3.2 Anniversary Trail at Toorak Road

Abstract

The Boroondara Bicycle Strategy (2008) includes a long term recommendation for the Anniversary Trail at Toorak Road to construct a bridge over Toorak Road to improve the level of safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

The bridge would remove the steep approach to Toorak Road and the need to navigate through a car park on the northern side of the road, as well as providing a safe grade separated crossing of Toorak Road for pedestrians and cyclists. The community benefits of the proposal are considered to be broad reaching and positive.

A technical feasibility study of the recommendation was commissioned in 2012 and finalised in 2014. The technical feasibility study found it was possible to construct a bridge over Toorak Road on the west side of the railway line in-line with the Anniversary Trail that met the requirements of all technical stakeholders in the area, namely Yarra Trams, VicRoads, Metro Trains Melbourne, Public Transport Victoria and VicTrack.

In late 2014 and into early 2015 preliminary community consultation was conducted with 78 residential and commercial properties near the proposed bridge. A total of five residential properties contacted Council officers to express concerns with the proposal. Following a series of meetings and written correspondence, the concept design was amended. In mid-2015 the five properties, represented by one resident, were advised in writing of the design changes. Despite the amendments, the concerns remained and little progress was made.

In October 2016, the Victorian Government announced the \$100 million Safer Cyclists and Pedestrians Fund, a fund geared towards projects that respond to cyclist and pedestrian safety concerns. It is considered that the Anniversary Trail at Toorak Road bridge proposal would be a potential candidate for the fund with the intention of attracting the full cost of construction, estimated at \$4 million.

Council officers reinitiated discussions and a subsequent meeting was held with the ward Councillors, residents and Council officers to discuss the proposal and the design modifications. Residents expressed their concerns and maintained their objections to the proposal. The objecting residents requested the exploration of alternative alignments on the east side of the railway line. The request was subsequently investigated, however the technical stakeholders did not support the eastern alignment options due to issues associated with additional costs, constructability, accessibility and safety for users. They continue to support the western alignment option.

From the consultation it is clear the proposal is not supported by a number of residents. However, officers consider the benefits to the broader community from the propsal are significant, and it responds directly to a recommendation within the Boroondara Bicycle Strategy.

This report seeks a Council position on the proposal in order to support a potential funding application. This would then provide Council officers with direction as to whether or not to progress the proposal and actively seek funding for its delivery.

Officers' recommendation

That the Services Special Committee resolve to:

- 1. Support the proposed Anniversary Trail bridge over Toorak Road on the west side of the railway overpass as depicted in Attachment 1 and Attachment 2.
- 2. Seek funding of the proposed bridge under the Victorian Government's \$100 million Safer Cyclists Fund or other relevant grant programs.
- 3. Notify stakeholders to the proposal of the Services Special resolution.

Responsible director:

Bruce Dobson Environment & Infrastructure

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to detail the proposal for a pedestrian and cyclist bridge over Toorak Road in-line with the Anniversary Trail on the western side of the rail line and seek a formal Council position on the proposal.

2. Policy implications and relevance to council plan

The Anniversary Trail bridge at Toorak Road proposal is consistent with the following items as defined in the Council Plan 2017-21:

- Theme: 'Enhanced amenity'
- Strategic objective: 'Facilitate the process of urban renewal throughout the City to enhance amenity by efficient and effective permit issuing administration.'
- Strategy 11: 'Parking, traffic and transport Respond effectively and efficiently to community needs on parking, traffic and appropriate transport issues.'
- Strategy 12: 'Safety and amenity Implement appropriate policies, strategies and practices that will improve neighbourhood amenity and safety.'

The proposal supports the Boroondara Community Plan 2017-27 through:

Strategy 5.1 - Improve road safety for pedestrians, drivers and cyclists through infrastructure improvements, education and traffic-management initiatives.

Strategy 5.2 - Address road congestion through an integrated approach that better manages traffic and promotes public transport, walking and cycling initiatives.

Strategy 5.4 - Promote and increase active and environmentally sustainable travel options, including cycling, walking and access to public transport.

Strategy 5.7 - Plan and advocate for better access and transport strategies to assist people with limited mobility, including those with disabilities and older adults, to travel in Boroondara to increase their participation in community life.

The proposal is consistent with and proposed by the Boroondara Bicycle Strategy (2008) (BBS).

3. Background

3.1 Policy and site context

The BBS is Council's 10 year plan to improve and enhance the on and off-road bicycle network in Boroondara. The BBS provides recommendations for improvements, including access, safety and education initiatives.

The Anniversary Trail provides an important north-south shared path connection through the City of Boroondara for pedestrians and cyclists. It connects the very popular Gardiners Creek Trail in the south to the Main Yarra Trail in the north and ensures that residents and visitors are provided with good quality intra-municipality connections.

3.2 Road safety and shared path user issues and concerns

There are a number of safety issues associated with the Anniversary Trail at Toorak Road. These are outlined below.

3.2.1 The narrowness and the steepness of the shared path on the north side of Toorak Road.

The path is not Disability Discrimination Act (1992) (DDA) compliant and residents have raised concerns about the shared path grade and accessibility. This is a particular concern for older residents that are reliant on walking for transport and recreation.

3.2.2 Potential conflicts with vehicles in the car park and lane on the north side of the Toorak Road.

The car park on the north side of Toorak Road and its access lane is mainly used by traders in the area. The movement of vehicles into and out of parking spaces and the movement of pedestrians and cyclists through the space is a safety issue.

3.2.3 Pedestrian and cyclist conflicts along the Toorak Road footpaths.

Traders and businesses in Hartwell Village have raised safety concerns with cyclists using the Toorak Road footpaths conflicting with pedestrians.

In line with the Victorian Road Rules, it is illegal for anyone aged 12 and over to ride on a footpath except for certain circumstances where a rider is accompanying a child under 12 years of age and if the rider has medical conditions or a disability.

3.2.4 Pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle conflicts in the lane at the rear of the shops on the south side of Toorak Road.

Some cyclists use the lane on the south side of Toorak Road to access the intersection signals at Toorak Road and Summerhill Road.

As with the north side car park and lane, the movement of vehicles into and out of parking spaces and the movement of pedestrians and cyclists through the space is a safety issue. This concern is more pronounced with the completion of the commercial and residential development at 1150 Toorak Road and their underground car park accessed via the lane and the reconfiguration of the Summerhill Road car park which has increased the number of vehicle movements in the lane.

3.2.5 Pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle safety crossing Toorak Road at the rail bridge.

Concerns have also been raised regarding pedestrians and cyclists crossing Toorak Road in close proximity of the railway bridge instead of using the traffic signals at the Toorak Road Summerhill Road signalised intersection. Toorak Road is a busy primary arterial road that carries over 33,000 vehicles per day. Traffic flow is constant and there are few opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely away from the traffic lights located at Summerhill Road.

A location plan is shown in **Attachment 1**.

3.3 Boroondara Bicycle Strategy (2008) recommendations

The BBS made the following recommendations for the Anniversary Trail crossing of Toorak Road.

- Option 1 Short term: Provide a north south pedestrian cross walk on the east side of the intersection of Toorak Road and Summerhill Road.
- Option 2 Medium term: Provide an additional signalised pedestrian and cyclist crossing adjacent to the trail (immediately west of the railway bridge).
- Option 3 Long term: Construct a bridge over Toorak Road.

3.3.1 Option 1

Option 1 was completed in October 2010, with a north-south pedestrian and cycle crosswalk provided on the east side of the intersection of Toorak Road and Summerhill Road.

The provision of the extra crosswalk significantly reduced pedestrian and cyclists wait time and journey time when crossing Toorak Road. The crosswalk is complemented by signage and linemarking that directs trail users to the crosswalk. The cost, approximately \$90,000, was funded by the Victorian Government.

3.3.2 Option 2

Option 2 was investigated and considered by VicRoads and Council officers. Given the close proximity to the existing bridge, the visibility of the pedestrian signals would be compromised for citybound traffic on Toorak Road. Due to these safety concerns, the proposal was not supported by VicRoads.

This option would not have addressed the narrowness and steepness issues on the north side of Toorak Road or the access issues within the car park.

Option 2 was subsequently abandoned.

3.3.3 Option 3

Investigations into the technical feasibility of option 3 (constructing a bridge over Toorak Road) commenced in 2012, with GHD commissioned to complete a technical feasibility study. Prior to the completion of the feasibility study it was not known if construction of the bridge was technically possible.

3.4 Technical feasibility study

The technical feasibility study reviewed the proposal and provided information as to the feasibility of the proposal. This information included details of a potential western alignment, construction methods and a concept design of the proposed bridge and associated ramp infrastructure.

The technical feasibility study considered a 30m long and 3.6m wide shared path bridge over Toorak Road on the west side of the existing rail bridge. The bridge also involved DDA compliant access ramps on the south and north sides of Toorak Road. The southern ramp, near Jickell Avenue, was proposed to be 100m long. The northern ramp, near Bright Street, was proposed to be 50m long. The bridge and ramp structures were proposed to be a total of 180m in length.

The proposed design retained the existing at-grade shared path in order to maintain access to the Hartwell Village shopping centre and Toorak Road public transport. Retaining this local access is an important component of the proposal.

The technical feasibility study included consultation with the impacted technical stakeholders in the area, being VicTrack, VicRoads, Yarra Trams and Public Transport Victoria (PTV). Each of the stakeholders was identified as being key to the technical evaluation of the project, with each owning major assets and running significant operations in the study area.

Each stakeholder brought their design and operational needs to the attention of Council officers and GHD for consideration and inclusion in the assessment of the technical feasibility of the proposal. All technical stakeholders provided in-principle support for the project and the proposed western alignment design subject to their design and operational needs being met.

The feasibility study confirmed all design and operational requirements of VicTrack, VicRoads, Yarra Trams and PTV could be met with the proposed western alignment design.

The concept design as prepared during the technical feasibility study is shown in **Attachment 2**.

4. Outline of key issues/options

4.1 Key issues

Community consultation on the proposed western alignment bridge commenced in November 2014 (refer section 5 for further details on the consultation).

In response to the consultation process, from November 2014 to mid-2015, residents of five properties adjacent to the proposed southern ramp structure shared concerns and voiced objections to the proposal. The issues raised relate only to the southern ramp and bridge structure. The responses can be considered for the northern and southern ramps.

The issues raised include:

- 1. Overlooking from the shared path ramp into private open space and associated loss of privacy.
- 2. Removal of vegetation, including tall trees and groundcover, on the railway embankment.
- 3. Noise and amenity impacts from shared path users and the Alamein train line.
- 4. Reduction in property value because of the proximity to the shared path ramp structure and the three issues listed above.

4.2 Options

Council officers considered the issues raised by the residents and amended the design to best respond to the raised concerns. The fourth concern noted above, reduction in property value, was referred to the Property Services department for consideration. Following exploration by officers, these mattes were discussed with the residents who had raised their concerns.

4.2.1 Overlooking and loss of privacy

The overlooking and associated loss of privacy concerns were addressed through the addition of screens along the shared path ramp and bridge structure. The screens can be designed to mimic natural vegetation and remove the ability for path users to overlook into the private open space of the residential properties.

The screens as shown in **Attachment 4** are indicatively at 2.1m high and can be increased in height to 2.5m or greater to ensure that overlooking by a person or a cyclist would not be possible. Various screening options are available, including solid screens with the potential for a mural(s).

New trees and groundcover planting are also proposed which would further provide screening of the ramp structure.

Consideration can also be given to installing fence extensions on the fences of the concerned properties. Alternatively the construction of new, taller fences can also be considered.

4.2.2 Removal of vegetation

Some vegetation, including tall trees and groundcover, will be removed as a result of the project. It is not possible, or appropriate, to retain all vegetation on the railway embankment.

A concept landscape design plan (the Plan) has been developed and includes planting new trees to offset those removed and improving the groundcover in the area. The species selection in the Plan is sensitive to the surrounding area and in accordance with Council's preferred species list. The Plan identified the English Elms in the area as being either dead or in poor condition, small to medium with elm leaf beetle infestation and, as such, appropriate for removal.

4.2.3 Noise and amenity impacts

The proposed screening and improved landscaping aim to respond to the noise and amenity issues. The Alamein train line is located directly next to the properties and currently generates noise levels significantly greater than that anticipated from path users. The existing Anniversary Trail is located next to the concerned properties. The bridge and screening is expected to improve the current train noise situation by providing better noise protection for the residents.

4.2.4 Reduction in property value

Council's Commercial and Property Services department has advised that there will be little or no impact on property values as a result of the proposed shared path bridge.

4.3 East side alignment

Following feedback from and further discussion with the residents, Officers engaged GHD consultants in June 2017 to undertake preliminary investigations for alternative alignment options along the eastern side of the railway line. Three alignments were developed for consideration and can be seen in **Attachment 3**.

The technical stakeholders were provided with the opportunity to review and comment on the three alternative eastern alignments. Several issues, detailed below, were identified with the three design options.

4.3.1 Shared path through the train station car parks

The provision of a shared path through the centre of the eastern train station car park was not supported for safety reasons. The technical stakeholders considered the risk of mixing vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians in the car park as hazardous.

4.3.2 Loss of car parks in the train station car parks

The loss of car parking spaces in the two train station car parks was not supported. The technical stakeholders stated the project would need to ensure that there was no net loss of car parking and would need to provide new car parking spaces to replace any lost.

This comment related to the loss of car parking to accommodate a shared path on the north-east side of the eastern car park and the loss of car parking related to the shared path access point in the western car park.

4.3.3 Costs of tunnelling, associated rail line closure and bus replacement costs

The construction cost associated with a tunnel in the order of 50m in length (including the embankments) as shown in the eastern alignment option was estimated to be \$3-4 million based on previous experience in a similar situation.

Additional costs involve rail shut down and bus replacement costs. The rail shut down and bus replacement costs are in the order of \$50,000 per day.

The level difference between the existing shared path on the west side near the residential rear fences and the railway line at the top of the embankment is approximately 5m.

In line with advice from Metro Trains, a tunnel would need to be taller and wider than the minimum height of 2.5m and 3.6m for pedestrian and cyclist paths as specified in Austroads standards to provide for natural lighting through the tunnel structure and to discourage anti-social activities. If a tunnel of 3 to 3.5m in height is required to be constructed, there would be in the order of 1.5m to 2m embankment cover between the rail tracks and the top of the tunnel structure. Methods of construction in either canopy tubes or cut and cover would require the closure of the railway line in the interest of public safety.

Metro Trains do not support a tunnel option at this location.

4.3.4 Constructability

The area to the north of Toorak Road is the same for the three eastern alignment options considered. Serious concerns were raised about the ability to access the area for construction and the likely impact on the neighbouring properties. It was noted that a rail line closure may be needed to facilitate construction in the narrow, heavily vegetated and effectively land-locked area.

Consideration was given to using private land to access the area. This was, however, discounted when the size and turning paths of the likely construction vehicles was considered.

4.3.5 Accessibility

The proposed eastern alignments all rely on sharp bends due to site constraints.

The bends on approach to the potential tunnel were raised as concerns that would impact on safety and the accessibility of the shared path. At the tunnel entrance on the west side there would also be visibility issues with pedestrians and cyclists using the path on the west side leading to Toorak Road.

The sharp bends would not meet Austroads Standards for shared paths.

4.3.6 Safety for users

The overall safety from both a personal safety and road safety perspective were considered. As with the accessibility, the necessary design features of the proposed eastern alignments are not conducive to good road safety outcomes with tight bends and visibility concerns.

Personal safety was highlighted as a very serious concern for the tunnel design option with the tunnel exit on the west side behind a private property with no passive surveillance from the street. The tunnel length would be significant in the order of 50m including the embankments. The option of shifting the tunnel exit to the nearby street in Straughan Street was also considered, however this would increase the tunnel length to 90m in length and exacerbate the safety and security issues. The cost would also be prohibitive.

Conclusion on east-side alignment

The issues raised by the technical stakeholders in response to the eastern alignment options are insurmountable. As the land and asset owners in the area, their permission and support is required to construct the proposed shared path bridge and ramps on both the eastern and the western sides. Accordingly, these eastern alignment options are not recommended by Council officers but are presented in this report for completeness.

5. Consultation/communication

5.1 Community consultation, engagement and communication

On 24 November 2014 a letter was sent to 78 residential and commercial properties informing them of the technical feasibility study for the Anniversary Trail bridge at Toorak Road and seeking their consideration of the proposal.

The letter provided recipients with four weeks to contact the nominated Council officer to provide feedback. A total of five properties provided feedback, all adjacent to the proposed southern ramp structure.

The resident concerns are set out in section 4.1 of this report.

Following significant investigation and design work, Council officers wrote to the resident representative and provided responses to the queries and design amendments proposed to mitigate or remove the issues raised. This response included the landscaping plan and preliminary screening options (see **Attachment 4** for the landscaping plan and preliminary screening options).

In a subsequent meeting, residents detailed their issues and concerns related to the proposed shared path bridge and ramp alignment on the west side of the railway line. They requested the exploration of opportunities for alternative alignments on the east side of the railway line.

Officers investigated an east-side alignment as described in section 4.3 of this report. This alignment is not supported by the technical stakeholders and is not recommended by officers.

An invitation to the 14 May 2018 SSC meeting was posted to residents and businesses on 23 April 2018.

5.2 Technical stakeholders

As noted previously, the technical feasibility that commenced in 2012 included consultation with the technical stakeholders. The feedback received from the technical stakeholders was considered as part of the study.

The technical stakeholder group was reconvened in June 2017 to consider eastern alignment options from a technical and operational viewpoint. The group consisted of VicTrack, MTM, VicRoads and PTV (Transport for Victoria). Again, the feedback from the group was considered.

The technical stakeholders support the western alignment proposal.

They do not support any of the three eastern alignment proposals for the reasons outlined in section 4.3 of this report.

5.3 Preferred alignment

The proposal with an alignment on the west side of Toorak Road as originally proposed in the feasibility study is considered to best meet the objective of providing a direct and safe path across Toorak Road that also has the support of key technical stakeholders.

6. Financial and resource implications

The Victorian Government has established Active Transport Victoria (ATV), a unit within Transport for Victoria (TfV), to promote the benefits of walking and cycling in Victoria. ATV works with VicRoads and the TAC to prioritise and invest in infrastructure that keeps cyclists and pedestrians safe through the Victorian Government's \$100 million *Safer Cyclists and Pedestrians Fund*.

It is understood the Victorian Government is currently seeking projects that meet the requirements of the *Safer Cyclists and Pedestrians Fund* and that are in the order of \$1 - \$5 million, with third party support, consultation and the majority of design work complete.

It is considered the Anniversary Trail at Toorak Road bridge proposal would be eligible for funding consideration for the *Safer Cyclists and Pedestrians Fund.*

It is intended the project be fully funded by the Victorian Government through the *Safer Cyclists and Pedestrians Fund* or an alternative grant program. Subject to Council endorsement of the project, Officers would then prepare a detailed funding application for the total estimated cost of \$4 million.

Council's expenditure would be limited to officer time.

7. Governance issues

Under Section 80C of the Local Government Act 1989, no officer involved in the preparation of this report has any direct or indirect interest in the subject matter of the report.

Consistent with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, it is considered that no human rights are impacted or infringed as a consequence of the recommendation of this report.

8. Social and environmental issues

When considered in a broad context, the proposal to improve safety and access for the Anniversary Trail at Toorak Road by constructing a bridge to permit direct and safe access for pedestrians and cyclists has positive social and environmental impacts.

Manager: Jim Hondrakis, Traffic & Transport

Report officer: Bhushan Jani, Senior Transport Engineer Clare Davey, Coordinator Transport Management

Anniversary Trail at Toorak Road – Existing Route and Proposed Bridge













Anniversary Trail at Toorak Road – Alternative Alignment on the east side (Options 1, 2 & 3)

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DRAWING LEGEND

planting

condition

condition

condition

condition 5. English Elm - dead

English Elm - dead

1.

3.

6.

9

Existing trees to be removed
Existing trees to be retained
Proposed overstorey tree planting
Proposed understorey shrub & groundcover

TREES THAT MAY REOUIRE REMOVAL

2. Italian cypress - medium sized tree in good

4. Eucalyptus species - large sized tree in good

English Elms - small sized tree in poor condition with Elm Leaf Beetle infestation English Elm - small sized tree in poor condition with Elm Leaf Beetle infestation English Elm - medium sized tree in poor

Condition from Elm Leaf Beetle
Condition from Elm Leaf Beetle
English Oaks - large sized tree & medium
sized tree covered in lvy but in good condition
English Oaks - small to medium sized trees in
good condition

Callistemon species - small sized tree in good

Eucalyptus species - large sized tree in good

ANNIVERSARY TRAIL PROPOSED LANSDSCAPE PLAN





TYPICAL CROSS SECTION THROUGH PATH AND EMBANKMENT

IMAGE BOTANICAL NAME COMMON NAME MATURE SIZE NOTES Ulmus parvifolia Chinese Elm Approx. 9 x 7m Selected to fit in with character of existing deciduous trees as well as being relatively hardy More resistant to Elm Leaf Beetle Allows light through to path during winter Flax Lily Approx. 0.8 x 0.6m Hardy, drought tolerant Dianella revoluta groundcover that will provide a lush green look all year round Approx. 0.7 x 0.6m Lomandra longifolia Tanika Hardy, drought tolerant 'Tanika' groundcover that will provide a lush green look all year round

SUGGESTED PLANTING PALETTE

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