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Ref: DOC/11/313704
File: FOL/11/31727

Elissa McElroy
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Dear Elissa,

PRINCIPAL BICYCLE NETWORK AND RAIL CORRIDORS REPORT AND NORTH SOUTH CYCLING ROUTES IN THE SOUTH EAST REGION

In 2010 the possibility of including rail corridors as part of the Principal Bicycle Network (PBN) was identified by VicRoads. Subsequently, VicRoads and the Department of Transport (DOT) decided to undertake a study of five rail corridors to explore and test this idea recognising that there could be significant challenges and opportunities associated with using rail corridors for shared paths.

DOT engaged Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB) to examine five corridors as case studies:

1. Northbank corridor (between Flinders Street and Docklands)
2. Craigieburn corridor (between Pascoe Vale and Glenroy)
3. Dandenong corridor (between Caulfield and Dandenong)
4. Werribee corridor (between Laverton and Werribee)
5. Ringwood corridor (between Box Hill and Ringwood)

The PB report found that typical challenges for shared paths in rail corridors included embankments and grade changes, rail infrastructure, buildings within the rail corridor, bridges and underpasses, drainage channels, road intersections and crossings.

For each of the corridors, a baseline review using GIS was undertaken comprising a desktop baseline study using spatial data from a range of sources including VicMap. This high level spatial analysis was undertaken for each case study corridor to identify potential sections of adequate clearance and sections with insufficient clearance from tracks.

In summary, the report found that the development and implementation of shared bike paths in rail corridors was a complex process which should not be undertaken if viable alternatives were possible. It found that shared paths in rail corridors could be very costly due to high design standards, rail operations and safety requirements. In addition, costs could escalate even further as a result of the numerous stakeholder consultations that needed to take place. Therefore, other options could provide a more cost effective alternative to shared paths in rail corridors.

However, the PB report also found that in some instances there was a strong case for developing shared paths. This may include providing a shared path on a temporary basis if changes to rail operation or requirements for rail reserve were unlikely to occur in the next 10-15 years. Based on medium growth levels in cycling over a ten year evaluation period, preliminary cost benefit analysis indicated that the development of some shared paths would have a BCR greater than one.

The report recommended that if a shared path in a rail corridor was to be developed, then community expectations and future provision for the cycling demand created by the shared path should be carefully managed for when the corridor is restored to its original purpose.

The scope of the PB report did not include a comprehensive comparison between the use of the rail corridor and other options, such as the on road option. A comprehensive and robust analysis of the options both within rail corridors and other alternatives should be undertaken to determine if the development of a shared path in a rail corridor is viable, in the short and longer term.

In parallel to the development of this report, VicRoads undertook consultation on the development of its SmartRoads network with all the Melbourne municipal councils. This consultation identified Bicycle Priority Routes (BPR) for each municipality and these are being considered as part of the soon to be released update to the Principal Bicycle Network.

In addition, VicRoads investigated the possibility of providing a bicycle path along the rail corridor south from the Yarra River, over Toorak Road and down to Dandenong Road. The entire corridor is either narrow local streets with on-street parking or a railway reserve in a deep cutting. Due to the complexity of utilising this rail corridor and the significantly high cost of delivering bicycle infrastructure within the corridor, no economically viable proposal within the rail corridor was identified.

One of the Government's election commitments was to allocate \$270,000 for bike lanes on Williams Road and Chapel Street from Dandenong Road to the Yarra River providing a north-south link through this area. VicRoads is undertaking a study between Alma Road and the Yarra River to identify feasible options on Williams Road, Chapel Street or Orrong Road.

The study is being undertaken in consultation with the Stonnington City Council and Bicycle Network Victoria. Subject to stakeholders agreement to an option, it is anticipated that the delivery of this project could commence this financial year.

Yours sincerely



Adele McCarthy

Director

Central City Transport

Department of Transport

18 / 10 / 2011