



METRO EAST BICYCLE USER GROUP INC.

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Submission re draft budget 2020/21

This submission urges that Whitehorse Council:-

- **Approximately double** its funding allocation for cycling related capital in the 2020/21 budget by adopting some priority 1 projects from the list at the Appendix to this submission;
- Reassesses its prioritisation in future years, to **treble cycling investment**, over the current multi year average, recognising the importance of cycling in fulfilling various objectives in adopted Council strategies, as well as meeting community needs; and
- Take further steps to rectify habitual under resourcing of cycling by adopting a suitable resolution as suggested under item 4 below.

1. Covid-19 implications

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an immediate and dramatic impact on the community. There are concerns about health, safety and transport costs. It is likely that significant amount of this will carry over to the long term future even after society resumes activities curtailed in the immediate pandemic response.

It is widely reported and directly observed by our members, that shared trail usage has increased dramatically. The Koonung and Gardiners Creek Trails have experienced growth of 140% and 300% respectively¹. There are numerous press reports of greatly increased bicycle sales in Melbourne and Sydney. We have an anecdotal report from one local bike shop that their sales have doubled.

Melbourne City Council has recognised the importance of cycling with plans for 12 kms of pop up cycle lanes displacing car parks². similar initiatives are occurring in Europe and the UK

As the Covid-19 restrictions are gradually reduced, there is likely to be a fall in public transport patronage because of the difficulty of social distancing on public transport. Many people may switch commuting by bicycle where practicable. Car usage may also increase, but with good cycling paths, increase in car usage may be restrained as people look to avoid traffic congestion. Many people's income has been and will remain severely affected. They will be looking for ways to cut costs. Their transport and parking costs can be significantly cut if they can cycle to places of work, shopping or study.

The increased popularity of recreational cycling is also likely to be sustained as people discover the pleasures and maintain this activity into the future.

¹ Bicycle Network, as reported in The Age 8/5/2020

² The Age May 8, 2020

Two conclusions flow from the above:-

1. Council should increase investment in shared paths to meet growing demand; and
2. Cycle projects should be included in the mix of stimulus activities considered for the \$2.5M funding allocation announced in the budget³. A range of suitable projects is given in the Appendix to this submission.

2. Strategic approaches

There is considerable scope to attract people to cycling, recognising that more than half of all trips by car are less than 6 kms⁴.

Council needs to broaden its concepts of cycling projects beyond discrete projects that characterise current thinking. There is scope for substantial increase in cycle paths by leveraging existing infrastructure. Two broad approaches need to be pursued:

(a) Cut throughs to link service lanes on major roads. Roads such as Springvale, Road, Burwood Highway etc. have service roads that run for a few hundred metres and then channel traffic into main running lanes. The provision of two metre wide cut throughs to link these service lanes would provide a contiguous and safe route for cyclists. MeBUG will be developing a detailed proposal shortly.

Recommendation: Council should, in consultation with the state government, conduct a municipal wide survey of existing service lanes and in cooperation with the state government, develop a plan to construct these cut throughs within a five year period, starting now.

(b) Designate existing wide walkways as shared spaces to allow cycling. There are a number of wide footpaths and plaza areas that can be safely shared between cyclists and pedestrians in much the same manner as Southbank in the City of Melbourne. This would greatly facilitate cycling to major commercial and sporting destinations such as the Nunawading Megamile

Recommendation: Conduct a municipal-wide survey to identify these spaces and implement appropriate signage and bike hoops where required.

3. Skewed funding allocation

This current budget, like all budgets in recent years, discriminates against cyclists compared to other groups and cohorts in the community. Cycling is both a recreational pursuit and a transport option for the Whitehorse community.

The Victorian government Cycling Strategy states that 17.2% of the Melbourne population cycled in the week prior to the 2017 study⁵. From this, we can infer that around 10% of the population are regular cyclists. This is despite the impediments to cycling because of the paucity of safe interconnected separated paths, which the Whitehorse Cycling Strategy acknowledges is a deterrent to around 60% of the population.

If cycling is viewed as a recreational pursuit it is grossly underfunded compared to investment in organised sporting facilities. Studies indicate⁶ that participation in 12 major sports such as football, cricket, golf and suchlike is only 15% across all age groups. It is heavily skewed to children up to age 14. Among working age adults, participation is only around 6 to 8%.

³ Coronavirus Pandemic Update, Whitehorse Mayor 20 April 2020

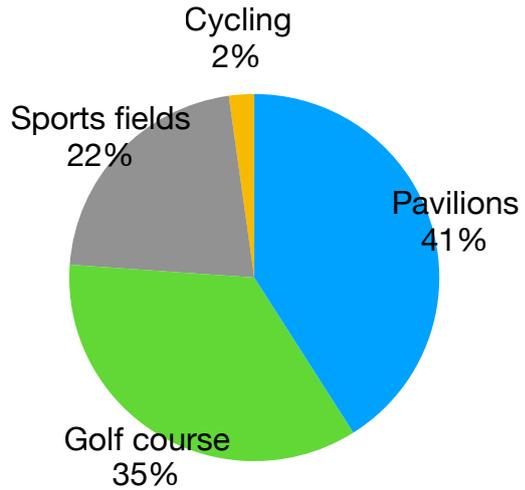
⁴ Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28 p 9

⁵ Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28, p 9

⁶ Sport Participation Rates-Aggregation of 12 Sports, Victoria 2017, Table 3

Recreation

	\$ x 1000
Pavilions	6075
Golf course	5201
Sports fields	3211
Cycling	327

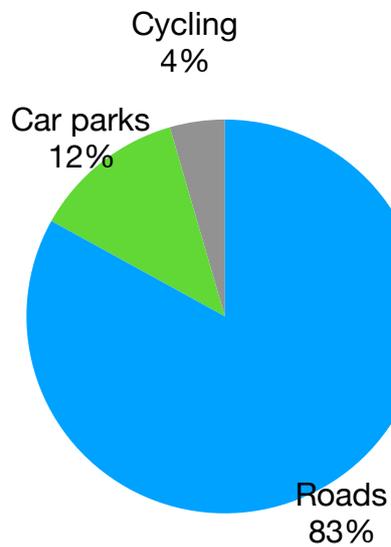


We see above that the 10% of the population that cycles receive 2% of capital funding, while the 15% in organised sport receive 98% of the funding.

A similar picture applies in regard to transport, where 96% of funding goes to roads and carparks and a mere 4% to cycling.

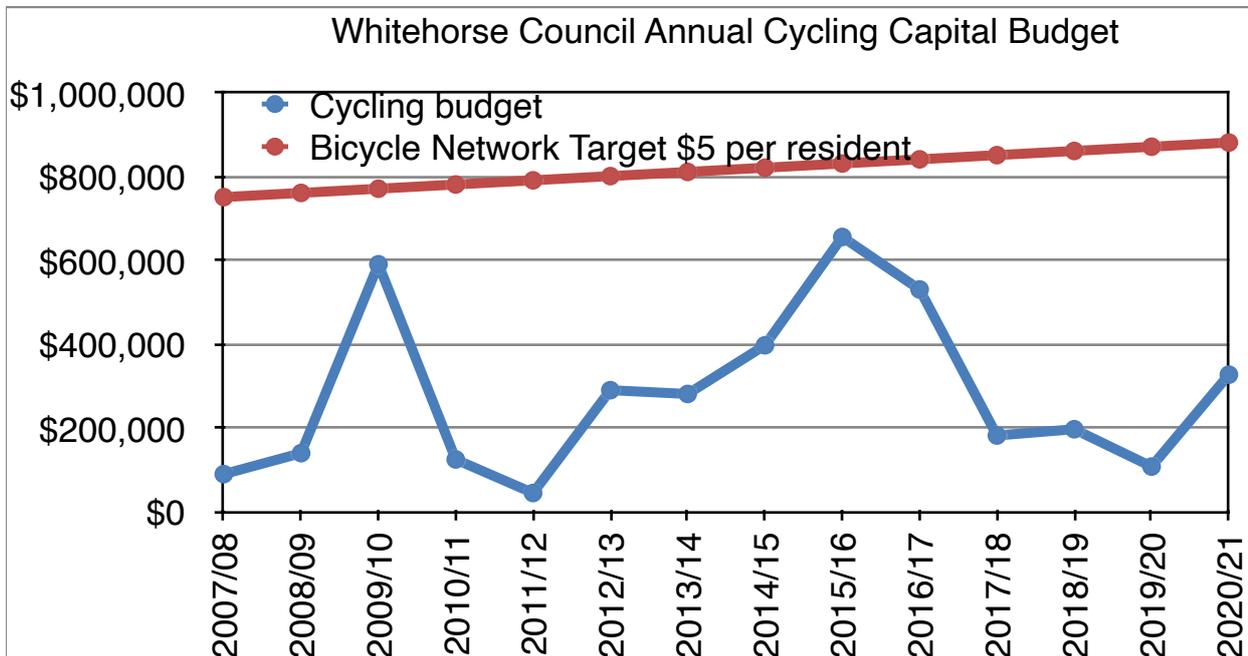
Transport

	\$ x 1000
Roads	6061
Car parks	910
Cycling	327



4. Need for policy rethink by Council

Cycling investment by Council has for many years been inadequate, falling far short of the expectations of the cycling community and the Bicycle Network recommended figure of \$5 per resident per year as illustrated below.



The changes needed will not in our view, come about unless there is **'top down' leadership from the elected council**, who are the community's representatives and voice to Council. We urge Councillors to frame and pass a resolution that directs council officers to:

1. Frame future budgets that elevate cycling planning and resourcing substantially above what has historically been the case. Capital funding should align with the Bicycle Network \$5 per resident target.
2. Appoint a staff member whose primary responsibility is to plan and promote cycling planning and funding within Council and to liaise with the cycling community. It appears that currently, no person has such a role and that cycling seems to be a 'bit part' of various officers' remit, but the particular interest of nobody.

5. Summary

We have outlined the need for a major increase of cycling investment. A list of specific projects is provided in the Appendix to this submission.

MeBUG Inc
18 May 2020

MeBUG Cycling project proposals for Whitehorse Council - Revised May 2020

Ref #	MeBUG Priority	Item	Justification	Council response 4/4/2019 (paraphrased)	Comment
3	1	<p>Remove access impediments to Box Hill to Ringwood Shared path at</p> <p>(a) Harvey Norman/Home Hardware</p> <p>(b) McGlone Street Mitcham</p> <p>(c) Richards St Mitcham</p> <p>(d) Install wayfinding signs along and in environs of the path</p> <p>(e) Provide kerb crossovers at</p> <p>i. Terra Cotta Drive, Nunawading</p> <p>ii. Tennyson Street, Mitcham</p>	<p>Improving safety for path users as well as efficient and direct access.</p>	<p>Administrative issues regarding responsibility. Safety concerns re Harvey Norman lane</p>	<p>Item (a) is now known to be in Council jurisdiction, contrary to earlier advice that this was not a Council road or lane. Safety should be assessed by comparing the safety of the present need for cyclists to ride on Springvale Rd and Maroondah Hwy. Safety concerns around Harvey Norman lane not justified see our survey dated 6/11/17, which showed an average of 1 vehicle every 2.20 minutes compared to thousands per hour on Whitehorse & Springvale Roads. Oliver Avenue now completed. The others about the main path and maintenance responsibility issues should not delay these improvements. Coordination should be straight forward in consultation with DoT (formerly VicRoads).</p>
6	1	<p>Shared Path on Melbourne Water Pipe Reserve.</p> <p>(a) Construct new section from Ballantyne Street to Mahoneys Rd roundabout.</p> <p>(b) Widen footpaths along Burwood Hwy to eliminate gaps in shared path</p>		<p>Lack of funding</p>	<p>Proposals discussed with Cr Bennett on site 26 Feb 2019. Eminently appropriate for immediate funding.</p>
15	1	<p>Woodhouse Grove & Mitta Av, Box Hill Nth. Construct short length of shared path to improve cycle linkage on Bushy Creek path.</p>	<p>Currently cyclists have awkward kerb crossings and have no option but to ride on the footpath.</p>	<p>"Needs further review"</p>	<p>Council's historical resistance to this simple improvement is perplexing. We understand it is funded in the 2019/20 budget but nothing started as of May 2020</p>

Appendix to MeBUG Budget submission 2020/21

Ref #	MeBUG Priority	Item	Justification	Council response 4/4/2019 (paraphrased)	Comment
24	1	Construct shared path along west side of Holland Avenue Burwood. Work with VicRoads to improve signal crossing to allow safe crossing by pedestrians and cyclists to McComas Grove leading to Gardinars Creek Trail and Lundgren Chain	Current crossing is dangerous due to short timing cycle and absence of pedestrian/cyclist provision	No plans	Dept of Transport (VicRoads) agree in principle (2/10/2018) Deakin University generally supportive (6/8/2019)
25	1	Separated path along Ely Road to connect Holland Gully path with gardiners Creek path via Boardman Close	Major east-West Route		largely EasyRides Route EW6
27	1	Bicycle parking/storage, eg 'Parkiteer' at Box Hill and Laburnum stations and increased capacity at Mitcham	Inadequate current provisions. Bikes chained to hand rails at Laburnum where there is absolutely no bike parking facilities of any sort.		Survey of parking usage sent to Council on 12 December 2019.
2	2	Construct 530 metres of new shared path on rail reserve North side from Oliver Avenue Bridge to Moncrief Road	Provide safe access to Nunawading commercial area from Box Hill to Ringwood shared path	No funding. requires VicTrack approval	Has Council pursued VicTrack licence?
4	2	Shared path along north side of Whitehorse Road from Middleborough Road to Bolton Street	Widen existing footpath to provide safe route to Bushy Creek path via local roads	Accepted as a long term project	Council accept in principle. Consider for coming budget round.

Appendix to MeBUG Budget submission 2020/21

Ref #	MeBUG Priority	Item	Justification	Council response 4/4/2019 (paraphrased)	Comment
19	2	Dorking Road/Whitehorse Road Intersection. (a) Provide cut through to link Dorking Road with Whitehorse Road service lane on North-East corner. (b) Improve traffic light configuration and/or phasing so Northbound cyclists can cross and proceed in one phase of lights.	For Eastbound riders leaving Dorking Rd. Avoid inconvenient and frustrating delay.	Low priority Easy Rides Route Could be done at Council expense	Council accept in principle. Consider for coming budget round.
20	2	Mont Albert Road/Elgar Road intersection. Additional Cycle/pedestrian crossing aligning with westbound lane of Mont Albert Road.	Would remove existing need for westbound cyclists to wait for two phases of lights.	Could be done at Council expense	
21	2	Springvale Road service lanes between Canterbury Road and Highbury Road. Provide cut-throughs and footpath widening (where no service lanes) to provide cycle routes both north and south bound.	General cycling safety. Will require joint action with VicRoads. MeBUG can furnish further details.	Long term action years 8-10 of strategy	Take up as part of a major strategic initiative in partnership with state Government. See body of budget submission.
23	2	Route markings Mullauna College to Mitcham station via Halliday Park, Fellowes and Edward Streets.		Not on easy rides route therefore a low priority	Council accept in principle. Consider for coming budget round.
26	2	Construct a shared path along the west side of Deep Creek Road Micham from Schwerkolt Cottage to Maroondah Hwy	Provides cycling access for school children attending Antonio park Primary School. Also a convenient interconnection between the Box Hill to Ringwood path and the Mullum Creek trail.		

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9	3	Delineate/mark wide sidewalk along Whitehorse Rd from Metropolitan Avenue to Springvale Road, as a shared path	Access to megamile and Nunawading community precinct	Reluctance to modify footpaths. To be considered as part of Cycling Strategy	
14	3	Kerb crossovers in Derby Street and Fuschia Street Blackburn to facilitate cycling along the gravel path to Blacks Walk.	Eliminate obstacles	Will consider realigning path to avoid obstacles	
17	3	Severn Street Box Hill. Signage e.g.sharrows defining East-West cycling route via pedestrian lights and Melrose Street.		Low priority Easy Rides route	
18	3	Nelson and Saxton roads Box Hill. Signage e.g.sharrows defining North South cycling route connecting to Box Hill gardens.		Low priority Easy Rides route	