

Re: Draft Monash Boulevards Urban Design Framework

Bicycle Network would like to thank the City of Monash for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Monash Boulevards Urban Design Framework.

The Discussion Paper and Urban Design Framework (UDF) outline proposed residential developments along Dandenong Road and Springvale Road, comprising 16.5km of road frontage, which will transform these traffic corridors into Boulevards with a strong sense of place. The Boulevards will include attractive housing choices, high quality landscaping, tree canopy planting, and prioritization of active travel with safe, connected walking and riding routes.

Monash City Council's vision for the Boulevards is firmly grounded in existing policy. The UDF, for example, is informed by the Monash Housing Strategy, the Monash National Employment Cluster Framework, and Plan Melbourne.

The project also aspires to the global concept of '20-minute neighbourhoods', an urban planning approach where people can achieve their daily living needs within a 20-minute non-motorised trip from their homes. In Melbourne, only 5.5% of the population are considered to currently reside in a 20-minute neighbourhood¹. Monash City Council's commitment to planning 20-minute neighbourhoods, particularly in an area that currently accommodates high volumes of vehicle traffic, is a great step forward and we support these actions.

We have focussed our feedback across Principles 2 (Movement and Connectivity), 3 (Landscape Character and Public Realm) and 5 (Sustainable and Resilient Communities), and their implications for increasing active transport uptake and meeting community needs.

Overall, the vision for active transport, as outlined in the Draft UDF, is logical and will lay the groundwork for a safe, shared space where people of all experiences can walk, ride, scoot and skate.

The development of ‘active transport spines’ (page 12) that are separated from the high-speed, high-volume traffic on these roads offers an opportunity for residents to travel safely using active transport modes. These spines, integrated with the existing service lanes, may provide critical active transport links to national employment clusters, such as Monash University Clayton Campus and Monash Medical Centre, as well as Chadstone Shopping Centre.

The majority of on-road bike facilities proposed are a combination of shared lane arrows (‘sharrows’) and painted line markings (pages 32–63). Previous studies, albeit in overseas settings, have suggested that these facility types are generally considered less favorable by riders compared to other forms of bike infrastructure². However, if combined with lower road service speeds (<50km/h) and reduced vehicle parking, which are known to be effective at reducing bike-vehicle collisions³, these facilities may offer riders an increased sense of safety when using the road to travel with a bike. Once installed, it will be important to perform intensive monitoring and evaluation on these facilities to assess bike uptake and draw conclusions on their level of service. Consulting local bike riders will also be beneficial.

The Draft UDF also emphasises the role of tree canopies in enhancing the ‘liveability’ of the project area. Indeed, this is being prioritised in many other local and state planning strategies, such as the Fishermans Bend Integrated Transport Plan⁴ and Darebin City Council’s Urban Forest Strategy⁵. Urban greenery is intricately linked to positive physical and mental health⁶, and previous studies suggest that ‘greening’ our urban environment can encourage people to opt for active modes of travel^{7,8}.

Overall, Bicycle Network supports City of Monash’s vision for the Dandenong Road and Springvale Road Boulevards and have only minor recommendations regarding active transport components of the project (in addition to comments raised above). Firstly, the Council should ensure that the Draft UDF, and the key principles and strategies thereof, aligns with the Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-2028. Further into the project, it will also be increasingly important to conduct thorough consultation with existing businesses, residents, local community groups and active travel advocacy groups on the proposed active travel infrastructure.

We look forward to working with the City of Monash further on this exciting project.

References

- 1 Thornton, L. E. *et al.* Operationalising the 20-minute neighbourhood. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* **19**, 15, doi:10.1186/s12966-021-01243-3 (2022).
- 2 National Academies of Sciences Engineering and Medicine. *Bicyclist Facility Preferences and Effects on Increasing Bicycle Trips*. (The National Academies Press, 2020).
- 3 Mulvaney, C. A. *et al.* Cycling infrastructure for reducing cycling injuries in cyclists. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, doi:10.1002/14651858.CD010415.pub2 (2015).
- 4 Transport for Victoria. Fishermans Bend Integrated Transport Plan. (Victorian Government, Melbourne, Australia, 2017).
- 5 Darebin City Council. *Urban Forest Strategy*, <<https://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/-/media/Council/Files/About-Council/Councillors-and-meetings/Governance-and-transparency/Council-policies-and-strategies/UrbanForestStrategyDecember20132028pdf.ashx>> (2020).
- 6 Tzoulas, K. *et al.* Promoting ecosystem and human health in urban areas using Green Infrastructure: A literature review. *Landscape and Urban Planning* **81**, 167-178, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2007.02.001> (2007).
- 7 Nawrath, M., Kowarik, I. & Fischer, L. K. The influence of green streets on cycling behavior in European cities. *Landscape and Urban Planning* **190**, 103598, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2019.103598> (2019).
- 8 Yang, Y., Lu, Y., Yang, L., Gou, Z. & Zhang, X. Urban greenery, active school transport, and body weight among Hong Kong children. *Travel Behaviour and Society* **20**, 104-113, doi:10.1016/j.tbs.2020.03.001 (2020).