

## IMAP Implementation Committee

### Briefing Paper

#### Action 10.1 Regional Open Space and Trail Network

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##### Purpose

1. To update the IMAP implementation Committee on the progress of Action 10.1

##### Background

2. The open space framework for the Inner Melbourne Region identified potential opportunities for improved linkages between existing open space, identified gaps in the existing open space network and barriers to future expansion of the network.
3. Each Council has developed or is in the process of developing an open space or public realm strategy that details the attributes and current uses of existing open space and the network of streets and trails that connect them. These documents also identify potential sources of additional open space which may be freehold land or land managed on behalf of the Crown by other agencies.
4. Improvements to the open space network are not limited to parks, but will include pedestrian and cycle links along road reserves and better use of linear trails along railway reserves, waterways and Port Phillip Bay.

##### Key Issues

5. Improvements to the regional open space network will require collaboration between the IMAP Councils, the Department of Transport (DoT) and Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) at a State Government level and statutory bodies such as Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and VicTrack.
6. Since the last report to the Committee, all Councils have engaged with Parks Victoria as part of its review of the Linking People and Spaces strategy. First prepared in 2002, this document identified gaps in Melbourne's open space network and is to be updated and presented to the Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, Gavin Jennings MLC, in late 2010. A draft document is expected for release and comment in July 2010.
7. The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) is currently undertaking an investigation in metropolitan Melbourne to identify and assess the uses, resources and conditions, values and management of Crown land and public authority land. The investigation will also report on the contribution of both Crown land and public authority land to Melbourne's liveability. Councils have been asked to contribute to the investigation before VEAC releases a discussion paper for public comment in 2010. A final report is due in May 2011.
8. Future use of land managed by VicTrack has been identified as a significant opportunity to improve the movement of pedestrians and cyclists between existing open spaces in addition to improving underutilised railway land for use as open space. The VicTrack IMAP Rail Corridor Strategic Plan states that it is desirable for surplus land be "used to deliver relevant and realistic local, state and federal planning and community initiatives" - including open space linkages and parklands. Investigation into the use of railway reserves as linear corridors for open space and new trails should continue with the involvement of VicTrack.
9. Previous experience by IMAP Councils with officers at VicTrack has not resulted in any strategic partnerships and progress on this level has been limited to those initiatives that have had Ministerial involvement or leadership by senior bureaucrats from within the Department of

Transport. This is in direct contrast to the experiences with Melbourne Water, DSE and Parks Victoria, where these organisations actively offer leadership, engagement and participation in open space planning and strategic initiatives.

10. Purchase of land affected by a Public Acquisition Overlay by the Crown remains limited to purchase via negotiation with the vendor if and when a parcel of land is put up for sale. As such, acquisition of land for benefit of public open space, linear trail networks or environmental purposes remains a rarity.
11. Where the development of new, smaller public open spaces have been identified, the competition between parks and car parking spaces has been identified as one of the key challenges in an inner urban environment.
12. Water Sensitive Urban Design and Stormwater Harvesting opportunities enable the “greening” of urban spaces without consuming large footprints. With financial support available from Melbourne Water, such projects offer an additional funding source linked to the improvement of public open spaces.

### **Discussion**

13. The review of the Linking People and Spaces strategy by Parks Victoria offers a significant opportunity to provide a single, coherent document to the Minister that accurately reflects the recommendations of each Council’s Open Space/Public Realm Strategies. While still in development, the document will consider alternative land acquisition processes – including compulsory acquisition – and funding opportunities.
14. Management of shared pathways remains a challenge and an opportunity. Capital improvements to the trail network has encouraged new users onto these trails but has brought on a potential conflict among users. The opportunity to distinguish between “greenways” for recreational cyclists and “speedways” for commuter cyclists needs to be considered further particularly along the Bay Trail and the Main Yarra Trail.
15. Earlier planning around pathways and the open space network has resulted in the establishment of a new pathway link across the Merri Creek through a partnership between the City of Yarra, Melbourne Water, the DoT and the City of Darebin.
16. The Draft City of Stonnington Public Realm Strategy has been displayed for public comment and will be put to Council for endorsement in 2010.
17. The State Government recently announced funding of \$2.5M to construct a new pathway crossing of the Yarra River in Abbotsford. Parks Victoria has indicated that it will manage and fund the project directly.
18. Parks Victoria has commenced detailed project planning for the proposed Darebin Creek Trail and will be establishing a project team in May/June 2010.

### **Recommendation**

19. That the IMAP Implementation Committee resolves to:
  - (a) note the development of the IMAP Action 10.1