

Port Adelaide Bicycle User Group (the 'PortBUG').



"The Port BUG"

Minister Corey Wyngard,
Minister for Transport.
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October 10th, 2020.

Dear Minister Wyngard,

The PortBUG notes with interest your recent announcement of \$625M Federal funding for South Australia, with a particular focus on post-COVID economic recovery. It seems that the greater proportion of this funding is destined for major road, rail and industry infrastructure projects. While we understand the economic significance of road and rail investment we would ask that you also consider the *urgent need* for renewed funding to revitalize and maintain the long-delayed development of Adelaide's Active Transport Network.

Active Transport (or Active Mobility) comprises walking, cycling, access to public transport and related travel activity (including mobility for those with disabilities). Commencing in the late '90s, DIT and councils across Adelaide and Regional SA have been developing on-the-ground provisions to support active mobility in our community for day-to-day commuting, shopping & access to services, health, recreation and tourism. The idea has been to develop a multi-level, '8-80 y.o.a' Network ensuring that *all* members of our community – children and students, workers, families, older folk and those with disabilities – have access to safe and secure walking, cycling and related facilities meeting their day-to-day travel needs. In other words, to truly realize the oft-quoted description of Adelaide as Australia's 'cycling (and walking) city'!

The principle feature of these efforts to date has been creation of a comprehensive, metro-wide network of Greenways or 'trunk' walking and cycling routes. Notable among these is the 22km Outer Harbor Greenway (OHG), connecting the Adelaide Parklands to Port Adelaide and Outer Harbor. The PortBUG was instrumental in initiating this route and spent 15 years actively promoting its development with successive governments. Since it opened in October last year the OHG has seen steadily increasing use and is now one of Adelaide's busiest commuting and recreational cycling routes.

Unfortunately the development of Adelaide's 'cycling city' status has effectively come to a standstill. The underlying significance of the OHG and other similar 'trunk' routes is their provision of a connected 'structural' framework facilitating development of *more localized* walking and cycling provisions that *feed into* these longer routes! While more of these 'trunk' routes are required across the Metropolitan area, there is now urgent need to support provision of more localized walking and cycling facilities, including new 'neighborhood' routes and a myriad of smaller projects such as new foot paths and 'ride-throughs', upgraded ramps, local shared-use pathways, safer road and rail crossings, roadside turning refuges and guidance and interpretive signage. Virtually all of these smaller-scale projects are the responsibility of Local Government, who in turn depend on matched funding from the **State Bicycle Fund (SBF)** for completion of their annual works programs.

When the first of Adelaide's Greenways were built in the late 1990s, the State Bicycle Fund was running at about \$2.5M pa and provided reasonably adequate support for the handful of councils engaged in Active Transport projects. Since then it has steadily declined while demand for council investment in walking and cycling provisions has grown significantly. Indeed we understand that by 2019 your Government had reduced the SBF to just over \$300K to support council projects. Despite having several 'shovel ready' projects ready to go early in 2020 - including the proposed Rosewater Loop shared use path, much needed by residents of Rosewater, Ottoway and Wingfield - the Port Adelaide/Enfield Council was unable to obtain funding assistance from the SBF.

Now at perhaps only 10% of its 1990s value, the SBF is rapidly becoming a rather pointless gesture of limited value to both Councils and the community. The current \$300K available would barely pay for a few hundred metres of paved pathway or a couple of secure road crossings, let alone the many more demanding projects that councils need to undertake.

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PortBUG understands that the State Budget is due in early November. We ask that your Government allocate a much more adequate funding to the SBF to ensure that it is able to support demands to further develop Adelaide's Active Transport Network. The funding required is modest – we suggest in the order of \$3 to 6M – and we'd argue that your Government consider such increased funding as *an essential complement* to the massive investment in roads and rail infrastructure you have planned.

Active Transport plays an essential and increasingly role in our transport system. For many it is a preferred mode of travel and for some the only one which they can reasonably access, especially for local travel needs. Walking and cycling also provide *alternative travel options* and thus significant resilience and extra capacity within our transport system at times of peak demand and when disruptions (such as rail 'outages') occur. Active travel also brings well-documented benefits to users in terms of reduced daily travel costs and much improved health and social outcomes.

Nor can benefits for local economies be ignored - recent research by Transport for London has found that:

- people who walk and cycle to the 'High Street' *buy 50% more* than people who drive
- walkers in particular *visit more often & spend up to 40% more* than those who arrive by car
- improved walking and cycling access improves retail sales by *up to 30%*
- cycle parking delivers up to *5 x the retail spend* than car parking.

PortBUG believes that increasing allocation to the State Bicycle Fund would be a 'win-win' investment for your Government, particularly as it is likely to generate significant political dividends!

The PortBUG also requests that your Government develop a new State Cycling (or 'Active Travel') Strategy to complement the SBF. Until 2010 South Australia's councils and community were provided with policy and planning guidance by a series of state bike plans, the most recent being 'Safety in Numbers' (2006-10), responsible for framing Adelaide's current Greenway Network. For the last decade – for reasons that remain unclear - Government has resisted renewal of this document, leaving Councils and communities 'flying blind', uncertain as to State Government priorities and what projects are likely to receive funding support.

Given the community's growing interest in walking and cycling over the last decade *and* the extra demands and needs arising in the current pandemic recovery context, we'd strongly encourage your Government to demonstrate a renewed commitment to Adelaide's Active Transport future by providing significantly increased funding for both the State Bicycle Fund *and* for a new Active Transport Strategy.

A truly comprehensive and connected, '8-80' Active Transport Network across the Adelaide Metropolitan area will provide inestimable benefits for all South Australians and for the city's economic, social and environmental future. Now is the time to provide South Australia with the sort of clear vision for its Cycling & Walking future provided by governments in countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark and New Zealand – and indeed in *all other states in Australia*. The PortBUG strongly asks you to ensure similar commitments to increased funding and to a renewed Active Transport Strategy in the forthcoming State Budget.

Yours sincerely,



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