

Town planner Alan Parker looks at the Victorian Bicycle Strategy and finds it a blueprint for what not to do.

The Victorian Bicycle Strategy (VBS) is a mishmash of seemingly unrelated programs, short on practical and financial commitments to ensure success. The overall program is not coherently defined as an effective greenhouse gas reduction measure whose benefits increase with time, and there is no clear idea of what the physical and behavioural end product will be around the year 2000. The VBS fails to clearly show what could be done for cyclists.

The VBS is particularly bad in regard to metropolitan Melbourne, because it fails to build upon the Final Report of the Melbourne Bikeplan (MBP) and ignores many of that report's positive recommendations.

The need to update the Melbourne Bikeplan has been ignored. It is now 12 years since the Victorian Town and Country Planning Association gave the Geelong Bikeplan team an award for the excellence of their work, to establish a bicycle planning model for Vic-

of route maps and to liaise with local councils to ensure that continuous routes are created. Consultants have been allowed to prepare local bikeplans without surveying routes by bicycle, and consequently they have failed to identify arterial bicycle routes. The VBS map of principal bike routes is a joke; the report's text fails to define the need for an arterial bicycle network that makes best use of the 7300km of light-traffic residential streets and to integrate these residential street routes with main road routes and off-road bikeways. There is no vision of the physical end product that could be created, in Melbourne, for the next generation, who may not want to cycle in a greenhouse world, but may just have to.

The VBS fails to define the role of bicycles in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The most far-reaching State policy initiative has been the State Greenhouse Strategy issued in 1989: it makes a one-line recommendation to encourage cycling. This Greenhouse strategy at least recognises that bicycling is an ecologically sustainable form of transport. However, it is the function of the VBS to show that cycling also has the potential to be relatively safe in the timeframe of the greenhouse strategy, and this has not been done.

In Holland today and many parts of Scandinavia the benefits of investing in bicycle facilities increase greatly the nearer one gets to creating a relatively safe arterial bicycle network. Indeed, most energy conservation projects are like that. It seems obvious that if we made provisions for bicycles with the thoroughness usually reserved for motor vehicles, we would create a network that is used by large numbers of people, without creating the pollution and health hazards associated with motor cars.

The VBS data on energy use by mode is inaccurate. Its data for walking and cycling metabolic energy has been confused with fuel energy consumption; the ratio of cycling to walking energy given shows a basic ignorance of the ergonomic realities of these modes. No account has been taken of the energy costs of producing and maintaining vehicles or of the energy losses in vehicle fuel extraction, processing and distribution (9.5 per cent of fuel consumption).

Table A shows that motor cars are second only to power stations as producers of greenhouse gases, emitting 37 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) each year and slowly leaking CFCs (that are 6000 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than CO₂).

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toria. The Final Report of MBP released in 1986 was the culmination of a long planning process. No matter the MBP deficiencies, it did at least say what needed to be said and route-mapped the whole of the metropolis, laying the foundation for a future bicycle arterial network. Whatever defects it had originated in a bureaucratic failure to listen to advice from practising cyclists and obstructionism from the Road Construction Authority.

The VBS fails to say clearly what has to be done by government agencies. Worse still, problem areas have not been defined and resolved with the agencies concerned; the old game of pretending there is no problem still applies. Vic Roads staff did not properly evaluate the programs in the MBP that have not been implemented. The only program that retains its MBP performance criteria is the Bike-Ed program.

No commitment has been made to update the MBP bicycle route network, and no one has been employed to maintain a master set

VARIOUS TRANSPORTATION MODES' CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS DURING TYPICAL LOADED OPERATION (PER PASSENGER KM)

MODE	CO ₂ EMISSION (Grams per passenger km)
AUTOMOBILE	85 + 90% CFC warming
JET AEROPLANE	65 + 20% CFC warming
DIESEL BUS	15 + 20% CFC warming
MELBOURNE TRAIN	20 + 15% CFC warming
SYDNEY TRAIN	15 + 15% CFC warming
MELBOURNE TRAM	10 + 20% CFC warming
EUROPEAN TRAM	10
EUROPEAN TROLLEY BUS	8
WALKING	4
BICYCLING	2

NOTES: Tram and train figures for Melbourne are high because brown coal is used as the primary energy source. Human energy figures represent fossil fuel input for food eaten, plus cost of shoe or bicycle manufacture and repair. As many people choose to walk or cycle for fitness benefits an allowance has been made for increased metabolic efficiency's reducing food intake. Data source: Alan Parker Design 1990.

The emissions result from car manufacture, petrol consumption and oil exploration and processing; they amount to 12.5 per cent of Australia's contribution to global warming. If the emissions arising from road construction and urban sprawl (generated by over-dependence on cars) were known, that figure would be even larger.

The VBS fails to show the potential of the bicycle to reduce emissions. There is no objective statement of the potential for bike/rail and bike/express-bus trips to substitute for long urban car trips despite the existence of good local data and fully researched overseas and local papers. Substituting short bicycle trips for car trips as a feeder to public transport would fit within a package of measures designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from land passenger transport.

The concept of using bicycles as feeders to rail in Melbourne, like the concept of a Melbourne bicycle arterial network, has been

around a long time. The map of bicycle access to rail (see Table B) shows the bicycle's potential. However, the main constraint has been uncontrolled bicycle theft — in particular at rail stations — about which the VBS says absolutely nothing of relevance.

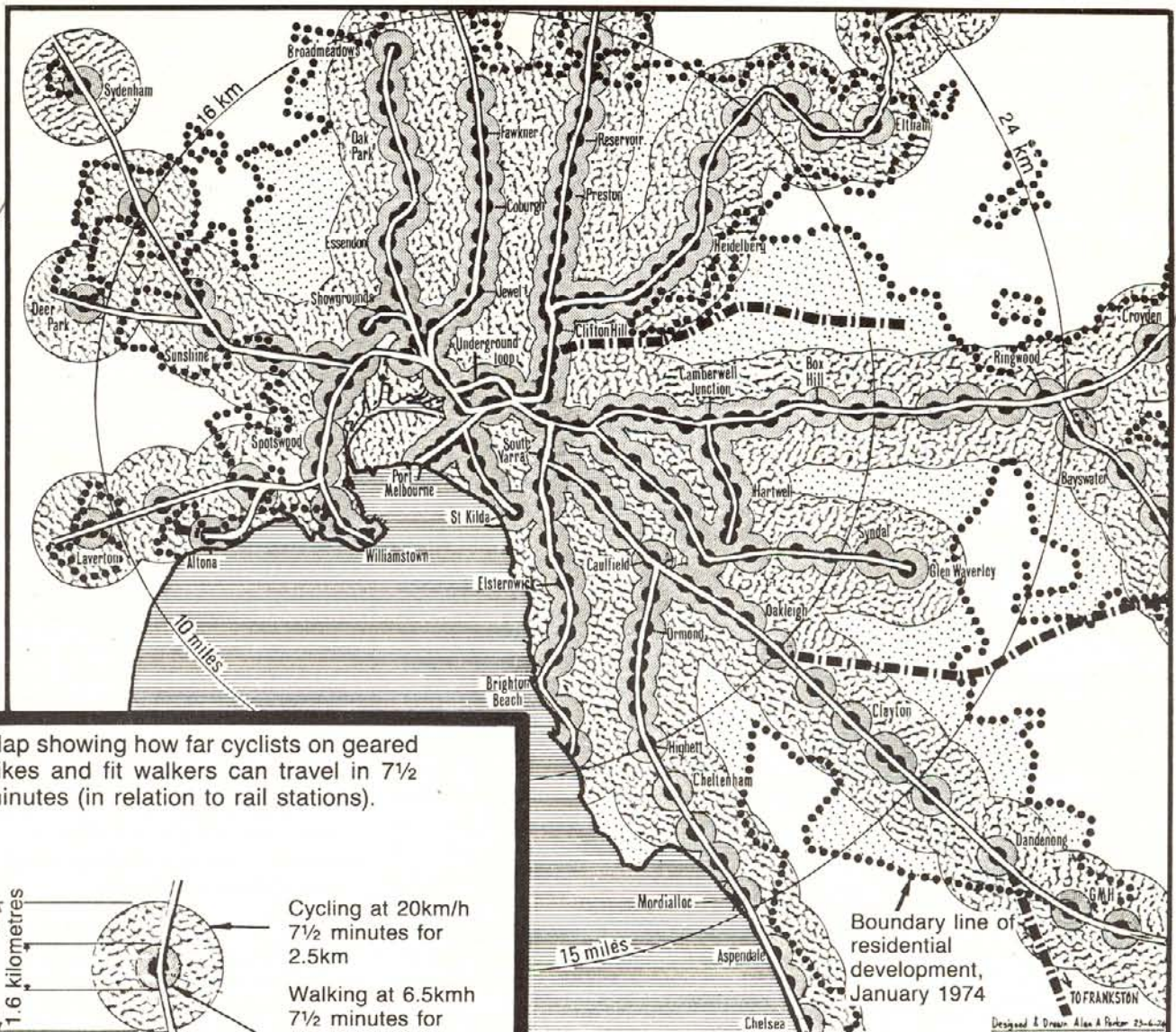
The number-one problem for cyclists is that Vic Roads management has "mickey mouse" ideas about cycling and does not understand that the bicycle is the environmentally superior mode of transport. It is very clear from the VBS that the Ministry of Transport, as the host agency, has lost its way and that the Roads Corporation in particular has an extremely confused idea of what it should be doing.

The VBS also fails to address the bicycle law enforcement problem. The MBP enforcement program was concerned with the enforcement of road rules as they related to cyclists both on and off the road. The MBP recognised that road rules and traffic law were

created with the intention of improving road user behaviour, thereby reducing accidents; it recognised that the role of the police is primarily to ensure that road laws are obeyed, and that their educative role is secondary. The MBP recognised the relationship between education programs and law enforcement in promoting safety, despite the weak recommendations in the final report of the MBP.

VBS is even weaker in its recommendations. It ignores recent research and the original reason for bicycle law enforcement in the Geelong Bikeplan, which stated, "Unfortunately, no amount of safety education will suffice on its own. Neither children nor adults will do the right thing automatically or consistently."

The VBS enforcement program fails to grasp this essential truth and it sets no targets to overcome the deficiencies of the MBP in this regard. The truth is that no suitable enforcement procedure currently exists for those most at risk (the 11 to 15 age group)



Map showing how far cyclists on geared bikes and fit walkers can travel in 7½ minutes (in relation to rail stations).

5 kilometres	Cycling at 20km/h	7½ minutes for 2.5km
1.6 kilometres	Walking at 6.5km/h	7½ minutes for 0.80km



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while for those 16 years and older to whom traffic infringement notices (TINs) can be issued, the issue rate is far too low and needs to be increased to at least two to three per 1000 population.

The VBS does not show how the police can best fulfil their enforcement role in relation to cyclists, or offences by other road users and bicycle thieves that threaten cyclists. Performance targets for the different types of police that need to be involved are not set. Not all police need to be involved, but in the long term over 5000 police would have some role in bicycle law enforcement.

The VBS fails to recognise that the law does not protect cyclists. Throughout Australia, in all states and territories, traffic law in general is selectively enforced in a way that discriminates against cyclists. Cyclists do not receive the protection due to them under the law because all police forces have the common belief that enforcing bicycle laws is low on their list of priorities. This has not always been so; prior to the 1960s bicycle offences were considered a serious traffic infringement. Not surprisingly, in the era when most police rode bicycles themselves bicycle offences were taken very seriously indeed.

Over the past 10 years more new bicycles have been sold than new cars, yet 100 times as many TINs for motor traffic offences were issued than TINs for bicycle offences in 1989. Around 100 times as many warnings and cautions were given to motorists than bicyclists. The issue rates do not have to be the same — no one is suggesting that — but the present 100 to one difference is grossly discriminatory. Today the needs of cyclists are measurably not being met and the level of adult traffic law enforcement is around 15 per cent of what it should be.

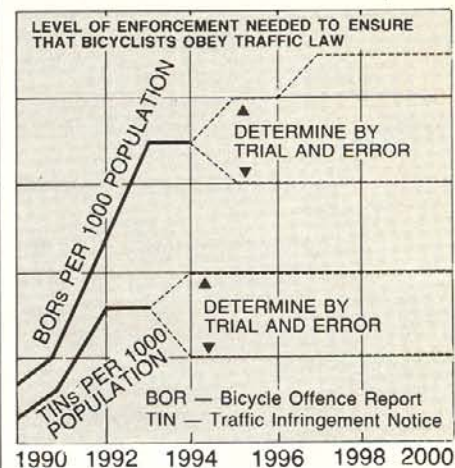
There is no successful statewide enforcement program in Australia, however there is a lot of experience. For example in both NSW and Victoria the overall TIN issuing is around 125 per year per 1000 population. Dr John Matheison notes that "bicycle trips are 4-6 per cent of all road trips and that bicycle law compliance is vastly worse than that for motor vehicles; it is reasonable to suggest that the level of bicycle enforcement be 10 per cent of that for other vehicles".

This target represents a seven-fold increase

over the 1987 level and a probable ten-fold increase on the 1989 level.

The higher rate is used as the basis for level of enforcement shown on Table C. It would be most unwise to set targets less than the levels knowing that bicycle helmet wearing is compulsory. The incompetence of VBS is revealed in its failure to put forward these targets, agreed to by a bike planning conference in Geelong hosted by the Victorian Ministry of Transport.

Note that TINs can be issued to bicyclists



15 years and over in Victoria; from July 1, 1990, helmet wearing was made compulsory in that state. It is clear that experience gained in Victoria over 1991 may mean that the levels recommended here have to be increased. There is likely to be a massive increase in police time spent at children's court if the legislation is to work for more than a short period: that much is certain.

There is one unproven option for making the Bicycle Offence Report (BOR) system more effective with secondary school children. (Suggested in the Bikesafe paper "The Unprotected Road User", and more recently by the Bicycle Institute of NSW.) This option is to use a clean BOR record as a prerequisite when applying for a driving licence at the earliest age, or conversely to delay by a year or so the licence application date for repeat offenders, thus making it unnecessary to go to children's court.

There are several other issues that have not been dealt with in detail. But if there are so many things wrong with this so-called strategy, then it might be better to put it in the bin and get on with the job of implementing the Melbourne Bikeplan. ⊕

Alan A Parker is Vice President of the Victorian Town and Country Planning Association. He has written before for this magazine about bicycles and the greenhouse effect ("Bicycles To The Rescue?", Freewheeling, November 1988).