

From: Rohan Leppert Rohan.Leppert@melbourne.vic.gov.au
Subject: City of Melbourne bike lanes
Date: 8 June 2022 at 3:08 am
To: mebug@mebug.org.au

RL

Dear Michael,

Thank you for sharing your written submission on the future of the City's bike lanes program with councillors.

Tonight's 4 ½ hour Council meeting was an extraordinary democratic exercise, and a big old political mess, but ultimately an important moment for the future of transport policy in Melbourne.

I've counted 1,028 submissions in favour of continuing the bike rollout, and just 10 against. There were two hours of incredibly powerful speeches from Melbourne's cycling community. Thank you for being part of this extraordinary moment.

The conclusion of the night was something of an anti-climax, which I will attempt to explain.

Council is on track to deliver more protected bike lanes in 2022-23 than in any year to date. We're on track to deliver more than 10km in the space of one year, including the completion of Arden St, Macaulay Rd, Grattan St and Royal Pde.

These projects are shovel ready, either approved by the Department of Transport or at the final stages of approval. Arden St and Macaulay Rd will start at the end of this month. It takes a long time (too long) to get detailed designs through the Department and approved.

The truth of the matter is that there are no new bike lane projects for Hoddle Grid streets close to Department of Transport sign-off, so for 22/23 we will build the projects that are ready to go, outside the Grid. I have fought hard for every cent in the bike lanes budget, and every cent is still there.

Everything fell apart last Thursday with the publication of [a Council meeting report](#) that included a recommendation for a 'deferral' of new bike lanes in the Hoddle Grid for a year. Perhaps this was an idea to sell the non-delivery of new bike lanes in the Hoddle Grid for one year as a positive, to placate some media commentators and business lobbyists; if so, it was too clever by half. The 'deferral' recommendation was completely unsupported by the actual data and analysis in the report.

The Age headline ("No more new bike lanes for CBD after council cops complaints") didn't help, and outrage followed – as well as a record number of written submissions.

The recommendation and media generated the perception that Council has a raft of Hoddle Grid projects ready to go and for political reasons Council should 'defer' them. That just isn't the case; our shovel-ready projects are currently outside the Grid.

I had two options: vote against the recommendation (which in my judgment would have been passed by a majority), or try to use the opportunity to rebuild a political consensus for how we will restart bike lanes in the Hoddle Grid. I chose the latter.

To that end, Councillors negotiated a new motion. I have included it at the end of this email, warts and all. The Hoddle Grid pause is for a year, but I've made it clear that this is 'only' to be one year, restarting July 2023, and we will use 2022-23 to complete design, consultation and attain approval for new separated bicycle lanes on Flinders Street.

As someone who has battled for new Hoddle Grid projects for my entire time on

Council (I first secured majority support for Exhibition St in 2018), I know that these moments are difficult. That 10 out of 11 Councillors have now expressed public support for Flinders St and committed funds to complete design is significant. I fought to include Flinders Street in the negotiated motion because I know it's a big ask, and because it should be built before Metro Tunnel works are concluded and Flinders Street is reopened to traffic in both directions.

We also need to work towards a cascading program of design, approval and delivery, so that we meet our 2030 bicycle network targets, including (especially!) in the Hoddle Grid. There is still Elizabeth, Spring, Bourke, Spencer and Franklin to come, but we will only get there if there is a confident majority support on Council. It's all achievable, but only if majority support holds.

So that's how Council ended up voting for a one year 'deferral' inside the Hoddle Grid that didn't really have the effect of deferring anything. The upshot is renewed political consensus, the mobilisation of cyclists who won't tolerate Council straying from its 2030 targets ever again, and a more realistic plan to build more bike lanes, including in the Hoddle Grid – starting with Flinders St.

I should add that the 'deferral' of new lanes in the Hoddle Grid in 2022-23 does not refer to the conversion of pop-up lanes to permanent lanes. These will continue! In 2022-23 we will build the >\$2m streetscape upgrade for the Theatres precinct on Exhibition Street, between Lt Bourke and Lonsdale, at long last.

Council also unanimously agreed to [my motion](#) to ask officers to bring forward recommendations for how and when Council should stage delivery of the Elizabeth Street Opportunities Plan, including its new physically separated bicycle lanes on Elizabeth Street. The motion will ensure the completion of a Future Streets Framework for the Hoddle Grid (a key element of our *Transport Strategy 2030*), to articulate a clear vision and transparent plan for all of our streets, and also seeks to properly review the Little Streets Transformations program rolled out during COVID, to make sure we've got our 20km/h Little Streets shared zones right.

All up, this has been an enormous night for Hoddle Grid policy work, and overall I think a positive one. The optics have been shocking, the messaging misleading, the politics a mess... but I hope this is progress.

That's a bit of how the sausage is made. Thank you for writing to councillors, and for pushing Council back towards a path of sensible, economy-boosting, life-saving transport policy.

Please continue to keep councillors accountable. There will be more wobbles. You can track progress by [signing up](#) to City of Melbourne meeting agendas, and [please keep providing feedback](#) on City of Melbourne protected bike lanes – this builds the evidence base for future projects.

With thanks,

Rohan

That the Future Melbourne Committee:

1. Notes the update on implementation of the City of Melbourne Transport Program to Aid City Recovery and Reactivation (refer Attachment 3 of the report from management)
2. Notes the findings of the Urbis study; Contribution of Different Modes of Transport to City Recovery (refer Attachment 4 of the report from management)
3. Notes the design improvements recently completed or upcoming in response to community feedback (refer Attachment 5 of the report from management)
4. Notes the further proposed changes to Exhibition Street to smooth traffic flow and provide

access to adjacent businesses and destinations (refer Attachment 6 of the report from management)

5. Notes the analysis of options to smooth traffic flow on Queens Bridge Street and management's intention to continue to investigate the option of a bus lane (refer Attachment 7 of the report from management)

6. Endorses the deferral of further installation of new protected bike lanes in the Hoddle Grid during financial year 2022/2023 only, following two years of accelerated delivery, and that during this time design work will continue, including detailed design for Flinders Street.

7. Endorses prioritised delivery of protected bike lanes outside the Hoddle Grid to high value routes including Arden Street, Macaulay Road and Royal Parade during financial year 2022/2023, noting that Arden Street and Macaulay Road as 2021/22 projects will commence as soon as practicable.

8. Notes that the two previous paragraphs will not result in any reduction in proposed budget for 2022/23, being \$4m on the Cycle Infrastructure program plus any funds carried forward from 2021/22.

9. Notes the above endorsements will still allow the continued delivery of protected bike lanes per the Transport Strategy 2030, other than the State Government arterial road upgrades which will not be delivered at the current rate and accelerated commitments made in response to both the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and COVID-19 pandemic.

10. Reiterates the ongoing commitment to ensuring that there are adequate loading zones within the Hoddle Grid, and that the conversion of car parking bays to safe loading zones where there is a demonstrated need will continue.

11. Notes that the installation of barriers between tram lanes and vehicular lanes, e.g. on Collins Street, has likely succeeded in changing driver behaviour but has also had an impact on traffic flows for all transport modes, and in order to understand these changes requests that management work with the Department of Transport to study and report on the impacts, to better inform future transport planning decisions by both levels of government.

Rohan Leppert | Councillor

Environment Portfolio Lead

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The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin, and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

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