

Setting Up & Running a Bicycle User Group: Tips from the PortBUG.

Setting up and running a BUG may seem like a complex task. However PortBUG has approached the task in a step-by-step and evolutionary manner, basically figuring it out as we've gone on - with considerable success! Here are some tips that may help with your own efforts...



1. Consider Your Scope & Activities. The role of the PORT BUG has focused on:

- identifying and promoting infrastructure needs and Bike Plan priorities
- identifying opportunities for ongoing network development, continuity and connectivity
- promoting appropriate benchmarks and user outcomes
- advocating for annual and continued implementation and funding of the Bike Plan
- providing Council officers with support, encouragement and advice
- requesting a degree of explanation and accountability from Local & State Gov't.

We have found the following approaches effective when working to achieve the above:

- 1.1. Try to be clear about your Goals:** It's important to have realistic and practical goals – both long-term and shorter-term or annual and to express them as practical outcomes or results. You can see the PortBUG's goals on our [homepage](#).
- 1.2. Ensure you are working to a Plan:** It is *essential* that every Council have a local area bike plan (or maybe an 'active transport plan' or similar). Without such a plan it's very hard to see how agreement can be reached on annual investment targets, how to achieve objectives and outcomes, how councils can be rendered accountable and how the community can work to support Council investment. **A Bike Plan is the 'first step'!** Implementation the second.
- 1.3. Communicate in Writing:** Write letters and emails to Council and Councilors to raise issues, identify priorities or promote targeted support for the Bike Plan.
- 1.4. Encourage council to allocate a dedicated 'Bicycle Officer',** providing both the BUG and the broader community with an identified liaison person and Council with someone who can maintain and promote focus on the Bike Plan's implementation.
- 1.5. Organise liaison meetings** with Council staff, Councilors, DPTI officers and with contractors associated with key planning exercises or projects (eg; staff from the recent T2T and Torrens Junction projects on the Outer Harbor Greenway).
- 1.6. Collaborate in the Council budget process:** Schedule meetings with the Bicycle Transport Officer (or your Council contact) and/or with Councillors throughout the 'bike budget' planning processes (starting in about July or August and carrying through to January the following year). We generally have at least 3 such 'budget' meetings in which both we and the Council propose targeted bike projects (generally drawn from or building on the current [PA/E Bike Plan](#)). We have initially focused very much on the larger-scale projects from the Bike Plan. As these have been addressed we increasingly find ourselves focused on the 'finer grained' functioning of the bicycle network, based very much on 'on the ground' (or 'in the saddle') experiences of members. Remember to suggest that Councils apply for State Bicycle Fund support...
- 1.7. Conduct regular 'Saddle Surveys':** 'survey rides' are very important, often with Council officers or members of the community. Such rides help share and develop ideas for new routes or improvement of existing ones. They particularly help the BUG refine and articulate goals; to more effectively harness such 'local knowledge' to *document unmet needs* across the community.

Other Possibilities: BUGs may also focus on buddy ride programs, community rides, and ‘community care’ and ‘friends of...’ programs, where small community groups (often of local residents) undertake to care for, rehabilitate and otherwise improve key sections of bike routes. PortBUG hopes to extend activity to these areas in the future.

2. Getting Started. People often say ‘I don’t know where to start!’ Here are a few practical ideas which we hope may get the ball (wheel) rolling!

- **Don’t worry!** Adelaide has been working on its ‘car dependence’ for a long time. Consequently the resulting imbalances in planning and investment – even on a localized scale - can feel overwhelming. We suggest just ‘think positive’, choose your goals and proceed step-by-step.
- **Get together and make a list!** That is, a list of *everything* that you can see that needs to be done. The *process* here is just as important as getting it all down on paper – it’s important to confer with others and share points of view and experiences. This is how you can work out your priorities, start to identify solutions and figure out how to share tasks - who is best placed to do what.
- **Go out and take photos!** Taking pictures gives you a chance to look more closely at your cycling environment. You start to notice things that you miss when you are just focused on staying upright. Take pictures of others using the roads and pathways. Think about illustrating the situations and infrastructure that concern you.
- **Share your experiences!** It’s a confirming, encouraging and enriching process and everyone has something worth contributing. A Facebook Group works well too. As do regular get-togethers or meetings, preferably over a drink or a meal. Local restaurants and cafes love their BUGs!
- **Check things out thoroughly!** Does your local Council have a bike plan or has it ever considered one? Has the bike plan been implemented (at all)? Is there someone responsible for reporting on this implementation and are annual reports available (check Council minutes)? If your BUG is in a workplace or school, go and talk to your boss or the Principal about things like bike parking, lockers, bike shelter and security, adequate lighting and access etc. Focus on the OH&S stuff and your welfare and happiness as an employee – that usually gets people interested! Make sure you tell people how alert and productive riding to work or to school makes you feel!
- **Be informed!** Nothing influences decision makers like a few facts. And you’ll sound like an expert too! BISA and other cycling organisations have *lots* of good information on their web sites and news feeds. It’s not rocket science – just sensible and factual information about the benefits of bicycles and bike use, what cycling provisions work best, what cyclists need, why ‘bicycle is best’ and so on. Check out our resource pages!

3. Consider your BUG structures and processes: At Port BUG...

- we have a **Convenor** (a leadership and chairing role)
- we have a **Secretary** (for record keeping and to assist liaison and communications)
- we have **regular meetings** – once per month *at least*
- we also **allocate actions** following from our meetings and where necessary ‘portfolios’ or project/task responsibility where it is appropriate.
- **BUG Membership** is conferred on anyone who signs up to follow our website’s [BUGBlog](#) (ie; our semi-regular blog posting) or our our facebook group – the [Port Adelaide Bicycle Forum](#).

Our minutes record issues, discussion and decisions as well as an Action Summary which is reviewed and reported on at subsequent meetings. We circulate minutes via email. We also have a Google Docs site where we store minutes and other key documents.

Our BUG Committee members have an internal e-mail list we use to communicate on a regular basis.

The core discussion, strategizing and action processes of the BUG are undertaken by a relatively small group of activists who have the time, energy and motivation required for more active participation. As long as there are connections to the broader community, we feel that it's quite viable for a BUG to have a 'core' membership as small as 2-3 people!

4. Engage with members and the broader community. Consider the following...

Website: A simple Wordpress, Blogger or Weebly web site can be very useful for providing information and blog post updates for the community. [Here's](#) the PortBUG site.

Facebook: Our new facebook group in particular – the [Port Adelaide Bicycle Forum](#) – as well as allied f/b groups and f/b pages such as those of the [WestsideBUG](#) and [BISA](#), have proved invaluable in disseminating information to the community and seeking input from a broader base. This PortBUG facebook forum seems to have real potential to share information, to enable more effective community liaison and to canvas community needs! More importantly, we feel that the level of input and activity there is evidence of both widespread community interest in Active Transport and bicycle issues, as well as the BUG's efforts to garner community support. We feel this provides the PortBUG with some 'representative validity'!

Regular BUG meetings: It is important that people get together with a clear agenda. BUG meetings are an opportunity for members of the community to attend. The BUG also invites Council and DPTI representatives as well as staff from key projects. This enables us to share information or discuss issues and provide consultative input.

Planning sessions: The PortBUG has held a number of internal and open planning sessions aimed at developing and documenting *our own* goals and priorities based on the day-to-day experiences of our members. While Council has its own Bike Plan, these BUG planning activities have helped us develop an objective and independent point of view, particularly when:

- our views *may differ* from Councils
- there are linkages and connections that *extend beyond Council boundaries*
- new initiatives or projects need to be considered *additional* to those in the current Bike Plan

5. Representation – Why Are BUGs Essential? The fundamental role of a Bicycle User

Group is to *represent the interests of the community*. This implies a *level of organised effort* sufficient to communicate to **councillors, council staff** and **government departments** – as well as **to the public** – that the BUG is sincere and serious about working constructively and progressively towards an outcome, can't easily be dismissed and is not going to go away! The role of a BUG is less about working with individual Councillors and more about the representation required to reach *all* of Council and its employees.

This is a significant challenge. Getting new initiatives through Council usually takes a majority vote. And it *also* usually requires the support of the paid, professional staff *first!* PortBUG has found that bicycle issues need to be represented to staff in writing in a highly organised manner and communicated consistently over time. Half the time it's *staff members* who need to be 'on-side' - sustained efforts to build relationships and communicate effectively with them are required.

It's PortBUG's view that Councils *do* need to feel the heat of organised community representation. They need to see and hear evidence that those interested in bicycle use and active transport in the community have made the effort to 'get organised'. They need to understand that they are dealing with a broad-based ground-swell of interest in AT in their local communities and not just a 'bunch of cranks'. It's this level of representation that seems to be the 'natural' role for a BUG. Peak organisations (like BISA and BikeSA) find it difficult to undertake this representation at council level simply because the issues are a bit too fine-grained and require both local knowledge and ongoing and sustained engagement.

6. Go for it! PortBUG is just one example of how a BUG may operate - there are many options. BUGs can be organised around Council areas, specific locales and their communities, schools and universities or workplaces. Some BUGs do not have a committee structure or website, instead preferring to connect as a group on Facebook (or in the pub). We'd only say that the methods used by the PortBUG when working with Council have been quite effective. We encourage you to try them.

The most important things we have learned are:

- to take opportunities for presenting new ideas whenever we can
- to always be positive (but persistent)
- to remember that whenever things seem chaotic it's probably because you've taken on too much - you may need to step back and figure out what you *can* deal with and what you cannot!

Appendix 1: Port BUGs Key Principles.

1.1. Active Transport is *the* Priority: Bicycle use is [Active Transport](#). While bicycles are vehicles they are also *fundamentally different* from motor vehicles. Rather than rely on fossil fuels they rely on 'human fuel'. Bike riders use their *own* muscles and bodies and movement, guided by higher levels of mental effort, an inherently positive attitude and experience-based judgment in ways that are very different from driving a car.

Active Transport is an integral and necessary part of South Australia's transport system but it is '[short changed](#)' for a variety of reasons – mainly a lack of understanding of how central and important it is to human health, sustainability, resilience and development. We believe that investment in Active Transport should actually be a 'bottom-line measure' of *how connected* transport planning is to the needs and interests of the community!

Active Transport needs must be the *first consideration and priority* in transport planning!

1.2. Bicycle Users are the Key to Effective Planning: Active Transport is also predominantly about moving humans – not a ton or so of steel and technology as well! Bike use neither needs nor deserves the level of control and direct management that car use requires. Most importantly, it's people cycling in their local communities who understand *their own needs* best! Planning both local and city-wide Active Transport networks *must* involve those who will use them. These are the people who know what the major cycling destinations are! These are also the people who are most familiar with where new bike facilities should be and what the opportunities for new infrastructure are. **No bicycle planning should occur without inclusion of bicycle users!**

1.3. Active Participation: BUGs are very much about [participatory democracy](#).

“Participatory democracy strives to create opportunities for all members of a population to make meaningful contributions to decision-making, and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities.”

The needs of a community cannot be addressed by Government *without active participation and input from the community!* The community has a *responsibility* to assert its needs and to argue for their provision. **The role of the BUG is to provide a voice for cycling!**

1.4. Resilience and Equity: These are key issues for PortBUG. Our members are keenly aware of our community's vulnerability to energy-related threats such as rising fuel and energy costs, oil depletion and climate change issues. Urban planning tends to assume (and it seems, prioritise) universal access to the private car when in

fact this is far from the reality in our community. This leads to 'unbalanced' planning and investment and unnecessary and avoidable hardship for many. **BUGs aim for a balanced approach to transport planning and investment.**

1.5. Putting Bike Needs 'On the Record': A major principle we have followed has probably been to put most of our goals and targets *on the record*, taking every opportunity we can to '*put it in writing*' and ensure our recognition as a 'stakeholder' and representative voice. **BUG's put community needs 'on the record'.**

Appendix 2: PortBUG Achievements.

PortBUG has been around for over 3 decades and is (we feel) a bit of a case-example of what can be achieved through community bike advocacy. We are currently a bit over half-way through the current 5 year Bike Plan and have commenced a brief review of what's been achieved thus far, what still needs to be done and the additional needs and opportunities that have emerged since the Bike Plan was put together. As a first step we have taken a look at what's been achieved to date over the span of the *current* 5-year Bike Plan. Here's a quick summary:

1. Redevelopment of Semaphore Road: 'Semi Road' is the 'high street' and social and economic heart of Semaphore and surrounding suburbs. It was perhaps one of the first *major* goals tackled by the PortBUG and was initiated by a weekend expedition with tape measures, pencils and paper to figure out what might be possible. Our subsequent submission sparked the road's creative development by Council engineers – it is now (we think) the only 'high street' in Australia with *both* on-road bike lanes and off-road bike pathways *and* with a 40km/h traffic speed limit. It is *very* bicycle friendly!

2. PA/E Bike Plan, 2015-20: Participating in the development of a **Port Adelaide/Enfield Bike Plan, 2015-2020** has been a major achievement for the PortBUG. This Plan replaced an earlier one which had largely been *drafted* by the PortBUG! Our submission to development of the current Plan included advocating for a dedicated Council bicycle officer.

3. Allocation of a Council 'Bicycle Officer': The allocation of a dedicated 'Bicycle Officer' at Council has been a crucial outcome - it has provided both the BUG and the broader community with an identified person to liaise with and has provided the Council with someone who can maintain focus on the Bike Plan's implementation.

4. Development of the Outer Harbor Greenway: This has been a long-term project for the PortBUG. We surveyed a possible route for the new Greenway in August, 2005 and developed a written (and illustrated) proposal which we circulated widely within local and state government. We have continued to:

- promote the route to successive governments and transport ministers and within our Council
- monitor progress, particularly when private developers have been involved (such as the St Clair housing project) and...
- successfully argue for key benchmarks and standards, including light-controlled crossings at main roads, new off-road bikeways and bridges and under-passes where appropriate.

We have recently participated in (and written submissions for) the first audit of the Outer Harbor Greenway (sections through the City of Charles Sturt) and hope to see such a review replicated for the route within Port Adelaide/Enfield.

- 5. Completion of the Other Harbor Greenway - North:** The BUG 'saddle-surveyed' this route and identified a number of key off-road links and other improvements required on the section between Port Adelaide and Outer Harbor. Most of these have now been completed with some further work on two key links scheduled for 2018-19.:
- a new off-road link at Mead St to bypass a hazardous T junction
 - new pathways, kerb ramps and a median refuge at the end of the Outer Harbor Greenway, North Haven.
- We have also discussed need for a comprehensive audit of the Greenway prior to the new bike plan after 2020 and hope to see this occur before formulation of the new Bike Plan.
- 6. Harbor Loop Bikeway:** The BUG has successfully argued for and then supported the building of a Harbor Loop bikeway around the Inner Harbor. This has included separated bikeways over the Birkenhead Bridge and encircling the western area of the Inner Harbor. Stage 1 of this project has been completed (western basin) with Stage 2 (eastern basin) to be completed in the next stage of Inner Harbor housing development. This Harbor Loop Bikeway has become a valued community resource while also forming a key section of the Outer Harbor Greenway!
- 7. Improved Bike Access and Bicycle Safety - Old Port Rd:** The PortBUG identified the need for such improvements on Old Port Road and successfully argued for their construction with Council and DPTI. New bike lanes have been installed on Old Port Road as well as an important and much-used 'bike bypass' at the hazardous junction of Old Port & Port Roads.
- 8. Crossing Nelson St, Port Adelaide:** The BUG successfully argued for new and improved bike crossings at Nelson St, Port Adelaide, a key component of the Outer Harbor Greenway and Harbor Loop.
- 9. Completion - Outer Harbor Greenway East:** The PortBUG has had extensive involvement in negotiations and advocacy (jointly with WestsideBUG) with the Torrens2Torrens and Torrens Junction projects to ensure satisfactory completion of the Outer Harbor Greenway between Queen Street, Croydon and the Adelaide Parklands. (likely completion, late 2018).
- 10. Off-Road Bike Facilities - Causeway Road:** Causeway Road is a main road spanning Semaphore, Glanville and Ethelton and linking Semaphore and Bower Roads. It is a local cycling road as well as a heavy-vehicle transport route. It is located adjacent to two primary schools, two rail stations, a hotel and many private residences. It offers no bike lanes and limited off-road cycling or pedestrian facilities. The BUG has successfully sought improvement and completion of off-road shared pathway facilities and a new crossing to make the route much more secure and bike-friendly. Currently in planning and for completion in 2018.
- 11. Greenway Lighting:** The PortBUG has been actively involved in the resolution of essential lighting upgrades (jointly with WestsideBUG) on the Outer Harbor Greenway, including through the Gillman Rail Yards and at St Clair (involved approx. 300metres of new pathway lighting).
- 12. Causeway Road:** The BUG identified need for extensive redevelopment of Causeway Road to facilitate improved bicycle and pedestrian access and safety. We undertook extensive and successful negotiations and advocacy for new off-road bikeways, a new road crossing and improvements to an existing bikeway along Causeway Road between Bower and Semaphore Roads. Construction of these new and improved off-road pathways is

scheduled for May-June 2018. Causeway Road is one of the Port's busiest heavy transport routes and is adjacent to 2 schools, a pub, 2 rail stations and an extensive residential area. It is also a major bike route!

13. Hart Street Redevelopment: The BUG nominated the redevelopment of Hart Street as a major priority for the Bike Plan. Hart Street is the major link between the Port CBD & Inner Harbor and the coastal suburbs and the Coast Park Bikeway. It is also the site of a wide range of educational and sporting activities and has potential to be a major Active Transport and commuting route. It's redevelopment is likely to provide a significant benchmark for rendering other major roads more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly!

14. Palais 'Bypass' on the Coast Park Bikeway: After over 2 years of 'closure' to bicycle use and extensive negotiations by the PortBUG, a new 'bypass' has been constructed on the Coast Park Bikeway around the Palais business premises at Semaphore.

15. Improved Main-Road 'Bike Space', Port Adelaide:

- Successful negotiation for major improvements to bike lanes, 'bike space' and traffic calming in Dale Street, Port Adelaide.
- Negotiations for an off-road bike path and on-road bike lanes, St Vincent Street and Jervois Bridge, Port Adelaide.

16. Successful Negotiation of Numerous Minor Projects: Some examples...

- **Extension of Bikeways to Nelson St:** This new bikeway links the Outer Harbor Greenway path to Nelson Street, the first step towards a linkage to the proposed Port Expressway bikeway and to the Stage 2 of the Harbor Loop.
- **Port Dock Station Planning:** The PortBUG is currently engaged in negotiations with the Port Dock Rail Station Project, principally for maintenance of Greenway access through the Project's construction and creation of a much improved 'active' rail crossing across the new spur line to the station.

17. Successful Negotiation of Projects – Future Council Budgets: PortBUG has successfully negotiated for the following future projects in forward planning – implementation of the PA/E Bike Plan (2018-19 & 2019-20):

- Improved 'surface signage' on the Coastal Way, Semaphore (2018-19)
- Advocacy for improvements to the Elder Rd/Mersey Rd Bike Route (principally improved local pathway linkages, 2018-19)
- Advocacy and negotiations for a new 'Coopers Link' off-road bikeway connecting the Gawler Greenway and the East-West Connector along Regency Road (2018-19)
- Successful advocacy and negotiation for a new roadway crossing for the Outer Harbor Greenway – Nth – new pathway linkages, ramps and a median refuge connecting the rail crossing maze at Flaminia St to the Coast Park Bikeway across Lady Ruthven Drive (2018-19).
- Successful advocacy and negotiation for various route improvements for the Rosewater LATM, including a new pedestrian and bike railway crossing at May Trc, Rosewater.
- Negotiations for resurfacing improvements – Levels Bikeway & Gawler Greenway.