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Parliament of Victoria  
Spring Street  
East Melbourne VIC 3002

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Submission to
Inquiry on Growing the Suburbs: Infrastructure and Business Development in Outer Suburban Melbourne

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry on Growing the Suburbs.

Enabling people of all abilities, from confident adults to children and families, to ride is an essential part of making our suburbs sustainable and enjoyable places to live, work and do business.

Bicycle Network Victoria is currently working on a three year project funded by VicHealth investigating how to overcome the current low cycling rates in outer suburbs. Cycling rates for travel in outer suburbs are amongst the lowest in Melbourne – in 2007 less than 1% of journeys were made by bicycle. A key aspect of this, and a focus of the project, is the lack of consistent and appropriate planning and provision for cyclists of all ages and abilities. This has led to poor provision for potential cyclists who do not have the basic cycling infrastructure to use their bikes for the many transport and recreational journeys/trips that can potentially be done by bike. As a result, people are dependent on the car rather than having it as one of various travel options available to them.

Travel and activity data show that most trips to schools, friends and shops are within 1-6 km – an easy distance to cycle. Trips to work and tertiary education tend to be much longer and rely upon good connections to public transport and places to leave a bicycle securely for the day. To enable these journeys to be made by bike, residents and visitors need access to a safe, interconnected cycling network.

Bicycle Network Victoria wish to address the following terms of reference:

(a) Identify existing public and private infrastructure provision, including schools, hospitals, commercial and shopping precincts, transport and roads, telecommunications, water and power.

Key deficiencies we have observed in existing suburbs are:
• Schools are not well connected to the wider off-road path network with children expected to ride on busy connector streets with motor vehicles.
• Arterial roads above 60k/h with on-road bike lanes only suit a small percentage of the population, whilst excluding other potential riders.
• Widely spaced crossings of major barriers such as freeways and railways that mean long detours for bicycle trips.
• Train stations and other public transport hubs not connected to the cycle network, making it difficult to combine bike riding with public transport.
• A lack of bicycle paths along rail reserves which would provide connections to stations for many people.

(b) **Assess the capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate increased population growth.**

• A lack of coordinated bicycle planning has led to a piecemeal approach to cycling infrastructure that is unconnected and often inappropriate for encouraging riders of all skill levels.
• As more people move to the outer suburbs pressure on roads and transport infrastructure will increase. A coordinated cycling network is crucial to providing a viable alternative to the car.
• Access to recreational cycling facilities such as the Metropolitan Trail Network is also important to promote healthy, active lifestyles.
• A coordinated planning approach needs to be adopted to ensure adequate cycling infrastructure is planned for the future and is connected to existing cycling infrastructure to create a bike network.
• The need to integrate cycling provision with land use policy has been recognised by the Growth Areas Authority (2011) in the recently released Growth Corridor Plans. Growth Corridor Planning Principle 3.2.4 states that “cycling networks should have a high degree of connectedness, continuity and permeability. Bicycle routes should directly connect to major destinations, other bicycle routes and other transport corridors to provide a network of continuous and interconnected routes. The bicycle network should be permeable to enable easy and ready access by residents. The network should generally be a combination of shared paths, exclusive bicycle paths and on road bicycle lanes to provide for all levels of riding skill”.

In addition to these terms of reference, investment in cycling infrastructure creates a number of economic benefits for local communities.

A recent report, commissioned by the Heart Foundation South Australia (Tolley, 2011) brings together evidence around the financial benefits to retailers and residents in making commercial streets more walking and cycling friendly. The report shows that walking and cycling to local shops is good for business and good for the local economy. In particular, the report shows making streets more walking and cycling friendly will:
• Increase retail rental values.
• Increase sale prices of nearby homes.
• Significantly increase pedestrian and cyclist activity.
• Generate more business and stimulate the local economy.
• Revitalise ‘drive-through’ districts into lively places that people want to visit.

The provision of cycling infrastructure can also create local jobs. A recent study in the United States estimated the employment impacts of building and refurbishing transportation infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians (Garrett-Peltier, 2011). Evaluating employment that is created through the design, construction and materials procurement of bicycle, pedestrian, and road infrastructure, the study found that bicycling infrastructure created the most jobs for a given level of spending. The highest level of job creation was for bicycle-only infrastructure creating up to 11.4 jobs per $1 million. In Australia, the $40 million Commonwealth stimulus funding for The National Bike Paths Program is creating 600km of bike paths and 1314 jobs (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011).

We trust these points are of use to you in your inquiry on Growing the Suburbs. Please let us know if you require further information.

Kind Regards

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References:

