



# BIKE SAFETY IN BRUNSWICK:

The case for protected bike  
lanes on Sydney Road.

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# INTRODUCTION

Imagine a cleaner, quieter Sydney Road, but with more people in it. Cities around the world have achieved this by devoting more road space to bikes and walking, and less to cars. This is what we need to do for Sydney Road.

## **Brunswick's most important shopping strip is choked by traffic, when it could be moving people on bikes and on foot.**

More people already ride to work from Brunswick than from anywhere in Australia. Many head for Royal Parade, off to Uni, hospitals or the city. The nearby Upfield Shared Path is crowded with train passengers, constricted in places and diverted in others. So more riders are choosing Sydney Road, even though 85% of riders feel unsafe there, as our survey shows.

Protected bike lanes on Sydney Road will let kids get to school more safely and will increase the number and diversity of those who chose to ride. More riding means less driving, traffic congestion and emissions, as well as healthier commuters and shoppers.

Already many of our growing apartment population use bikes instead of cars, and soon level crossing replacement works will close the Upfield Shared Path. The future is upon us and this report explains how and why Sydney Road needs to adapt.



**Dr Tim Read**  
Greens MP for Brunswick



## 1.1 SUMMARY

Sydney Road is considered the most dangerous road for cyclists in Victoria. It is also a congested, extremely slow commuter route for cars and trams.

Unless something changes, these problems will continue to grow as Brunswick and the inner-north remain a popular destination to call home.

The evidence suggests public transport, walking and bikes are the best way to address the increasing congestion in Brunswick.

This report discusses the results of a survey carried out by the office of Tim Read MP regarding the safety of Sydney Road and the Upfield Shared Path for cyclists.

The report also discusses contemporary research and developments on the effects of improving bike infrastructure on cycling safety, cycling participation, traffic congestion, as well as addressing potential commercial impacts for Sydney Road's traders.

### KEY SURVEY RESULTS

- 812 responses to *Brunswick Bike Safety Survey*, with 79% of respondents living in Brunswick, Brunswick East, Brunswick West or Coburg.
- Nearly all cyclists surveyed (85%) felt an element of danger, either 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe', when riding along Sydney Road. Only 22% indicated they 'would never use Sydney Road', meaning 78% use it at least a few times a month, despite the fact that most feel unsafe.
- Perceptions of safety appear grounded in reality: 40% of respondents (330 people) indicated they either had experienced or seen a car dooring on Sydney Road, and almost one in five respondents (152 people) had witnessed a cyclist being hit by a car. Many individual responses detailed horrific personal stories of accidents and resulting ongoing trauma.
- Cyclists more frequently use the Upfield Shared Path, with 62% of surveyed cyclists using the route at least a few times a week – 20% more than travel on Sydney Road. Only a very small number of respondents indicated that they had witnessed or experienced crashes between cyclists and cars on the shared path.
- Nearly all survey respondents (83% of females, 80% of males) stated they would ride down Sydney Road more often if a protected bike lane was present, which suggests safety is a key factor in determining what route to take.

### KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Already more cyclists commute to work from Brunswick than from anywhere else in Australia. However, what holds cycling participation back further is many people's fear of sharing a road with motor vehicles.
- Consistent with other studies, our survey suggests infrastructure that separates riders from cars, either dedicated off-street paths or protected lanes on roads, will increase cycling participation by improving actual and perceived rider safety.
- Although cyclists' perceptions of safety were higher for the off-street Upfield Shared Path than for Sydney Road, the viability of the path as a major commuter route is limited by the lack of space and the presence of pedestrians.
- The major barrier to the removal of on-street parking and creation of permanent, protected bicycle lanes on Sydney Road is likely to be objections from Sydney Road traders concerned about the effects on their businesses.

## KEY SURVEY RESULTS

### 812 RESPONSES:

454 MALE (56%); 354 FEMALE (44%);  
4 UNSPECIFIED



### UNSAFE

MORE THAN 4 OUT OF 5 CYCLISTS SURVEYED FEEL 'UNSAFE' OR 'VERY UNSAFE' ON SYDNEY ROAD.



### ABUSED

MORE THAN 3 OUT OF 5 CYCLISTS HAD BEEN ABUSED BY A DRIVER OR PEDESTRIAN ON SYDNEY ROAD.



### CAR DOORING

2 OUT OF 5 CYCLISTS HAD SEEN OR EXPERIENCED A CAR DOORING ON SYDNEY ROAD.



### HIT BY CAR

1 IN 5 SURVEYED HAD WITNESSED A RIDER BEING HIT BY A CAR.



## WOULD RIDE MORE OFTEN WITH PROTECTED BIKE LANES

NEARLY ALL RIDERS SURVEYED (83% OF FEMALES, 80% OF MALES) SAID THEY WOULD RIDE MORE OFTEN ON SYDNEY ROAD IF IT HAD PROTECTED BIKE LANES.

## 1.2 HISTORY OF SYDNEY ROAD

Sydney Road has always changed with the times.

In 1839 a new Sydney Road ran from the city to Albert Street, was extended to Blyth Street in the 1840s, and then to the new Pentridge Prison by the early 1850s when it eventually replaced Pascoe Vale Road as the primary route to Sydney.

In early days a tollgate to charge the road's users was located at the Sarah Sands Hotel on the corner of Brunswick Road.

The first tram, pulled by horses, appeared on the road in 1879 and was replaced by a cable tram in 1887.

In 2004 Sydney Road was placed under the authority of VicRoads and classified as an important arterial connection between the Western Ring Road and the CBD. Clearways on both sides of the street were established for peak periods, banning parking for two hours to increase the traffic flow of cars and trams.

The appearance of painted bike lanes and events such as Ciclovía (2008 and 2009) and the Sydney Road Street Festival (1989 to present) promoted pedestrian and cycling traffic on the road.

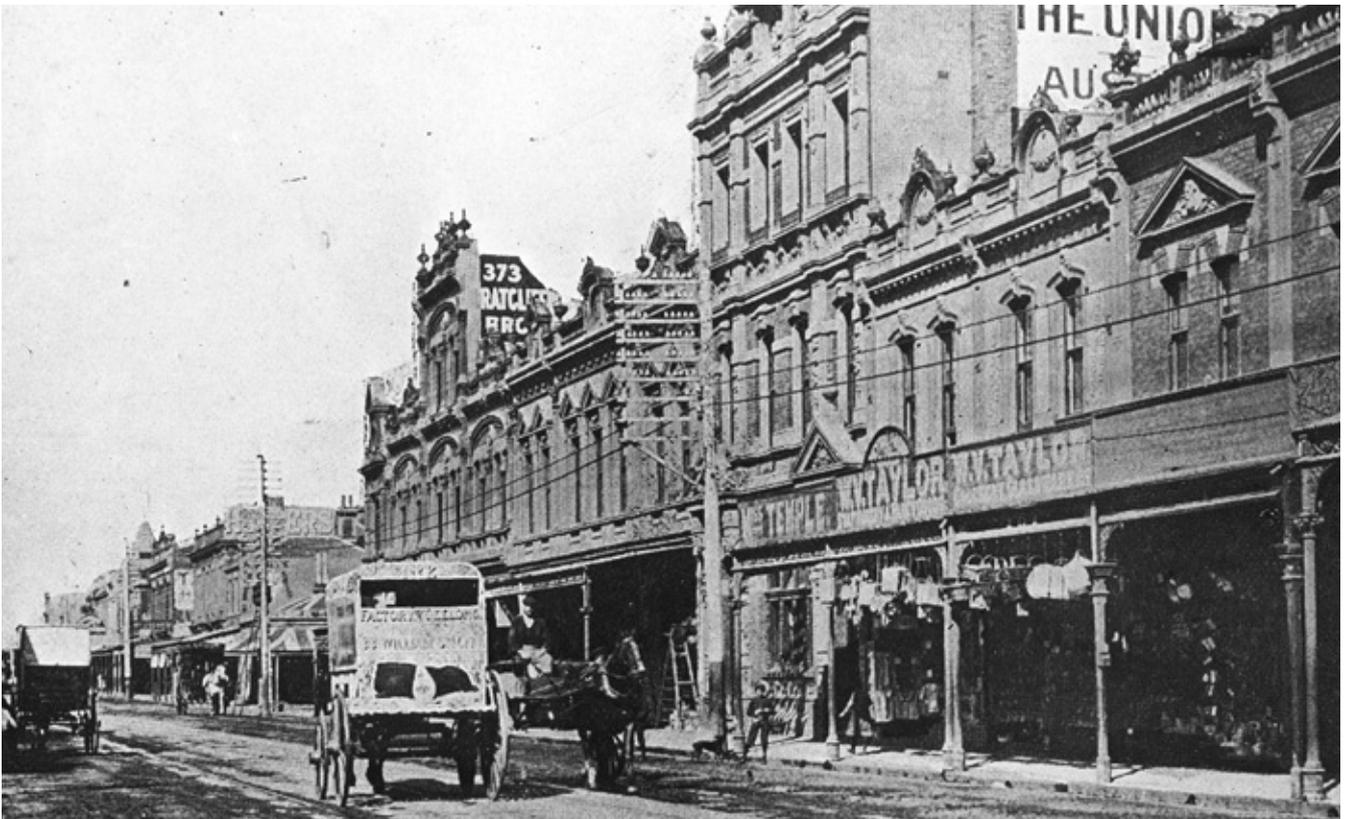
Around this time broad political support emerged for 'rejuvenating' Sydney Road to prioritise public and active transport over on-street parking.

Carlo Carli, Labor MP for Brunswick from 1994 to 2010, was one such proponent, stating: 'Parking interferes with trams and cycling. I think we should re-engineer Sydney Road to favour sustainable transport – walking, cycling and public transport.'<sup>3</sup>

In 2007 the then Mayor of Moreland, Mark O'Brien, outlined his own plans for a car-free boulevard along Sydney Road, while the Victorian Government briefly experimented with extending clearway times in 2009–10.

New laws requiring the tram network to be fully accessible to people with disabilities require the street to be redesigned to accommodate accessible tram stops. At a minimum, these new tram stops will eliminate some stretches of parking, and will change the amenity of Sydney Road.

The building of accessible stops presents a perfect opportunity for the broader redesign of Sydney Road to reflect modern inner-city living and commuting.<sup>1,2</sup>



Sydney Road 1907. Moreland City Libraries Historic Catalogue.

## 1.3 BRUNSWICK BIKE ROUTES AND CURRENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Currently, there are no protected bike lanes in Brunswick.

Bicycle routes around Brunswick consist of either off-street shared (bike and pedestrian) paths, on-street painted lanes on larger roads, and sign-posted 'shimmy' routes that wind through back streets.

While the Moonee Ponds and Merri Creek off-road trails serve the western edge of Brunswick West and eastern edge of Brunswick East respectively, the primary cycling commuter routes for Brunswick run north-south down Melville-Dawson-Grantham Streets, Sydney Road and Lygon Street, as well as the mainly off-street, Upfield Shared Path.

Of these, Melville-Dawson-Grantham Streets and Sydney Road are arterial roads. The Victorian Government is responsible for traffic planning, maintenance, upgrades and construction of all arterial roads. All non-arterial roads in Brunswick are managed by the Moreland City Council.



**A typical bike lane in Brunswick. Parked cars and driveways.**

# OUR GROWING CITY AND CONGESTION

Melbourne's population is on track to reach five million by 2021 and pass eight million by 2050. The Moreland municipality is expected to grow by 43,000 people (25,000 cars) in the next 15 years.<sup>4</sup>



Images: Shuang Li & ChameleonsEye / Shutterstock.com

Already Sydney Road has been ranked as the slowest moving off-peak arterial road in Victoria at 9 km/h. And Sydney Road's number 19 tram, Melbourne's fifth busiest, is even slower at an average speed of 7 km/h, improving to 14–17 km/h during the peak-hour clearways.<sup>5</sup>

According to the Department of Transport, Melbourne's existing transport network will need to cater for an additional 10.6 million trips a day by 2050, a large proportion coming from the inner-north, to and from the CBD.

People in Moreland are already doing their best to reduce congestion. More cycling trips, 34,659 on an average weekday, originate from Moreland than from any other Local Government Area (LGA), and most of these are on the north-south route to and from the city. In the morning peak, 900 bikes per hour, representing over a third of all vehicles, head down Royal Parade to central Melbourne from the direction of Sydney Road.<sup>6</sup>

**While it is possible for Brunswick and surrounding areas to make space for more people, it is hard to imagine how we make space for more cars. The obvious, perhaps only solution is investing in a mix of transport infrastructure that encourages people to ride, walk or take public transport to work.**



## 2.1 PLANNING FOR OUR CHANGING CITY

The inner-north is a desirable place to live, meaning there are more and more people and their cars in Brunswick, but less and less available space. Inevitably, this has caused major congestion on our roads.

**Realising that growth in vehicle traffic from higher populations is reducing liveability, local governments are increasingly regulating their planning schemes to discourage the use of cars.**

Moreland City Council released an Integrated Transport Strategy in 2019 to remove minimum car park requirements for new apartment developments and to encourage public and active transport. The City of Melbourne has already abolished these minimum requirements.

In fact, major cities around the world have long been reducing car parks in a bid to reduce congestion and improve liveability. London abolished minimum parking requirements in 2004, as has Oslo, and San Francisco.

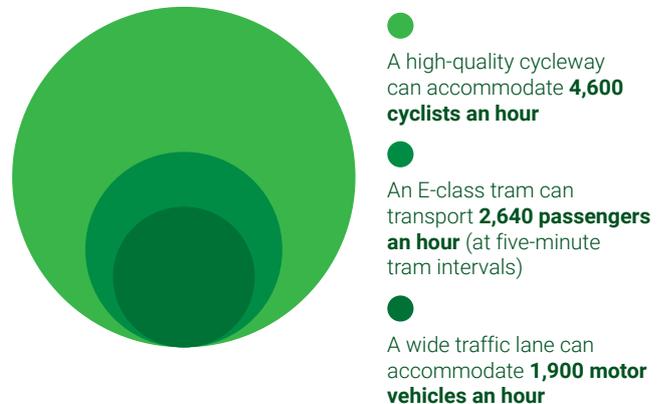
Street parking has long been illegal in central Tokyo for a population of around 9 million, and other landmark cities like Zürich and Paris have been reducing the amount of on-street car parking for decades.

**In theory, there is universal agreement from all levels of government that Melbourne's current and future needs require the reallocation of space from cars and car parking to walking, cycling and public transport.**

Cycling is vital in alleviating congestion because a high-quality cycleway can transport substantially more people per square metre of road space than cars and trams. The *Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018–28* states that in one hour a high-quality cycleway can move 4,600 people, a lane running trams every five minutes moves 2,640 people, and a car lane moves 1,900 cars.

As most inner-city cyclists already know, cycling as transportation is particularly efficient in suburbs such as Brunswick, because it largely avoids the peak congestion on the roads and public transport.

**Figure 1: Efficiency of cycling compared with other modes of transport.**



Cycling participation is also expected to grow via technology. Electric, 'e-bikes' have great potential as commuter vehicles, significantly increasing the range of cycling trips, and reducing the need for people to shower and change clothes at their destination. Electric bikes also make cycling a more appealing option for people who are generally less physically active.

E-bikes currently comprise only a fraction of the roughly 1.5 million bicycles sold in Australia each year, but the market is growing. In more established markets such as the Netherlands, e-bikes already outsell regular bikes, with global e-bike demand expected to double in five years.<sup>8</sup>

### WHAT THEY SAY

*'Active modes of travel such as walking and cycling have the potential to reduce the growth in all forms of motorised travel and to improve public health. Melbourne 2030 recognises the importance of providing safe, attractive and continuous pedestrian and cycling routes and facilities, on and off-road, as an integral part of new and existing urban development.'*

#### – Victorian Government: Melbourne 2030

*'For Melbourne to continue to be a globally connected and competitive city with strong and healthy communities and higher social and economic participation, the share of trips by public transport, as well as active transport modes such as walking and cycling, must increase.'*

#### – Victorian Government: Plan Melbourne 2017–2050

*'Encouraging people to cycle rather than use a car for short trips will reduce pressure on the road network and support the development of 20-minute neighbourhoods.'*

**– Victorian Government: Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018–2028**

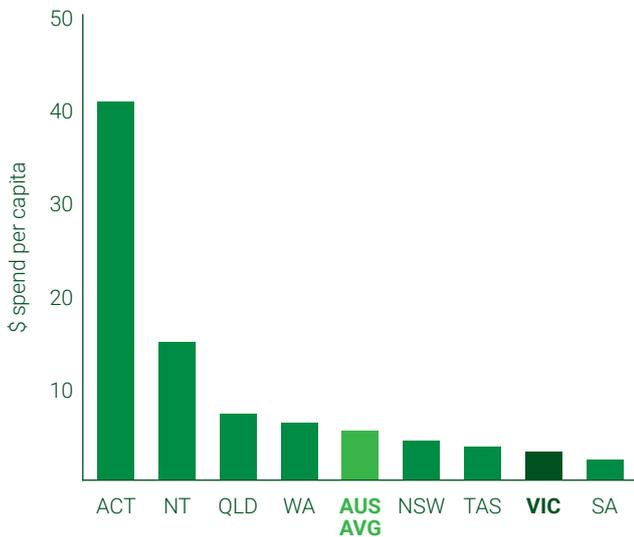
*'...the primary aim of MITS is to reduce car use by encouraging walking, cycling and public transport, so that limited road space and parking resources can be used by people who have the greatest need to drive.'*

**– Moreland Council: Moreland Integrated Transport Strategy (MITS) 2019**

**2.2 THE FAILURE TO ACT FOR OUR CHANGING CITY**

Although there is agreement that cycling must become a more significant part in our urban transport network, successive Labor and Liberal Victorian governments have failed to match their rhetoric with spending on bicycle infrastructure.

**Figure 2: State and territory cycling investment 2015–16 per head of population.**



In 2015–16, the Australian Bicycle Council ranked Victoria second lowest in the country for bicycle specific infrastructure spending, at a total of \$17 million or \$3.01 per person, well below the national average of \$5.29, and less than 1% of the \$2 billion allocated to roads.<sup>9</sup>

A \$100 million Safer Cycling and Pedestrian Fund to boost cycling investment across 19 key cycling

corridors was promised by Labor as part of their 2014 election campaign. However, by the time of the 2018 election none of these corridors had been constructed.<sup>10</sup>

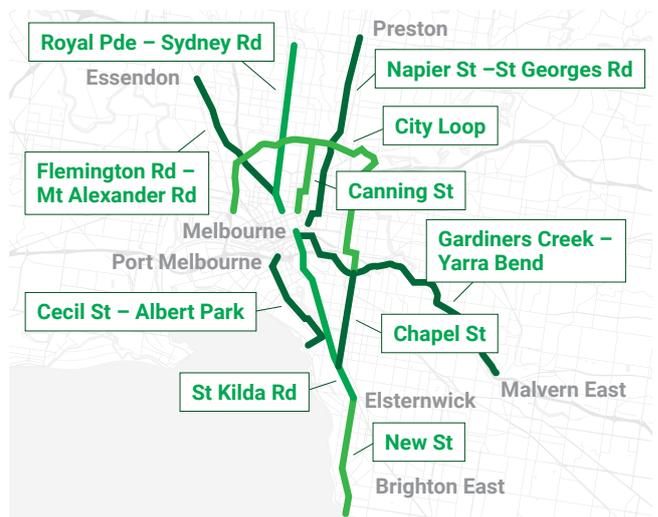
The Victorian Government's *Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018–28*, was also largely theoretical and lacked solid commitments in terms of participation targets, funding, planned routes, street-specific treatment designs and project deadlines.

While the strategy stated that Victoria would draw on the, 'Amsterdam, Copenhagen, London, San Francisco and Portland' models for building cycling transport networks, this has yet to materialise in terms of investment. After the recent 2019–2020 Victorian State Budget, Bicycle Network calculated the projected cycling infrastructure spending to be only \$2 per person a year.

In fact, whereas Amsterdam, Copenhagen, London, San Francisco and Portland all invested in purpose built, stand-alone major cycling infrastructure, all of the current Victorian Government's major investments in cycling infrastructure come as appendages to motor-vehicle centred 'super projects': North East Link, the West Gate Tunnel and Level Crossing Removal.

In early 2019, RACV-commissioned research identified Sydney Road, in a list of major roads that should be converted into bike-friendly commuter highways, based on safety, existing demand, connection to other routes, and ability to ease congestion. To date the Victorian Government is yet to respond to this research.

**Figure 3: Top 10 priority corridors for cycling superhighways – RACV-commissioned research**



# **SYDNEY ROAD: THE MOST DANGEROUS ROAD IN VICTORIA**

Between 2006 and 2015 on Sydney Road there were 223 reported bicycle crashes, including one fatality, ranking it as the most dangerous road for cyclists in Victoria. Current VicRoads data shows crashes have occurred at almost every point of Sydney Road in Brunswick over the last four years.

In 2015 an opening car door knocked Italian chef, Alberto Paulon off his bike and under a following truck which killed him. This led to \$1.6 million investment in safety improvements on the road: a permanent 40 km/h speed limit; the broadening of painted bike lanes in some places; banning right hand turns on some intersections; and, 'look' door warning stamps painted on the tarmac.<sup>11</sup>

**However, VicRoads' own research found that the dooring stamps were ineffective, and a year on from the tragedy Bicycle Network reported that Sydney Road remained one of the top locations for dooring in Melbourne.<sup>12</sup>**

Establishing temporary bicycle lanes when the clearways operate has also been problematic. Sydney Road is the state's worst tow-away road, with about five cars removed every weekday – for bike riders this means swerving into peak-hour traffic around illegally parked cars is a regular occurrence.<sup>13</sup>

In 2016 John Merritt, then Chief Executive at VicRoads, stated that the authority had not finished with their plans to improve safety on Sydney Road. However, at the time of publishing, there has been no further changes to the road.

Most recently in June 2019, VicRoads asked the public for feedback on five proposed designs for the development of Sydney Road. Of the five designs, one removed on-street parking and established permanent protected bike lanes.

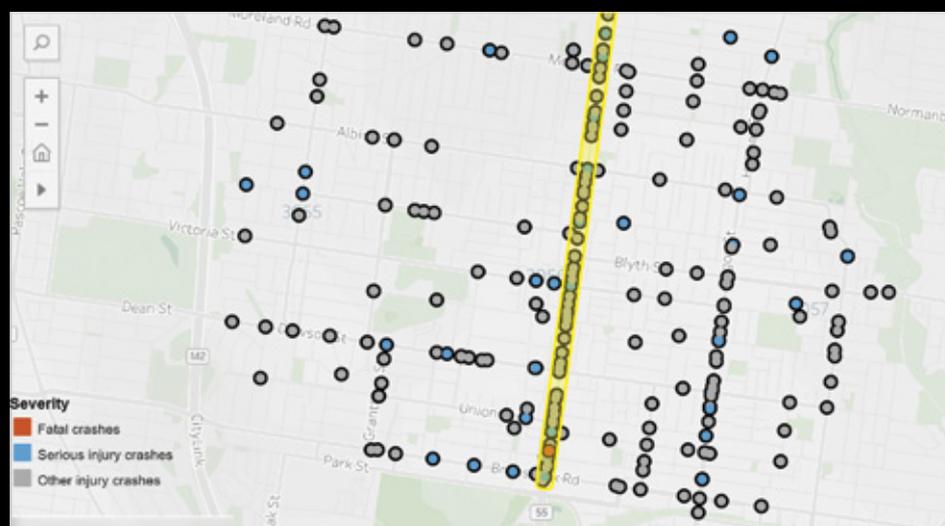


A local Brunswick cyclist is hit by a car at an intersection of Sydney Road – image captured by his mounted video camera.



Deteriorating 'look' door warning stamps and parked cars on Sydney Road bike lanes.

**Figure 4: Bicycle accidents in Brunswick 2014–2018 (data incomplete for 2018). Source: VicRoads.**



# BRUNSWICK BIKE SAFETY SURVEY RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The *Brunswick Bike Safety Survey* was conducted over a period of a month between March and April 2019. Hard copies of the survey were delivered to bicycle shops in and around Brunswick and an online version was posted on social media. Fliers advertising the online survey were also distributed to cyclists on Sydney Road and the Upfield Shared Path during morning peak hour.

## 4.1 KEY FINDINGS

- 812 responses: 454 male (56%); 354 female (44%); 4 unspecified.
- More than 4 out of 5 cyclists surveyed feel 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe' on Sydney Road.
- More than 3 out of 5 cyclists had been abused by a driver or pedestrian on Sydney Road.
- 2 out of 5 cyclists had seen or experienced a car dooring on Sydney Road.
- 1 in 5 surveyed had witnessed a rider being hit by a car.
- Nearly all riders surveyed (83% of females, 80% of males) said they would ride more often on Sydney Road if it had protected bike lanes.

The majority (79%) of the 812 people who participated in the *Brunswick Bike Safety Survey* lived in Brunswick or the neighbouring suburbs: Coburg, Brunswick West or Brunswick East.

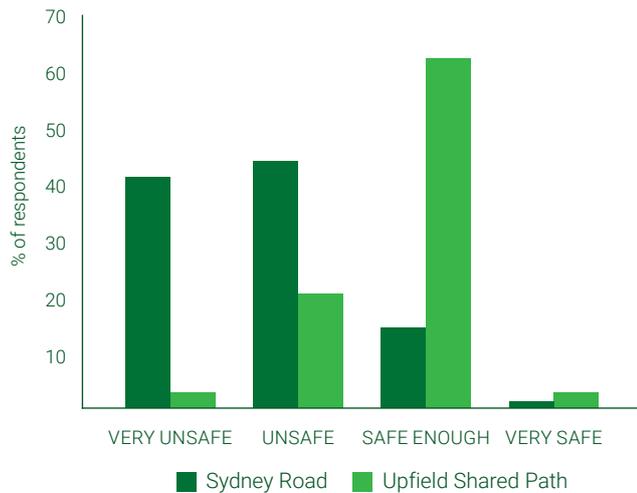


## 4.2 DIVERSITY, SAFETY, PARTICIPATION AND BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

The *Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018–28* states that around 60% of all people are curious about cycling but are deterred by ‘real or perceived’ safety concerns, especially the interaction with motor vehicles. The fact that fewer women than men cycle is attributed to the difference in people’s tolerance towards this risk.

The survey found slightly more women riders, 45% compared to 37% of men, indicated that they felt ‘very unsafe’ on Sydney Road. However, we also found that nearly all riders (85%) felt some element of risk, either ‘unsafe’ or ‘very unsafe’, when riding along Sydney Road.

**Figure 5: How safe do you feel riding on Sydney Road and the Upfield Shared Path?**



Around 64% of riders feel ‘safe enough’ or ‘very safe’ on the Upfield Shared Path, whereas only around 15% feel this way on Sydney Road. Compare this to a separate survey of potential cyclists by the City of Melbourne that found 83% of potential bike riders were confident to ride in bike lanes protected from traffic, whereas only 22% were confident to ride on just a painted bike lane.

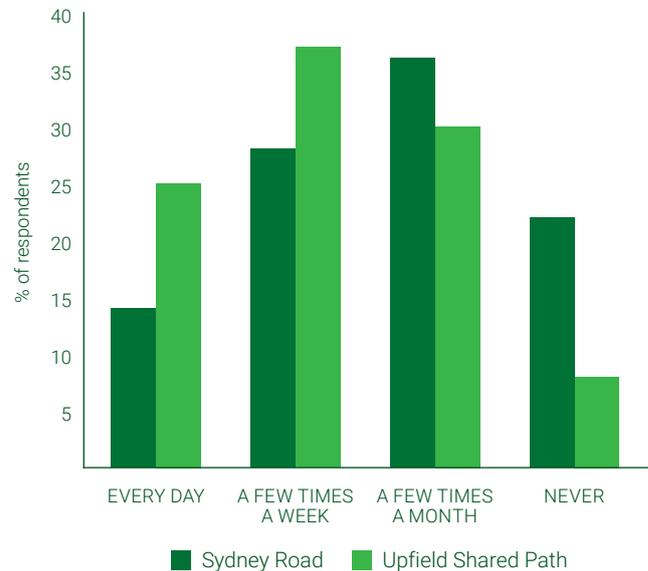
Bike riders more frequently use the Upfield Shared Path, with 62% of riders using the route at least a few times a week – 20% more than Sydney Road. If we consider the transit speed of the two routes is roughly equivalent, this again suggests riders actively seek the safest route. Indeed, the *Melbourne Bike Strategy 2016–2020* found 65% of riders will choose a route

15% longer than the shortest to access dedicated bicycle infrastructure.

This supports the idea that building infrastructure to separate cars from bicycles on roads is the key to increasing both the total number, as well as the diversity of cyclists.

**Nearly all riders (83% of females and 80% of males) said they would ride on Sydney Road more often if it had a protected bike lane.**

**Figure 6: How often do you use Sydney Road and the Upfield Shared Path?**



## 4.3 HOW SAFE IS RIDING A BIKE IN BRUNSWICK?

Australian crash data indicates cyclists are increasingly vulnerable road users. In 2015–16 cyclists accounted for one in five road accident hospitalisations. This data also showed the rate of cycling hospitalisations had increased over the previous six years, whereas it had decreased for other road users: motor vehicle occupants and pedestrians.<sup>14</sup>

A recent study has found that of bike crashes on Australian roads, 52% involved another road user, most commonly a motor vehicle, and 22% of these occurred while cyclists were riding in a marked bicycle lane.<sup>15</sup>

The survey indicates that the common perception that cycling Sydney Road is unsafe because of the close proximity of motor vehicles, is grounded in

reality. The proportion of respondents who had seen or experienced crashes or near misses with cars was substantially higher for Sydney Road than the Upfield Shared Path.

### Two out of five cyclists surveyed indicated they had experienced or seen a car dooring on Sydney Road.

While the unprotected on-road bicycle lanes on Sydney Road provide a narrow space for cyclists during clearway times, at all other times bike riders are squeezed into a narrow strip flanked by moving vehicles on one side, and drivers opening doors of their parked cars on the other.

**Table 1: Incidents reported by survey respondents.**

	Sydney Road		Upfield Shared Path	
	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Near incident with a car</b>	657	80%	177	21%
<b>Pot holes/bumpy bike lane surface</b>	647	78%	449	54%
<b>Anger directed at cyclists from driver/pedestrian</b>	501	61%	276	33%
<b>Car dooring (seen or experienced)</b>	330	40%	5	1%
<b>Crash with motor vehicle (seen or experienced)</b>	152	18%	26	3%
<b>No safety incidents reported</b>	32	4%	170	21%

Although the majority of cyclists indicated that poor road conditions (pot holes or bumps) were present on both routes, 24% more riders said poor conditions appeared on Sydney Road.

Poor road conditions are particularly dangerous when obscured by rainwater accumulation, and practically unavoidable given the peak-hour lane is often less than a metre wide. Research has linked poor road conditions to higher single vehicle bicycle accidents and our survey suggests cyclists feel much more regular, quality maintenance could be done to improve the quality of both routes.



**Current state of Sydney Road bike lanes.**



### CASE STUDY: TESSA AND LEO

*'As a mum, knowing that Leo was cycling to the places he needs to go, to meet his friends, footy training and school, it would make me feel so much better if there were protected bike lanes.'*

**– Tessa Fluence, Mum to Leo Fluence and everyday bike rider.**

See their video on the *Brunswick for Bikes* website.

## 4.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CYCLING PARTICIPATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE: IF YOU BUILD IT...

Consistent with many other studies, our survey indicates that cycling infrastructure that separates cyclists from cars, either dedicated off-street paths or protected lanes on roads, is the key to increasing cycling participation by improving actual as well as perceived rider safety.

Recent analysis by Melbourne City Council suggested that 39% of bicycle crashes can be avoided if continuous, physically separated bike lanes were installed instead of painted space.<sup>16</sup>

Cities that have invested in dedicated cycling infrastructure, including protected lanes, increasing cycling participation, and reducing crashes and fatalities, include:

- **London:** New and protected 'Cycle Superhighways' led to a 55% increase in the use of cycleways, including by women and children.<sup>17</sup>
- **The City of Melbourne:** Melbourne has increased separation on key bicycle routes since 2012, increasing the number of bicycles as a percentage of vehicles entering the central city from 11% to 17%, while decreasing the proportion of cycling crashes by 20%.
- **New York:** (158 km of protected lane), Chicago (40 km) and San Francisco (20 km) have invested in protected lanes and other separated 'bikeway' treatments, and have observed a strong positive correlation between better infrastructure, improved cyclist safety and increased cycling.
- **Minneapolis:** grew its dedicated bikeway infrastructure by 113% between 2000–2015, growing the number of bicycle trips by 203%, while lowering the number of bicycle crashes and rider fatalities by 75% and 79% respectively.<sup>18</sup>

The *Melbourne Bike Strategy* found that Melbourne and Moreland Local Government Areas have the greatest potential to increase the number of cycling trips.

**The evidence is clear: Better bicycle infrastructure will improve the speed, comfort and safety of travel for the relatively high number of cyclists using Melbourne's northern commuter corridor already, as well as increasing participation for a large number of potential, less confident but interested, cyclists.**



### CASE STUDY: BEN

*'I've noticed cars get priority over cyclists. It does feel quite dangerous because the risk is a lot higher for a cyclist than it is for a car.'*

– Ben Maher, Brunswick resident and everyday bike rider

See his video on the *Brunswick for Bikes* website.

## 4.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE UPFIELD SHARED PATH

Although cyclists' perceptions of safety were higher for the off-street Upfield Shared Path than for Sydney Road, the viability of the path as a major commuter route is limited.

A major drawback is that despite operating in two directions, the width of the path is limited by the proximity of the rail track on one side and established buildings on the other.

VicTrack, that owns Victoria’s transport land, assets and infrastructure is generally unable to open up more space for the Upfield Shared Path due to safety regulations and/or to allow for future rail track expansion.

While some sections of the path are of the highest quality, the lack of space at regular intervals limits the path’s capacity, quality and speed during peak periods. The problems worsen towards the south/city end of the path, where available space is the most limited, and greater numbers of bikes funnel onto the track.

At its narrowest points the path is little over 1.5 metres wide, creating bottlenecks where cyclists and pedestrians squeeze past each other in both directions. By comparison, VicRoads’ *Traffic Engineering Manual* specifies a minimum 2.5 metre width and a desirable 3 metre width for two-way bike only paths, and suggests that path widths should be greater than this when there is a high volume of riders – by way of comparison, Copenhagen’s famed Cykelslangen veloway bridge is 4.6 metres wide.

**Larger commuter bikes, bikes with trailers for children, students and family groups with young and inexperienced riders are particularly vulnerable when there is less space available on bike paths, despite being amongst the cyclists who are most likely to value and use an off-street route.**

Close proximity to the tracks, train stations and adjoining properties means sections of the path are frequently forced to detour through side streets due to construction, new building developments and nearby maintenance projects.

**In fact, the Upfield Shared Path has rarely, if ever, provided a seamless off-street, car-free route.**

While 22% of cyclists said they would never use Sydney Road, 78% use it at least a few times a month, despite the fact nearly all riders indicated they feel unsafe or very unsafe when riding on it.

**This suggests that despite recognising the dangers, Sydney Road remains an essential – or unavoidable – route that must be improved for current cyclists.**

Problems with the Upfield Shared Path are unlikely to be resolved in the foreseeable future. The Neometro development at Jewell Station means that the path will continue to detour onto nearby streets until the end of 2020, while an even bigger detour is expected in 2020–21 as part of the Skyrail development, potentially forcing many more riders onto Sydney Road.

Without major acquisitions or advanced infrastructure spending for elevated veloways or tunnels, the fundamental limitations of the Upfield Shared Path make it hard to see how it could form part of a ‘cycling superhighways’ project.

The high number of commuters using the path to head into the city will continue to experience bottlenecks and detours at the southern end of the path, regardless of the clearer potential to improve and expand sections further north.



**Narrow point in the busy southern section of the Upfield Shared Path.**

# THE COMMERCIAL EFFECT: PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY?

An important barrier to the creation of permanent, protected bicycle lanes on Sydney Road is the perception that removal of on-street parking will be bad for businesses.



For this reason, traders have long campaigned against any parking changes along Sydney Road, including prominent campaigns in the 1960s to oppose parking meters, and again in 2008 against increasing clearway times.

However, research has shown that traders generally overestimate the amount of trade resulting from this parking.

**A CDM Research study of 143 pedestrians in 2015–16 noted that only two respondents indicated that they had parked on Sydney Road.**

The bulk of research actually suggests that while removing on-street parking sometimes changes the way people shop, retail spending actually increases.

**Analysis of changes to street parking in Portland, New York, Auckland, Wellington, Vancouver, and Toronto all suggested either cyclists spend more than motorists in the long term, or the effects on business of removing parking for bike lanes would be minimal.**

Interestingly, in Portland it was found that cyclists and non-drivers spent less on grocery trips but more at restaurants, bars and convenience stores.<sup>19</sup> Significantly, the large grocers and supermarkets on Sydney Road provide their own off-street parking for customers, minimising the need for on-street parking.

In fact, the lobby group *Revitalise Sydney Road* states that between Brunswick Road and Moreland Road there are already over 1,350 parking spaces close to Sydney Road supplied by businesses, as well as a large number of spaces owned by the Moreland City Council.<sup>20</sup>

# IT'S TIME TO ACT

There is broad agreement among policy makers that public transport and active transport are the key transport modes to address current and future congestion in Brunswick.



- ▲ Already more people ride to work from Brunswick than from anywhere in Australia, but widespread concern about sharing roads with cars holds a lot of people back from riding.
- ▲ Consistent with many other studies, our survey indicates infrastructure that separates bikes from cars, either dedicated off-street paths or protected lanes on roads, will get more people on bikes by making them feel safer.
- ▲ Building protected bicycle lanes on Sydney Road is not the only measure that will improve cyclist safety. Lighting, signs, traffic signalling and intersection treatments are also vital to making riding safer. However, protected bike lanes do appear to be the key to increasing cycling participation.
- ▲ Improving the Upfield Shared Path to become the sole major commuter route is not viable, as there is not the space to widen the path where it is most needed.
- ▲ Although the removal of on-street parking and creation of permanent, protected bicycle lanes on Sydney Road is likely to be opposed by many businesses, the evidence suggests the potential effects on businesses are minimal, and may actually be positive.
- ▲ Giving Sydney Road protected bike lanes will not only move more people more safely, it will make it a more attractive shopping destination.



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Join the *Brunswick for Bikes*  
Facebook group.



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