



Unley Bicycle User Group
City of Unley, South Australia

Unley Bicycle User Group (BUG) Member Feedback on the proposed Mike Turtur Bikeway (MTB) Overpass Project by Public Transport Projects (PTP) Alliance

Please accept this submission of feedback from the committee and members of the Unley BUG. This submission is prepared by the Unley BUG Committee on behalf of our 161 current members to ensure the interests of people who cycle, walk and use mobility aids in, to and through our City are met in the above stated project. The concerns raised by our members are outlined here for your consideration.

Railway station subway access and conflict

Many members have expressed concerns over the continued use of the train station subway as it exists and that they wish it to be upgraded in tandem with the overpass. The current subway is not DDA compliant, has a low ceiling, is dirty and uninviting. bicycle users are directed to use it to continue on the MTB by dismounting and wheeling their bikes through the subway. Most bicycle users comply, recognising the steep ramps and blind corners are dangerous. Some do not, and there have been collisions caused by bicycle users not dismounting, or by inattentive parties on foot and on bikes.

DDA compliant access to the station can be achieved with simple improvements to the railway station subway access ramps. This would result in much shorter and more direct access to the platforms, especially for wheelchair and mobility aid users. There is a counterintuitive approach inherent to the current design for DDA compliant access which requires those users to travel two or three times further than present and ascend a much greater height to access the elevators.

Other members have raised safety concerns for people (especially women and especially at night) using the subway. These additional issues of safety combine with the low ceilings, uneven surface, dank conditions, poor lighting and restricted line-of-sight and no passive surveillance to produce a space that is ripe for redevelopment. Many members would prefer station safety and accessibility upgrades to this subway with wider passages, gentler ramps, open portals for visual surveillance on approach and improved lighting and drainage. Other members have voiced preferences for the subway to be closed and all station access to be via the MTB overpass for the same reasons, citing feelings of safety.

Unley BUG prefers for the subway to be retained but upgraded as part of the MTB overpass project. We feel this better meets the projects twin aims of connecting the MTB and improving access to Goodwood Railway Station. Recognising this project is not exclusively a cycling project, slightly reorienting the project to be a shared-use path **and** station access project (as is the purpose of the elevators) would likely be helpful in convincing more people to support the project, especially those who are sceptical of cycling infrastructure projects.

Intermodal conflict on the overpass

Feedback has been somewhat mixed as to whether or not there should be elevators on the MTB overpass. Understandably, many of our members are hesitant to support a feature which carries intermodal conflict across from the subway to the overpass. However, people



understand that it is not inherently dangerous to share a path and recognise the need for DDA compliant access to the station.

The rationale for removing the elevators follows that the MTB overpass project is designed to separate movements of those accessing the station and those needing to get past it. Many members do understand the elevators on the overpass represent a 'two birds with one stone' opportunity but feel that movements accessing and bypassing the station should be accommodated separately.

We note the design features recesses for accessing, waiting for and alighting the elevators. People using the elevators are expected to be unlikely to look before stepping onto the path. This is of concern to bicycle users as the intent of the overpass is to facilitate faster through movement on bicycles. Some members feel this is at odds with a design that allows lingering and multiple path crossover points at the crest of the overpass. However, experience with the tram access points and pathways adjoining the current MTB indicate that most users are capable of managing their speed and interacting with courtesy.

If the elevators are installed, we advise the following design features be considered:

- widened/angled recesses to allow for better line of sight into the recesses by through-travelling users and for improved ease of access for users of large mobility aids (eg mobility scooters)
- floor murals (similar to Goodwood Rd side streets) to encourage calmer movement and more sociable negotiation of passing movements
- 'share the space' and 'people exiting elevators ahead' decals on the ground
- responsive lighting, chimes and/or announcement warning for opening elevators eg:
 - "doors opening, look for bicycles, share the space" for inside the elevator
 - elevator arrival chime sounds on overpass to alert bicycle users
 - LED signage near elevators warning bicycle users when the elevator doors have opened ahead. These could display 'share the space', 'reduce speed', 'elevator opening ahead' or similar
 - responsive lighting on overpass which brightens as people leave the elevator where the change in lighting can trigger a change in situational awareness.

Unley BUG prefers to support the design option that allows for people to take the station access option that makes them feel safest and is most suitable to their abilities whilst enhancing overall mobility and accessibility for all users. Elevators to the station would improve train-to-bike intermodal movements and pedestrian/DDA access overall and most intermodal conflict would be mitigated by the design features stated above. But there should also be upgrades to station subway access to allow for the separation of some movements to improve the efficacy and safety of the overpass and ensure a shorter and more direct access to the station for users who need it.

Tree removal, vegetation and landscaping

In light of unauthorised tree removals by DIT contractors on the MTB during recent upgrades, many members are deeply concerned about loss of trees and vegetation for this project. We understand that some tree removals are an inevitability of many infrastructure projects but these concerns are couched within:

- residents wanting to preserve Unley's natural heritage



- residents currently lobbying Council to declare a climate emergency
- Unley Council undertaking city-wide tree cover monitoring
- bicycle users not wanting to be associated with tree removal for dedicated infrastructure (being viewed as anti-environment).

Unley BUG members have expressed their wish for as many trees to be retained as possible, which appears to be considered in the current plans. The worries continue there will be additional losses and members would prefer a net increase of trees as part of the project completion.

As we understand, much of the landscaping will lay with City of Unley council. It would be beneficial for Council/community collaboration over the landscaping options if a detailed schematic can be released, outlining exactly which land parcels will be landscaped by PTP and City of Unley. This will assist the community in forming proposals for land uses such as rain gardens, community gardens etc.

Tram underpass access and conflict

It was noted by many members that the project scope does not include improvements to the underpasses through the tram overpass. The current underpasses are important links for people moving between the MTB and current detours to Leader St, Victoria St and for accessing the station and Forestville Reserve.

However, they are far too narrow for use in a such a busy cycling route let alone a shared use path. This often creates conflict between users who either must wait for each other to exit the underpass or cannot see other approaching users until the last moment, especially entering the eastern underpass. This is of special concern within the context of the overpass project which is likely to increase the volume bicycle users. It is also important to note that some bicycle users already do and will continue to approach these underpasses at speed.

Unley BUG has been informed that while the tram overpass is approximately 80-90 years old, it is possible from an engineering perspective for these underpasses to be widened without compromising the integrity of the overpass. It is our strong recommendation that this is incorporated into the project scope to improve ease of movement for all users accessing the station, park and MTB overpass.

Future integration with tram services

Members have raised concerns that the overpass should be integrated with the tram overpass and include a tram station on the overpass. Whilst this is a desirable outcome for transport integration, we note that this would be constrained by several factors including:

- the cost additional cost of the project making the bikeway overpass project overall prohibitive
- the arch of the tram overpass may be unsuitable for a tram to rest at a level stop along its full length
- the arch of the tram overpass may be unsuitable for a DDA compliant platform
- the width of the current tram overpass not allowing space for any platforms
- access to a central tram platform would require users to cross the tram tracks.



Clearly there is interest from the community for this integration but would require significant works to upgrade the tram overpass which would significantly increase the cost and complexity of the MTB overpass project. Considering the tram overpass is 92 years old, it may be prudent for a future connection point between the MTB and a new future tram overpass to be identified through the course of this project if future integration is a consideration.

While it would be ideal to have full multi-modal integration at this site, we recognise that for this to occur it would likely require a full reconstruction of the tram and bike overpasses and potentially the Goodwood Railway Station with relocation of the elevators attached to the MTB overpass. Also considering the two nearby tram stations at Goodwood Rd (460m north-east) and Forestville (390m south-west) from the Goodwood railway station, we understand a new stop would introduce line inefficiencies and likely require the closure of one or both adjacent stops.

Car parking space removals

We note there have been some comments from nearby residents at the loss of some car parking spaces at the Forestville Reserve to allow for a separated western approach to the MTB overpass. Unley BUG is pleased this is incorporated into the design as it:

- separates cycle movements from the carpark to reduce danger potential conflict from reversing motor vehicles
- allows pedestrians safe access to the overpass and station without danger and potential conflict with reversing motor vehicles
- develops a contiguous and cohesive path for all users that reduces interaction and shared space with motor vehicles
- increases space within the reserve that excludes motor vehicles.

A count was conducted of the parking surround Forestville reserve finding:

- 18 spaces in the small southern car park
- 22 spaces in the larger western car park
- Approximately 48 spaces on Ethel St between Norman Tce and Nichols St
- Approximately 25 spaces on Nichols St between Ethel St and Nairne Tce.

This amounts to ~113 spaces either within or directly adjacent to the Forestville Reserve. We consider the removal of 4–7 spaces as outlined in the design to be more than reasonable to accommodate a separated access path for bicycle users, pedestrians and mobility aid users and is in keeping with State Government and Council stated aims of promoting active transport as a method of mitigating transport-based carbon emissions.

In summary, considering the varied member responses we make the following key points for consideration:

- incorporating our recommended safety measures for minimising conflict near elevators on the overpass
- incorporate widening of underpasses through the tram overpass to allow safe and smooth transitions between the Marino Rocks Greenway and the MTB on Railway North Tce and Railway South Tce



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- there should be a net increase in vegetation and trees on the site to offset trees lost and in recognition of the role of trees in assisting action in the climate emergency.

And either:

- improvement of Goodwood Station subway and access ramps **as part of the project** to allow DDA compliant access to the station and movement separation **as well as** of overpass elevators (*preferred option*)
OR
- improvement of Goodwood Station subway and access ramps **as part of the project** to allow DDA compliant access to the station and movement separation **instead** of overpass elevators
OR
- immediate commencement of improvement to Goodwood Station subway and access ramps **following completion of the MTB overpass** as a separate project.

The Unley BUG does not believe the elevators should be considered the **primary** accessible route to the station in recognising the increased distance and height required to travel for people with prams and unmotorised mobility aids. Added with the potential for conflict with fast-moving bicycle users, it is important for station access upgrades to be incorporated to separate movements and improve station safety and access via the subway **and** the overpass.

We trust you will give these concerns and comments due consideration in recognition that the project should meet the needs and expectations of the community and users of the overpass.

Regards,

David Elliott

Chair

Unley Bicycle User Group

0402 416 210

ubug.secretary@gmail.com.au