

21 December 2011

Rockbank North PSP

Submission for the GAA draft Precinct Structure Plans open for public comment

Bicycle Network Victoria supports the provision of cycling networks in new suburban developments and welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the draft Precinct Structure Plan process.

Bicycle Network Victoria is currently working on a three year project funded by VicHealth investigating how to overcome the low cycling rates in outer suburbs.

A key aspect of this, and a focus of the project, is the lack of consistent and appropriate planning and provision for cyclists of all ages and abilities. This has led to poor provision for potential cyclists who do not have the basic infrastructure to use their bikes for the many transport and recreational journeys/trips that can easily be done by bike. People are dependent on the car rather than having it as one of the travel options available to them. Travel and activity data from existing suburbs show that most trips to schools, friends and shops are within 1-6km – an easy distance to cycle. Trips to work and tertiary education tend to be much longer and rely upon good connections to public transport and places to leave a bicycle securely for the day.

Key deficiencies we have observed in existing suburbs are:

- Schools are not well connected to the wider path network with children expected to ride on busy connector streets with motor vehicles;
- train stations and other public transport hubs not connected to the cycle network;
- arterial roads above 60k/h with on-road bike lanes that only suit a small percentage of the population;
- lack of bicycle paths along rail reserves which would provide connections to stations for many people;
- widely spaced crossings of major barriers such as freeways and railways that mean long detours for bicycle trips; and
- a general deficiency of cycling infrastructure leading to a piecemeal, unconnected series of lane and paths that are not used (a bit like an incomplete water supply network made of a series of unconnected pipes that is expected to provide people with drinking water).

The project has developed a draft Planning Checklist for Cycling that aims to prevent these deficiencies and allow a quick assessment of whether the basic requirements for cycling have been met in development proposals. The Checklist covers the three basic criteria of:

- **Connectivity** (is it physically possible to ride to key destinations?);
- **Permeability** (encompassing directness and choice of routes –is cycling an attractive choice); and
- **Quality/Appropriateness** (does the cycling facility suit the people using it and the trip purpose?).

At **Precinct Structure Plan** level the checklist seeks to establish a finer grained network that allows access to local destinations as well as connections to surrounding areas. At PSP level there is an increased focus on the permeability and appropriateness of the bicycle network routes. Connector streets are usually shown at this level and many key destinations such as schools, community centres and Local Town Centres will be located on these streets.

Using the Planning Checklist for Cycling as an evaluation tool, Bicycle Network Victoria offers the following suggestions for the draft Rockbank North Precinct Structure Plan (see attached annotated plan and table):

Rockbank North

General note – the lack of a scale on the plans made reading and interpreting difficult especially when assessing distances.

Connectivity –

Network of bicycle routes - bicycle routes (on-road lanes and/or off-road paths) are provided along connector and arterial streets and local access streets are configured to limit speeds and volumes. This provides connectivity to most destinations, including school, parks and Local Town Centres, Major Town Centres. All residences will be within 400m of a marked bicycle route. But there are no path alignments along either the Outer Metro Ring road (OMR) or the Western Freeway which limits access to the wider path network and also to areas in the south west of the plan area and the Rockbank Train Station.

Connections to destinations - The south eastern Local Town Centre (LTC) is well connected via off-road paths and on-road lanes. The smaller south western local convenience centre is not well connected with no marked bicycle routes (on-road lanes or off-road paths) linking it to the wider bicycle network. The future Major Town Centre is also well connected via paths and lanes.

Permeability –

Access into Town Centres – Access into and through the southern LTC is well connected by an off-road path and on road lanes. The northern Major Town Centre is also well accessed by on-road lanes but has no off-road path to internal destinations within the Centre.

Access to Schools, Parks Community Centres – None of the schools proposed has an off-road path connection to the wider off road path network. Off-road paths on connector streets would help overcome this. The same is true of the community centres. This is a critical deficiency of the plan.

Crossing of barriers - The Outer Metro Ring road to the east is a potential significant barrier for permeability to the east while the Western Freeway is a potential barrier to the south and to Rockbank Station. No paths or path crossings are shown for these corridors. At least four crossing are needed: one at Leakes Rd, one of the Western Fwy in the SE, one of the OMR in the SE to follow the drainage reserve path and one for the Kororoit Creek path at the OMR to connect to the eastern extension of this path. Both crossing of the Western Fwy could provide connections to Rockbank Station. Multiple crossings of Kororoit Creek are shown which allow access across this

potential barrier and there are paths proposed on both sides of the creek which enhances permeability.

Quality/Appropriateness –

Connector streets with schools, parks, community facilities – most schools, parks and community facilities will be located on connector streets. These streets are likely to carry significant motor vehicle traffic volumes at moderate speeds (50-80km/h). On-road bike lanes on these roads are unlikely to be used by school children, family groups or novice riders and separated off-road paths, with clear and unhindered crossing of minor streets, are more appropriate. They also serve to connect to the wider off road path network alongside parks and green corridors. Beattys Roads is a candidate, as is the middle north south connector which passes schools, community facilities and higher density areas.

Connector streets with buses and bikes - Most of the connector streets have marked on-road bike lanes on potential bus routes. This may lead to conflict between buses and bikes as buses must cross and recross the bike lane to load and unload passengers. Off-road bike paths are more appropriate on these routes as bicycles can run behind stops and high frequency bus services will not be hindered in their operation. Off-road bike paths also mean a narrower paved road width which is easier for pedestrians and potential bus passengers to cross.

Bike lanes on high speed roads – Taylors and Leakes Rd are higher speed arterial roads which propose on-road bike lanes alongside motor vehicles travelling above 70-80km/h. Austroads Guides to Road Design (2009, 2011) recommend separated bike paths for these traffic regimes and these are much more likely to be used by less confident and novice bike riders such as children and family groups who do the majority of riding in the community via short trips to school, shops and friend and for recreation. Separated, bike only paths are more appropriate for these roads but care needs to be taken to design intersections and cross overs (driveways etc.) to provide clear and unhindered passage for bike riders. A bike path that stops and gives way at minor intersections does not properly provide or encourage bike riding.

Separated bike paths from pedestrians – where high volumes of bikes riders and pedestrians are expected, especially at peak times such as before and after school, there is the potential for conflict on shared paths. This can be seen on some of the most popular existing shared paths in Melbourne such as the Main Yarra Trail and the Inner Circle Trail where high volumes of bike riders and walkers mean both are disadvantaged. This can discourage walking and cycling; especially by the more vulnerable who may be fearful of venturing onto a busy shared space. Widening of the path only works up to a certain point and then it makes more sense to provide separated bike and pedestrian paths. Experience and modelling has shown that where peak bicycle volumes exceed 200 bikes per hour with more than 100 pedestrians per hour then separate bike and pedestrian paths are appropriate. The diagonal shared path proposed connects to several high demand areas and past some high density residential areas so is likely to see high numbers of bikes and pedestrians. A separated bike path is appropriate for this path rather than a shared path.

Undercover bicycle parking at public transport hubs – many local trips can be made by bike but longer trips using a bicycle, especially to distant workplaces and tertiary education, rely upon connections to public transport and leaving in a secure place for the day. The current Parkiteer cages at train stations are an example of secure, undercover bicycle parking that allows people to ride to the station and leave their bike. Similar facilities should be provided where public transport connections for bike riders are expected.

Regards

Bart Sbeghen
Healthy New Suburbs
Bicycle Network Victoria

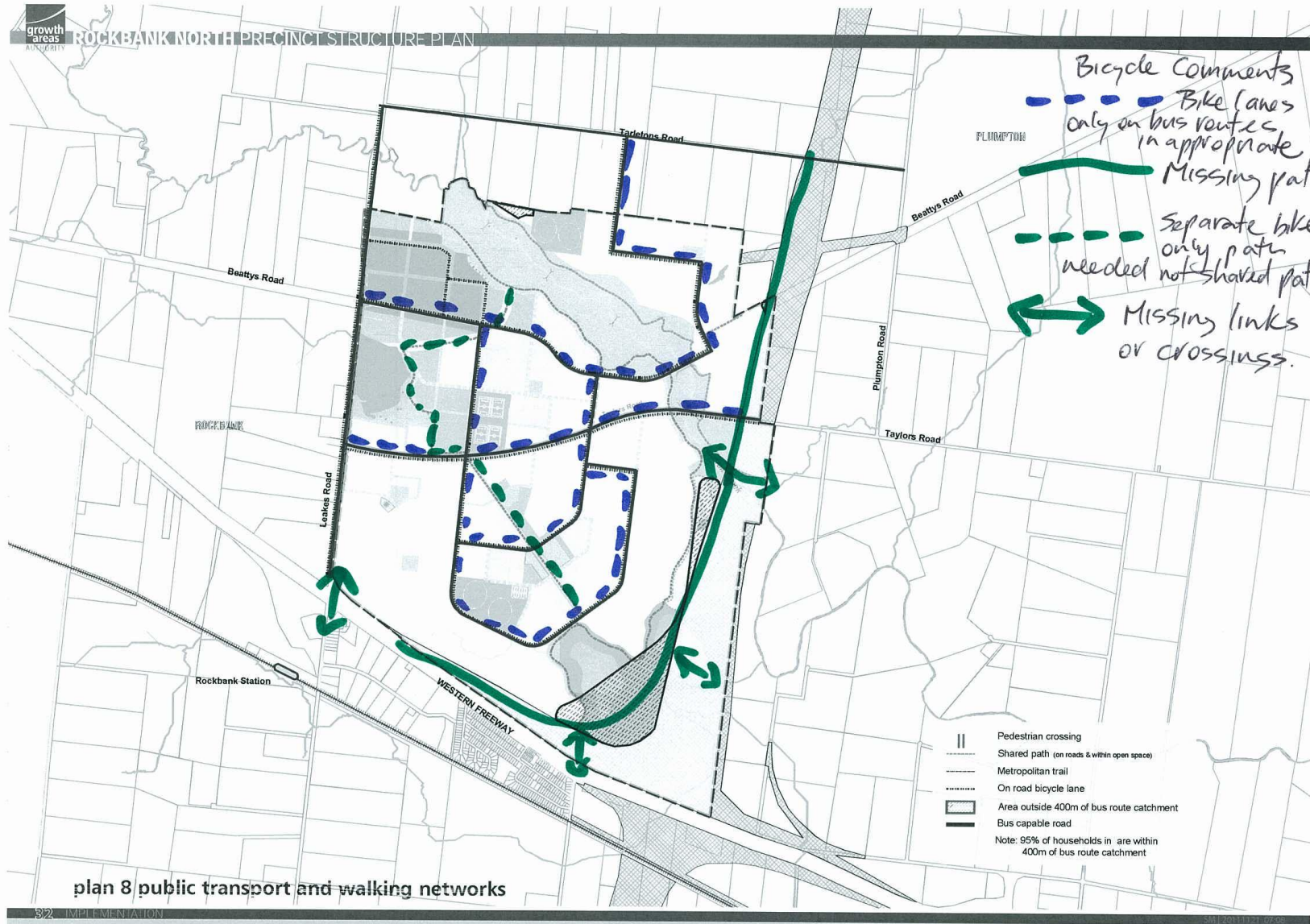


Figure 1: Annotated plan showing bicycle comments

Table 1: Planning Checklist Assessment

Precinct Structure Plan		Rockbank North Precinct Structure Plan		
		Yes	No	Response
Item 1	Corridor routes			
Connectivity				
	Are separated, continuous paths provided alongside all freeways, railway reserves and other green corridors?		1	Does not show alignment of paths along Western Fwy and OMR
	Are bicycle routes provided along major roads (Principal Bicycle Network routes and other major roads)?	1		
	Are paths provided along all Metropolitan Trail Network Paths (MTN)?	1		Kororoit Creek path
Item 2	Local destinations			
Connectivity				
	Are bicycle routes provided along all connector streets?	1		Mostly on-road bike lanes
	Are bicycle routes provided to parks, shops, schools and community services etc.?	1		
Item 3	Residence connections			
Connectivity				
	Are all residents within 400m of a marked bicycle route?	1		
Item 4	Choice of routes - activity centres			
Permeability				
	Is there a choice of bicycle routes into and through activity centres to suit a range of trip types and purposes?		1	Not into Major Town Centre - bike lanes only
	Are there connections to minor and major destinations within the activity centre?		1	Bike lanes only for major town centre. Path through LTC
Item 5	Choice of route - separate paths			
Permeability				
	Have direct routes for transport cycling been provided that are not shared with other path users on foot?		1	Diagonal path has no parallel road route. Should provide bike only path.
Item 6	Barriers and crossings			
Permeability				
	Are crossing points at barriers provided at least every 800m?		1	No crossings of OMR or Leakes Rd or Western Fwy shown

Precinct Structure Plan

Rockbank North Precinct Structure Plan

		Yes	No	Response
Item 7	Topography			
Permeability				
	Does the planned bicycle network take account of topography and avoid hills where possible?	1		Relatively flat and paths follows drainage
Item 8	Separation and volumes			
Quality				
	Are separated cycling and walking facilities provided on off road paths where cycling numbers are expected to exceed 200 bikes per hour and pedestrian numbers 100 per hour in peak periods?		1	Not specified
	Are local streets configured to allow shared use by bikes and motor vehicles (speeds <40km/h and volumes of <3-5000vpd)?	1		
	Are marked bicycle lanes or off –road paths provided for connector or arterial roads up to 60km/h and volumes < 5000vpd?	1		
	Are separated paths provided for arterial roads (speeds over 60km/h and volumes above 5000vpd) and on connector streets with schools?		1	Bike lanes shown with opportunity for shared path
Item 9	Off-road paths			
Quality				
	Are all off road paths at least 2.5m wide with 1m clearance each side?	1		3m paths specified in table 4 infrastructure plan
	Are all schools and sporting grounds connected directly to the off road path network via a cycling facility that provides separation from motor vehicle traffic (usually off-road path)?		1	relies on local streets and bike lanes
	Are off-road paths provided on the side of the road or barrier that provides the best connections to destinations?	1		Paths on both sides of Kororoit Creek. None shown on Freeways or OMR
Item 10	Bikes and public transport			
Quality				
	Have interactions with the on road public transport network (buses and trams) been catered for?		1	Bike lanes on bus routes on connector streets not appropriate
	Is secure parking (undercover locked cage with multiple rails inside) provided at railway stations and major bus interchanges?		1	Only "Bicycle parking facilities are to be provided by development proponents in convenient locations at key destinations" such as parks and town centres.