

## Cycling for the Environment, for Health, for Pleasure

### River Torrens Integrated Strategic Asset Management Plan

The nine metropolitan Councils adjoining River Torrens Linear Park are undertaking a joint review of existing facilities and preparing a plan for the future renewal and redevelopment of the Park.

As an organisation that represents both existing cyclists and “proto-cyclists” – the significant proportion of the population say that they would cycle more if conditions were safe enough – the Bicycle Institute has a particular interest in the Linear Park. As well as recreational cyclists, Linear Park caters for “transport” cyclists (those riding from A to B for reason other than to “go for a ride”) who are intimidated by the idea of riding on road. This even includes some who ride to the CBD, and who park their bike at or near to the Linear Park before walking to university, work or shops.

We have three recommendations for management of walking and cycling along the River Torrens:

1. Provide an alternative path to separate cyclists and pedestrians
2. Provide direct, safe, on-street alternative cycling routes to the Linear Path, particularly where it is not possible to provide an alternative path to separate cyclists and pedestrians
3. Provide simple clear, directional signage designed to be read by cyclists.

The first two may not always be possible. The third certainly is.

Applying our recommendations together, through the combined efforts of the nine councils whose responsibilities encompass the River Torrens Linear Park, will ensure that this fantastic asset will be enjoyed by both local residents and the broader Adelaide community in harmony. The Bicycle Institute’s vision for Linear Park over the next three decades is for it to be valued as the treasure it is rather than instead being known as a contested, contentious space that’s a headache and a heartache.

More detail on our recommendations follow.

#### *1. Provide an alternative path/s to separate cyclists and pedestrians*

The Linear Path was established over 30 years ago, when the idea of a shared use path was new. The path is now highly valued by both pedestrians and cyclists and is an important route into the City. But the success of a piece of infrastructure designed 30 years ago to cater for the population of 30 years ago doesn’t mean that this design is the right template for the present, much less the next 30 years. Indeed, we regard shared paths as very much a second-rate solution wherever pedestrian and cyclist numbers are appreciable.

As Alan Davies has [recently written](#) in the on-line magazine, *Crikey*:

“As cycling increases in popularity the old ways aren’t good enough anymore; walkers and cyclists can’t continue being assigned to the same (non-car) basket. It’s necessary to think a lot harder about eliminating conflicts not only between cyclists and motorists, but also cyclists and pedestrians.”

We are well aware that paths shared by pedestrians and cyclists can create conflicts, and the Linear Path has become notorious as a zone for creating conflict between cyclists and pedestrians. A recent summit on cycling on footpaths hosted by the Local Government Association heard several mayors

comment that while they receive very few complaints about cyclists on footpaths, they receive many complaints from pedestrians about cyclist behaviour, and from cyclists about pedestrian behaviour.

For most of its length the Linear Park has plenty of space to provide multiple parallel paths. Indeed in some locations there already are multiple parallel paths. These should be clearly demarcated so that cyclists and pedestrians can be separated.

In other locations, things get squeezier. Here, separated paths may not fit. But there can still be room for short sections of paths that allow cyclists to bypass the main path and any pedestrians using it. Evidence for this is in the 'goat-tracks' currently providing such passing opportunities in an informal but only occasional way. This concept should be a formal part of reducing conflict. As bypass paths could be designed around one-way, cycle-only use, grades could be used that wouldn't be acceptable on the main path, and quite narrow, with no allowance for a cyclist to overtake another cyclist in these sections – making these feasible where a wider parallel path isn't.

*2. Provide direct, safe, on-street alternative cycling routes to the Linear Path, particularly where it is not possible to provide an alternative path to separate cyclists and pedestrians*

While using the Linear Park is pleasant and appears relatively safe, it is circuitous and, as noted, conditions can sometimes give rise to conflict between cyclists and pedestrians using the path. It is in the interests of all concerned if faster transport cyclists can be encouraged off the Linear Path onto alternative routes better designed around cycling for transport.

The features of such routes would be that these are direct, quiet, fast and safe. Where possible these should use residential streets adjacent to the Linear Park, to maintain amenity and aid wayfinding. To induce cyclists to use such routes, they would need to offer the same convenience as the Linear Park. Arterial roads should be crossed either with a diversion into the Linear Park to go underneath the road, or (preferably) using median refuge crossings.

We would be happy to work with relevant authorities in both the broader and detailed design of a route or sections of routes.

*3. Provide simple clear, directional signage designed to be read by cyclists.*

It can be hard to imagine how one could become lost while using a park that follows the River Torrens. However Linear Park is often wide, and as previously noted has numerous alternative paths, many of which have sections unsuited to cyclists. The Bicycle Institute has been calling for wayfinding signage for Linear Park for many years, with a long standing challenge to councillors and state politicians to ride from the city to the hills without getting lost. (To this we would add the challenge to find the route off the Linear Path and reaching Tea Tree Plaza.)

The need for wayfinding signage has long been recognized by Councils as well. Unfortunately they have left the task of designing such signage to consultants and staff who do not seem to understand the task. Even the signage Adelaide City Council has introduced to its Park Lands and into the city centre is poor, albeit a vast improvement on its previous efforts.

The result has been very expensive but ineffective signage. If the street network were treated in the same way there would be chaos. Signs should be:

- easy to identify and read while cycling past, including at night
- at decision points, pointing to places relevant to cyclists
- simple and clear
- easy to maintain.

It should be easy to indicate the route to take for just four destinations: the coast, the city, Modbury and the hills. Names of streets and roads being crossed would be another feature of the wayfinding system.

Once again, we would be happy to help the relevant authorities design such signage. We will happily identify the locations and what should be written on the signs.