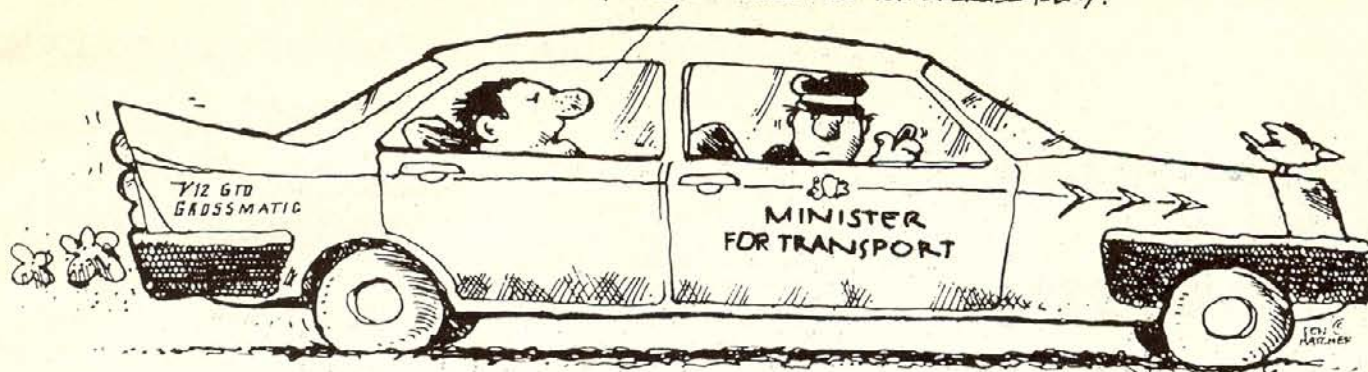


ONCE AROUND THE BLOCK ROBERT,
I FEEL A PERVERSE NEED FOR EXERCISE TODAY!



VICTORIA LOSES DIRECTION

The state which pioneered government involvement in the planning and provision of better facilities for cyclists has run out of steam? One of this country's leading cycle experts looks at recent events in that state.

BY ALAN A PARKER

IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ANYONE with an interest in cycling to visit Melbourne these days to not be impressed with the range and quantity of government provided facilities designed to make cycling easier, safer and more attractive to the general public. What's more the facilities are being used and are drawing more and more people away from a sedentary lifestyle and onto their bikes.

While the Victorians have always been far ahead of other states there are signs now emerging that all is not well. This change has coincided with the appointment of a new Labor minister last year. Since then the state's major agency with an interest in bicycling affairs, the State Bicycle Committee, has been downgraded and the future of the Melbourne metropolitan bikeplan is in doubt.

In May 1986 the government was finally persuaded to commit 3.7 million dollars a year over a ten year period to implement the plan. Be that as it may the bikeplan, like any major ongoing public work, is now desperately in need of extensive revision to incorporate the latest knowledge and techniques.

Nearly every other government plan dealing with the Melbourne metropolitan area has been redone or revised during the last two years and now it should be the Bikeplan's turn.

A more ominous sign of the deteriorating situation in Victoria is the current state of ruling Labour Party's transport policy which, when it was revised for last year's state election, excluded a prior commitment to implement the bikeplan.

There once was a time when the SBCV would churn out forests of paper

promoting its achievements but now it is very difficult to find out what is happening even if you ask. In the past two years the SBCV has not produced a public document that tells the public what has been spent on bicycle facilities, what has been done and what has been built.

In contrast the State Bicycle Committee of New South Wales may have only a pitiful million dollars a year to spend but at least you know what has been done because that committee produces a detailed annual report setting out the facts about its activities.

At election time last year a lie was told to the Victorian voters that \$6.5 million was being spent on cyclists that year. This is total deception as many of the projects were federally funded bicentennial projects with only a nominal contribution from the state government.

The downgrading of the SBCV

During 1988 a new chairman was appointed to the SBCV but he will no longer report directly to the Minister. Instead the chairperson now reports to the head of Road Construction Authority.

The SBCV has effectively been downgraded and the new chairman, while being an able person, is on so many other committees that he can not spend enough time on SBCV work. The new Minister has totally ignored cyclists requests for a chairman who has time to get things done and trouble shoot problems that arise from having to work with so many other government departments.

I had a meeting with the new chairman last July and suggested to him that a proper business plan be prepared for the SBCV but as yet nothing has happened. The SBCV is now lacking direction and staff are demoralised. One staff member has recently resigned and another was transferred elsewhere in the public service. This has, according to one member of the committee, put back the work of the SBCV five years.

Most local bikeplans last year were done in a rush and only one local bicycle

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.

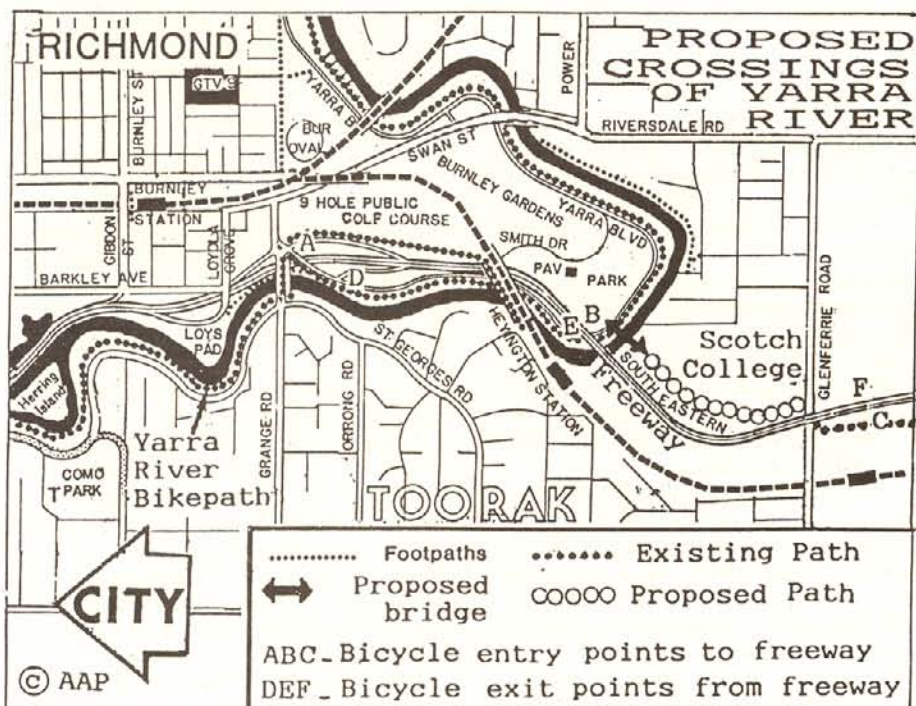
After eight years of bureaucratic bumbling cyclists still don't have access to where other road users can conveniently go. The bicycle paths built in the south east of Melbourne do not connect with the Yarra River bike path because of a one-kilometre freeway overpass which has been built without an alternative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



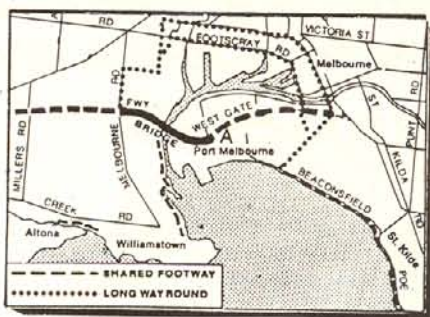
Freeway report ignores cyclists rights of access

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.