Yarra. Cycling education for members of the community has been supported or facilitated by some local governments through the provision of grants, facilities and promotional material. Council has provided cycling education for staff wishing to use bicycles for work travel. The provision of cycling education or other support activities could be considered as part of Council's sustainable transport programs.

Critical Mass

20. Critical mass is a group bicycle ride through Melbourne held on the last Friday of each month. Participants in critical mass have various aims and objectives. Among them are to raise awareness of the need to improve the sustainability of transport in cities, improve conditions for cycling and other related issues.

There are no specific organisers for the ride and behaviour on the ride is characterised by spontaneity so it would be difficult to coordinate any specific activities in advance. The event has some impact on peak hour traffic, though participants often try to avoid affecting public transport. The event has used City of Yarra roads in the past. Given this, it is not proposed to invite Critical Mass to extend its activities in the City of Yarra.

Shared Paths

21. Shared paths are able to be used by pedestrians, cyclists and skaters. The City of Yarra has several shared paths including the Main Yarra Trail, the Merri Creek Trail and the Linear Park Trail. In addition to the funding for on-road bicycle works, Council also allocates capital funding for the development of shared paths which is in excess of \$200,000 per year. The use of shared paths has been increasing strongly in recent years.

Council is aware that interactions between some users can cause problems. These include dogs poorly controlled, cyclists travelling too fast or close to pedestrians and other issues.

22. Path design factors play a role in encouraging path sharing. Council has recently upgraded a section of the Main Yarra Trail from MacRobertson Bridge to Gardiners Creek in Richmond.

Part of this work included providing a higher speed path closer to the Yarra Boulevard which is more attractive to cyclists and walking tracks in more scenic sections closer to the river. Council also uses a suite of signage designed by VicRoads to encourage appropriate path sharing. The signage encourages users to keep dogs under control, to walk on the left, to move off the path when stopped and for cyclists to use bells to warn when passing and to give way to pedestrians.

White centre line marking has been shown in some cases to encourage users to stay left and to assist with path sharing. Council recently introduced centre line marking to the full length of the Main Yarra Trail in City of Yarra.

23. Various marketing materials published by organisations such as Parks Victoria or Bicycle Victoria encourage sharing by emphasising a code of conduct. It would be expensive and probably ineffective for Council to develop its own marketing campaign around these messages or to run a program of enforcing trail behaviour through local laws officers.

The issue of sharing paths has been discussed at the City of Yarra Bicycle Advisory Committee. This discussion has generally concluded that it would not be cost-effective for Council to run significant programs without the support of other councils and agencies.

24. One approach to this issue would be to work with other councils and agencies such as Bicycle Victoria, Parks Victoria, Department of Infrastructure's cycling and walking branch, the Municipal Association of Victoria and others to assess current enforcement and education programs and develop an approach to this matter.

Shared zones

25. Council has also recently been working on developing a style of street space known as a shared zone. These are zones in which vehicles are required to give way to pedestrians and cyclists. They generally have speed limits of around 10 kph and are often constructed in a way that removes kerbs so that the road and footpath areas are less defined. An example is the recently constructed Lennox Square project at the intersection of Lennox and Victoria Streets in Richmond.

This approach has been gaining momentum in Europe and in Australia. A key characteristic of many of these types of places is the removal (or reduction of the amount of) traffic signs, lines, signals and delineations.

This gives drivers the cue that they need to make eye contact with others using the space to ensure they can safely move through. The City of Greater Bendigo recently won a Planning Institute of Australia award for its plan to significantly improve walkability in the city centre. Much of the Bendigo plan is based on the above concepts. A group of council officers has formed to assess further opportunities for these types of projects. Benefits for cyclists from these projects are that traffic speeds are significantly reduced improving safety and the perception of safety.

Consultations

26. No specific consultation has been conducted in the preparation of this report. However, there has been consultation on these issues in the past including via the City of Yarra Bicycle Advisory Committee and the development of the Encouraging and Increasing Walking Strategy.

Financial Implications

27. There are no specific financial implications of this report. Any direct financial implications would be identified as part of specific proposals.

Economic Implications

28. There are no specific economic implications of this report. Any economic implications would be identified as part of specific proposals.

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Environmental Implications

29. There are no specific environmental implications of this report. Increasing cycling has positive environmental impacts where this replaces travel by more polluting methods such as motor vehicles. Any direct environmental implications would be identified as part of specific proposals.

Social Implications

30. There are no specific social implications of this report. In general increasing cycling is considered to have positive social implications due to its beneficial impacts on health, opportunities for social interaction, enhancing mobility and reducing the cost of transport. Any social implications would be identified as part of specific proposals.

Council Plan, Strategy and Policy Implications

31. The initiatives discussed in this report support several Council strategies. Encouraging more cycling supports Council's Environment Strategy, Strategic Transport Statement and the Encouraging and Increasing Walking Strategy.

Legal Implications

32. There are no specific legal implications of this report. Any direct legal implications would be identified as part of specific proposals.

RECOMMENDATION

33 That Council note the contents of this report.

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