

Cycling for the Environment, for Health, for Pleasure

Proposed Mike Turtur Bikeway improvement

Submission of the Bicycle Institute of South Australia

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the proposal to widen and resurface the Mike Turtur Bikeway (MTB) between King William and Musgrave Street. The Bicycle Institute of South Australia (BISA) represents the interests of people who cycle to work, school and shops, hence we are very interested in the MTB as a key piece of infrastructure.

Over its history, the MTB has probably been the most appreciated cyclist route in the metropolitan area, apart from the River Torrens Linear Path. However, it was created in an earlier era and the condition of the surface has deteriorated significantly in recent years. We congratulate DPTI and Unley Council on taking the initiative of upgrading this valuable route. Good quality infrastructure separated from vehicular traffic is vital to stimulate and support cycling for transport. On behalf of everyday riders, we would like to convey our strong support for the project, including the path widening to 4m. Adelaide's cycle network requires upgrades to improve connectivity and safety. BISA has highlighted the necessity of this project over recent years, based on feedback from riders who were very concerned with the width and surface, and are pleased to see progress.

BISA has recently met with residents to discuss the project and listen to concerns. BISA recognises the need to maximise greening and ensure the path manages conflict points. Importantly, these issues need to be managed whilst ensuring the path width supports high cycle and pedestrian volumes. It is our belief that both are manageable, with an accepted level of loss of some trees and vegetation.

With this in mind we have identified a number of areas for improvement, for both cyclist and pedestrian safety and utility. We have arranged our feedback from the King William Road end to the Musgrave Avenue end in the following pages, for reasons that should become clear. Please keep in mind that at times our comments are constrained by our understanding of the intent. There may therefore be misunderstandings that are easily rectified with additional information.

We have a great deal of experience with cyclist infrastructure and are aware that the devil can be in the detail. So we would welcome an invitation to discuss these comments further and contribute to any design changes. Please feel free to contact Fay on 0409 284 165 or fay.patterson@bisa.asn.au or Katie on 0416 294 134 or katie.gilfillan@bisa.asn.au.

Once again, congratulations on the initiative. We hope that you will take our ideas on board and look forward to experiencing the result.

Yours sincerely,



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Chairperson, Bicycle Institute of SA

General comments

The MTB travels in a generally north-east to east-north-east and south-west to west-south-west alignment through Unley. For clarity, we will use the terms “Citywards”, “Glenelgwards”, “tramwards” (being towards the tram line, i.e. north-west) and “fencewards” (away from the tramline, i.e. south-east) to refer to directions. Hence “fencewards” does not necessarily refer to the presence of an actual fence.

We understand that the fencewards edge of the MTB will be maintained at about the same distance from the fence line as the existing path, with widening generally tramwards.

Lighting

The light pole symbol is shown in the legend as existing, with replacement of luminaires with new LED versions to provide enhanced illumination. We support a higher level of lighting for the MTB. Cyclists suffer more than car drivers from inadequately lit routes as we do not have high intensity, high spread lights in-built and powered by our vehicles. Cyclists have been great beneficiaries of the lower level of energy use associated with LED technology, however the intensity of highly powered bicycle lights can be dazzling to other MTB users. Lighting of the MTB should help alleviate this by reducing contrast.

Given the relatively low (i.e. pedestrian-appropriate) height of the existing lights and potential obstruction by canopy cover, we will be interested in whether the new lighting can achieve an even level of illumination. If not, we believe that in some places, relatively inexpensive solar lights might be able to supplement the installed lighting. We note that a light exists at the intersection of the Trevelyan Street path with the MTB but is not shown on the plans. This could also be replaced with LED light, subject to the impact on neighbouring properties, or perhaps a lower light attached to the pole.

Greenery

The MTB in many ways presents an exemplar to later Greenway concepts of walking/cycling infrastructure that also delivers amenity. For this project, we see the highly valued green ambience as a subject of sensitivity, as backlash on a subject such as vegetation removal can translate to broader opposition to future bicycle infrastructure, regardless of its merits. Having experienced something of the sort with the Frome Bikeway, we would not wish this on you.

We are therefore pleased that design work has enabled only 4 rather than an original 11 significant and regulated trees to now be planned for removal. In regard to these, we have been advised that you plan to use a permeable asphalt surface around the trees, on the arborist’s advice. We would like to query whether permeable asphalt will require greater excavation than other options? From our experience on other projects, the priority in these “structural root zones” (the root area close to the tree which keeps it up) is that any surface should require as little excavation as possible, as damage to roots in this area can leave the tree unstable. Concrete could limit tree root intrusion issues for the path plus require less excavation (e.g. 100mm concrete with 75mm base) compared to a permeable asphalt. Continuing the (impermeable) bitumen is also an option with a thin base around the trees. If the permeable asphalt is possible with a thinner base it would be a great solution. We would assume that excavation will occur where possible by hand in the structural route zone, rather than by machine, with raised roots integrated into the base. Thank you again for your efforts to retain these trees.

For the broader project, we are pleased that the green ambience will be reinstated, with new, more and appropriate plantings in place of those trees and shrubs that will have to be removed. Shade in summer will be all the more appreciated given the replacement of brick pavers with bitumen (which we think is wise given the root problems that make pavers so hazardous.) In some places, vines could perhaps be

grown on the tramway fence to maximize greenery where space is limited. Indeed, grape vines on the old fence could even be relocated, given the project is being undertaken in winter/spring. We note that Adelaide City Council has had success in reducing weed infiltration and crumbling at the edges of bitumen paths by finishing with a thin edging strip.

While we appreciate that significant greening cannot be undertaken in the tram corridor itself, there are a number of low-maintenance drought-resistant groundcovers that could be planted close to the fence and allowed (with Adelaide Metro sufferance) to spread into the corridor. The presence of weeds within the tram corridor attests to this, but curated plantings should be more successful and attractive. It would be accepted that the edges of these might be crushed or damaged by Adelaide Metro activities within the corridor, but would regrow from the original planting. This would produce a greater effect of greening and a potential 'value add' for the project in extending the landscaping and its benefits as a food source, habitat, and in reducing urban heat in summer.

Trevelyan Street path connection

This is an important connection to the MTB, providing cyclist access directly east through Unley via Young Street and connecting to the Adelaide Park Lands trail network via Miller Street, Roberts Street and a refuge in Greenhill Road. It also provides access to a tramway crossing and hence east/west connectivity for local residents. The path appears to be constructed on a power line easement.

Currently, the intersection of the path with the MTB is poor due to the awkward angle of intersection, masonry walls and lack of clearance to the MTB creating significant sight distance issues. This is, essentially, a blind corner. While the MTB has previously been widened in this area, the central line marking was not adjusted at the time. This, plus vegetation overhanging the cyclone-wire fence, has encouraged cyclists heading Glenelgwards to continue to track close to the Trevelyan Street path and is a safety problem begging for resolution.

Sheet 3 of the plans gives the impression that the valuable Trevelyan Street path is to be closed. We believe this to be an oversight. If it is otherwise, we strenuously object to the closure and would further protest that such a significant change has not been properly communicated as part of the consultation.

As it is, the proposal in this area is slightly mystifying. The alignment as shown veers tramwards of the existing alignment. This would improve the sight distance to the Trevelyan Street path but, given no acknowledgement or treatment of this path, the only outcome of moving the alignment seems to be the removal of several well-established trees (not shown on your plans). We would suggest that this could be avoided. We believe that the existing MTB alignment could be curved tramwards somewhat more steeply in this area to avoid the local trees, and still be well within comfort levels for cyclists. This would still retain some increase in the size of the planting area fencewards of the MTB as shown in the plans – but hosting low shrubs and groundcovers rather than thick tree plantings over the Trevelyan Street path. The Trevelyan Street path could thus be brought out at a suitable alignment and with adequate sight distance and less impact on vegetation.

We would also suggest that a short section of block pavers be used here to highlight the junction to path users, as is used at other conflict locations on the MTB. We note that an electrical box in this location contributes to the sight distance problem. This is essentially cantilevered out from its supports. If still warranted under the new alignment, we suggest that it might be simple/inexpensive to essentially turn the box on its supports to reduce its impact.

Pedestrian crossing to Le Hunte Street

The tramway crossing to Le Hunte Street has a huge strategic value that we would like to explain, as there is no treatment of the related pedestrian crossing in your plans.

From the perspective of the MTB, recent changes to King William Street to accommodate new tram stops south of Victoria Square have consigned the creation of a safe north-south route into the CBD on this street to the distant future. Nor can the Citywards end of the MTB easily be widened or improved past the Greenhill Road tram stop. However, the opportunity exists to connect the MTB to the Central Market via Le Hunte Street and Clarke Street in Wayville, a refuge in Greenhill Road, and Owen/Russell/Compton Streets in the City – both creating a direct route to a highly popular destination and its precinct, and encouraging some cyclists away from the narrowest part of the MTB. The Owen/Russell/Compton bicycle route has already been developed by Adelaide City Council, which has also installed bike parking at Compton Street/Gouger Street for Central Market visitors. Only a new path through the Park Lands is needed to connect the Unley and City ends of the route – and would be relatively straightforward as it would not need to pass through or close to sports grounds or the such.

The MTB upgrade provides an excellent opportunity to improve the connection of this route with the MTB and signal Adelaide City Council regarding the Park Lands path. We also suggest that a short section of block pavers be used to highlight the junction to path users, as is used at other conflict locations on the MTB. (To complete the route, the Le Hunte end of the pedestrian crossing would also need a small amount of attention.)

Bendall Avenue

We welcome the improved access to Bendall Avenue. We suggest that the inner corners of the new path be radiused, to assist people wheeling a bicycle (or other wheeled device) turn the corners.

Wayville Tram Stop to Almond Street

The junction with Almond Street and the MTB raises similar blind corner issues as for the path at Trevelyan Street. In this case, we note that the Wayville Tram Stop is located some 80-85m Citywards of Almond Street, with a tram crossing located roughly midway between the two. It seems to us that instead of widening the MTB over this length as planned, it might be more desirable to develop a pedestrian-only path tramwards of what is currently cyclone-net fencing and vegetation, with a landscape strip provided between the MTB and pedestrian path. This would create a bypass for pedestrian commuters using the tram stop for this section of path. The advantages of this proposal are:

- Reducing potential pedestrian conflicts at the Wayville tram stop, especially noting that tram and cycle commuter numbers peak at the same time; and providing better delineation between the tram stop and path to Bendall Avenue, by reducing the extent of block pavers.
- Eliminating pedestrian conflicts related to the existing pedestrian crossing, as pedestrians would no longer enter the MTB here. (Grade issues related to matching the tramway crossing and the MTB would therefore no longer apply.)
- Complete separation of pedestrians and cyclists for a section of the MTB.
- Greater flexibility in managing pedestrian access to Almond Street and hence the blind corner – noting that the Almond Street footpath is very narrow and unlikely to be walked upon, with most access to the MTB coming from the trafficable surface.

- Tram maintenance vehicles would be able to use the new pedestrian path, using a fence access point and given an adequate shoulder, rather than their access being in addition to the MTB corridor. Insofar as this formalises their access and provides a more efficient use of space, this might enable some additional space to be allocated to (probably low) landscaping.

Rogers Street

We note that a raised concrete slab and pedestrian kerb ramp near the tramway crossing that create something of a hazard for cyclists. The kerb ramp appears to be removed as part of the MTB widening. While we welcome this, we query whether this won't disadvantage certain pedestrians. We wonder whether a small kerb extension could instead be used to accommodate a new kerb ramp – albeit that none of the footpaths in Rogers or Almond Streets is particularly wheelchair or pram friendly.

Tall, vertical elements present a degree of hazard to cyclists and in this section, existing pedestrian crossing signs present this type of hazard. It is not clear if these are to be retained or removed. We request that these signs and their poles be removed with the pedestrian crossing warning marked on the ground, as has occurred on the Frome Bikeway.

Would we be correct in interpreting the plans as showing the MTB being relocated 0.5m off the face of kerb, presumably to provide clearance to the kerb as a drop off hazard? If so, we would suggest that given the 3.6m squeeze point slightly Citywards the pedestrian crossing, it is arguably desirable for this width to extend to a similar point slightly Glenelgwards of the pedestrian crossing (i.e. a total of some 12m), to discourage cyclist overtaking in this area and to maximise clearance and visibility between path and crossing users.

We hope that the shared use path and the section of street between Almond Street and Rogers Street will one day be one large, landscaped area that caters for children, movement by pedestrians and cyclists, as well as access by vehicles. We suggest that as much as possible, planning for this area be considered holistically to not prevent such a future vision.

Rogers Street junction

Again, this currently presents a blind corner situation. We support the splitting of the path for reasons of retaining an established tree but also suggest some delineation of access to the MTB at this point to manage sight distance at this junction.

Alternative routes

We do not support the redirection of commuter cyclists from the MTB per se. The MTB is one of very few utility routes for cyclists separated from traffic and should not be converted into a recreation-only path in the absence of a MTB-equivalent alternative. Having said that, while the type of cyclists who use the MTB should feel comfortable doing so – and we believe the proposed widening will reduce conflicts related to concurrent use by cyclists and pedestrians – it is also true that some people are directed onto the MTB from the Marino Rocks Greenway, at Victoria Street/ Devon Street. The Marino Rocks Greenway is substantially on-road and more likely to host people comfortable with using (quiet) on-road environments. We note that sharrows have been provided on Albert Street indicating its suitability for such cyclists, but suggest that additional route signage might be of use in identifying Albert Street/John Street/Trevelyan Street as an alternative for the type of cyclists who would wish to maintain relatively high travel speeds and avoid mixing with pedestrians.