



16 February 2018

Mr Luke Sherwell
Active Transport Officer, City of Greater Geelong
PO Box 104, Geelong, VIC 3220
Via email to: contactus@geelongcity.vic.gov.au and lsherwell@geelongcity.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Sherwell,

Submission re. Building Better Bike Connections

Geelong Sustainability welcomes the opportunity to submit a written response to the City of Greater Geelong's public consultation on Building Better Bike Connections. We congratulate the City on gaining \$4.7 million in funding from the TAC's Safer Pedestrian and Cyclist Fund for these cycling infrastructure projects.

About GS and our supporters

Geelong Sustainability is an incorporated not-for-profit community group focusing on sustainability-related matters in the wider Geelong area. Our mission is *to inform, inspire and connect communities to create a sustainable future and to protect our natural environment*. In 2014 we adopted the One Planet Living Principles as a guiding framework for our work. Of the 10 principles, the Sustainable Transport principle is most relevant to this matter as it aims to encourage walking, cycling and low carbon transport.

Geelong Sustainability has over 150 financial members composed of individuals, families and local businesses. Plus we have several thousand followers on social media and over 1800 email subscribers. One post on our main Facebook page regarding this project has reached over 1800 people alone. Our members and supporters cover the age spectrum and reside across the breadth of Geelong and beyond. While some are commuter cyclists, many more cycle less frequently than they would like to because they do not feel safe sharing the road space with cars. The City's own research confirms this situation with only 2% of the 40,000 commuter trips to Central Geelong being made by bike.

Improved cycling infrastructure is an important issue for our group. In recent years, we have written to Geelong Council and Lisa Neville MP regarding cycling safety concerns and to show our support for the Principal Bike Network. Cycling and active transport are regular topics at our Green Drinks events. We have also encouraged people to cycle to homes on Sustainable House Day and other events. We are keen to see more people cycling more often where they can do so safely. We know it will boost their mental and physical health, reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and contribute to the liveability of our city. It is vital that city planners put people first in urban design so that we can create more liveable cities, more resilient neighbourhoods, more connected communities and citizens who are healthier and happier.

Clever & creative vision

As a Partner in the Our Future Vision process, Geelong Sustainability is cognisant of the community's desire for a fast, reliable and connected transport network as part of the 30-year vision for a clever and creative city. These infrastructure projects, especially the Southern Link will be a major enabling boost towards the goal of 50% of journeys to work being made by public transport, walking or cycling. As Geelong becomes more and more a university town, it is vital that Deakin students have travel options to assist them to transit between the Waterfront and Waurin Ponds campuses.

Some our members envisage the ideal solution for High Street in Belmont would be to remove all cars and trucks entirely between Roslyn Road and Regent Street. They would like to see this block become a green, people-focused mall with access only for buses, pedestrians and cyclists.

Ten reasons why the Geelong city-region should love cyclists

1. Cycling helps improve air quality – it is low cost and virtually emission free.
2. Cycling helps reduce congestion – bikes take much less space than cars.
3. Cycling eases the burden on health services - cycling improves our health.

4. Cycling boosts the economy – for every \$1 invested in cycling, the return is 5-10 fold.
5. Cycling boosts everyone's quality of life – cycling and walking impact well-being.
6. Cycling helps combat climate change – a truly sustainable transport solution.
7. Cycling improves road safety – cars are more likely to kill on impact than bicycles.
8. Cycling improves mental health.
9. Cycling helps lower the cost of car insurance – most cyclists are also insured car owners with low usage, therefore subsidising others.
10. Cycling helps reduce the tax burden for road maintenance – pay vehicle registration but place lower burden on road infrastructure.

Making cycling safe, stress-free & convenient

With many journeys in Geelong within easy reach of work, school, shopping and leisure destinations, we need more people to leave their cars at home and choose their bicycle. However, with very few exceptions, the road network in Geelong is extremely poorly designed for bike riding and therefore, people fear for their safety. They see the risk of accidents as a reason not to ride - opening car doors, hazardous roundabouts and left turn arrangements pose too great a risk. Women in particular do not feel safe on shared roads, and for good reason and so fear for their children riding to school.

Protected bike lanes are essential and will offer a safer, lower-stress, better-connected network that separates pedestrians, bicycles and motor vehicles, reducing the need for cyclists to mix with other road users and reducing the risk of serious injury and death for cyclists.

As Barton Van Laar from *Bike Safe* says about the relationship between a safe bike infrastructure and the popularity of cycling: "Build it and they will come!"

We have no civil engineering expertise and so will not comment on the technical plans. We are however a little concerned that some cycling groups have suggested using Francis Street rather than High Street. It's vital that the City does not repeat the mistakes of Swanston Street. The cycling route must be where the people want to be ie. close to shops – or they won't come!

Making cycling desirable

The Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28 vision is to increase the number, frequency and diversity of Victorians cycling for transport by investing in a safer, lower-stress, better-connected network, prioritising strategic cycling corridors, and by making cycling a more inclusive experience.

In Melbourne in 2008, bicycles made up 9% of all vehicle movements into the city in the morning peak period. By 2017 this figure had risen to 16%. Whereas, in Geelong the figure has stagnated at 2-3% and is decreasing.

We find the following excerpt from the strategy paper a compelling argument for improved cycling infrastructure: "About 60 percent of Victorians are curious about cycling and like to ride, but they don't cycle, or cycle less, because they want a safer, lower-stress, better-connected network and a more inclusive cycling culture. If we had such a network and culture, four in 10 Victorians say they would be encouraged to cycle, or cycle more often, to destinations close to where they live. They would be attracted by the comfort and safety of the cycling experience, the predictability of the journey time and the low cost. More people cycling will reduce congestion on public transport and take motor vehicles off the road. This will provide economic and environmental benefits for individuals and the community."

Economic benefits of cycling

- According to a Danish study, the cost-benefit analysis of a cycle journey of one kilometre in Copenhagen during rush hour, shows there is a total socio-economic benefit of \$0.34 cents AUD per kilometre (as compared to if the journey had not taken place) by comparison with a socio-economic loss of \$1.17 AUD per kilometre if the same kilometre is driven by car (as compared to if the journey had not taken place).
- According to a [UK Department of Transport study](#), 'Investing in Cycling and Walking – The Economic Case for Action', car journeys cost the economy six times more than bike rides, and this difference is increasing.

- Bike lanes are a cost-effective way, to improve public health. A study from Denmark shows that sick leave drops by one day per 1,200 kilometres travelled on the cycle track, and what is spent on improving conditions for commuter cyclists comes back to the municipality in saved sick-leave expenses and reduced CO2 emissions.

Environmental benefits of cycling

- Bike rides benefit the climate immensely. When you incorporate all factors in the calculations, a cyclist on average emits 21 grams CO2 per kilometer, whereas a person driving a car emits 271 grams of CO2 per kilometer, or around 13 times more.
- By choosing to cycle rather than drive a car, people in Copenhagen save the city 90,000 tons of CO2 emissions annually, which is 16% of the total emissions of 549,000 tons - a considerable reduction.

Health benefits of cycling

- A [Medibank study](#) found physical inactivity was found to cost Australia \$13.8 billion a year when the health impacts were last assessed in 2008.
- According to the OECD, an obese, or overweight person incurs 25% higher health expenditures than a person of normal weight in any given year. Health spending is increasing in Australia. In 2010, the average was \$ 5,500 AUD per person.

Business benefits of cycling

- A [Melbourne case study](#) has shown that half-a-dozen bikes occupying the same space as a parked car generated, on average, nearly four times as much retail spending.
- A [study of Lygon Street](#) in Carlton found that the average cyclist's retail spending was \$16.20/hour compared to a car driver's \$27.00/hr. However as six bicycles can park in the space required for one car, while one car space equates to \$27.00/hour retail spending, six bicycle spaces equate to \$97.20/hr.
- A [New York City study](#) found that after protected bike lanes were added, injuries fell by 20% and retail sales increased by 49%.

Local business concerns

While a number of business owners in High Street, Belmont are protesting against the Southern Link Cycling Route proposal, petition organiser and business owner Vince Albanese stated on *The Sustainable Hour* radio program: "95 per cent are not 'anti bike lanes'. We're not. We welcome bike lanes. But what we don't welcome is to lose all the parking instead. (...) I think greening the street will look beautiful. I'm actually in favour of it." [Source: The Sustainable Hour, 94.7 The Pulse, 7 February 2018, [Podcast and text](#)]

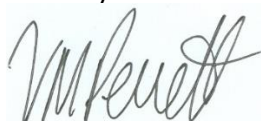
It is possible the High Street protesters are less opposed to the project but rather frustrated by the (lack of) communication in the planning process. Given the construction delays during the green spine works in Malop Street, their fears about business disruption and timeline blow-outs are understandable.

Attitudes to cyclists

In many countries, cyclists are [much maligned by drivers](#) who have never paused to reflect upon the possible benefits of having fewer cars on the road. Once implemented the Southern and Western Links may result in an attitudinal shift and a re-think about how we travel, the desirable mix of transport infrastructure and how we build people-centred public spaces. If that happens, perhaps even the more ardent car lover may be prepared to do short trips on their bike.

In conclusion, we strongly support the rationale and objectives of the proposed cycling connections, which will result in safer riding, quicker journeys, less congestion, cleaner air and more connected communities.

Sincerely



Vicki Perrett, President

On behalf of the committee, members and supporters of Geelong Sustainability

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