

Moreland Leader

Bike bridge gets nod

Suzanne Robson

23Jul07



Rachel Hughes at the Parkville stairs that stop her ride to the city. N04CO501

A BICYCLE-FRIENDLY bridge to link the Capital City Trail over Manningham St is poised to go ahead after numerous complaints from Moreland cyclists and wheelchair-users.

Melbourne councillor David Wilson said work on the bridge would start next year, pending planning approval from VicTrack and Connex.

Melbourne Council has allocated \$2.3 million for construction of the bridge which will connect the Capital City Trail on either side and provide access for the disabled who been unable to travel along the trail due to stairs.

Disabled cyclist and West Brunswick resident, Rachel Hughes, who has had juvenile rheumatoid arthritis since she was 12, was unable to travel to work using the trail because of the flight of stairs at Manningham St in Parkville.

Ms Hughes, 40, has had eight hip replacements and was unable to carry her 20kg electric bicycle down the stairs.

"I just feel it is discriminatory I should be able to go through there on my bike," she said.

"I was on my way to work and I had to turn around and go back."

The 29km trail follows the Yarra River to Yarra Bend Park and Merri Creek in the northeast, the former Inner Circle rail reserve and Royal Park to the north and Moonee Ponds Creek, The Docklands and Southbank.

The disability liaison worker and book store employee said she used her bike because she also suffered from epilepsy and had been told not to drive.

Bicycle Victoria facilities development manager Jason Den Hollander said the organisation regularly got complaints about the stairs and many people turned around at that point. "There are so many people riding now because it is environmentally friendly and (the stairs) are a major barrier to them," he said.

Ms Hughes said she was amazed that there was no access for the disabled and made a complaint to Melbourne Council. "There is a climate problem and people should be encouraged to cycle," she said. Victorian Network on Recreation and Disability manager Judith Geraghty said the stairs were a barrier to disabled cyclists and those in wheelchairs travelling into the city.

"I am extremely concerned that the bike path is not accessible to a broad range of users," she said.