



## A campaign history

An archive of Bicycle Network's former Darebin Bridge website and 24 year history of involvement with the Darebin Bridge campaign.

## East: Darebin Bridge

The support for building the Darebin Bridge continues ...



## Built a bridge – let's get over it



**22 June 2017.** In a development surely equivalent to Caesar's fateful crossing of the Rubicon, the span across the Yarra River to link to the Darebin Creek Trail has been installed.

Dare we assume this is the point of no return for this long-awaited link to the Main Yarra Trail?

Some cynicism is appropriate here because no fewer than 23 years have been expended campaigning for the completion of the entire length of the Darebin Creek Trail and its logical connection to the Main Yarra Trail and the Greater Melbourne shared-path network.

Proving the high degree of public interest in this missing link, 50 spectators tramped across Willsmere Park, Kew East, to the river to watch the spans lifted into place.

The finished bridge still needs its 4m-wide deck – and one kilometre of path to and from it – but the two 62-tonne spans are in place.



The spans are on temporary supports until the cantilevers are built out from the abutments. The final bridge will comprise the spans plus the cantilevers, total length of 60 metres.

The lift was a delicate operation that took the entire day.

The bridge is contracted to be finished by August, but is running late.

Next in the project will be the construction of ramps for the bridges, and finally the trail itself.

The trail has to be last because the route is being used as an access track for the project.

VicRoads advises that there will be a grand opening of the finished bridge later in the year, possibly in October.

Photo credit: John Parker

## **Alphington connection back in spotlight**



**9 May 2017.** As the Darebin Yarra Link Trail edges closer to completion the spotlight has moved to the lack of a connection from the trail into neighbouring Alphington.



Local residents have asked why they can't access the trail through the LaTrobe Golf Club, which separates the suburb from the trail.

The connection from the Darebin Yarra Link Trail to Alphington is highly desirable and important to the local community.

However it has not been a part of the current bridges project since it was excluded from the VCAT approval in 2009.

VicRoads cannot build the connection as part of the current project because it does not have a planning permit for that route.

In its decision in 2009 VCAT suggested that a connection to Farm Road could be developed as "a separate exercise."

There are a number of options for the connection, and with golf on the decline and clubs struggling for new members, there may be a more positive attitude towards negotiating a route through the course.

As the bridges project approaches completion, the government, the council and the golf club should be working together to make the Alphington connection a reality.

## The beam has landed



**15 February 2017.** Progress continues on the Darebin Link project to connect the Darebin Creek Trail to the Yarra.

The final bridge beam for the bridge from Napier Waller Reserve to Latrobe Golf Club (bridge 3) has been put in place.

Extended pile driving has taking place over the last month in both Latrobe Golf Club and Willsmere Park for the bridge across the Yarra River (bridge 5).

Work will now concentrate on the abutments for this bridge so that the main span over the Yarra River can be placed in April.

The section of trail behind the golf club maintenance sheds (cantilevered bridge 4) is also underway.

Once the bridges are in place work will start on sections of the trail connections.

All on track for opening in late 2017.



## Piling on at Darebin Bridge



**14 December 2016.** The next stage of the Darebin Creek – Yarra Trails link is marching relentlessly forward as the contractor sinks the piles for the final series of bridges to take riders along the Creek and across the Yarra.

The contractor is piling for the three remaining bridges in one go.

And they have now constructed the access road in from Wilsmere Park on the other side of the river

## Darebin links work restarts

**10 August 2016.** A new contractor has been appointed to complete the final stage of the Darebin Creek Yarra Trail Link.

Coleman Rail, an infrastructure construction specialist has won the contract for the remaining three bridge structures and trail sections.

Work is now expected to be finished by this time next year.

The work will be on section two of the Darebin Creek Trail from Napier Waller Reserve along the Creek through the Latrobe Golf Course, then across the Yarra through Wilsmere Park to Main Yarra Trail in East Kew near the Eastern Freeway.

The completion of this trail will remove a long-standing gap in the Principal Bicycle Network by providing a connection to the wider northern and eastern metropolitan shared user path networks.

When the link is completed it will conclude Bicycle Network's longest ever campaign – 22 years of agitation to get this vital link done.

Incidentally, the contractor Coleman Rail appears to have some [keen bike riders on the staff](#): they should be committed to do a good job!

## Darebin Bridge: last arch in long march



**BICYCLE**  
NETWORK®



**29 February 2016.** The 22 year

campaign to link the Darebin Creek Trail to the Yarra Trail has entered the final phase, with the construction of the last remaining links soon to get underway.

The link is a kilometre long, three metre wide, concrete path through the municipalities of Banyule, Yarra and Boroondara traversing some of the most attractive landscapes in Melbourne.

The design of the link matches the sensitive environment and meets all guidelines and standards.

Tenders for the final section of trail and remaining three bridges, including one over the Yarra, will be advertised soon, with works to be completed in the second half of next year.

The remaining section is from the third bridge over the Darebin Creek in Napier Waller Reserve, along the Creek through the Latrobe Golf Course, then across the Yarra through Willsmere Park to Main Yarra Trail in East Kew near the Eastern Freeway.

The completion of this trail will remove a long standing gap in the Principal Bicycle Network by providing a connection to the wider northern and eastern metropolitan shared user path networks.

The link in the shared path network will provide cyclists with a safer off-road avenue to commute to the CBD and other centres, such as the Latrobe National Employment Cluster.

“When the project is completed next year it will bring to a close a 22 year campaign by Bicycle Network and Melbourne bike riders to get this vital link in place,” Bicycle Network CEO Craig Richards said.



"It's going to be a tremendous asset to Melbourne, providing an opportunity for the community to take to their bikes for healthy exercise and visit this beautiful corner of the city."

"Minister Donnellan is to be congratulated for getting the final stage underway and joins a long list of political leaders from both sides of politics, including current opposition leader Matthew Guy, who have fought ceaselessly over the years to complete the vision for this project."

### **Project declaration a milestone**

There had been hopes that the project would have been completed earlier, since the \$18M funding was approved in 2012, but progress was frustrated by long-time opponent, Boroondara City.

As a result, the final stage in the Darebin Creek Trail has been "declared" under the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009 which allows access to the land required to complete the trail.

Declaration of a project is relatively common for transport projects, but is not usually considered for bike projects that are being being senselessly thwarted by opponents.

But it should be. Transport by bike has equal rights as any other mode, and governments should be making regular use of the Act's powers to face down the bike infrastructure Nimbys that are blocking active transport plans around the state.

The Minister for Roads Luke Donnellan said:

"Building the missing link in the Darebin Creek Trail will safely connect northern suburbs residents to over 600 kilometres of cycling trails across Melbourne."

"We're getting on with delivering the projects that Victoria needs and by removing this long standing gap in the Principal Bicycle Network we're ensuring that cyclists and pedestrians can access one of Melbourne's most popular trails."

### **Two bridges a cure for riders**



**23 April 2015.** The concrete is curing on the first two bridges on the Darebin Creek-Yarra link and the new trail already looks inviting. Imagine riding through here.

The photos above show the poured deck of the first bridge and the deck of the second bridge just before it was poured that day.

The curved approach to the third and final bridge of the first stage of the project was put in place on Monday.

There are thousands of riders who can barely wait until this project is completed.

## **Bridges: (not) too far off**

**12 March 2015.** Construction of the Darebin Trail missing link is forging ahead with bridge abutments and the path base now in place.



Today the first two bridge decks are due to be lowered into place. We will post photos as they come to hand. You can see the progress in the images shown.



Looking from Sparks Reserve



Path underway adjacent to Alphington Grammar Sports Fields



Looking north from Napier Waller Reserve



Looking south from Napier Waller Reserve

UPDATE: This image just in!





## Contractor starts on Darebin Bridge

**5 November 2014.** A contractor has been awarded the tender for the construction of the three bridges comprising stage one of the Darebin Bridge project.

The announcement was made by Roads Minister, Terry Mulder, during his presentation to the Bike Futures Conference last week.

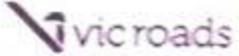
The contract has been won by Cut & Fill Civil Engineering, who have built major road works, including the Geelong Ring Road, but are also working on the 12 Apostles Visitor Centre on the Great Ocean Road.

The first stage involves construction of the trail from Sparks Reserve near Heidelberg Road in Alphington, across Darebin Creek and progress south back over the creek twice to connect to Napier Waller Reserve.

The second stage has been delayed pending further negotiations over alignment and land acquisition for the remaining bridge and trail connections.

It is now 19 years since Bicycle Network began campaigning for the bridge.

## Tender is the green light

  
**Tenders**  
**New Advertisement(s)**  
**Shared User Path Darebin Yarra Trail Alphington**  
**Contract No: 8842** - Construction of three bridges over Darebin Creek, shared user path and associated works on Darebin Yarra Trail from Sparks Reserve to Latrobe Golf Club, Alphington. A compulsory pre-tender site inspection will be held commencing at 10.30am on Wednesday 23 April 2014 at Sparks Reserve Melway Map 31 D10. Prequalification Level: R3 and B2 and F5. Contact: Nathan Ganeshanathan Phone: (03) 9881 8063. **Closing Date: 21 May 2014**



**9 April 2014.** After 19 years of battle, tenders have finally been called for the building of the Darebin Bridge.

Newspapers recently carried advertisements for the submission of tenders for the first stage of the project.

Contract number 8842: a number that will enter history as the document that legally drives the first shovel into the Darebin Creek soil on the highest priority bike project in Victoria.

The move follows considerable activity by VicRoads in recent months to prepare documentation required for the project.

Once a bidder has been selected riders should see construction hit the ground in June/July.

This will see the trail progress from Sparks Reserve near Heidelberg Road, across Darebin Creek and progress south back over the creek twice to connect to Napier Waller Reserve.

Stage One finishes at the approach to the Latrobe Golf Course, where a major Melbourne Water tunneling project will interrupt the trail progress for a brief period.

VicRoads is still in discussion with the Golf Course over the final alignment of the path and detailed designs for Stage Two.

## **Edging closer...**

**23 November 2013.** VicRoads have progressed the project by leaps and bounds, despite only being handed the baton earlier this year.

Due to a Melbourne Water sewerage project which will dissect the intended path just south of Napier Waller Reserve, the project has been split into two stages. 'Stage One' will be from newly opened end in Sparks Reserve, across the creek and through Napier Waller Reserve to golf course practice range. Stage Two will include from this point south to the major Yarra River crossing and link the the Main Yarra Trail in Willsmere Reserve.

Stage One comprises 3 small bridges across the creek and some complex land acquisition aspects.

VicRoads will put out the tender to construct Stage One in January 2014. This should see construction start in the middle of 2014.

## **Minister unlocks critical link**

**4 June 2013.** Another attempt to halt the Darebin Bridge has been thwarted after Planning Minister Matthew Guy overturned a Boroondara Council decision to deny a permit for necessary works.

In April Bicycle Network witnessed a chaotic Council meeting where Boroondara Council refused the two-year extension of an expired planning permit to build the Darebin Bridge linking the Darebin Creek Trail through the rest of the network. This



was in spite of their previous support for the project and successful VCAT defence already locked in place.

The other councils involved, Yarra and Banyule, had already granted extensions to their permits.

Using his ministerial powers to overrule the council and approve the project, Mr. Guy highlighted the importance of the route. "The bicycle is trunk transport infrastructure. We need to ensure we have good bike paths as transport," Mr. Guy said. "I respect the fact that there are differing views in Boroondara. But it is not a freeway, this is an important part of the cycling jigsaw."

The intervention came as welcome news for Bicycle Network after seeking urgent talks with the Government to assure the community that the project would go ahead.

The Napthine Government, which wants the link completed by 2015, announced the 1.8 kilometre extension in December 2012. It will feature sealed paths and four bridges, including a long, single span, bridge across the Yarra River.

## **We're through to Sparks Reserve**

May 2013. [See story here.](#)

## **Steady as she goes — Darebin Bridge on track**

**1 May 2013.** Work continues to advance on the planning and design of Victoria's major priority bike project, the Darebin Bridge, despite yet another futile blocking attempt by opponents on Boroondara Council.

The long and complex project, which will link several of Melbourne's key bike networks to the Yarra Trail, requires extensions to the normal planning permit periods.

These extensions—a procedural formality—were quickly granted by the the councils of Yarra and Banyule.

However, the City of Boroondara, in an audacious and rash act of defiance of Victoria's planning laws, has refused the permit extension in hope of stopping the bridge.

Boroondara opponents of the project had previously attempted to get VCAT to rule against the bridge, but their arguments were found to be groundless.

Now the Council is attempting to re-open the deliberations already decided by VCAT, although it has no legal power to do so.

And, in blocking the extension of the permit, it thumbed its nose at the Supreme Court decision which outlines the procedure councils are required to follow in such instances.

These conscious and deliberate breaches of the very laws the Council's planning committee is obliged to uphold and enforce, are sure to come under further official scrutiny.



In the meantime VicRoads, which is now responsible for delivering the bridge, continues to make steady progress as it refines and proves up the designs.

The report prepared for the council, which was not adopted, [is here](#).

## Bridge breakthrough at zero hour



**9 December 2012.** The State Government has launched a new pro-bike agenda with the announcement today that funding is fully committed to the Darebin Bridge project and that work will start next year.

Construction will take three years.

A total of \$18M has been released for the Bridge—actually a complex of four bridges including a 50 metre span over the Yarra.

The announcement came on the brink of a rally to be held at the bridge site today. The rally, which was to highlight the lack of progress on the project, will now celebrate the welcome announcement.

The decision culminates a 17 year campaign by Bicycle Network and bike riders to get the 1.8km project delivered in order to link up up six major bike trails that currently can't connect directly.

The announcement was made by Planning Minister Matthew Guy, who took the initiative to reverse years' of inaction by funding the project from his own portfolio—the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure.

The Government should be congratulated on announcement. [Please write to Minister Guy and the Premier, Ted Baillieu](#) informing them of your sincere appreciation of the decision to green light the Darebin Bridge project,

He also announced that a 10 year Victorian Bicycle Strategy has been completed to ensure an effective roll-out of priority projects. The strategy will centrally co-ordinate all bike initiatives across the government.

"The Darebin Creek trail is one of the key missing links in Melbourne's bike network and today's announcement will open up hundreds of kilometres of bike paths throughout Melbourne," Mr Guy said.

"The new path will provide a more viable option to commute to work in the CBD and for children to travel across the river to school by bike."



Bicycle Network CEO, Craig Richards, said the decision to fire up the Darebin Bridge project is a great leap forward by the Government.

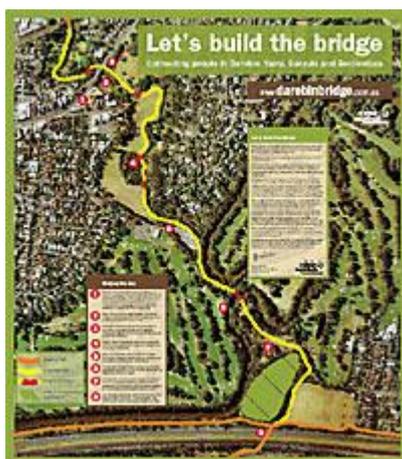
"Minister Guy is to be congratulated for seizing the initiative and getting this vital project moving again," he said.

"The 1.1 million Victorians who ride a bike every week will be re-assured that the Baillieu Government now has its bike plan back on course, fully funded in the next budget.

"The Darebin Bridge is one of the most important pieces of community infrastructure on the priority list. It links up some of Melbourne's most popular bike trails, realising the full potential of the existing network.

"It's going to encourage large numbers of people to get healthy exercise, and not just bike riders; walkers, nature lovers, photographers; all kinds of people will want to use the bridge to visit this beautiful corner of Melbourne.

"This decision is the culmination of a 17 year campaign by Bicycle Network and Melbourne bike riders and we expect this facility to become one of Melbourne's major attractions."



The \$18 million investment will include:

- land acquisition and associated costs of the entire Darebin Creek Trail Extension; sealed pathways;
- construction of the Yarra Bridge and integrated stair access to Willsmere Park;
- a Ramp to Yarra Bridge from Willsmere Park providing all-ability access; and construction of the Napier Waller Bridge (south and north bridge).

Concept designs have been completed. Design elements along the trail will embrace the character of the Yarra River and respond to the natural river environment, according to government documents.

The Yarra Bridge will span 50 metres and will feature a 'stick-inspired' skin, a curved lookout space over the Yarra, and stair access to Willsmere Park. [Download the map.](#) and [Join facebook rally event](#)



## **Once more into the breach, dear riders!**

**15 November 2012.** Darebin Bridge Rally. Your help is needed to get the government moving faster on the Darebin Bridge project. Bicycle Network is inviting every rider who cares about the development of this crucial link to attend a rally on Sunday, 9 December, at Sparks Reserve, Ivanhoe: 10:00-11:00am. Lock it in the diary now!

This project is of the highest priority, has the required permits, has the support of all political parties, and yet progress remains glacial, stymied by the Baillieu Government's deep freeze on many critically important bike initiatives.

Your participation will build a bridge of support for this venture. Now it is time for the people to send a clear message to the Government that they are tired of waiting years for the short, missing link to be completed.

Building the Darebin Bridge will link six of Melbourne's most popular trails and give easy access to hundreds of kilometres of popular bike paths throughout the metropolitan area.

While attending the rally you will be able to envision how the network will mesh together and provide access to a magnificent riding environment.

There is no excuse for more delays on this project. As the six local Mayors pointed out in their recent letter to the Government, see below, there is low cost preparatory work which can be underway right now.

Timely funding and development of this trail is more important than ever, as the final link into Sparks Reserve is currently underway and the planning permits for the remaining works have already had to be renewed due to inaction from the State.

It is puzzling that this Government, facing a health epidemic related to low levels of physical inactivity, this year has decided to turn its back on recreation trail projects, by shuttering the Metropolitan Trail Network program.

Help us shake them out of their lethargy.

It is now time to get the funds flowing and bring the Darebin Bridge to completion.

See you at the rally!

## **Hit for six! Mayor's demand Darebin Bridge action**

**29 October 2012.** Six municipalities representing three quarters of a million people have called on the Baillieu government to get moving on the construction the Darebin Bridge, Melbourne's top priority bike infrastructure project.



In an unprecedented initiative the mayors of Banyule, Boroondara, Darebin, Nillimbik, Whittlesea and Yarra have combined forces and penned a letter asking for immediate action on the long-awaited project.

The mayors, frustrated by the lack of enterprise from the government, argue that although the total project is large and complex, progress could be made now by funding the short connection of the Darebin Creek Trail in Ivanhoe to the Main Yarra Trail in Kew.

The move by the councils comes as bike-related projects across Victoria stall following the surprise decision in the State budget to reduce funding of the Bicycle Program.

The mayors say:

"This connection has been in the planning stage for 15 years and all of the preliminary requirements, including planning permits and detailed design, have been completed for this vital link, the State Government however has yet to commit to providing the necessary funding to enable the construction to occur.

"We therefore write to urge you to make the necessary funds available to enable this final stage in Darebin Creek Trail to be completed."

To read the full letter to the Minister for Sustainability and Environment [click here](#).

Timely funding and development of this trail is more important than ever, as the final link into Sparks Reserve is currently underway and the planning permits for the remaining works have already had to be renewed due to inaction from the State.

It is now time to fund this project to completion.

You can also show the Minister that you support the development of this link by writing a personal letter of support - for a link to the appropriate email address [click here](#).

**Time for local and state governments to step up**



**8 August 2012.** The permit renewal applications are in the mail and it is time for Banyule, Yarra and Boroondara to reaffirm their support for the Darebin Bridge. Once that is in place we can all direct our energy towards the Baillieu Government to Bring the Bike Budget Back and develop the Path Strategy for metropolitan Melbourne.

## **Building Permit Application Extensions to be sought**

**26 April 2012.** The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) has been in contact with planning officers in the Banyule, Boroondara and Yarra Councils and is currently gathering the necessary information for inclusion in the request to extend the planning permits for the Darebin Creek Trail works.

The date of expiry for each of the current permits is as detailed below and the council can extend the planning permits provided the request is made by DSE within three months of the expiry date of the permits.

- Banyule City Council Planning Permit issued 31 July 2009
- City of Boroondara Planning Permit issued 12 August 2009
- City of Yarra Planning Permit issued 31 July 2009

DSE have informed us that they intend to lodge the application in the near future, before the permits lapse, to secure the timely extension of these planning permits.

## **Bridge plans firming up nicely**

**19 September 2011.** Parks Victoria are getting close to releasing more details of the current plans for the Darebin Bridge, prepared over the past few months by Thompson Berrill Landscape Design (TBLD).

The concept plans are being discussed with the project stakeholders and will be available as soon as this stage of the process concludes, which is expected soon. The plans include concepts for the bridge structures as well as formalising the alignment of the trail to connect the Darebin Trail from Sparks Reserve to the Main Yarra Trail. Bicycle Network has discussed the plans with Parks Victoria, and with only a few minor concerns expressed, they are looking positive.

Finalising these plans will allow construction plans to be drawn up so that this can finally get done!

Banyule City continues to eye water levels under Heidelberg Road closely so they can knock off their connection into Sparks Reserve as soon as conditions allow.

There has been strong interest in progress on the Darebin Bridge. Obviously on-the-ground work over winter has been lacking, but this progress behind the scenes will pay dividends soon. Check back to have a look at the concept plans. They will be available on this page.

## **Bridge gap slowly swinging shut**



**11 March 2011.** Banyule City is inexorably marching toward the starting place for the Darebin Bridge project as it completes the work on the approaches.

Stage 1 consists of connecting the trail from its northern terminus into Sparks Reserve and under Heidelberg Road with a local access connection to the Boulevard. 1A of this stage has already been built (the Boulevard connection) with the balance to be under construction as soon as weather and conditions on the ground permit.

This relatively small step in the final outcome, is an exciting and welcome development. With construction underway, the Bridge is now inching itself towards its long, long, long-awaited connection.

Stage 2, namely planning for construction through Sparks Reserve, Alphington Grammar, Napier Waller Reserve, Latrobe Golf Club, over the Yarra, through Willsmere park and connecting with the Main Yarra trail has undergone a feature survey by Parks Victoria and a project brief for detailed construction design has been prepared by the Project Control Group.

Parks Victoria closed its tendering process for detailed construction design of Stage 2 in December. An announcement about appointing a project contractor is expected soon.

Stage 3, the local access trail from Alphington to the Main Darebin Trail is undergoing feature survey work currently.

## **Banyule bubbling up to Darebin Bridge**

**7 December 2010.** Despite the boggy weather and engorged river banks brought on by the wet spring, some construction works on the Sparks Reserve/Heidelberg Road section of the Darebin Bridge project are now underway.

The recent deluge will delay progress, but the start of the work is quickening the pulse of riders.

City of Banyule will continue with construction on this stage of the project as conditions allow, while Parks Victoria pushes on with the tender process for the more southerly, and lengthy, section.

Good on Banyule for putting down the marker and getting a start on this project. Thanks all around!

## **Darebin Bridge goes to tender**

**17 November 2010.** Parks Victoria has formally started the design and construction process for the multi-million dollar bridge over the Yarra River to link Yarra and Darebin Creek trails.

It has called for tenders from suitably qualified individuals or organisations to undertake the construction design, including the bridge structure and shared trail approaches.



The project will provide a vital connection from Heidelberg Road in Alphington through to Willsmere Park, connecting with the Main Yarra Trail in Kew.

It is expected to take several years to complete the project, which will add enormously to the connectivity and value of Melbourne's popular recreational trails network.

Parks Victoria states that the successful contractor or consortium, led by a landscape architect or landscape architectural firm, will need to have specialist skills and experience in the following areas:

- High level project management
- Landscape architecture, architectural, engineering, bridge design and trail design skills
- Appreciation of cultural diversity, heritage values and natural values
- Sophisticated communication and negotiation skills
- Capacity to develop high quality community recreational outcomes
- Extensive experience in managing multi-faceted design projects in the public domain.

Tenders close on 16 December 2010.

## **Darebin Bridge progress report [updated]**

**27 October 2010.** [updated] The City of Banyule confirms that construction on the Heidelberg Rd to Sparks Reserve is expected to begin on 8 November. Expect to see photography as soon as possible. Apologies are in order regarding the previous item lacking this information.

**26 October 2010.** [updated] Although the go ahead for the Darebin Bridge was declared in May, construction has yet to begin on the approach between Heidelberg Road and Sparks Reserve, (see picture below).

Latest advice is that works are now expected to begin in February, when expected low water flows in the creek will make the going easier.

This vital link in the Metropolitan Trails Network is one of the most important projects in the history of trail development in Melbourne and it is disappointing that work has not begun as expected.

Planning for the the longer section south of Sparks Reserve, being undertaken by Parks Victoria, appears on schedule. Details about construction timelines for that section are expected in the next few weeks.

## **Darebin Bridge approaches start**



**7 May 2010.** The first phase of the Darebin Bridge project, construction of the trail approaches through Sparks Reserve, will begin within months.

The building of network approaching the bridge had been on hold because of permit complications, but Parks Victoria successfully sought a variation of the permit to enable the trails to be built in advance of the bridge structure rather than concurrently.

Work on the approaches between Heidelberg Road and Sparks Reserve is set to begin by mid-year and be completed by year's end.

The trail should extend from the point shown in the photo below, under the Heidelberg Road bridge and into Sparks Reserve.

## **It's a win!**

**7 August 2009.** The legal battle has been won and the opponents vanquished: the path is now clear for the development of Melbourne's most awaited piece of bike infrastructure.

This week the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) approved the issuing of permits for the Lower Darebin Trail and associated bridge over the Yarra.

Finally there will be a connection from Heidelberg Road in Alphington through to Willsmere Park, connecting with the Main Yarra Trail in Kew.

When constructed in several years' time the trail will open up a vastly improved route and attract a new generation of riders to the pleasures of riding Melbourne's creek and river environments.

The VCAT decision brings to an end a multi-year wrestle with an ill-informed and bloody-minded group of opponents.

According to VCAT: "The permit applications are the culmination of many years of work and, we find, represent well considered, sensitive and thorough concept and revegetation plans.

"The construction of a connection between the Darebin Creek Trail and the Main Yarra River Trail is eagerly awaited by many and enjoys overwhelming policy and strategic support at State and local government levels.



"Arguments raised by the proposal's opponents are not grounds upon which any of the planning permits for the trail should be rejected. Importantly, changes that have emerged through these proceedings have resolved a long standing impasse with respect to the LaTrobe Golf Club land.

"Overall, there will be a clear net community benefit by granting all three planning permits. Detailed design and management can address the few outstanding issues."

The proposed 1.8 kilometre route involves trail connections beneath the Heidelberg Road bridge to Sparks Reserve, into land that will be acquired from Alphington Grammar School and the LaTrobe Golf Club (between which the path would pass across the Creek and across the flats of the Napier Waller Reserve), and across the Yarra River into Willsmere Park (between the Billabong and sports fields).

The main trail would be three metres wide with landscaping, boardwalks, three bridges across the Darebin Creek and one across the Yarra River, drownout areas, safety barriers/flood activated gates, emergency access, various forms of fencing and a fish ladder.

Bicycle Network CEO Harry Barber said the victory showed what strong and unswerving commitment from members could achieve.

"This was one of our biggest campaigns and the members never wavered despite the many setbacks and delays. The day that bridge opens will be one of the proudest in our history".

Parks Victoria applied for planning permits to three Councils: the Cities of Banyule, Boroondara and Yarra in August 2007 to complete the missing link. All three permits were subsequently referred to VCAT by Parks Victoria.

"This is a fantastic and long anticipated outcome for local communities, and walkers and cyclists more broadly" said Cheryl Nagel, Manager Visitor Experiences for Parks Victoria.

"Once the trail is constructed, people will be able to walk, cycle or roller-blade on an easy gradient, sealed, off-road path alongside the Darebin creek and over the Yarra River to access the area's beautiful parks, or to join the network of trails both to the north and south".

"We would like to acknowledge the willingness of the three Councils – Banyule, Boroondara and Yarra – to work with us to achieve this outcome."

"Importantly we commend both Latrobe Golf Club and Alphington Grammar school for agreeing to sell to the State Government the land necessary to allow the final link in this trail to be achieved. This demonstrates substantial goodwill to the communities".

Parks Victoria will now develop the detailed designs for the trail construction and arrange for the purchase of the required land, and then construct the trail.

The section to link the current end of the Darebin Trail, under Heidelberg road to Sparks Reserve in Ivanhoe will be the first part of the trail constructed.

**5 August 2009.** Today VCAT has handed down its decision and has endorsed the Parks Victoria application to build a bridge and the associated trails. More details when we have read the judgement in detail.



## Hearing completed now for the decision

**28 July 2009.** The final VCAT hearing on the permits for the bridge has been completed, with objectors failing to lay a glove on the Parks Victoria plan for the project.

The tribunal is expected to announce its decision in about a month. As expected VCAT was told that the LaTrobe Golf Club had agreed to sell a critical parcel of land to the project, clearing the last remaining obstacle for the bridge to proceed to the design stage. Should the Tribunal give the go ahead, complex and lengthy legal processes will begin to transfer property to Parks Victoria. These could take more than 12 months to complete. Construction of the bridge could take several years after that, bringing to 17 years the total time since Bicycle Network began the campaign to get the bridge built.

## Bridge plan leaps legal obstacle

**9 April 2009.** One of the obstacles standing in the way of the Darebin Bridge project opposition by LaTrobe Golf Club has been overcome with the club agreeing to negotiate the acquisition of land required by the development.

The club, located in Alphington abutting the Bridge site, had originally objected to the plans, but at the VCAT hearing in February announced that it had withdrawn its objection. Furthermore, the club agreed to enter into negotiations with Parks Victoria for the transfer of land needed for construction purposes.

The change of heart by the club has meant that Parks Victoria can now optimise the alignment of the Bridge and its approaches.

The proposed new plan will need to be assessed by VCAT and the remaining objectors before any final go-ahead can be made.

That will be in July.

## Practice hearing

**4 December 2008.** Parks Victoria's appeal to VCAT will go to a practice hearing tomorrow 5 December 2008. The purpose of the practice hearing is to consider progress of the application and to make any 'procedural arrangements' before the main Tribunal hearing in February.

The main hearing begins on 16 February 2009 and may run for seven days.

## Darebin Council commits to bridge battle

**6 November 2008.** Darebin Council will take its fight for the Darebin Bridge -- the missing link in Melbourne's cycling network -- to the formal hearing before VCAT (Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal)



“We’ve been looking forward to the completion of this project for many years. Darebin has done its part, now we want to see the final link approved,” General Manager Community Assets and Leisure, Geoff Glynn, said.

Parks Victoria has proposed a shared path route and bridge in Kew, to complete the link between the two trails. The matter will be decided by VCAT in December. Darebin is applying to appear at the VCAT hearing to argue in support of the proposal.

The ‘missing link’ would connect the Darebin Creek Trail with the Main Yarra Trail, meaning Darebin residents could ride all the way to the city along bike paths.

In recent years we’ve spent \$930,000 on missing links in the Darebin Creek Trail, including building a bridge into Banyule over Darebin Creek.

The Council's full statement is [here](#).

## **Banyule getting busy**



**05 November 2008.** The City of Banyule has received \$340,000 from the State Government to construct the next piece of the puzzle along the Darebin Creek Trail.

This section of the will go under the Heidelberg Road Bridge and into Sparks Reserve.

With the recent progress being made further north at [Darebin Rd](#), this new development will only add further pressure onto the Cities of Yarra and Boroondara to complete the Darebin Bridge.

The case is now scheduled to go before VCAT in February with the support of all three relevant councils (Banyule, Yarra and Boroondara) plus a number of government departments.

The campaign has not been won yet but the positives are stacking up.

## **Minister's letter**



**September 2008.** Fiona Richardson the local member on the north side of the bridge has written to the Minister responsible for Parks Victoria Gavin Jennings and asked how things are going. [Here is his reply.](#)

## **Boroondara votes yes for Darebin Creek Trail. Finally.**

**17 June 2008.** At midnight last Monday Boroondara's Urban Planning Committee granted a planning permit to Parks Victoria to extend the Darebin Creek Trail over the Yarra River and to connect to the Main Yarra Trail via Willsmere Park, ending many years of Council indecision on the matter.

The vote in favour was 5 to 4. Councillors had previously heard some 40 public submissions.

Supporting councillors were Heinz Kreutz, Coral Ross, Dick Menting, Nicholas Tragas, and Mary Haliakias-Byrnes. The matter now goes to VCAT with a positive endorsement from the City of Boroondara, adding to the support from Yarra and Banyule.

Bicycle Network will keep you informed when the VCAT hearing gets underway.

## **A Message from Bicycle Network**

**June 2008.** Many people: local riders and walkers, local councils, the state government, and Bicycle Network have been working steadily for many years to get this bridge built.

Today the project has a lot of support and the money to build it is in the bank.

For Bicycle Network this bridge is a very high priority and we are determined that it will be built soon. At the moment we are hoping for the best; construction could start before the end of this year.

All supporters of the bridge also have to be prepared for the worst. There are still a small number of noisy opponents who will attempt to stop or delay the project. We can expect public comment against the project.

Arguments will be mounted to attempt to delay the project. Some will offer to agree, provided unreasonable conditions are met. We can expect legal challenges.

This is why we all need you to join in as a supporter. One of the best things you can do is to tell others about the project and encourage them to visit [www.darebinbridge.com.au](http://www.darebinbridge.com.au)

It is likely there will be times when Councillors or Politicians will need to know how much we all want the bridge. We will keep you up to date on the campaign on the website. Click 'Email Me Updates' and you will be told immediately when something significant has happened.



Whatever the opponents of the bridge do, we will all be working hard for the bridge and we ask you to remain positive, determined and supportive.

It might be a rough ride, but it will be worth it. In future, when you use the bridge, you will experience that deep satisfaction of knowing you helped make a 20 year dream come true.

## **Called in**

**5 June 2008.** Parks Victoria has grasped the nettle and 'called in' the planning process for the Darebin Bridge and associated trials. The permits will now be considered by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

This will result in a single streamlined approvals process where the application and all the objections can be heard together, and the formal approval, when issued would have a uniform set of conditions.

The exercise of this little-used power by Parks Victoria was unexpected, but justified. Although the project had support from Yarra and Banyule councils, Boroondara had exceeded the time allowed for a decision.

Boroondara may or may not have approved the Bridge plan at its planning committee on 2 June there was an officers' recommendation in favour. But it was too late.

We could see that even with Boroondara support, it was likely that others would object to the permits. On the map we noted opponents or potential opponents such as the school, golf club and local residents.

Parks Victoria's action means, we understand, that all objectors will have to front VCAT in one hearing.

In the short term Parks Victoria has acted in the best interests of the project. The VCAT hearing will draw out all the opposition, so that it can be considered at the one time. A prompt VCAT ruling hopefully in favour of the project will put a stop to all the huffing and puffing and mark the start of action.

We expect that councils will be miffed by Parks Victoria cutting short their processes, especially as they were already (or nearly) supporters of the project. We would never deny that thorough community consultation is important.

There will be long term benefits from Parks Victoria's emphatic action. It signals a new mood of decisiveness on the Government's part. Investment in bike riding infrastructure looks to be moving up the priority list.

The VCAT hearing is the next milestone. We will keep you informed.

An [article on the issue](#) has appeared in The Age

## **Boroondara Planning Committee**



**3 June 2007.** Last night the Boroondara Planning Committee met until midnight to hear both sides debate the Darebin Trail Yarra Bridge proposal.

There was general support for bike riding, paths and the concept of a north-south link, even from the 'Antis'. The case against the specific proposal coalesced into two themes claimed negative environmental impact, and supposed poor bike rider behaviour.

Local presenters drew attention to the fauna in the billabong area, some of which are categorized as threatened. Tortoises, platypus, black cockatoos, owls, possums, bats and the Azure Kingfisher were mentioned. The ecological value of the billabong was recognised by all while noting that the proposed path in fact has negligible environmental impact, being well removed from the actual areas. Councillors were told that RMIT students study the billabong area and overseas visitors come to see it.

The Council's own ecology consultant, Dr Graeme Lorimer, told the meeting the area had survived dairy farming and a freeway. Some of the trees around the billabong predate white settlement. He said that the reduced bird breeding in the billabong was caused by the presence of dogs. The plans for the path would not compromise the important ecological values of the area, and cyclists, being quiet, have the least impact on wildlife of all likely path users, he said.

Bicycle Network has always supported protecting the ecological values of this area, as it has with other bike trail projects.

The second theme of the opposition was the alleged poor behaviour of bike riders, who were characterised perhaps even demonised as 'commuters'. Riders were associated with cutting new path alignments, not warning pedestrians and riding at up to 60kph.

The 'Antis' sought to have the Council endorse a path in another location.

There has been a substantial amount of work done over the years to identify and evaluate alternative alignments. As the council's officers reported to the meeting, the currently proposed 'direct' alignment, north from the underpass on Kilby Road and up across the Yarra at the end of the peninsula on the east side of the golf club, was the clear winner on many criteria. They said that 'alternative alignments contained significant flaws not seen in the alignment proposed.'

The pro-path speakers, including Bicycle Network, concentrated on the opportunities for recreation and transport that the path will generate. They challenged the claim that the path would only be used by commuters and also challenged the idea that all commuters were irresponsible. Others endorsed the path including over-50s riding groups associated with both Council of the Ageing (COTA) and the Darebin BUG. Students who will graduate from Alphington Primary on the north bank and are zoned to go to Kew High School on the south side of the river will also make use of the path. Another speaker outlined the informal trips that kids will be able to make across to friend's houses. Pro-path speakers emphasised their connections with park, bushwalking and restoration groups. Others reported on their responsible riding speeds providing a reality check on the claims of 60kph bike travel.



The Boroondara BUG drew attention to the value of the Yarra River valley for regional as well as local recreational, illustrated by the presence of many golf courses lining the river. Much public and private land has been allocated to golf courses over many years. Now we read in the media that 'cycling is the new golf!' And to meet the needs of bike riding as a recreation a strip of land only four metres by 300 metres needs to be allocated from the Yarra Valley in Boroondara for the proposed path.

Councillors at the meeting raised questions about how to mitigate rider speed on the path. There was a worrying suggestion to install injury-causing bollards in the middle of the path. Be assured we will work to ensure that this does not occur. We did give the Council a commitment to help them with engineering and etiquette measures that will ensure all users help share the path.

**29 May 2008.** These are the wards for Boroondara residents.



Download a [more detailed map](#).

Next Monday, 2 June 2008, the Darebin Bridge proposal will go before Boroondara Council for consideration. At this meeting all the Councillors, meeting as the Planning Committee, will consider submissions from members of the public at the meeting.

They will not vote at this meeting. They will vote two weeks later on 16 June 2008.

### **The Clock is ticking - Boroondara Council vote on 2 June the next hurdle**

May 2008. Boroondara City Council will vote on the Bridge and associated path proposal on 2 June.

We have spoken to the Councillors. One, Healy, remains resolutely opposed. Four have said they are in favour and the others have said that they will make up their mind when they read the paperwork submitted by the Council staff. They will receive this report from the staff tomorrow Friday 23 May 2008.



We will seek the commitment of the other Councillors next week and update Boroondara residents with an email. We will also update this page, so if you want to follow developments, click Email me updates above.

We recommend that residents put the date in the diary. If you only go to one Council meeting we strongly urge you to make it this one. Opponents to the bridge may be outspoken on the night so it is important for supporters and residents of Boroondara to show the Councillors that they support a 'Yes' vote.

In a positive development we have been told that the planning report prepared by Boroondara Council staff will recommend approval of the Parks Victoria application to build the path and bridge. The list of other supporting organisations includes: Parks Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment, VicRoads, Melbourne Water, Boroondara Bug, Darebin BUG as well as Bicycle Network.

We understand that officers at Yarra and Banyule, who have been delegated the decision by their Councillors, will approve the application in the near future.

If the Councils all endorse the application, this will put Parks Victoria in a strong position to finalise its planning process.

## **The Darebin Creek Trail moves further south**

**May 2008.** With the recent funding and construction announcement by Parks Victoria and the City of Darebin to [join the missing link in the Darebin Creek Trail near Darebin Rd](#), we can now say 'thank you' to Darebin City Council as their role in the Darebin Bridge project is done.



With this link now solved the spotlight swings further south along the trail.

From the tree into Sparks Reserve

The Darebin Creek trail currently ends in the City of Banyule. The orange piece at the top of your map is now complete. The short red section near the number 3 is where the trail currently ends.

To get past the tree and under the bridge Parks Victoria are negotiating to purchase a small parcel of land. This negotiation is progressing well.



If this negotiation is successful, Banyule has plans and funding in place to extend the path further south under Heidelberg Rd and into Sparks Reserve, on the north side of Darebin Creek. This work could get underway quite quickly.

### **The planning permit**

The planning permit for the main project from Sparks Reserve to the Eastern Freeway was prepared by Parks Victoria and submitted to all three remaining councils: Banyule, Yarra and Boroondara.

Planning staff at the City of Yarra and Banyule have told us that both Councils are comfortable enough with the project and will let council officers make the decision whether to support the permit. We believe this is a positive sign. It suggests that neither Yarra nor Banyule have significant concerns with the project in their area.

The southern section of the project - from Number 6 on your map - leaves the City of Yarra on a bridge across the Yarra River and enters the City of Boroondara. The planning application will go to a vote before Boroondara Council on Monday 2 June.

Many residents wrote to the City of Boroondara during the period of public comment. There is a discrepancy between the many hundreds of CCed emails that we received - well done everyone - and the number that Boroondara report receiving.

Over the next two weeks we will be following this issue up as well as contacting the Councillors. We think the vote is 50:50 at the moment, some Councillors are clearly for and some against and some are keeping their cards close to their chest.

We will tell you what we find out in the next In the Loop. That will come out on 22 May which will give members and friends of Bicycle Network who live in Boroondara a chance to contact their Councillors if necessary.

### **Time to write - the signs are up**

**March 2008.** We have asked residents of Yarra and Boroondara to write in support of the project to their Council. The period for public comment closes on March 18.

Here are our submissions to the three Councils: [Banyule](#), [Boroondara](#), [Yarra](#)

### **Good news**



**February 2008.** There is movement at the station on the Darebin Bridge project. We have just received a note from Parks Victoria which includes the following:

'Parks Victoria lodged planning permit applications on the 31st of August, 2007 with the Banyule, Yarra and Boroondara Councils to complete the final section of the Darebin Creek Trail from Heidelberg Road to the Main Yarra Trail. Two of the three councils [Yarra and Boroondara] requested further information which has now been provided.'

This Q&A is what has pushed the timelines out from August until now. It might be a good sign that neither Council wanted more information about the alignment. Their concerns were about the size and shape of the bridge. This matter will now come formally before Councillors in these two Councils.

If you are a resident of these two Councils can you please write a short, positive note of support for the project. Your support as a ratepayer is vital to help us get over this hurdle. This public notification will be a signal for the opponents of the project to write as well!

Parks Victoria's note continued:

'The planning permit applications are now ready to proceed to public exhibition. The public exhibition period will extend from the 4th of March till the 18th of March. Notification of the public exhibition period will be placed in the Heidelberg, Melbourne/Yarra and Progress Leader.

Identical plans and supporting documentation have been provided to all three councils and will be on display at the relevant council offices during office hours. The planning permit application details are as follows:

Banyule City Council P635/2007	44 Turnham Avenue, Rosanna	Ref No.
Yarra City Council PL07/0812	333 Bridge Road, Richmond	Ref No.
Boroondara City Council PP07/00882	8 Inglesby Road, Camberwell	Ref No.



Alternatively the plans and supporting documentation will be available to view during the public exhibition period [here](#).

This means that we are now into the critical part of the campaign. If we can swing all the Councils in behind the project at this stage, we have a better chance of surviving future challenges.

## **All clear for the Kew Billabong path to the Darebin bridge**

**November 2007.** Dr Graeme Lorimer has given the all clear for the path to the Darebin Bridge past the environmental sensitive Kew Billabong.

Dr Lorimer's report commissioned by the City of Boroondara, states that the Darebin Bridge and associated shared path will not negatively impact on the vegetation or animal life in Willsmere Park or the Kew Billabong.

The report supports the many years of assessments and design work carried out by numerous Councils and Government Departments. The conclusions of the report are not surprising given that the path alignment runs under the freeway, past a soccer ground and over a regularly mown grassy area to the river bank. It completely avoids the billabong.

On one hand the report will reassure those concerned about the impact of the trail. On the other hand those who have tried to use the unique qualities of the billabong to oppose the path have been shown up by this report.

Importantly this report will inform decisions by the Boroondara Council. The Mayor of Boroondara has in the past, quite rightly, said that Council cannot support the project if it has negative impacts on the environment. This report means that the Mayor and Councillors can now swing their support behind the project.

The report highlighted increased pedestrian use and dog traffic along the banks of the river as the biggest threat to the environment. The report also states that these can be managed if they eventuate.

Boroondara, Yarra and Banyule Councils are currently considering planning applications for the Darebin Bridge Project. Councils will be seeking public comment early in the New Year and should be voting on the project soon after. Yarra and Banyule Councils have supported the project for many years.

## **Consideration of Planning Permit applications grinding along slowly**

**November 2007.** Riders could be excused for thinking that nothing has happened since the planning applications for the Darebin Bridge project were lodged over two months ago. While little has happened publicly Parks Victoria and the Councils are working busily behind the scenes.



Parks Victoria is currently working to answer the final questions that Councils have asked about the project and we expect that Banyule, Yarra and Boroondara Councils will be calling for public comment on the project by January. This will be your chance to support the project.

The past few months have seen support for the project grow from the community and all levels of Government. We will let you know when the consultation opens and you have the opportunity to show your support. For an email update make sure you click on 'email me updates' above.

## **Planning Applications have been lodged**

**31 August 2007.** Parks Victoria have lodged the planning applications for the Darebin Bridge with the Councils of Banyule, Yarra and Boroondara. So now after many years of studying the form guide, the ball has been bounced and the real game can begin!

Click on 'Email me Updates' (right) to keep up to date as we will be asking for your support in the very near future.

## **Construction starts on Banyule section**

August 2007. The City of Banyule, with funding assistance from Parks Victoria, is currently building a new section of the Darebin Creek Trail. This will extend the trail south of Darebin Parklands to the Heidelberg Road Bridge and is an essential part of the Darebin Bridge project. Unfortunately the new trail will not quite make it under Heidelberg Road and into Sparks Reserve. We are hopeful construction of the trail into Sparks Reserve will commence in 2008.

The photos below show the construction of a new creek crossing and associated trail construction.



The image below shows the new section of trail in green and the new creek crossing in blue. Sparks Reserve is the park area to the south of Heidelberg Road that the trail should reach in early 2008.



## Maps now available in Bike Shops

June 2007. You can [pick up a map](#) from a number of bike stores around the bridge.

## Planning application in the works

May 2007. A planning application is yet to be submitted to the relevant councils for the Darebin Bridge and associated trail. Parks Victoria is working to resolve some last minute legal issues before this is done.

In the coming months we can expect Yarra, Darebin, Banyule and Boroondara councils to all be considering planning applications for the bridge. You can be a part of the process by registering your support for the project during public consultation. Click on email me updates above to be notified when you can have your say.

## Briefing for Boroondara

March 07. Boroondara Councillors have received a briefing from Parks Victoria about the Darebin bridge. A Council officer told us the meeting 'was to provide an opportunity to explain the issue to Councillors so that when the planning application is lodged by Parks Victoria, Councillors can make an informed decision.'

After receiving well over 200 emails no formal decision to support a planning application for the bridge was made, however council are now committed considering any planning application that is lodged.

After a year of slow but steady progress the project has recently become very public again. Recent events include:

- The Mayor of Boroondara has publicly opposed the location of the bridge going against the 2006 masterplan developed and endorsed by council.



- Parks Victoria is ready to submit planning applications although the City of Boroondara appears to be stalling this process.

2007 will be a challenging and hopefully very productive year for the project. One thing is certain: Your support will be required at some stage so please click email me updates above to stay in touch, we will send you an email when the campaign heats up.

## **Boroondara Council needs to know you want the bridge**

**February 2007.** The Mayor, Phillip Healey, has been speaking against the bridge in the local papers.

Please show your support for the bridge by emailing the Boroondara councillors.

Councillors need to know that you want the Darebin Creek Trail to link to the Main Yarra Trail and that you want them to accept and approve the planning application.

[Click here to email](#) the Mayor and Councilors. Please say if you live in Boroondara and remember to keep it positive, grumpy emails turn Councilors off.

To be notified of news and actions, see 'email me updates' at top of page. Find out what you can do to help.

Council's masterplan for Willsmere Park endorses the bridge location as proposed by Parks Victoria. The Parks Victoria plan is based on more than 10 years of consultation and investigation.

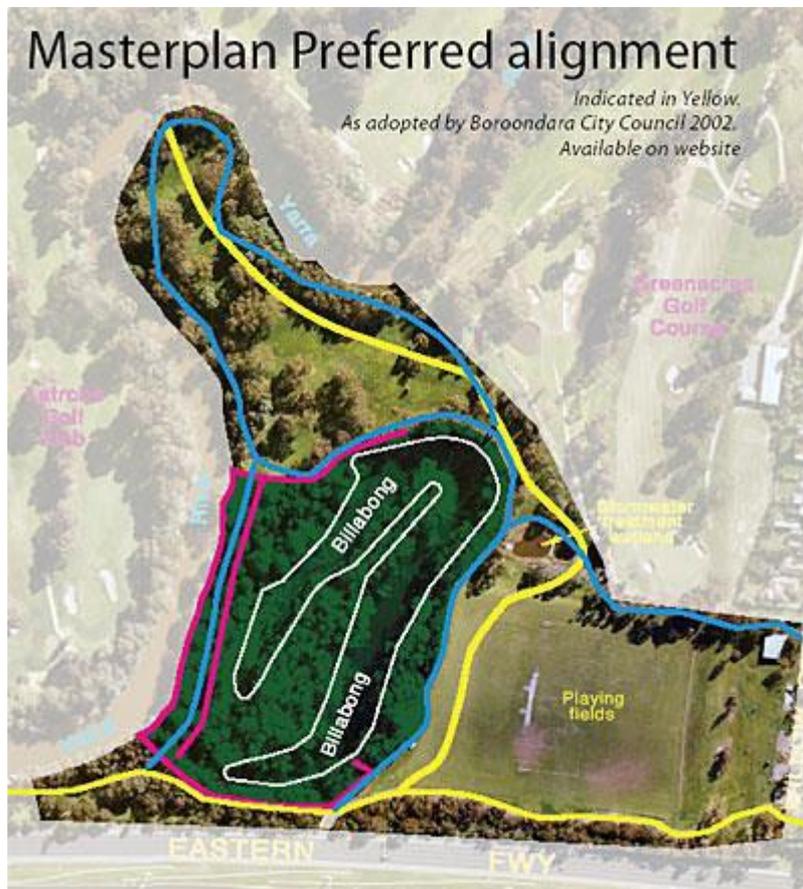
The Mayor has been stating that council no longer supports the route and wants the bridge in another location. Previous investigations have shown all alternative routes to be unworkable.

With your support the other councilors will outvote the Mayor.

Cr Healey has been claiming that the bridge and trail will impact on important ecological areas in Willsmere Park.

However the report he cites clearly states that significant ecological values are restricted to the Kew Billabong and single large trees.

The trail will be constructed well outside the fenced boundary of the Kew Billabong and avoids all significant vegetation as shown in the diagram to the right with the trail route previously adopted by council shown in yellow.



## **\$2 million to build the Bridge**

**August 2006.** The state government has announced \$2 million for the construction of the link between the Darebin Creek Trail and the Main Yarra Trail. This is great news for this long overdue project.

## **Meeting with Minister Delahunty**

**November 2005.** Bicycle Network met with Minister Mary Delahunty, the state member of parliament for Northcote, about connecting the Darebin Creek Trail to the Main Yarra Trail. The Minister is very supportive of the project and will work with Bicycle Network and community groups to lobby for state government funding of the project. There are currently no state government funds allocated for the construction of the trail south of Sparks Reserve to the Yarra River. This section has not been fully costed but is anticipated to be between \$2 and \$4 million. Current funding from the state is \$1 million per year for the whole of the Metropolitan Trail Network (MTN). Obviously only a fraction of this can be allocated to the Darebin Creek Trail and even if the project were to receive one quarter of the current funds available it could not be finished within 10 years. Bicycle Network is calling for state government funding for the MTN to increase to \$5 million per year. Parks Victoria is currently preparing



planning applications for the project. It is hoped that they will be submitted by the end of the 2005 and approvals granted in early 2006.

## **MTN funding announced -- Darebin bridge will benefit**

**October 2005.** After Bicycle Network members wrote over 500 letters earlier this year, Minister Thwaites has announced a new fund for the Metropolitan Trail Network (MTN). Funding for the MTN now meets the state government's 2002 election promise; however more money will be needed to fund critical projects.

The new fund will provide \$187,500 towards the construction of the missing section of Darebin Creek Trail between Grange Road and Darebin Road. The City of Darebin will also provide some matching funding for the project.

While the funding is a commendable step, current government funding will not be able to connect the Darebin Creek Trail through to the Main Yarra Trail in Kew. A commitment of significant additional funding will be required within the next year to ensure this important link is realised.

We believe that increasing the Metropolitan Trail Network annual funding to \$5 million could deliver this and other important projects on the trail network.

The development of the new fund provides all trail users with an opportunity to thank Minister Thwaites for developing the MTN fund and to stress the importance of additional funding to the Minister and local MP Mary Delahunty.

You can email Minister Thwaites at [john.thwaites@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:john.thwaites@minstaff.vic.gov.au) and Minister Delahunty at [mary.delahunty@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:mary.delahunty@minstaff.vic.gov.au). Don't forget to send a copy (bcc) to [campaigns@bv.com.au](mailto:campaigns@bv.com.au).

## **Darebin Parklands section complete**

**December 2004.** Darebin Council has constructed a section of path south from Darebin Parklands as far as the Hurstbridge railway line. It is planned to continue the path next financial year to Heidelberg Rd and Sparks Reserve.



When complete the project will link the Darebin Ck Trail to the Main Yarra Trail - a crucial gap in Melbourne's shared path network.



The project will extend the Darebin Creek Trail south from the Darebin Parklands to where the Anniversary-Outer Circle Trail passes under the Eastern Fwy (Melway Map 31C9 to 45F1).

Parks Victoria is negotiating with affected landholders along the proposed route and will eventually need to apply for planning permits to proceed. Progress has been slow but we are confident the project will eventually go ahead.

The section in Sparks Reserve has also become more urgent since an existing footbridge over the Darebin Creek was washed away in the December 2003 floods, increasing demand for the trail to be constructed through this section asap.

Completing the link is one of Bicycle Network's highest priority campaigns. It will give the residents of Melbourne's north-eastern suburbs access to hundreds of kilometres of popular bike paths throughout the metropolitan area.

### Benefits

Linking the Darebin Trail to the Yarra Trail will allow cyclists to travel:

- downstream on the Yarra Trail to the City
- upstream on the Yarra Trail to Westerfolds Park in Templestowe
- along the Anniversary Trail through Kew and Camberwell to the Gardiners Creek Trail in Malvern.
- The path will allow access for students all the way to Latrobe University and eventually to RMIT's Bundoora campus.

## Challenges to overcome

### Keeping this route

All alternative routes have been explored and ruled out

### Enlisting Alphington Grammar

Alphington Grammar has expressed in principle support recognising the transport, recreational and excursion benefits for their students. They need to make a definite commitment.

### Getting access to public parks

Some locals think Napier Waller Reserve and Kew Billabong are their private parks instead of public spaces for us all to enjoy.

### Getting past the golf course

The Latrobe Golf Club has opposed the Bridge, despite the trail avoiding all playing areas. The functions of the golf club will not be affected.

### Distinguishing between open parkland and environmentally sensitive areas



Some Boroondara residents and the Mayor don't recognise that the bridge and trail avoids all ecologically sensitive areas. The whole project has been given the thumbs up by the experts.

## **Draft Landscape Concept Plan for Willsmere Chandler Billabong 'Buffer Zone' released**

**July 2007.** The City of Boroondara has released a Draft Landscape Concept Plan for Willsmere Chandler Billabong 'Buffer Zone'. This is unlikely to have a major impact on the overall project, however it could reduce options for the best trail route in the future.

This plan could be seen as a move by Boroondara Council to hinder the progression of the bridge project. Council are seeking comment until July 25th 2007.

Whilst we support council's desire to revegetate the area and improve this asset we note that the design differs greatly from the previous concept as muted in the Council Approved Management Plan.

We are surprised that the soccer pitch appears to have been moved even closer toward the Billabong, and further away from the infrastructure (pavilion, seats and lighting, all currently at eastern end) built to support it.

Unfortunately the plan appears to significantly reduce flexibility for a future trail alignment adjacent to the soccer pitch and could result in a trail closer to the billabong than is necessary.

We are also surprised by the seemingly premature statement on the council website:

"Please note that the plan does not show a shared path link through the reserve to connect the Darebin Creek Shared Trail with the Main Yarra Shared Trail, as this alignment for the path connection is not supported by Council. Council is concerned about the impacts that the construction of the trail and the bridge crossing over the Yarra River will have on the environmental values of the park."

This statement appears to preempt the outcome of Council's consideration of Parks Victoria's planning application for the bridge over the Yarra River and associated trail in Willsmere Chandler Park. The planning application will be submitted in July 2007.

The current Council is yet to consider the Parks Victoria proposal, although it is noted that council has previously made clear its desire for an alternative to a previous Parks Victoria application (Council resolution 2003).

The imminent planning application from Parks Victoria provides the opportunity for the current Council to vote on the preferred bridge location and trail alignment.

We have asked that the Draft Landscape Concept Plan for Willsmere Chandler Billabong 'Buffer Zone' be reviewed after the Parks Victoria application is lodged and council has made a clear decision on that application.

## **The Darebin Bridge Project**



## **Summary of the Darebin Bridge Project**

There is a bridge that will link six of our most popular trails: the Darebin Creek trail and the Metropolitan Ring Road Trail linked to the Main Yarra trail, The Outer Circle or Anniversary Trail, the Koonung Creek Trail and the Capital City Trail.

If you live north of the Yarra River, imagine being connected to the paths that everyone else uses.

This bridge will give you easy access to hundreds of kilometres of popular bike paths throughout the metropolitan area.

It will be great for students at a dozen schools riding every day, from both sides of the river. It will open a new convenient car free route to La Trobe University. It will be perfect for CBD workers who want to commute by bike.

The bridge will open up 600km of bike paths all over the metropolitan area from your front door. You will be able to ride to Fed Square for coffee or Westerfolds park, head off for Ringwood or ride down to the Bay. Shop by bike at Chadstone or in Chapel Street.

If you live in Yarra or south of the river in Boroondara, Whitehorse and Manningham you will be able to get across to the Darebin parklands, Latrobe Uni and the Western Ring Road.

For all this to happen we need the bridge.

The Darebin Bridge.

## **History of the Darebin Bridge project**

1989 – User survey showed strong support for bridge

1993 - Lower Darebin Creek concept plan adopted.

1993 - Golf club agrees to allow the trail through.

1995 – BVNews article calls for the bridge to be built

1997 – BVNews reports state funds are solid.

1997 - Boroondara approves plan and funding

1997- Locals object to Tribunal claiming it is a 'pristine area'. Objection thrown out and permit awarded

1998 – LaTrobe Golf Club refuses to sell land to the trail.

1999 – Boroondara planning approval lapses and is extended

2000 – Minister Thwaites commits to Public Open Space zoning for the trail and bridge

2001 – Boroondara refuses to extend planning approval

2002 – Boroondara endorses Willsmere Park Management Plan and bridge

2002 - Golf Club to "fight tooth and nail" against trail



2004 – Concept design completed by Parks Victoria

2005 – Negotiations completed for two key properties north of Heidelberg Road Bridge

2006 – Premier Bracks announces \$2 million funding

## **People who will use the Bridge**

### **Walkers**

Kew residents will walk to Darebin Parklands, a unique stretch of secluded native bush. People who live in Alphington, Ivanhoe and Fairfield will walk to Sparks Reserve, Napier Waller Reserve and Kew Billabong.

### **School students**

A dozen schools are within 5 km of the bridge. So kids will walk or ride from home to school on the other side of the river. They'll enjoy it, it'll do them good and there will be less traffic on the roads.

### **Uni students**

From the Harp Hotel, a LaTrobe uni student will beat the bus or the Plenty Road tram to Uni. Coming the other way, a northern suburbs student will ride across the bridge and straight down to Swinburne.

### **Commuters**

More people will be able to ride to work in town in under thirty minutes. It's not just CBD commuters; Camberwell Junction, Northland, Chadstone and Prahran/South Yarra are all easy cycling distance from the bridge:

### **Recreational visitors**

This one bridge will enable Darebin residents to choose between coffee at Westerfolds or Studley Park Boathouse, muffins in Eltham, Fed Square or at Heide Gallery. Outings to the Zoo, CERES or the Collingwood Children's Farm will be easy.

It's going to be a busy bridge.

## **Supporters of the Bridge**

### **Government Support**

In 2002, the Darebin Bridge was identified in the State Government's strategy for Melbourne's open space, Linking People and Spaces. The strategy said it was one of Melbourne's highest priority projects.

This strategy said that Parks Victoria and local governments should "close the gaps in the Darebin trail from John Cain Memorial Park south to the Main Yarra Trail at Willsmere Park" within three years.



Other state government bodies agree: VicRoads, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Melbourne Water have all committed money or formally supported the project.

Even with this wide-ranging support, the three year time frame has not been met.

The bridge got a boost in May 2006 when Premier Steve Bracks announced a \$2m State Government commitment to the bridge, demonstrating that this is a project of state-wide significance.

The new local MP in Northcote, Filona Richardson, has recently been attending community meetings about the bridge and is very supportive of the project.

### **Council Support**

In early 2007 the new mayor of Boroondara publicly stated that he was opposed to the project as proposed by Parks Victoria and supported by all other Councils involved. All Councils have shown strong support for the bridge for over a decade – including Boroondara. The City of Boroondara’s current Park Masterplan endorses the bridge location.

The current Boroondara Council is yet to consider the Parks Victoria proposal, although it is noted that Council has previously made clear its desire for an alternative to a previous Parks Victoria application (Council resolution 2003).

### **Community Support**

It’s not just government bodies that support the Darebin Bridge. Many community groups and local residents have invested years of effort to bring about this vital part of Melbourne’s infrastructure. Following is a list of the bridge’s champions and defenders.

- Banyule Bicycle User group
- Boroondara Bicycle User Group
- Darebin Bicycle User Group
- Yarra Bicycle User Group
- Community Coalition for Darebin – Yarra Bridge Trail:
- Alphington Primary Safe Route Committee
- Darebin Bicycle User Group
- Darebin Creek Management Committee
- Darebin Parklands Association
- Friends of Darebin Parklands
- South Alphington and Fairfield Civic Association

In summary:

- The relevant government bodies support the bridge.



- The local residents, community groups and bicycle user groups support the bridge.

Bicycle Network has been a long time supporter of this project.

The challenge to all of us now is to get over the last few hurdles. It will not be easy or smooth sailing but the bridge is ready to build.

## What you can do

### Tell your friends and order some maps

One of the best things you can do is show your copy of the Let's Build the Bridge map to as many people as possible.

If you need some more copies or know someone who does, you can get some maps in the following ways:

- Visit one of the bike stores in the area that is stocking the map. These are
  - Ivanhoe Cycles - Heidelberg Road, Ivanhoe
  - Lawrencia Cycles - Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn
  - Melbourne Bicycle Centre - Queens Parade, Clifton Hill
  - Top Gear - Doncaster Rd, Greythorn

Have a look at where the bridge will land (Melways 45 F1)

### Write a letter of support to your Mayor and Councillors

Writing a positive letter of support to your ward councillor and mayor can help projects through difficult times.

Councillor's emails addresses can be found at your council's website.

[Banyule Council](#)

[Boroondara Council](#)

[Darebin Council](#)

[Yarra Council](#)

### Write a letter of support to Minister Thwaites and your local MPs

- [Write to the Hon John Thwaites](#), Deputy Premier and Minister for Environment, Water and Climate Change.
- Minister Thwaites has responsibility for Parks Victoria and has been a long time supporter of the project since his involvement as Planning Minister a number of years ago.
- If you live in Northcote you can [write to Fiona Richardson MP](#), who is the member for Northcote and is proving to be a strong supporter of the trail.
- If you live in Ivanhoe you can [write to Craig Langdon MP](#), who is the member for Ivanhoe.
- If you live in Kew you can [write to Andrew McIntosh MP](#), who is the member for Kew.



## Write a letter to your local paper

Writing a letter in support of the bridge to a local paper can be very effective, especially in helping councillors recognise the importance of the project.

The following papers have all written a lot about the project of the years.

- Write to the [Yarra Leader](#)
- Write to the [Northcote Leader](#)
- Write to the [Preston Leader](#)
- Write to the [Heidelberg Leader](#)
- Write to the [Progress Leader](#) (Boroondara)
- Write to the [Melbourne Times](#)
- Write to the [Heidelberg and Valley Weekly](#)

## Earlier News

### Consideration of Planning Permit applications grinding along slowly

**Nov 07.** Riders could be excused for thinking that nothing has happened since the planning applications for the Darebin Bridge project were lodged over two months ago. While little has happened publicly Parks Victoria and the Councils are working busily behind the scenes.

Parks Victoria is currently working to answer the final questions that Councils have asked about the project and we expect that Banyule, Yarra and Boroondara Councils will be calling for public comment on the project by January. This will be your chance to support the project.

The past few months have seen support for the project grow from the community and all levels of Government. We will let you know when the consultation opens and you have the opportunity to show your support. For an email update make sure you click on 'email me updates' above.

### Planning Applications have been lodged

**31 Aug 07.** Parks Victoria have lodged the planning applications for the Darebin Bridge with the Councils of Banyule, Yarra and Boroondara. So now after many years of studying the form guide, the ball has been bounced and the real game can begin!

Click on 'Email me Updates' (right) to keep up to date as we will be asking for your support in the very near future.

### Construction starts on Banyule section

Aug 07 The City of Banyule, with funding assistance from Parks Victoria, is currently building a new section of the Darebin Creek Trail. This will extend the trail south of Darebin Parklands to the Heidelberg Road Bridge and is an essential part of the



Darebin Bridge project. Unfortunately the new trail will not quite make it under Heidelberg Road and into Sparks Reserve. We are hopeful construction of the trail into Sparks Reserve will commence in 2008.

The photos below show the construction of a new creek crossing and associated trail construction.

The image below shows the new section of trail in green and the new creek crossing in blue. Sparks Reserve is the park area to the south of Heidelberg Road that the trail should reach in early 2008.

### **Darebin Bridge in the news**

**Jul 07.** The Darebin Bridge has been making news in the last week. Northcote MP Fiona Richardson raised the issue in [Parliament on July 19](#) and there was also a detailed article in [The Age on Saturday July 21](#).

What you can do

- Parks Victoria is about to submit planning applications for the project. Boroondara, Darebin and Yarra Councils are likely to be calling for public comment on in late July. Click on email me updates above to be notified.
- The City of Boroondara is asking for comments (until July 25th) on their proposal to move a soccer pitch to where the proposed trail could be built.
- Tell you friends or learn more by [getting a copy](#) of the map.

### **Stay Tuned - Planning applications to be submitted soon**

**Jul 07.** We've heard from a number of government sources that July is the month that Parks Victoria will be submitting planning applications to Boroondara, Darebin and Yarra Councils.

This will be the time to show your support for the Darebin Bridge project. Make sure you click on email me updates above so we can let you know when the consultation begins.

### **Local MP writes to Minister Thwaites**

**Jul 07.** Fiona Richardson, Member for Northcote, has [written a letter](#) to Minister John Thwaites to ensure the appropriate level of funding is available to build the bridge.

### **Contract Awarded**

**Jul 07.** The contract has been awarded to build a section of the trail, in Banyule, between the Railway Bridge and Heidelberg Rd (Melway Ref 31 D10). Construction should begin soon.



Negotiations are still underway to acquire the land needed to get the trail through to Sparks Reserve.

## Maps now available in Bike Shops

**Jun 07.** You can pick up a map from a number of bike stores around the bridge.

## The Next Move

**May 07.** For many months Parks Victoria has promised to submit planning applications to the relevant councils. It is now unclear whether a planning permit will be needed in the City of Boroondara section.

Meanwhile Boroondara Councils position on giving the necessary consent for a planning application to be lodged remains unclear.

The situation is complex because Council is the land manager of Willsmere Park and any planning application needs a letter from them that gives consent for the application to be lodged. The planning application will then go through the normal planning approvals process including public consultation and a final decision by council. Therefore council has the power to knock back a planning application without allowing it to go through the normal consultation and planning approvals process.

After many emails and a presentation from Parks Victoria, it appeared that council were happy to give the necessary consent for a planning application to be lodged.

It is a critical and frustrating time in what is sure to be a long process. It seems that two things are needed:

- Parks Victoria needs to decide if a planning application is to be submitted and if so it needs to be done as soon as possible
- Boroondara Council needs to commit to allowing a planning application to be submitted should it be required. This step does not mean that council supports the proposed trail alignment or bridge location. Instead it simply ensures that the application for the bridge is considered by the correct planning process.

**May 07.** A planning application is yet to be submitted to the relevant councils for the Darebin Bridge and associated trail. Parks Victoria is working to resolve some last minute legal issues before this is done.

In the coming months we can expect Yarra, Darebin, Banyule and Boroondara councils to all be considering planning applications for the bridge. You can be a part of the process by registering your support for the project during public consultation. Click on email me updates at [www.darebinbridge.com.au](http://www.darebinbridge.com.au) to be notified when you can have your say.

**Mar 07.** Boroondara Councillors have received a briefing from Parks Victoria about the Darebin bridge. A Council officer told us the meeting 'was to provide an opportunity to explain the issue to Councillors so that when the planning application is lodged by Parks Victoria, Councillors can make an informed decision.'



After receiving well over 200 emails no formal decision to support a planning application for the bridge was made, however council are now committed considering any planning application that is lodged.

**Feb 07.** The Mayor, Phillip Healey, has been speaking against the bridge in the local papers.

Please show your support for the bridge by emailing the Boroondara councilors.

Councillors need to know that you want the Darebin Creek Trail to link to the Main Yarra Trail and that you want them to accept and approve the planning application.

[Click here to email](#) the Mayor and Councilors. Please say if you live in Boroondara and remember to keep it positive, grumpy emails turn Councilors off.

Council's masterplan for Willsmere Park endorses the bridge location as proposed by Parks Victoria. The Parks Victoria plan is based on more than 10 years of consultation and investigation.

The Mayor has been stating that council no longer supports the route and wants the bridge in another location. Previous investigations have shown all alternative routes to be unworkable. With your support the other councilors will outvote the Mayor.

Cr Healey has been claiming that the bridge and trail will impact on important ecological areas in Willsmere Park. However the report he cites clearly states that significant ecological values are restricted to the Kew Billabong and single large trees.

The trail will be constructed well outside the fenced boundary of the Kew Billabong and avoids all significant vegetation as shown in the diagram to the right with the trail route previously adopted by council shown in yellow.

## **Darebin Creek Trail connection to the Main Yarra Trail**

**Mar 07.** After a year of slow but steady progress the project has recently become very public again. Recent events include:

- The Mayor of Boroondara has publicly opposed the location of the bridge going against the 2006 masterplan developed and endorsed by council.
- Parks Victoria is ready to submit planning applications although the City of Boroondara appears to be stalling this process.

2007 will be a challenging and hopefully very productive year for the project. One thing is certain: Your support will be required at some stage so please click email me updates above to stay in touch, we will send you an email when the campaign heats up.

**Aug 06.** The state government has announced \$2 million for the construction of the link between the Darebin Creek Trail and the Main Yarra Trail. This is great news for this long overdue project.

**Nov 05.** Bicycle Network met with Minister Mary Delahunty, the state member of parliament for Northcote, about connecting the Darebin creek trail to the Main Yarra Trail. The Minister is very supportive of the project and will work with Bicycle Network and community groups to lobby for state government funding of the project.



There are currently no state government funds allocated for the construction of the trail south of Sparks Reserve to the Yarra River. This section has not been fully costed but is anticipated to be between two to four million dollars.

Current funding from the state government is \$1 million per year for the whole of the Metropolitan Trail Network (MTN). Obviously only a fraction of this can be allocated to the Darebin Creek Trail and even if the project were to receive one quarter of the current funds available it could not be finished within 10 years.

We are calling for state government funding for the MTN to increase to \$5 Million per year. Parks Victoria is currently preparing planning applications for the project. It is hoped that they will be submitted by the end of 2005 and approvals granted in early 2006.

**Oct 05.** After Bicycle Network members wrote over 500 letters earlier this year, Minister Thwaites has announced a new fund for the Metropolitan Trail Network (MTN). Funding for the MTN now meets the state governments 2002 election promise; however more money will be needed to fund critical projects.

The new fund will provide \$187,500 towards the construction of the missing section of Darebin Creek Trail between Grange Road and Darebin Road. The City of Darebin will also provide some matching funding for the project.

While the funding is a commendable step, current government funding will not be able to connect the Darebin Creek Trail through to the Main Yarra Trail in Kew. A commitment of significant additional funding will be required within the next year to ensure this important link is realised.

We believe that increasing the Metropolitan Trail Network annual funding to five million dollars could deliver this and other important projects on the trail network.

The development of the new fund provides all trail users with an opportunity to thank Minister Thwaites for developing the MTN fund and to stress the importance of additional funding to the Minister and local MP Mary Delahunty.

You can email Minister Thwaites at [john.thwaites@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:john.thwaites@minstaff.vic.gov.au) and Minister Delahunty at [mary.delahunty@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:mary.delahunty@minstaff.vic.gov.au). Don't forget to send a copy (bcc) to [campaigns@bv.com.au](mailto:campaigns@bv.com.au).

Dec 04 Darebin Council has constructed a section of path south from Darebin Parklands as far as the Hurstbridge railway line. It is planned to continue the path next financial year to Heidelberg Rd and Sparks Reserve

When complete the project will link the Darebin Ck Trail to the Main Yarra Trail - a crucial gap in Melbourne's shared path network.

The project will extend the Darebin Creek Trail south from the Darebin Parklands to where the Anniversary-Outer Circle Trail passes under the Eastern Fwy Melway Map 31C9 to 45 F1).

Parks Victoria is negotiating with affected landholders along the proposed route and will eventually need to apply for planning permits to proceed. Progress has been slow but we are confident the project will eventually go ahead.



The section in Sparks Reserve has also become more urgent since an existing footbridge over the Darebin Creek was washed away in the December 2003 floods, increasing demand for the trail to be constructed through this section asap.

Completing the link is one of Bicycle Network's highest priority campaigns. It will give the residents of Melbourne's north-eastern suburbs access to hundreds of kilometres of popular bike paths throughout the metropolitan area.

### **Benefits**

Linking the Darebin Trail to the Yarra Trail will allow cyclists to travel:

- downstream on the Yarra Trail to the City
- upstream on the Yarra Trail to Westerfolds in Templestowe
- along the Anniversary Trail through and Camberwell to the Gardiners Creek Trail in Malvern.
- the path will allow access for students all the way to Latrobe University and eventually to RMIT's Bundoora campus.