



Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group

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Green Bridges for Brisbane
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Dear Sir or Madam

Submission on Brisbane City Council's proposed five new green bridges

This submission provides the views of the Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group (CBD BUG) on the five new green bridges proposed by Brisbane City Council (BCC).

As background to this submission, the Brisbane CBD BUG is a grass roots volunteer organisation of more than 800 members, representing the interests of the very large number of people riding bicycles to, from and within the Brisbane city centre. We are active in seeking policy decisions at all levels of government supporting people who want to cycle, and in particular relating to improved infrastructure, end-of-trip facilities, integration of cycling needs with other transport modes and a regulatory environment friendly towards people riding bikes. CBD BUG members meet monthly to exchange information and ideas, discuss issues of relevance and determine the direction of policies to benefit CBD cyclists.

Overall, the CBD BUG would like to congratulate BCC for building this essential and long overdue infrastructure that will connect communities, improve this city's transport system efficiency and getting locals home to their families sooner and safer.

After many years the Brisbane River's re-emergence as a characteristic component of this subtropical city is a welcome change from its former waste disposal function. However, with insufficient points at which it may be crossed the river is also major barrier to commercial, social and other interactions beneficial for residents.

The significant distances between Brisbane's current river crossings mean cyclists and pedestrians are particularly disadvantaged relative to motorists. There is 12 km of river front between the Story Bridge and the Gateway Bridge with crossings only possible by virtue of the limited services of Brisbane's exorbitantly priced ferries. The situation is even more dire for western suburbs residents, with over 21 km of river front between the Centenary Bridge and the Moggill Ferry without a single river crossing option.

Installing these new river crossings will be a game changer for many Brisbane residents on both sides of the river. Through enabling the increased uptake of active transport these new river crossings will also have a range of significant economic, social and environmental benefits.

We note the current on-line BCC survey regarding these bridges seeks community members' input of their form. The CBD BUG's position is that the form of these bridges is less important in comparison to how well they function – which is heavily dependent on their locations being appropriate, with connections being installed to existing (and future) cycling and walking routes. As we have seen from the Kurilpa Bridge the Queensland Government made a major mistake in not providing a suitable connection to the nearby Bicentennial Bikeway. Another of its defects is due to the non-delivery of the staircase initially planned for installation at its South Brisbane end - to make pedestrian use more direct in comparison to the much longer ramp. One further shortcoming of both the Kurilpa Bridge and the Goodwill Bridge was not fully roofing them to shelter users from Brisbane's often-intense sun and rain.

In relation to the St Lucia to West End green bridge, while the Boundary St, West End landing of this bridge is little used by cyclists for a range of reasons, we acknowledge the proposed Keith Street, St Lucia landing will place this crossing more than 500 metres closer to the University of Queensland (UQ) than the hitherto anticipated location of Guyatt Park. This positioning is seen as having the potential to be more attractive for people walking between UQ and West End. Importantly, the currently proposed location will also result in a more even spacing of bridges relative to the also-proposed Toowong to West End green bridge and the existing Eleanor Schonell Bridge.

The need to provide new green bridges that are well-spaced along the river is also relevant to the alignment of the Belbowrie green bridge - currently proposed to be located between the river end of Weekes Road in Bellbowrie to Grindle Road in Wacol. This location is very close to exactly half-way along the 21 kilometres of river front between the Moggill Ferry and Centenary Bridge.

However, the CBD BUG's position is the Grindle Road location is highly inappropriate given the physical distance from the southern ramp to the nearest private residences on that side of the river. Additionally, this location's remoteness would cause personal safety concerns for people walking / cycling. We would echo the public comments of Rail - Back on Track on this proposed location - that it would in fact be "a bridge to nowhere"

It is appreciated that BCC is looking to create a bus service link for Belbowrie residents to a train station – but we suggest Darra station would be a significantly better option than Wacol station. For starters, with the Wacol station being on both the Springfield and Ipswich lines it has far more trains than Wacol station. An example of this can be seen in the Monday to Friday morning peak travel period, when between 7am – 9am there are 23 city-bound trains stopping at Darra, versus only 11 at Wacol. Secondly, current train travellers report Wacol station as feeling much less safe (even during business hours) compared to Darra station. Thirdly, the passenger catchment for buses travelling from Belbowrie over a bridge landing at Sumners Road and then travelling via Riverhills, Jamboree Heights and Darra to Darra station would be potentially far greater than that of a service travelling directly between Belbowrie and Wacol via the proposed Grindle Road connection.

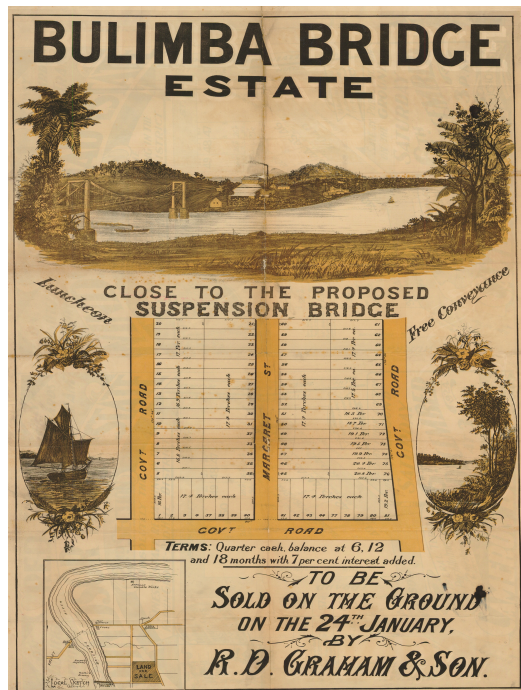
Accordingly, the CBD BUG sees the far more beneficial location for this new green bridge being at the end of Sumners Road in Riverhills. This location would be approximately one kilometre further downstream from the currently proposed site and place it slightly closer to the Centenary Bridge than the Moggill Ferry. However, given the 21 kilometres between these two existing river crossings the resulting difference from the exact midpoint is viewed as relatively inconsequential for active transport users and even less so from a public transport perspective.

We note BCC has also proposed this bridge provide emergency access for Belbowrie during another flood event. While this is a meritorious approach it is difficult to see how the significant expenditure for a new bridge for this purpose would be justified from a cost benefit perspective, even considering flood events with a high likelihood (5% annual chance). We also note that according to BCC's on-line Flood Awareness Map, Weeks Road is susceptible to flooding at its intersection with Vanwall Road even during a flood with just a Medium Likelihood (1% Annual Chance). Accordingly, delivering a bridge that enables the maximum number of daily users should be the primary focus of this project.

Should this flood emergency access also be a critical outcome from this project it is suggested the same result would be achieved with a bridge from Sumners Road (to increase the cost benefit from the likely cyclists/pedestrian usage), with a longer approach ramp at the Moggill landing that would clear flood lines.

The “elephant in the room” of BCC’s *Green Bridges for Brisbane* program is of course that that this program does not include a new green river crossing between Bulimba/Hawthorne and New Farm/Teneriffe.

Proposals for a new bridge crossing spanning the Bulimba Reach of the Brisbane River have been ongoing for many decades. An indication of the duration of this issue is the following image showing an 1885 handbill promoting a new land sub-division that also features the location of a proposed suspension bridge in the vicinity of Hawthorne.



Source: http://onsearch.slg.qld.gov.au/primo_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=SLQ&search_scope=SLQ_PCI_EBSCO&docId=slq_alma2112754480002061&fn=permalink

Much more recently, during the Beattie Queensland Government era the May 2007 *Smart Cities: rethinking the city centre* report identified that a series of new pedestrian/cyclist bridges within an 8km radius of the CBD was desirable, which included a connection between Bulimba / Hawthorne and New Farm / Teneriffe.

(<http://www.chiefscientist.qld.gov.au/images/documents/chiefscientist/reports/smart-cities.pdf>)

Incredibly, this was only shortly after a draft River City Blueprint was released by BCC in July 2010 showing there was strong community support for a green bridge between Bulimba and Teneriffe (and also between West End and Toowong).

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/calls-for-bridge-to-link-toowong-and-west-end-20100708-10270.html>

Growth in bicycle commuting between Brisbane's eastern suburbs and the CBD has been weak and well below that observed in other sections of Brisbane, and especially in comparison to the southern and western suburbs where high quality, continuous cyclist infrastructure has been installed. (41:23 of Dr Matthew Burke - Transport Innovations lecture, 22 July 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DD7sV4ISwQ8>).

A new green river crossing would not only shorten the trips of many eastern suburbs residents who want to cycle commute, but would also allow people on bicycles to bypass the particularly intimidating section of Wynnum Road that stretches from Junction Road, Morningside to Hawthorne Road, Norman Park. In opening cycle commuting as an option for residents living in suburbs further out from the CBD such as Cannon Hill, Murarrie and Tingalpa as Wynnum, and joining the eastern and northern suburbs, this bridge would be truly transformational.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this program.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul French', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Paul French
Co-convenor
Brisbane CBD BUG
5 December 2019

Cc: Patrick Condren, ALP Candidate for Lord Mayor