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## Submission to the Future Melbourne (Transport) Committee

### Princes Bridge Northbound Bike Lane

Victoria Walks congratulates the City of Melbourne for undertaking the trial of an on-road bicycle lane on Princes Bridge, which rectifies a previous error in placing bicycles on the footpath.

Victoria Walks is concerned that the public debate around the Princes Bridge northbound bike lane trial has largely ignored the positive impact of the project on walking.

Princes Bridge is a key pedestrian route across the Yarra River, connecting some of Melbourne's most significant pedestrian destinations including Flinders Street Railway Station, Federation Square and the arts precinct. Princes Bridge is used by approximately 30,000 pedestrians per day. Between 5 and 6pm an average 3,178 people walk across the bridge, more than the number who cross by car (2,166) and bicycle (909) combined (City of Melbourne 2013a).

The existing footpaths on each side of the Bridge are not suitable to be used as shared paths or to be divided into separated paths for cyclists and pedestrians. VicRoads' Guidelines for shared path design do not anticipate paths with volumes greater than 200 pedestrians per hour (VicRoads 2013). With between 700 and 2,500 pedestrians per hour<sup>1</sup>, Princes Bridge is literally 'off the chart' in terms of pedestrian volumes. VicRoads recommend separate bike and footpath facilities for higher volumes, but there is insufficient space on the Princes Bridge footpaths to create comfortable, separated cycling and pedestrian environments. Princes Bridge (prior to the bike lane trial) is used as an illustration of poor separation of cyclists and walkers in the VicRoads' Guidelines (attached). A footpath of this width, with very high levels of walkers and cyclists, should never be used as a shared path.

The dramatic increase in cycling during the trial period clearly indicates that the previous configuration was not operating safely or efficiently and was therefore deterring cyclists from using the bridge.

Soon to be published independent research on barriers and enablers to seniors walking that has been undertaken on behalf of Victoria Walks has underlined the importance of separating cyclist and pedestrian paths, if we are to provide an inclusive urban environment. This research surveyed more than 1,100 Victorian seniors on walking issues. "Bicycle riders on shared walking and cycling paths" was one of the most significant barriers to walking and concerns of seniors (Garrard 2013). Seniors are the fastest growing demographic in the Victorian population and it is essential that we respect and listen to their concerns and make walking safe, enjoyable and accessible to enable them to participate in community life.

The northbound bike lane has enabled full use of the footpath to be returned to walkers. While to some extent the value of that can be quantified, as above, there is also a less tangible value. Footpaths are for feet, they are the lifeblood of the city. Footpaths are for walking, but also stopping, talking, playing, laughing and strolling. That is, footpaths are the basis of our public space and they should not be seen as simply transport routes. The role of Princes Bridge in the public life of the city is evidenced by the fact that the numbers of people crossing the bridge by tram, car, or bike are generally constant between the morning and evening peaks, while walking across the bridge increases by more than 50% in the evening, when people are not only moving from work but out enjoying the city.

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<sup>1</sup> Estimated 700 pedestrians on the eastern side and 2,500 pedestrians on western side during the evening peak, based on correspondence that states "more than 80% of pedestrians using Princes Bridge are using the west side of the bridge on an average day" (City of Melbourne 2013b).

Princes Bridge is particularly important for tourists. For many their first real experience of Melbourne will be to arrive at Flinders Street Station and walk across Princes Bridge to Southbank, the arts precinct or the Botanic Gardens. Crossing the Yarra, admiring the city, is an integral part of that quintessential Melbourne experience. A visitor's first impression of Melbourne should not be dodging cyclists or being crammed into a narrow dedicated footpath, so that cars can queue in two lanes rather than one.

The City's Transport Strategy prioritises public transport, walking and cycling as the priority transport modes and states "*in a connected city, walking has priority over other modes of urban mobility*" (City of Melbourne 2012, p34). The decision on Princes Bridge will be a significant test of whether the Council is genuine in this commitment.

## Recommendations

Victoria Walks strongly recommends:

1. That the northbound bike lane be retained on a permanent basis
2. That a trial of a southbound on road bike lane be undertaken.



Princes Bridge footpath (during northbound bike lane trial) 3pm, 3 October 2013

## References

City of Melbourne (2012). *Transport Strategy 2012: Planning for Future Growth*.

City of Melbourne (2013a). Unpublished data on people movements by all transport modes across Princes Bridge.

City of Melbourne (2013b). Letter from Manager Engineering Services to Princes Bridge stakeholders, dated 29 May 2013.

Garrard (2013). Yet to be published report on barriers and enablers to walking by Victorian seniors.

VicRoads (2013). *Cycle Notes 21: Widths of Off-Road Shared Use Paths*, VicRoads, August 2013.

## Attachments

*Cycle Notes 21: Widths of Off-Road Shared Use Paths*, VicRoads, August 2013.