

committee was set up to follow-up the recommendations. The same thing is likely to happen this year due to staff shortages.

## Private school opposes vital bike path link

BY ALAN A PARKER

THE MELBOURNE BIKEPLAN in its 1981 second stage report recommends a cross river link to join up the main Yarra bicycle path to other routes in the Gardners Creek Valley. Late in 1985 the cyclists advocate body, Bicycle Victoria, wrote to the Minister of Transport complaining that the State Bicycle Committee had not yet acted on this vital proposal. Tom Roper, the minister at the time agreed with the proposal and as a consequence a decision was made to employ consultants to work out how to do it.

The consultants recommended an expensive bridge and a bike path through private land owned by Scotch College who are opposed to the idea. The cost of the consultants proposal was over \$500,000 and because of its high cost the project will be abandoned and forgotten unless some pressure is brought to bear.

Scotch College do not want their land to be used for a bike path and have used a barrister to establish their legal property rights. This was a predictable outcome from the outset but the charade continued.

After eight years of bureaucratic bumbling cyclists still don't have access to where other road users can conveniently go. The bicycle paths built in the south east of Melbourne do not connect with the Yarra River bike path because of a one-kilometre freeway overpass which has been built without an alternative means of access for bicycles.

The easiest way in future to link up the paths is to use the three metre wide freeway brake down lanes from the Yarra River to the east side of Glenferrie Road.

Bicycle riders may never gain access because of the high cost of the proposed facilities. Worse still the Road Construction Authority and the anti-cycling lobby now have an officially endorsed report (see following story) which fails to recommend the only practical short term option for cyclists: the use of freeway breakdown lanes to bypass Scotch College property.

The interesting feature of this silly episode is that if the SBCV had briefed the consultants properly in the first place and told them to use the latest research materials on route selection then the on-freeway option would have been considered.

If the latest American guide to route selection had been used then the only direct low cost and convenient route along the freeway breakdown lanes would have been recommended as shown on the map at points A, B, C, D, E, and F.

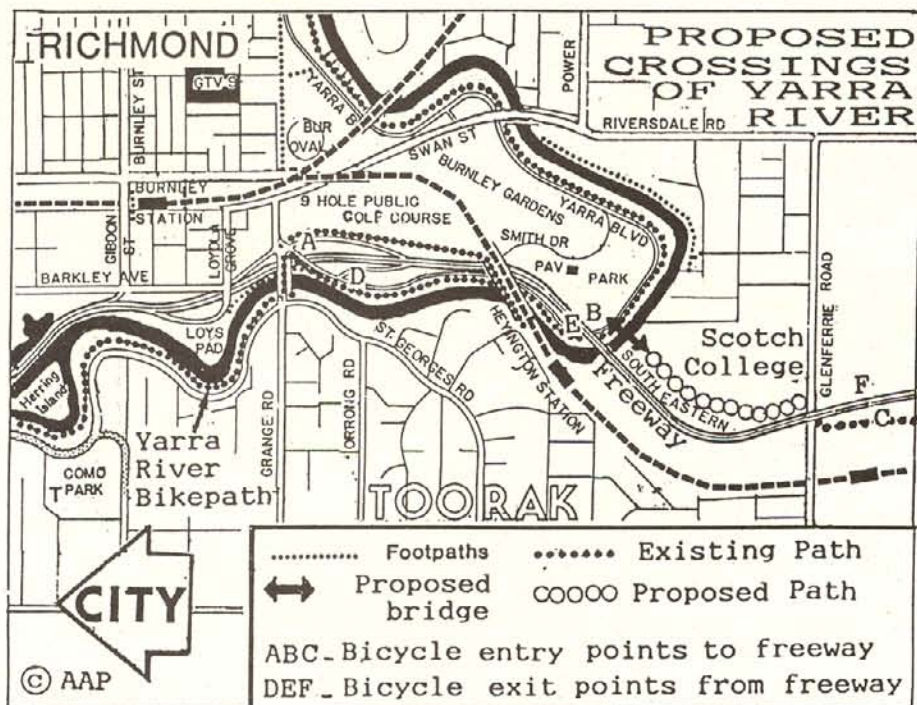
## Freeway report ignores cyclists rights of access

BY ALLAN A PARKER

A NEW REPORT issued by the Victorian Road Construction Authority in association with the old NSW Department of Main Roads has been met with puzzlement in bicycle advocate circles. The report is a study of issues relating to cyclists use of freeways.

For many years the transport bureaucracy has ignored cyclists' access and mobility needs and produced narrow restrictive reports looking almost exclusively at bicycle safety. This latest report entitled *Urban Freeway Cycling Study* is also grossly biased towards safety and almost totally ignores the cyclist case for equal rights of access and enhanced mobility.

The report is full of generalisations and fails to examine the benefits and consequences of bicycle use on actual freeways in Melbourne and Sydney. Even the safety aspect is viewed narrowly and does not include a comparative accident study of the alternative routes cyclists are forced to use. It fails to report the total lack of evidence behind the original decision to ban cyclists.



The report also ignores the documented proposals for Melbourne's Westgate bridge and other vital freeway links. The importance of the Westgate Bridge for cyclists is shown on the map. The longer and more dangerous alternative routes can clearly be seen.

My technical articles in this magazine (issues 42 and 44) have not been referenced in the report even though they were recommended by to the editor when advice was solicited by the consultants. They were also tabled as basic working documents and formed part of my formal presentation to the SBCV when the report/study was originally mooted.



**T**HERE ARE TWO very important reasons why cyclists should be allowed to ride the freeway brake down lanes. The first is that most alternative main road routes are more dangerous for cyclists because the roadway is usually of insufficient width and the outside lane is often in poor condition. This issue has been adequately recognised in the report. However, the second reason, that the freeway breakdown lanes can be linked up with bike paths and potential back

road routes to create a continuous network of bikeways, is conveniently overlooked.

How Melbourne urban freeways relate to off-road routes is shown on the map. In that city such a network would make cycling far safer in the long term than it is ever going to be under the present policy of trying to make every road bicycle safe.

The report presents the case for cyclists being able to use the breakdown lanes citing mostly the excellent work of Bill Wilkinson in the USA which largely

relates to rural freeways. Unfortunately there is no innovative thinking about the special needs of cyclists in urban areas.

What is needed is a more positive approach that both integrates the breakdown lanes into a bikeway network and would require that they be properly designated as cycle routes. They should also be recognised as bicycle territory where drivers may only park their broken down vehicles.

It is very important that the rights of cyclists be clearly recognised, that severe penalties be introduced to deter motor vehicle drivers from driving along the breakdown lanes as they do today in certain places. They should also be called "Bicycle Freeways" and bicycle symbols be painted on them.

Additional access to these bicycle freeways from nearby bikeways and back road routes will also be necessary. In addition the Melbourne Bikeplan needs to be revised to properly determine where the freeway connections are best located.

What the report says can be boiled down to a proposal to copy USA methods and allow cyclists on and off at existing road ramps only. I think we can do a lot better than that because bicycle planning in Melbourne is way ahead of North American practise. What we should expect from this report are recommendations for the proper integration of all bicycle facilities within the strategic framework of a revised Melbourne Bikeplan.

Cyclists rights to use all roads should be reinstated by a directive from the minister and the report should be rewritten. As it also involves New South Wales there is also a possibility that it could be used as a means of denying cyclists in that state the access to freeways which they already possess.

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