

# Council to push on for more bike lanes

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MELBOURNE City Council will push ahead with its controversial Copenhagen-style bike lanes on three more major city roads.

The move to introduce the lanes — which separate cyclists and cars by putting a lane of parking between them — comes after negotiations with Roads and Ports Minister Tim Pallas.

In March, Mr Pallas dismissed the council's plan to install the lanes on St Kilda Road, because it would have deleted one lane of car traffic.

Car drivers had an "existing right" to that lane, he said then. "People have a right to drive their cars, and they have a right to do it without being impeded upon," he said.

Melbourne City Council is now completing a traffic study of St Kilda Road in a bid to prove to Mr Pallas that installing the new-style lane would not dramatically increase congestion.

Lord Mayor John So, who will meet Mr Pallas next week to discuss transport issues, said yesterday he wanted to see more of the new bike lanes across the city.

A feasibility study has begun into putting the lanes on East Melbourne's busy Albert Street, and also on Rathdowne and Queensberry streets in Carlton.

The city's first Copenhagen cycle lane, so called because they were pioneered in the Denmark capital, was installed in May on Swanston Street between Melbourne University and RMIT.

"The council needs to do everything it can to provide a range of safe transport choices for Melburnians," Cr So said.

The push for more of the lanes comes after *The Age* last week revealed a 36 per cent growth in cycling in June compared with the same time last year, bucking the seasonal trend for a drop in numbers during the colder months.

Melbourne City Council has also reported a huge increase in cycle traffic entering the CBD, with bikes accounting for 7.9 per cent of all vehicles in March, up from 3.9 per cent in 2006. Overall, it is estimated that 4700 riders enter the CBD each morning. The increase in riders has aggravated congestion on some city-bound bike routes.

The City of Port Phillip and Bicycle Victoria have planned for a two-way Copenhagen lane on the north side of Fitzroy Street as part of the council's designs for St Kilda foreshore.

The lane would then connect with a new bike route and run the length of Albert Park before connecting to new Copenhagen lanes along Cecil Street in South Melbourne. Part of the lane has already been completed outside the South Melbourne market.

Former deputy premier John Thwaites promised the new bike lane during last year's state election campaign.

Bicycle Victoria development manager Jason den Hollander said the new bike lane through South Melbourne and Albert Park would cut up to 12 minutes from the current commuting time.

Mr den Hollander said the new link would open up a new catchment of cyclists who would benefit from a safer ride into the city.

Port Phillip environment manager Paul Smith said the new link would provide an alternative to the busy Beach Road cycle route.

"It's a different experience and one that is probably more suited to recreational cyclists, but commuters will still use it," Cr Smith said.