The Whitehorse cyclists believe that the draft strategy presented is unambitious with its goals of lifting the modal share of cycling and is lacking in terms of building infrastructure, encouraging people to participate in cycling as a recreational activity. With more than half the population in the City of Whitehorse either overweight or obese, now is the time to be making significant investment into something that can positively affect the lifestyle and health of the population with the additional benefit of adding value to land in this municipality.

There was no review of 2007 strategy and the performance against its aims. Of 12 high priority projects, only two were completed. While some have been overtaken by events (such as the Healesville Freeway Reserve) and others are now in active planning (such as the Melbourne Water Pipe Reserve) there has been no action on the two top priority projects; improvement of the cycle lanes on Blackburn Road at the Canterbury Road and Burwood Highway intersections. These remain urgent and should be included in the strategy as high priority near future projects.

On the positive side of things, it was good to see a commitment to build the Syndal to Heatherdale pipeline trail, however this was the only major separated from traffic infrastructure project in the whole draft strategy. The idea of using quiet roads is also a good idea in brown fields areas, however it should not be the primary focus of the strategy.

We believe that the focus of the strategy in terms of building infrastructure should be considered in the following order.

1. Build up off-road infrastructure.
2. Connecting Destinations
3. Connections to other municipalities off-road networks.
4. Better utilisation of existing road space and nature strips.
5. Low traffic stress road solutions.

We also believe that there needs a to be a major focus on the Box Hill and Nunawading Megamile activity centres and a plan for making that whole area significantly more bike friendly. Currently as the area stands, it is very cyclist unfriendly, there is no way through the main retail areas if you are adverse to riding in traffic that is either travelling at a rapid speed, moving in and out of car-parks and posing a doing threat or is significantly narrowing the available space in which one can safely ride a bike.
Off Road infrastructure
The building up of the off-road infrastructure provides a backbone to building a cycling network. These are the places where more people will cycle. According to the 2011 census, almost twice the percentage of people who live in Burwood or Mont Albert North/Box Hill North cycled to work compared with those who live in Mont Albert or Box Hill. This is easily explained by the fact that Burwood has the Gardiners Creek Trail to the city and Box Hill North and Mont Albert North have the Bushy Creek or Koonung Creek Trails which provide an un-broken run to the Melbourne CBD.

Cycling Percentages of Whitehorse Council Suburbs trips to Work (Modal Share – Census 2011) with off-road paths marked in green.
Taking a look around Melbourne, other locations that have this similar opportunity compared to neighbouring suburbs include Glenroy/Oak Park (more than double Airport West) owing to the presence of the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail. Yarraville, Spotswood, Williamstown (triple) and Altona (Double) compared to Altona North have an unbroken path to the Melbourne CBD via the Shepard Bridge.
More info found here: https://chartingtransport.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/melb-dest-bicycle.gif
Off Road Infrastructure Projects

The current situation: To look at the Whitehorse and surrounds off-road map gives a good visual clue of where statistically you will find more people who will cycle to work and what projects to go on with next (note we have assumed completion of the BHRSUP).

Visually this map is interesting as it demonstrates exactly why there are very few people actually cycling, the infrastructure is very disconnected, there is no going from point A to point B on a separated facility. The next few pages will highlight the building of a backbone network and provide an order in which to advance.
1. **Syndal to Heatherdale Pipeline trail.**
The major infrastructure aim of building the Syndal to Heatherdale Pipeline trail is the most logical and cost-effective project possible and has our full support as the next major project to be completed. It links the Rail Trail up with Monash University, Glen Waverley, etc and is simple to build:
2. Connector from BHRSUP to Koonung Creek or Bushy Creek Trail.
The next most critical piece of infrastructure is a short connector from the Box Hill to Ringwood Rail trail to the Bushy Creek Trail which will lead along the Eastern Freeway to the Melbourne CBD. Potential routes should be considered, these are Nelson Rd/Saxton St, Dorking Rd and the Elmhurst Basin/Blackburn High School routes. Of these, we believe that Dorking Rd is the most easily achievable and the shortest path to take to link these 2 trails, however the Nelson Rd path would link the Box Hill CBD and take in the Hospital facilities and TAFE and the Elmhurst path would provide the quickest trip to the CBD from places like Blackburn or Nunawading:

Such a connector would instantly link the BHRSUP to the Melbourne CBD. To maximise the usage a treatment similar to Fordham Ave Camberwell, O’Hea St Coburg or provision of Copenhagen style lanes would be required.
Some visual examples of these type of connectors treatments:
Fordham Av, Camberwell (shared path on one side of the road – right side as viewed)

O’Hea St, Coburg: Dedicated cycling facility.

The use of such treatments could also become standard in a number of locations to provide greater levels of access to the off-road backbone.
3. Connector from BHRSUP to Gardiners Creek Trail.

The next most piece of infrastructure in building the off-road network would be about ensuring that there is an un-broken path from the BHRSUP to the Gardiners Creek Trail that is sealed. Currently there is a large section around Deakin University that is unsealed and thus unsafe for riding. Additionally there is no off-road connection between the rail trail and the start of the Gardiners Creek Trail at Albion Rd. Linking this all up with a sealed path would boost the cycling levels around Deakin Uni and help alleviate some of the parking issues around that location. It would also boost mixed-modal solutions where students could get off the train at Laburnum station and cycle to Uni.
There are small sections of this that have already got a sealed path west of Blackburn Rd and this path would provide another valuable East-West route through Whitehorse. This links the Gardiners Creek Trail, to the Pipeline and the Dandenong Creek/Eastlink trails and the City of Knox and its more than 80km of off-road infrastructure.
Off Road Infrastructure Summary

Just considering these 4 projects alone delivers a strong off-road back-bone network that would encourage higher levels of commuting by bike, greater levels of shopping, etc. by bike, but additionally would also provide excellent recreational loops for people to enjoy. This is most powerfully demonstrated by showing just the shared path network alone with these 4 projects with the outline of the city of Whitehorse:

All of a sudden, large numbers of people will live within a short distance of an off-road path that is part of a wider and connected network with obvious benefits. This should be the primary goal of the strategy – then the on-road quiet routes and service roads strategy to provide people with access to this backbone network should then be considered.
On Road Infrastructure

The current picture of on-road infrastructure also paints a picture of cycling being a very much neglected mode of transportation. The proposed on-road markings and way-finding are a big improvement on the existing infrastructure. However, not only is there great potential in utilising the service lanes of Whitehorse to great effect.

Provision of cut-throughs on service lanes and making use of wide nature strips could see the creation of cycling routes along major roadways where cyclists are physically separated from fast moving traffic. A major highlight being the route along Burwood highway which will link the Brickworks development to the city of Knox bike network. Going the other direction a link between the Gardiners Creek trail (and Deakin Uni) could easily be made.

Map showing the service lanes routes (in yellow):
Connections between Municipalities

Very important is to provide seamless connections between municipalities. Of particular importance are the links along Burwood Highway to the city of Knox and the Mont Albert Road connection. These need to be safe provisions. Burwood highway should be an off-road facility with a bridge across Dandenong Creek and a strategy for an east-west connection to the Melbourne CBD from Box Hill direct should be a top priority.

This shall involve working in great detail with adjoining councils to ensure that a great piece of infrastructure doesn’t fall away because you have crossed a municipality border.
Low Stress Routes
Once these other items are considered first, then the priority should be placed on the low-stress routes. These might be easier to build in the short term but they will only attract a small percentage of the population who will not ride on the roads in any circumstance.
Here there are some fantastic opportunities to look at ways to put connectors through parks, laneways or areas where space presents itself easily. Such a strategy was utilised in Moreland for their Shimmys program to great effect. The example below demonstrates a route that would follow the advisory Victoria St, through Walker Park, past where the council offices are, cut through to Tunstall Ave, cross at the pedestrian lights, the pass through the council purchased Nunawading Primary school land, and along through Tunstall Park through to Luckie St.

Other sites where something similar can be done include Nicoll Park, Koonung Reserve, East Burwood Reserve. Some sites already have a good path through them like the path through Forest Hill Reserve from Hylton Cr and the Somers Trail.

Be sure to have great wayfinding and route numbering. We have suggested numbers for East-West Routes and letters for North-South Routes which would make navigating around Whitehorse very easy for all.
Box Hill Master Plan
Cycling facilities in and around Box Hill central are very poor. There has been no evident awareness of cycling as a transport option for accessing Box Hill central shopping and station precinct. Any upgrade of this area should include cycling in the planning and design. With chronic traffic congestion around Box Hill, cycling offers an option than can help alleviate this problem. The completion of the Box Hill to Ringwood shared path will deliver cyclists to Box Hill. This capability should be capitalized upon by making cycling in, around and through Box Hill central, convenient and legal.
Specific improvements should include:

- Permitting riding (with speed limit) in the Mall as is common elsewhere such as Southbank and Docklands
- Provision of many more bike hoops.
- Road and traffic signal treatments especially on Whitehorse Road to facilitate north-south bike travel.
- Provide where needed, contra flow bike lanes on one way streets.
- A detailed survey of various cycling impediments and opportunities via existing laneways and loading entrances to enable use by cyclists.
- Lobby the state government for improved treatment along Whitehorse Road, utilise the service lanes and make the area around the Tram Rd/Station St intersection much safer.

Nunawading Megamile
This precinct has been developed with absolutely no regard for access by bicycle. It is in urgent need or review to ascertain how cycling lanes can be retrofitted. Consideration should be given to contraflow paths along existing service lanes combined with widening pedestrian paths to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists with suitable speed restrictions.

Annual budget process and consultation
The strategy should include procedures for Council to proactively consult with the cycling community at appropriate times in the annual budget cycle, to identify projects to be considered for funding in the budget. Such consultation is necessary because circumstances and priorities will change with time. The strategy should not be seen as set in stone for the decade ahead.

In Conclusion
Whilst we believe that there have been great strides made in this new strategy towards making cycling more friendly in Whitehorse, there are a number of areas that can be focussed on and worked towards for making an even greater percentage of trips made in the area by bicycle.