



Junortoun Community Action Group Inc.

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Tuesday, 28 August 2018

City of Greater Bendigo
Attention: Rob Kretschmer
PO Box 733
Bendigo Vic 3552

Cycling and walking strategy submission

Dear City of Greater Bendigo,

On behalf of the Junortoun community the Junortoun Community Action Group (JCAG) presents the following submission to the 2018 review of the City's cycling and walking strategy.

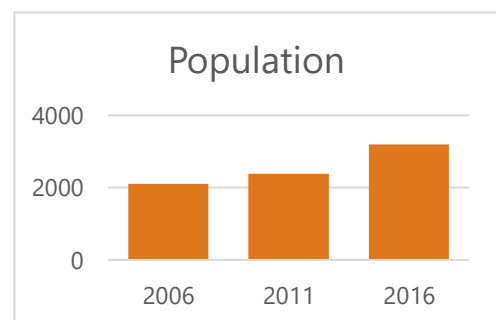
JCAG is the community representative association for residents of Junortoun. Our group was formed in 2012 and incorporated in 2014. JCAG conducts community events and keeps our community informed through newsletters, Facebook and a website. We have a track record of successful lobbying having achieved a playground, the Strathfieldsaye-Junortoun cycling and walking track and improved bus services for Junortoun. We have close working relationships with local organisations including the Friends of the O'Keefe Rail Trail, Strathfieldsaye and District Community Enterprise, and Bike Bendigo.

General comments about the strategy and Junortoun

Junortoun is a developing and growing suburb. Its character is changing from rural to medium density, with areas of high-density development (zoned General Residential) at its west.

Junortoun is a growing suburb as evidenced by census population figures.

Year	Population
2006	2,103
2011	2,378
2016	3,201



The Mclvor Highway runs through Junortoun which presents a hostile and risky environment for pedestrians and cyclists. However the suburb is also fortunate to have bushland parks, the O'Keefe Rail Trail and the neglected Bendigo Bushland Trail within it. These are locations well-suited to recreational walking and cycling, and have the potential for use as protected cycling and walking routes.

Recently (mid-2018) a cycling and walking route between Junortoun and Strathfieldsaye was completed, which is already providing benefits to the communities of these suburbs.

The actions identified in this submission are drawn from: community surveys conducted in 2012 and 2015, the Junortoun Community Plan 2013-15 and Junortoun Community Plan 2016-22, contributions from JCAG committee members and interactions with the community from a Facebook post in August 2018.

Actions to improve cycling

The Junortoun Community Action Group is eager for improvements to be made to cycling infrastructure and signage that will improve cycling for people who live, work and study in our suburb.

Current situation

The O'Keefe Rail Trail passes through Junortoun. The Trail provides recreational opportunities for walkers and cyclists, and plays a minor role as a commuter route. It has the potential to provide a greater role as a commuter route.

The Bendigo Bushland Trail passes through Junortoun, intersecting with the O'Keefe Rail Trail. This trail has suffered from neglect and lack of maintenance over the past two decades. It is overdue for maintenance and has potential as a recreational trail, and as a radial commuter route between Junortoun and Epsom. The Junortoun Community Action Group supports its upgrade and ongoing maintenance.

A well-used narrow sealed path runs through the National Park between Trotting Terrace Junortoun and Cousins Street Strathdale. This path is used by school students and teachers attending Catherine McAuley College Junortoun and also by Junortoun residents who do not wish to use Mclvor Highway to access locations west of Junortoun. This route to the city has a steep grade which is a challenge to some users.

A wide cycling and walking path was recently completed through National Park between Junortoun and Strathfieldsaye – linking to the Strathfieldsaye network of shared paths. This path was partly funded by the community of Strathfieldsaye and Junortoun. The path is important as cycling (and walking) along Junortoun Road is hazardous (discussed further below). The path particularly supports young people to access schools in Junortoun and Strathfieldsaye, to access sporting and recreational facilities in Strathfieldsaye, and providing an off-road connection between the Strathfieldsaye community and the O'Keefe Rail Trail.

In considering commuting routes between Junortoun and central Bendigo, residents have three potential routes, all of which require upgrade works to make them safer and encourage their use. Each route has advantages and disadvantages.

- Mclvor Highway. This route is the most direct, but users must encounter fast moving traffic, hills, traffic conflicts, and risk of dooring. Some, but not all, of the route has painted bicycle lanes. It leads to the recognised conflict points of the Mclvor Road railway bridge and the roundabout at the Brian Boru Hotel.
- Cousins Street and St Aidans Road. This route can be accessed from Trotting Terrace in Junortoun, via a path through the forest. The route via Cousins Street and St Aidans Road is via quieter streets, but is not sign-posted. The route avoids Mclvor Highway, but is hilly. There are intersection conflicts (especially Reservoir Road, Crook Street and Sternberg Street) and a dooring adjacent to Kennington Primary School. There is an absence of directional signage. At the Junortoun end of this path the bicycle path along Trotting Terrace disappears and cyclists are forced to interact with an increasing volume of fast-moving (80km/h) traffic along Trotting Terrace.
- O'Keefe Rail Trail – This route is separated from Mclvor Highway traffic and provides gentler grades for trail users. However the surface is poor in places and conflicts exist with vehicles where the trail crosses local roads, and, in particular, the dangerous Mclvor Highway crossing. Signage is needed along the route. There is no lighting of the route after dark. Better connections are possible with local roads in Junortoun and the failure of VicRoads to provide an underpass at the western end (Napier Street / Weeroona Avenue) is a huge missed opportunity.

Throughout Junortoun, as in much of the municipality, there is poor to no directional or way-finding signage for cyclists.

Proposals

The proposals of the Junortoun Community Action Group to improve cycling opportunities for Junortoun residents are listed below. JCAG would be pleased to present our ideas on any or all of these initiatives to the City of Greater Bendigo and associated stakeholders.

These proposals are not sorted in order of desired priority.

C1 A safe cycling and walking route between Homebush Estate and Strathfieldsaye.

Local access routes for residents, particularly school children are important. They provide opportunities for active transport to schools and reduce car dependency for local trips. There is no safe bicycle route between Homebush Estate (and surrounding streets) in Junortoun and Strathfieldsaye to allow children to travel to/from schools, sporting facilities and playgrounds by bicycle.

This link could be achieved by construction of segregated (preferred) or on-road bicycle lanes along Somerset Park Road and Caleana Road connecting into the Strathfieldsaye trails network. This would allow residents in the east of Junortoun to access facilities and services in

Strathfieldsaye. It would also provide Strathfieldsaye residents with alternative access to the O'Keefe Rail Trail and a recreational path to Longlea, Axedale and Heathcote.

C2 Complete the missing cycling link on Trotting Terrace between the O'Keefe Rail Trail (via La Valla Court), the forest path to Cousins Street, and the path through Mclvor Forest Estate that leads to Strathfieldsaye.

This consists of a section of approximately 220m of shared cycling and walking path along Trotting Terrace and is subject to a Pick My Project bid in 2018.

This would encourage use of O'Keefe Rail Trail as a commuter route, and increase O'Keefe Rail Trail access options for recreational purposes. It would improve safety for cyclists along Trotting Terrace, provide a safer connection to Mclvor Forest Estate, including the playground, for residents of La Valla Court and nearby streets (Wilkie Road, Cashens Road), and would facilitate access by students to Catherine McAuley College and the BSSC La Valla Trade Training Centre.

C3 Provide on-road bicycles lanes along Mclvor Highway as far as Bennetts Road.

Painted bicycle lanes are not ideal and are not an alternative to a segregated bicycle path, however Mclvor Highway does provide a direct access route to the city which can be used as a commuter route by confident cyclists. The highway east of St Vincents Road is narrow with no sealed shoulder. This contributes to the risk to cyclists along this route.

The VicRoads Principal Bicycle Network¹ shows that an on-road bicycle route should exist along Mclvor Highway from the city to St Vincents Road. Contrary to the map's indication, an on-road path is not present in this location and VicRoads should ensure the path is provided in the near future (1-2 years) as part of maintenance and upgrades of this section of highway.

Further, the Principal Bicycle Network shows a "proposed" on route path is planned for Mclvor Highway between St Vincents Road and the O'Keefe Rail Trail. VicRoads should be asked about their timeline for providing this "proposed" on-road bicycle path in this location.

In time, JCAG expects that Mclvor Highway will be duplicated through Junortoun in response to growing vehicle numbers. At that time JCAG will argue for the construction of a segregated bicycle lane to Bennetts Road, as part of what is likely to be substantial construction.

Meanwhile the existing lanes of Mclvor Highway between St Vincents Road and Bennetts Road (approx. 5.4km), should be widened with sealed shoulders, and on-road bicycle lanes installed.

These lanes should be well-maintained, with regular sweeping and debris removal.

¹ <https://vicroadsopendata-vicroadsmaps.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/principal-bicycle-network>

They would:

- Improve rider safety along Mclvor Highway
- Encourage commuter cycling from Homebush Estate, Domenica Drive and nearby subdivisions by experienced, competent cyclists.
- Allow local residents to access the Junortoun Post Office and General Store, the Bendigo Baptist Church and the Park Lane Caravan Park.

C4 Upgrade and maintain the segregated (off-road) cycling paths along Mclvor Highway between Harley Street and the O’Keefe Rail Trail crossing.

A segregated path exists on the south side of Mclvor Highway between Harley Street and the O’Keefe Rail. This is particularly used by residents of Bendigo Domain Village and students of Catherine McAuley College. The surface quality varies from good to poor along its length, and conflicts exist between path users and industrial vehicles at the ASQ site.

This route has a history of use by horses and drivers accessing the trotting facility.

The route lacks continuity at Lords Raceway, where the access route is not clearly marked, and it is unclear to users whether they are permitted to walk through the trotting and greyhound facility to continue their journey. Most users do, but it would be nice to have this sanctioned.

In parts this route is affected by heavy sand which makes it difficult for bicycles, wheelchairs and prams. Other sections are affected by rocks and gravel. Still other sections have areas of overgrowing vegetation which potentially provide space for snakes to live.

Upgrading this path would provide safe access for neighbourhood and general purposes, especially for residents of Bendigo Domain Village to walk to their local Post Office and General Store; and would facilitate active transport options (walking and cycling) for students of Catherine McAuley College.

C5 Improved and upgraded link routes leading to/from the O’Keefe Rail Trail.

Improve access routes to/from the O’Keefe Rail Trail through maintenance and upgrades to feeder paths, and installation of signage at the following locations:

- Cassowary Way (Homebush Estate)
- Callistemon Close
- Jacaranda Court
- Cootamundra Place
- Kalinda Drive, and
- Manning Court

The O'Keefe Rail Trail passes through Junortoun and offers an opportunity for use as a commuter cycling route and school walking route. However access routes from local roads are not well maintained and signage is poor or absent.

Signs should be installed along the O'Keefe Rail Trail to indicate where local streets may be accessed. Signs should also be provided on local roads to indicate the access path to the O'Keefe Rail Trail.

This will build the "Junortoun cycling network" and increase use of the O'Keefe Rail Trail for leisure, recreation, commuter and active transport purposes.

C6 Improved signage of, and leading to, all cycling routes throughout Junortoun.

The existing bicycle paths of Junortoun, indeed across the Greater Bendigo municipality, are not well signposted. Signage was a significant issue identified in the 2006 Cycling and Walking Strategy and little action has been taken in this time.

Signage increases awareness of facilities and provides confidence for path users. Arguably, lack of signage is a major contributor to the lack of use of the Bendigo Bushland Trail.

Installation of new signage throughout Junortoun would support, encourage, promote and facilitate use of the Junortoun (and Bendigo and Strathfieldsaye) cycling networks for daily activity, leisure, recreation, commuter and active transport purposes.

C7 An underpass at the intersection point where the O'Keefe Rail Trail crosses Mclvor Highway.

The point where the O'Keefe Rail Trail crosses Mclvor Highway at grade is a busy and dangerous crossing point which presents a major issue of rider safety that discourages cycling and walking along the trail. In addition to the busy highway, this point also features bus stops and significant traffic movements from the adjacent church and holiday park.

JCAG requests that an underpass be constructed for trail users at the point which the O'Keefe Rail Trail crosses Mclvor Highway. This would allow users of the O'Keefe Rail Trail to cross Mclvor Highway safely. This would facilitate the use of the rail trail for recreational and commuter purposes and for school access.

If our society can build underpasses for livestock, surely it can build one for humans too!

C8 Improvements to the safety of Junortoun Road for cyclists.

Junortoun Road is a narrow road with blind crests, blind intersections and no sealed shoulders. It has no footpaths or bicycle paths. It carries a growing traffic volume which travels at 80km/h and functions as a major route between Junortoun and Strathfieldsaye.

There are no footpaths for residents to walk on, and walking on busy Junortoun Road is unsafe. JCAG interaction with residents has identified that they will not ride or let their children ride on this road due to safety concerns. This increases car dependency in our suburb and nearby communities.

JCAG proposes that Council make engineering improvements to Junortoun Road that encourage cycling and walking. This includes constructions of a segregated cycling and walking path, as well as other traffic calming, speed reduction and safety measures to provide safety and confidence for local residents and vulnerable road users.

This would promote cycling and walking, and reduce car-dependency and isolation for local residents. It would improve safety for all road users including cyclists and pedestrians.

C9 Improvements to the routes leading between Junortoun and central Bendigo.

As noted above, there are three potential cycling routes between Junortoun and central Bendigo:

- Mclvor Highway
- The "Trotting-Cousins" forest path, Cousins Street, St Aidans Road and Skene Street
- The O'Keefe Rail Trail.

As well as serving as a commuter route, the Cousins Street – St Aidans Road route provides links to La Trobe University, Kennington Primary School, Bendigo South East Secondary College, Kennington Reservoir and the shopping facilities and services centres at Kennington.

All three routes identified above should be upgraded with safety improvements, intersection upgrades, signage and lighting. They should be designated "strategically important" for City of Greater Bendigo planning purposes.

Cycle-friendly safety improvements are particularly needed at:

- The intersection of Cousins Street and Reservoir Road, Kennington.
- The intersection of Skene Street and Sternberg Street, Bendigo.
- The road narrowing at the railway bridge over Mclvor Highway near Sternberg Street.
- At points where the O'Keefe Rail Trail crosses local roads.

These measures would improve safety and reliability for cyclists and encourage commuter cycling for employment and education, as well as for neighbourhood/utility trips.

C10 Bicycle racks at key bus stops along the Mclvor Highway corridor.

This is a small and relatively inexpensive intervention to install bicycle racks at key bus stops along the Mclvor Highway corridor.

JCAG recommends installation of bicycle hoops at bus stops at:

- Mclvor Highway near Popes Road, and Homebush Drive (west)
- Mclvor Highway near Domenica Drive or Homebush Drive (east) – proposed new bus stop

- Trotting Terrace near Mclvor Forest Drive and La Valla Court
- Mclvor Highway near Bendigo Retirement Village.

This would allow commuters to travel the “final mile” from their home to their closest neighbourhood public transport (bus stop) and secure their bicycles. It would allow for safe storage of bicycles during the day while commuters and school students are at work or studying.

This would assist the many Junortoun residents who live over 1 km from a bus stop.

Actions to improve walking

Current situation

Few, if any, sealed footpaths exist along local roads in areas of Junortoun zoned *Rural Living Zone* or *Rural Conservation Zone*. This represents a safety hazard and physical and psychological barrier for local residents who wish to walk for leisure or fitness, to access local services, to walk to schools, or even to visit neighbours.

In areas of Junortoun zoned *General Residential Zone* some footpaths exist, although often only along one side of a road.

Mclvor Highway is a dangerous location for pedestrians and its heavy, fast-moving traffic load makes it difficult for people of all ages to cross. This contributes to car dependency for local journeys (e.g. to the Post Office and General Store, the Pub) and for travel to school (Catherine McAuley College).

Some thoughtful planning has created some local access routes, e.g. between Ridge Road and Lorikeet Drive; and between the O’Keefe Rail Trail and streets such as Homebush Drive (Cassowary Way), Callistemon Close, Jacaranda Court, Cootamundra Place.

It is possible for leisure walkers to get lost in forest areas (National Park and State Forest) if people are not familiar with the environment. Additional signage in these parks would reduce this risk.

Proposals

The JCAG submission on improving walking facilities focuses on a number of actions. These are not presented in order of priority.

W1. Install sealed footpaths within 500m of key destinations.

Local residents should be able to, and encouraged to, walk safely to playgrounds, schools, shops, community facilities and bus stops from a distance of 1km radius. This requires well-formed and well-maintained footpaths, safe roads crossings and traffic calming measures along the routes that people are likely to take. These connections should be sealed (bitumen or concrete) for a radius of 500m from the destination.

W2. Mandate construction of footpaths in all new developments and sub-divisions regardless of zoning.

It is a major failure that footpath construction is not required from developers when land is subdivided. Recent local examples include Atlas Meadows, Homebush Estate and parcels of land along Trotting Terrace and Junortoun Road.

The incremental cost of including such infrastructure in a sub-division project is small and should be required by City of Greater Bendigo planning rules irrespective of zoning.

Footpaths allow and encourage people to walk within their neighbourhood. They promote physical activity, reduce social isolation and address car dependence..

W3. Support for pedestrians to cross busy roads.

As noted, Mclvor Highway is a hazardous place for pedestrians. Crossing Mclvor Highway is a challenge which will limit use of public transport by Junortoun residents.

Safety measures and support for pedestrians to cross Mclvor Highway is particularly needed at:

- St Vincents Road (to the Post Office and General Store, and to access Catherine McAuley College)
- Popes Road (to access the Pub, the bus stop, Confectionary Capers and Homebush Estate)
- The O'Keefe Rail Trail crossing point (See C7)

And is also needed at Junortoun Road where the new cycling and walking route emerges from the forest.

W4. Construct Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant footpath connections to bus stops.

Few, if any, bus stops in Junortoun meet DDA requirements.

The planned increase of bus service frequency along Mclvor Highway provides an opportunity to improve bus stop infrastructure with sealed bases, ramps and connecting paths (see W1 above).

W5. Make Junortoun Road safe for pedestrians.

Safety improvements along Junortoun Road, notably a shared segregated cycling and walking path would benefit pedestrians and cyclists alike. (See also initiative C8).

This action was identified by several local residents during social media engagement with residents by JCAG during August 2018.

Comments from residents included:

A footpath along Trotting tce to Junortoun rd. Then along Junortoun rd down to the just finished footpath at Ryalls Lane. (NT)

Yes this! There are so many kids walking and riding their bikes to the bus/school and it's so dangerous for them on Junortoun Road. Not to mention when you're walking dogs along there! (JB)

Footpath along Junortoun Rd also the amount of people that walk along botany Rd too. This is quite dangerous around the bend in the middle. (ST)

A form of footpath or track along Junortoun Rd (TC)

I agree with TC's comment. The only way to the bus stop on Junortoun road is to walk along the narrow shoulder of the road. Which I think is very unsafe, especially for kids that have to walk along there to and from the school bus, in an 80km/h zone. (FM)

W6 – Upgrade the Bendigo Bushland Trail,

The neglect and disrepair of the Bendigo Bushland Trail has been noted in many documents, and JCAG supports its reinstatement, maintenance and installation of signage along its length.

JCAG especially highlight the section between Cousins Street and Strathfieldsaye Road which follows a water race between Junortoun and Kennington. This area is rocky, bendy and uneven in parts which makes it difficult to traverse for walkers and cyclists.

JCAG recommends that this section of trail in particular be upgraded. For example removal of rocks and boulders, repair or washed away areas, adjustment to curves and bends, and smoothing of the surface with gravel fill. This would benefit both walkers and cyclists and contribute to its use as an off-road access path to Victory Christian College.

One resident (BH) commented:

A possible route between current bike/walking path (Junortoun Mclvor Forest to Strathdale Cousins St) through to Strathfieldsaye Rd near Victory Christian College. For those wanting to walk to Strath Village and Kennington Village, or children going to Victory.

Concluding words

The Junortoun Community Action Group thanks the City of Greater Bendigo for the opportunity to comment on the development of this strategy. Our group has a history of working constructively with the City and local authorities to improve our community, and it looks forward to continuing this partnership to deliver the outcomes mentioned above for the people who live, work, study in and travel through Junortoun.

Yours faithfully,

Robert Jamieson
Chair

Kevin de Vries
Secretary