

Getting on Track: Successfully Integrating Walking and Cycling Initiatives



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NZPI Conference 2010
Planning Pathways to the Future
Christchurch, NZ

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Abstract

Less traffic congestion, a fit and healthy population, vibrant and active public realm and a step towards a more environmentally sustainable future; the benefits of active forms of transportation are well recognized and understood. Federal, State and local government as well as non-government organisations are involved in a range of activities to support walking and cycling. Melbourne City Council will have Australia's first public bikeshare scheme operational in the near future. Sydney City Council and Brisbane City Council have committed \$76 million and \$100 million respectively over the next four years to fund the development of bike paths and other works. Thus the initiatives can range from the development of policy and provision of infrastructure to the delivery of behaviour change programs. Agencies and departments involved in these activities include the transport, health, environmental, urban design and planning sectors.

Although it is recognised that successful actions to facilitate walking and cycling should occur at all levels of community through a multi-sectoral and multi-interventional approach, the development and implementation of such integrated responses is often problematic. Walking and cycling initiatives are frequently undertaken in a fragmented manner across varying agencies, government departments and geographic locations.

This paper presents the key learnings from the 'Integrated Approach to Walking and Cycling: Mapping Exercise' project recently undertaken by Beca Pty Ltd on behalf of Sport and Recreation Victoria. Using case study examples, it will discuss a range of key issues - including governance, investment, information sharing and integrated stakeholder engagement that may assist other government and non-government agencies in getting "on track" in terms of the effective and sustainable delivery of initiatives to support walking and cycling.

1 The Project

In 2006 the Victorian State Government committed \$132 million over four years to promote good health and wellbeing. As part of this commitment the Government has supported the Go for your life cross-Government campaign which seeks to promote healthy eating and increase levels of physical activity. 'Go for your life' includes a significant investment in a range of community-based programs. Where possible, programs build on existing community building activities and target socio-economically disadvantaged and isolated areas. These programs will provide support at the community level to achieve sustained change.

The 'Integrated Approach to Walking and Cycling: Mapping Exercise' project was funded by the 'Go for your life' campaign and was coordinated by Sport and Recreation Victoria. The project objectives were:

- To develop a framework to allow for the thorough documentation of existing policy and programs relevant to walking and cycling across Victoria;
- To properly audit the range of policies and programs across Government and the nongovernment sector which contribute to walking and cycling activity throughout the State; and,
- To develop an action plan to guide the future integration of walking and cycling initiatives.

A total of 72 strategic policies and 56 programs relevant to walking and cycling originating from Federal, State and local government as well as nongovernment organisations were audited as part of the project. Furthermore ten case studies were undertaken which sought to explore walking and cycling initiatives across a range of population groups across a number of geographic settings. A key focus of the project methodology was to bring together key stakeholders for a series of workshops throughout the course of the project, to encourage information sharing and collaboration.

The outcomes of the 'Integrated Approach to Walking and Cycling: Mapping Exercise' project highlight a range of issues and opportunities associated with the integration of walking and cycling. These issues are complex and frequently involve a range of players. The following sections summarise the key project findings as they relate to the themes of governance and efficient program delivery.

2 Getting on Track: Governance

There is an increasing emphasis at all levels of government to develop strategic policy supporting walking and cycling. This was indeed the experience of the 'Integrated Approach to Walking and Cycling: Mapping Exercise' project which found that there are a wide number of Government departments, agencies and non-government organizations currently involved in the preparation of policies to support and encourage walking and cycling.

Walking and cycling now feature strongly in health policy, transport policy and environment policy. Whilst this means walking and cycling are firmly on the policy agenda, there is a great complexity relating to policy focus, roles and responsibilities and the charter of various government and non-government organisations at a State, regional and local level.

Some of the key findings of the Integrated Approach to Walking and Cycling: Mapping Exercise project in relation to governance were:

- There was considerable uncertainty around roles and responsibility, leading to policy duplication and a failure to properly integrate policy.
- Policy is often directed at specific sectors, for example infrastructure provision, active transport, land use planning, health and tourism.
- There is scope to improve the integration and synergies between policies. For example, there are opportunities to promote linkages between policies pertaining to infrastructure provision with policy directions relating to behaviour change.
- Local government was frequently identified in as the primary implementation mechanism to realising strategic policy. However there is often limited resourcing available at this level to undertake all the strategic actions identified.
- That there was generally a lack of coordination internally within local government and across LGA

boundaries, especially in relation to infrastructure provision.

Accordingly the Integrated Approach to Walking and Cycling: Mapping Exercise project recommends that the following issues are addressed in order to promote 'good governance' regarding walking and cycling initiatives:

- Improve the definition of roles, responsibilities and co-ordination of government and non government agencies at a State, regional and local level.
- Improve information exchange, stakeholder engagement and ongoing partnerships.
- Provide education and encouragement to support behaviour change so as to realise community benefits from increased cycling and walking activity, and ensure improved linkages between infrastructure provision and behaviour change programs.
- Enhance physical activity, recreational and tourism opportunities.
- Improve the integration of cycling and walking with transport planning and public transport provision to increase the mode choice for walking and cycling.
- Improve connectedness across communities through co-ordinated provision of local walking and cycling infrastructure across regions.
- Support improved up front planning for integrated walking and cycling infrastructure as well as responsive approval processes to achieve improved facilities (especially in newly developing communities and in existing and new Activity Centres).
- Ensure evaluation and continuous improvement in policy and program development.

The policy context of Port Phillip City Council, located in Metropolitan Melbourne illustrates an innovative approach adopted by a local authority to better promote and support walking and cycling.

Case Study Example: Port Phillip City Council

The City of Port Phillip is located along the northeastern edge of Port Phillip Bay within Melbourne's inner metropolitan area. This Council is committed to the promotion of walking and cycling throughout the municipality – as a means of managing transport and traffic, as well as encouraging healthy and active lifestyles.

Importantly Port Phillip City Council has identified a 'Road User Hierarchy' which is referenced in key local policies and prioritises walking primarily, and secondly, cycling. Accordingly, Council is dedicated to providing innovative responses to walking and cycling issues, which relate to areas including infrastructure, active transport, physical activity, safety and accessibility. One such example is the 'Pedestrian Friendly Crossovers' designed by Council's Sustainable Transport Officer in partnership with Council engineers.

Council devised new crossover guidelines which specifically function to give precedence to the amenity and safety of pedestrians. The first street reconstructed in the municipality with this treatment was Rothesay Street, Elwood. This treatment is now required of all new footpaths constructed within the City of Port Phillip.

The key features of the Port Phillip policy context considered to contribute to its success are:

- Clear linkage between Council's strategic policy, 'work on the ground' and programs.
- Cross-departmental collaboration within Council.
- Consistent strategic directions across key policy documents.
- Council possesses both formal and informal linkages with its neighbouring municipalities. In particular, the former relates to Council's involvement in the Inner Melbourne Action Plan (IMAP). The IMAP comprises representatives from the City of Port Phillip, City of Yarra, City of Melbourne and Docklands and seeks to adopt a regional approach to key issues, including walking and cycling.

3 Getting on Track: Efficient Program Delivery

The results of the project's program audit illustrate the complexity of the circumstances associated with the delivery of walking and cycling programs in Victoria. In particular the following key findings and challenges to efficient walking and cycling programs were identified:

- A range of State Government departments and agencies, local Government Authorities as well as non-government organisations are involved in leading the implementation of programs.

- There are few initiatives implemented at a regional scale and through regional authorities.
- There are often good linkages between policy and programs, particularly at the State level. However, at the local level there are many policies and strategies, and it less clear that program delivery is meeting strategic objectives.
- In practice program delivery at the local level is often determined by the availability of resources rather than strategic policy direction.
- The programs captured in the audit ranged in scale from large budget ongoing programs to smaller one-off programs. Many programs are on-off or pilot programs, or are in "start up phase".
- Funding partnerships for program delivery are often complex. These partnerships exist between government and non-government agencies, and across different levels of government.
- Most programs do not have KPIs, program targets or evaluation frameworks.

The findings of this audit potentially have significant ramifications for the development, administration and delivery of walking and cycling programs. In particular the project findings are suggestive of a need to review funding models and partnership arrangements to provide greater certainty for ongoing program delivery and funding sources. The project also suggests that opportunities for the "bundling" of programs be explored in order to facilitate the longterm funding of initiatives and to provide for greater program certainty.

There is scope to improve program delivery evaluation and to strengthen linkages between program funding and evaluation. Because resources at the local level are often limited, there is a focus on program delivery rather than evaluation activity.

The co-ordination of infrastructure planning and provision across local government areas and regions is generally undertaken through informal linkages. There are opportunities to improve coordination and complex program delivery partnerships.

Nevertheless the Ride2School program established in June 2008 by Bicycle Victoria illustrates many of the 'ingredients' considered necessary to facilitate the delivery of successful walking and cycling programs.

Case Study Example: Ride2School, Bicycle Victoria

Ride2School aims to increase the proportion of students riding and walking to school and thereby engender healthy lifestyles by increasing students' physical activity. 953 registered schools currently participate in Ride2School and the program operates in every municipality within Victoria. While Bicycle Victoria, a non-government and not-for-profit organisation, is the lead agency responsible for the development and implementation of Ride2School, the program is an example of successful collaboration between a non-government organisation, local and State government.

It is funded by the Victorian Government's 'Go for your life' initiative and receives \$4 million over four years. Other key sponsors of the project include Sustainability Fund and VicHealth. The key features of the Ride2School program considered to contribute to its success:

- The wide reach of its implementation; as previously mentioned the program has been implemented within every Victorian municipality.
- The program addresses a range of issues including physical activity, active transport, safety, education and infrastructure.
- The program includes the ongoing monitoring of participation rates. In particular participating schools are encouraged to complete an online Hands Up! Survey to track the number of students arriving by different modes of transportation. There are incentives (i.e. equipment, bikes and eligibility for bike shed grants) provided to schools to undertake this component of the program.
- The 'Bike Ed' program implemented by State Government agency VicRoads is incorporated with Ride2School. This program aims to develop riding confidence in both parents and students.
- The program is an example of collaboration between non-government organisations, State Government and Local Council.
- The program has strict reporting requirements with evaluation of the program's participation rates and the progress towards KPIs built into the process.
- Ride2School answers to a Steering Committee comprising representatives from VicHealth, VicRoads, Go for your life (Department of Human

Services), Bicycle Victoria, Sport and Recreation Victoria, TravelSmart, Department of Transport, Department of Education and Municipal Association of Victoria.

4 Conclusion

A more health-conscious public, traffic congestion, increasing petrol prices, over-crowding on public transport, improved infrastructure and facilities, and higher-density development are just some of the forces encouraging populations to take to the streets by foot or bicycle. There are considerable community benefits from walking and cycling. These include economic, social and environmental benefits, and many of these benefits will assist governments in meeting a number of key challenges relating to health, transportation, access and the environment.

The integrated walking and cycling project is focused on collecting information to help understand the complex range of policy and programs directed toward walking and cycling initiatives. It will help inform the ongoing evolution of the Victorian State Government's widely successful "Go for your life" campaign.

It was our experience that policy direction and program delivery in relation to walking and cycling is fragmented. We encourage the adoption of an approach which is inclusive and promotes the integration of walking and cycling for the whole community, for all population groups across all geographic settings, and which is streamlined so that greater efficiencies are achieved.

Overall, the project recommended the following key actions in order to better improve the ongoing success of Victoria's walking and cycling initiatives:

- The way forward needs to strongly focus on improving governance – clarifying roles and responsibilities – and keeping both government and non government agencies working together with key stakeholders.
- Establishing a 'peak' walking and cycling forum, possibly meeting quarterly, and encouraging stakeholders and agencies to keep working together. This will require some cultural change, particularly within government at State and local level, and the ongoing development of partnerships. It will also require improved information provision.

- In relation to the policy framework, we think there is scope to strengthen the policy hierarchy at state, regional and local level. In particular there needs to be a greater focus on policy relating to walking and also on policy to integrate walking and cycling at a regional level.
- Program delivery is fragmented. We suggest “bundling” of programs to improve accessibility and effectiveness.
- There is an urgent need to increase resources allocated to local infrastructure provision, and to ensure the better matching of infrastructure provision and behaviour change programs.

In conclusion, the key recommendations of the ‘Integrated Walking and Cycling: Mapping Exercise’ project require adoption of ‘hand in hand’ approaches to governance which entail collaboration and information sharing across different levels and departments of government.