

"May sustainable transport systems be at the heart of Adelaide's success as a people-friendly and environmentally responsible city."

Mayor Amanda Wilson
City of Holdfast Bay

17 November 2023

By email: awilson@holdfast.sa.gov.au

Sturt River Linear Park - Kibby Ave to Pine Ave

Dear Mayor Wilson,

I write to raise some matters in relation to discussion of Council at agenda item 15.2 of the meeting of Council on 14 November 2023 relating to the Sturt Linear Trail. Bike Adelaide believes the present situation is an appropriate time to reassess funding opportunities and seek additional support from the State and Federal Governments, leading into the 2024/25 budget. This is with a view to allocating appropriate funding, and securing additional funding support to deliver a fit-for-purpose, high quality path that meets community needs.

Our key requests in order to progress the matter are that Council:

- submit a funding bid to the State Bicycle Fund to secure additional funding for the project
- engage City of Charles Sturt to discuss experience with cantilevered shared-path projects
- engage City of Unley to discuss experience with resident privacy concerns and options along shared-path corridors.

We encourage Council to seek funding support from the State Bicycle Fund, to which any SA council may apply. Bike Adelaide receives reliable advice from the Department of Infrastructure and Transport that the Fund is consistently under-allocated and has never been exhausted. In October this year, Copper Coast Council opened a 14.8km cycling trail with 50/50 funding from the State Bicycle Fund, demonstrating the massive potential for this fund.

We understand that Council resolved to defer a decision on the motion to note the consultation report of the project and approve Administration to proceed with detailed design of the project with the diversion into David Ave/Fisher Tce/Bridge St.

Given the engineering and site constraints to provide a continuous path between properties and the Sturt River, we appreciate that this decision has been deferred until early 2024 in order to explore better outcomes. We know that when good projects are compromised in the design process, those compromises deliver worse outcomes in the long term and are even harder to rectify.

Bike Adelaide asserts that an on-road diversion of the shared use path is a sub-optimal approach and is inconsistent with the project purpose of providing a continuous, shared-use pathway separated from motor traffic. It is a longstanding priority for Bike Adelaide that active transport projects meet key criteria:

- provide direct, continuous routes that avoid unnecessary detours and interactions with motor vehicles
- accommodate all abilities for all kinds of active transport, including walking, cycling, prams and mobility aids, vision and sensory levels
- accommodate all ages and facilitate independent movement for all ages (an 8-80 network).

We assess that an on-road detour option for a shared-use path is not consistent with any of our priorities above and consequently does not have our support.

The on-road detour option via Bridge St and David Ave will fail to deliver the primary purpose of a shared-use path which is to avoid interaction with cars. Shared-use paths generate their utility through enabling pedestrians and cyclists priority, and providing a clear, direct and legible path. The on-road option creates unnecessary conflict points between motorists and shared-path users, creating new dangers instead of avoiding existing ones. It additionally makes it more difficult for more vulnerable users to use the path safely, especially children travelling to school independently, people with limited mobility or who use mobility aids, people with vision and hearing impairments.

Bike Adelaide previously provided comments in support of a cantilever path option as the most desirable, recognising it introduces engineering challenges. But it has the benefit of providing better safety outcomes with wider paths and better sightlines, less effects on nearby properties and opportunities for an interesting design.

We have seen small cantilever paths delivered by City of Charles Sturt on sections of the Torrens Linear Trail at River St and several arterial road underpasses, demonstrating there is existing expertise and design solutions available locally to refer to. We encourage Council to engage with City of Charles Sturt to discuss their approach to these projects to inform potential design processes and options.

We provided further comment that failing the implementation of a cantilever option, a 1.8m wide path along the original proposed route adjacent to the river is the next most preferable option. Experience on other paths, including Mike Turtur Bikeway demonstrate that most people are very good at negotiating these spaces and design features can be employed to encourage slower, more cautious movement. Recent experience with upgrades to the Mike Turtur Bikeway (MTB) in Wayville also demonstrate the positive opportunities for Council to engage with residents in co-designing solutions such as privacy features. We encourage Council to engage with the City of Unley to discuss their approach to resident privacy concerns to inform potential design options.

During closures of the MTB between King William Rd and Musgrave St Goodwood for a period of nearly two years, cyclists were re-routed onto Albert, John and Trevelyan Sts. Each street has varying levels of motor traffic but the route required cyclists to make several turns across traffic lanes, which exposes them to close passes and collisions by motorists. This re-route subsequently saw use of the Mike Turtur Bikeway decrease by approximately 20%, which was captured in Bike Adelaide Super Tuesday bicycle surveys. This reflected the discomfort and feeling of unsafety many cyclists felt using the road, making those turns, or having to switch between the path and the road. The fundamental appeal of a shared-use path is that people avoid being exposed to risk by being near motorists.

The experience of the MTB abutting properties, through areas with very similar land uses and residential typologies is overwhelmingly positive. We know that high quality paths do increase the amount of pedestrian and cycling use on it, and a large part of that use comes from residents adjacent and very close to the path. This is demonstrated by Goowood and Wayville having the highest rates of walking and cycling to work in the City of Unley, largely due to their improved access to safe, direct and connected pathways. The same is true for Goodwood Primary and St Thomas School in Goodwood, with some of the highest rates of cycling to school in the state. The high amenity of direct and continuous paths means it is safer for people of all ages and abilities to walk and cycle to school or work, and has a direct impact on reducing car through-traffic, rat-running and congestion, especially at school zones.

Three decades of the Mike Turtur Bikeway in the City of Unley has demonstrated to Bike Adelaide, the City of Unley and the State Government that the strongest proponents for improvements to it are the residents along its length. There is a strong sense of participation where residents now have a safe place to walk with children and pets without dealing with extra road crossings or shared space with motorists. The uninterrupted connection makes it a vital route for people walking, cycling, as well as using a mobility scooter, wheelchair or pram because the path is designed specifically for their needs, allowing them to reach local amenities.

Combined, these benefits have provided a positive net benefit for property values and resident amenity given the improved social inclusion and better public passive surveillance of the area, reducing crime and vandalism.

As the path will not serve weekday commuter travel to and from the CBD like the MTB does, the Sturt Linear Park is very unlikely to experience comparable levels of use, and the concern that people will be constantly flowing past properties cannot be substantiated. There is no indication from properties in similar circumstances, such as along the Coastal Path at Henley, Grange or Tennyson Beaches that any resident has been forced to move or not host friends and family because of passing pedestrians and cyclists.

The Sturt River Linear Park is a considerably under-used corridor and is typified by incredibly poor quality crossings at main roads, significantly suppressing community utility and accessibility. Consequently we offer our encouragement to Council to continue delivering incremental improvements to the path, and gradually making it into a valuable community asset. Bike Adelaide appreciates that Council has taken to defer this matter to ensure a suitable outcome is achieved.

Regards,

David Elliott, Chair

Cc:

Crs A venning, J Fleming, R Snewin, A Kane, R Abley, B Patton, A Bradshaw, C Lindop, S Lonie, M O'Donohue, W Miller, J Smedley