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Group Submission on Glenroy to Coburg Bike Route

Finding the best way to connect Glenroy to Coburg for bike riders.

The Glenroy to Coburg Bike route is important for encouraging adoption of cycling and behaviour change in the northern suburbs of Merri-bek. Encouraging mode shift to cycling will reduce transport emissions and increase sustainability and health outcomes.

There are five internationally-recognised design principles that cycling-friendly infrastructure needs to meet: safe, connected, direct, attractive and comfortable.¹

The Glenroy to Coburg route should be

- Safe for inexperienced cyclists
- Provide connections to shops, schools and other facilities
- Be direct
- Have a minimum of elevation change
- Work as a comfortable cycling route linking Glenroy to Coburg.

Ideally, the whole route should be on protected bike lanes or shared use paths to encourage more people to cycle.

The easiest routes are those with least elevation change. This is particularly important to consider for children and inexperienced riders. Not everyone will have an e-bike or mountain bike to zoom up hills.

The route should be as direct as possible. This is important for visitors navigating and wayfinding in our municipality. But equally for people wanting the most direct comfortable route between Glenroy and Coburg.

¹ See Transport for NSW Cycleway Design Toolbox. Designing for cycling and micromobility. December 2020

https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2022/Cycleway-Design-Toolbox-Web_0.pdf

See also DTV Consulting (The Netherlands), 5 design principles for successful bicycle infrastructure <https://dtvcapacitybuilding.com/blog/5-design-principles-for-successful-bicycle-infrastructure/>

Be aware that cyclists often follow 'desire lines'. If a route is too up and down, involves too many turns, includes riding up and down kerbs, uses short sections of footpath, and finicky intersections, it won't be comfortable or attractive and be used by most cyclists.

Ideally the route serves both commuter cycling traffic and local cycling traffic to local destinations.

Some of these routes serve local destinations better than as a commuter route.

The original long proposed route for Coburg to Glenroy involved protected bike lanes on Cumberland Road, then Kent Road, through KW Joyce Reserve, Northumberland Avenue. This route would have worked and met most of the criteria as above. But the State Government about turn in using Cumberland Road as a protected bike route, and the demise of the protected bike lanes in Kent Road means the route needs to be reassessed.²

The route needs to go from Rhodes Parade where the present Shared use path ends, to O'Hea street where protected bike lane/path connects to the Upfield Bike Path and Coburg.

Principal Bicycle Network

We note Pascoe Street and Boundary Road are listed as part of the state Government Principal Bicycle Network.³ This is a prominent east-west route. The State Government should take some responsibility to provide safe cycling infrastructure because of this.

² For the reversal on Cumberland Road protected bike lanes see Extend the Upfield Bike Path, 13 June 2020, Pascoe Vale MP Lizzie Blandthorn Backtracks on Cumberland Road dedicated bike lanes <https://upfieldbikepath.wordpress.com/2020/06/13/pascoe-vale-mp-lizzie-blandthorn-backtracks-on-cumberland-road-dedicated-bike-lanes/>

³ See DoT Principal Bicycle Network (last Update May 3, 2023) <https://vicroadsopendata-vicroadsmaps.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/vicroadsmaps::principal-bicycle-network-pbn/about>

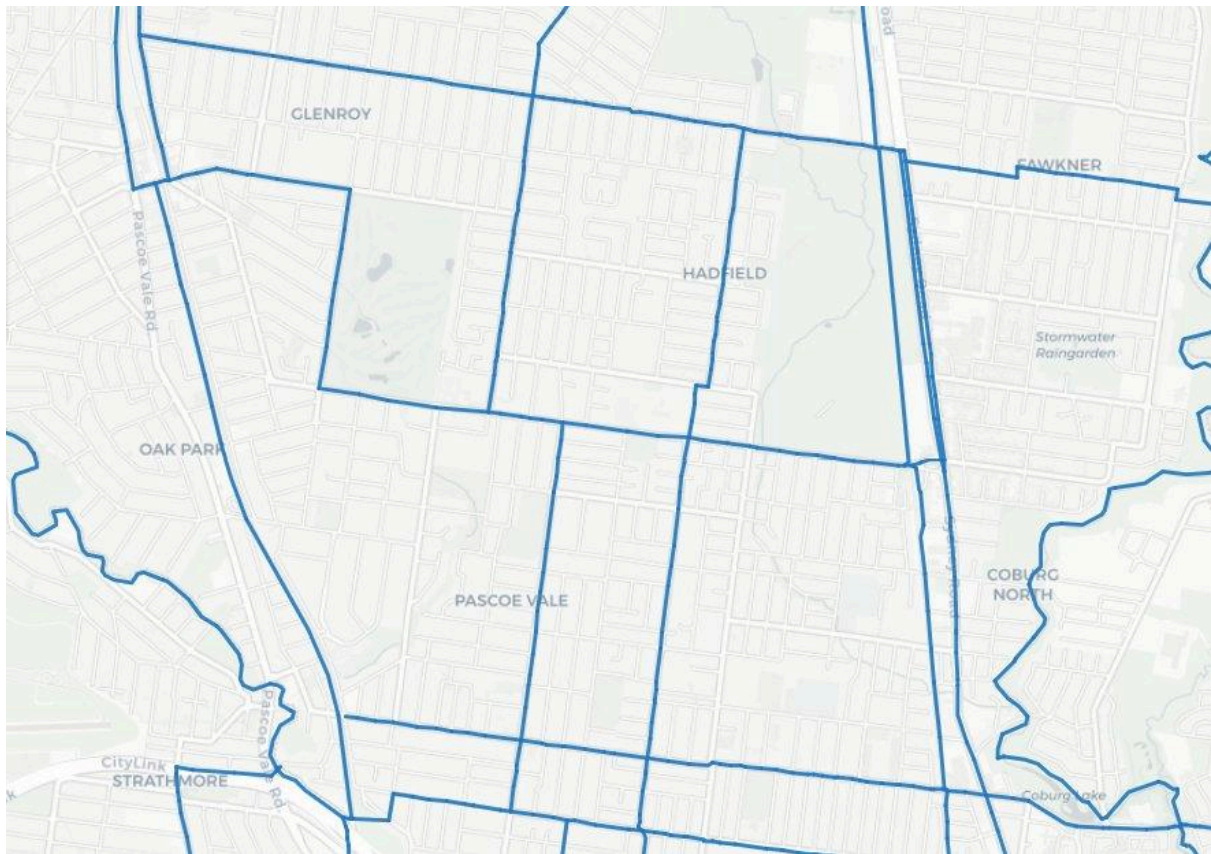


Image: Excerpt from State Government Principal Bicycle Network Map showing Boundary Road as an important east-west route

Grant Funding

The state Government, and MP for Pascoe Vale, Anthony Cianflone should be approached for grant funding for whichever route is chosen, as State Government decisions have long delayed design and construction of this route. Alternate Route 2 with Pascoe Street and Boundary Road is part of the State Government Principal Bicycle Network. All the more reason the State Government should help fund cycling infrastructure improvements on this route.

Federal MP Peter Khalil had also promised grant funding for part of this route in the past. He should also be approached for a grant funding commitment given a Federal election is approaching in the next year.⁴

⁴ Peter Khalil MP promised \$500k to extend O’Hea St shared use path with proposed Cumberland Road protected bike lanes in April 2019.
<https://upfieldbikepath.wordpress.com/2019/05/12/cycling-infrastructure-funding-and-the-federal-election/>

The following table summarises the various route attributes from details at Conversations Merribek website: <https://conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/glenroy-coburg-bike-route>

	Length	intermediate locations	elevation change	Intersections	Route description
Current Route	3.3km	13	14m up, 27m down	6	Northumberland Rd, KW Joyce Reserve Shared Path, Kent Rd, Derby St, O'Hea St
Pascoe Vale Shimmy	3.5km	14	22m up, 35m down	4	Northumberland Rd, KW Joyce Reserve Shared Path, Kent Rd, Valerie St, Alpine Gv, Gyles St, Prospect St, Pascoe Vale Swimming Pool Car park and Rogers Reserve Path to Cumberland Rd crossing signals, Olive Gv, Sylvan Gv, Gaffney St crossing signals, Irvine St, O'Hea St.
Alternate Route 1	3.3km	10	4m up, 17m down	8	Pascoe St, Boundary Rd, Cumberland Rd, Kent Rd, Derby St, O'Hea St.
Alternate Route 2	3.3km	9	4m up, 17m down	8	Pascoe St, Boundary Rd, Derby St, O'Hea St.
Alternate Route 3	3.4km	7	33m up, 46m down	5	Northumberland Rd, Bellevue St, Bolingbroke St, Anderson St, O'Hea St
Alternate Route 4	3.3km	11	22m up, 36m down	6	Northumberland Rd, KW Joyce Reserve Shared Path, Cornwall Rd, Penzance St, Cole Reserve concept shared path, Cumberland Rd, Warwick Rd, Derby St.

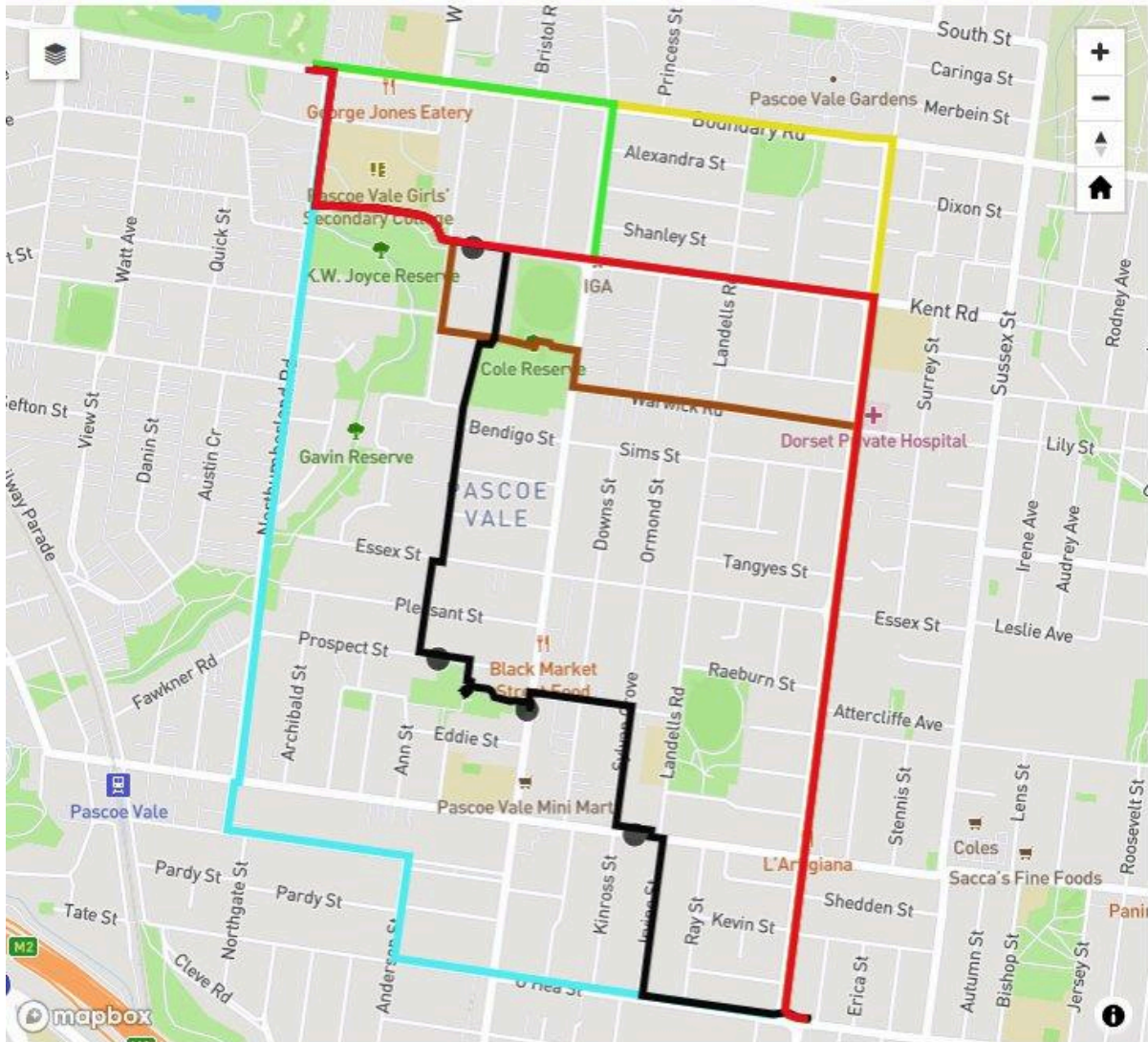


Image: Conversations Merri-bek Map of alternate routes

Current Route

The current route was far from perfect including navigating the Cumberland Rd/Kent Road Roundabout. Kent Road east of Cumberland would still share the road cycling route. Only sharrows would signify it is a shared route. Once Council removed the protected bike lanes on Kent Road there appears to be little advantage in continuing to support this route. The route through KW Joyce Reserve and Northumberland Rd involves a change in elevation. While cycling through the Reserve is a more attractive environment, the hill makes this route uncomfortable for some people. Using the path through KW Joyce Reserve really only made sense if the Kent Road route could be made to work.

Pascoe Vale Shimmy Route.

This is a shocker in that it poorly meets the five internationally-recognised design principles and it is surprising it is considered the Council Officer's preferred route.

The route is already in existence. There is some utility for local cycling traffic to the Pascoe Vale Pool or Neighbourhood House.

Most cyclists would avoid using this route. The use of footpaths for a short distance in a number of places does not inspire safety confidence. Riding up and down kerbs makes the journey uncomfortable.

There are very real safety issues at some of the places where cyclists go from footpath to road or vice versa. Example: Irvine St and Gaffney St with a large fence that makes cyclists invisible to cars approaching from the south. Road modification and signage would likely to be insufficient in ameliorating this risk)



Google Maps: Irvine st and Gaffney St intersection showing a car at Irvine across the path of the cycling route that turns into Irvine. A motorscooter is proceeding south across Gaffney Street. Even a raised footpath crossing at Irvine st with the giveaway sign is likely to be ignored by many drivers, focussing on the traffic on Gaffney St, rather than cyclists coming along the footpath on their left. The residence wall also prevents cyclists seeing any cars approaching from the south.⁵

The route is not direct and involves elevation change.

⁵ See Google Maps for intersection detail <https://maps.app.goo.gl/6fBvCZnh4dryPfBu6>

The website states “Our recommended route is the Pascoe Vale Shimmy route, which we have identified as the safest, most efficient and effective option for all road users.”

Yet Climate Action Merri-bek argue this route is far from safe, is not very efficient and doesn't meet cyclist desire line needs, and is far from effective for meeting an attractive, comfortable and direct cycle route linking Coburg to Glenroy.

Climate Action Merri-bek made a video of this route to highlight some of the negative issues: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i65g2oX-7io>

Alternate Route 1.

Reasonably direct. The Kent Road/Cumberland Road Roundabout is a real problem to navigate. Kent Road east of Cumberland would have to work as shared space. Alternate Route 1 and 2 both have minimal elevation change.

This option and Alternate Route 2 would need to resolve Pascoe Street and Boundary Road provision of safe cycling infrastructure. This could be done with a bi-directional protected lane along the north side of Pascoe Street and a section of Boundary Road.

Alternate Route 2

This is the most appealing for directness. It has the equal minimal elevation change with Alternate Route 1. A bi-directional protected lane would be required on the north side of Pascoe St and Boundary Road, similar to Alternate Route 1.

From the Boundary Road / Bristol St intersection the nature strip expands both on the north side and south side of Boundary Road. While there are trees and street furniture, Council transport staff should have the expertise to design and construct a shared use path on the nature strip extending from Bristol street to Derby Street.

A traffic issue was raised at Council meeting regarding Boundary Road and Derby street intersection on 12 April 2023. A citizen asked “What can be done to improve the intersection of Derby Street and Boundary Road?” Anita Curnow, Director City Infrastructure responded: “Boundary Road is an arterial road managed by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP, formerly VicRoads). Any changes to the operation of the road needs to be investigated and funded by them. Council is aware DTP have investigated the precinct in the past but no cost effective treatment was identified. A check of the crash history at this intersection indicates no casualty crashes (where someone was injured) in the last five years.”⁶

Derby street is not a direct cross of Boundary Road (see aerial photo below) which can confuse traffic resulting in low speed collisions and near misses. Traffic accident data shows

⁶ On Derby St/Boundary Rd intersection. Merri-bek Council Minutes of Council Meeting 12 April 2023, <https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/globalassets/website-merri-bek/areas/my-council/council-and-committee-meetings/council-and-parm-meetings/minutes/2023-minutes/council-minutes-2023-04-12-april---pdf.pdf>

a history of accidents of minor vehicle collisions with minor injuries at this intersection, Likely to be even more near misses.



Google Image: Derby St/Boundary Road intersection

There is presently no pedestrian crossing, either zebra crossing or traffic lights crossing on Boundary Road between Sussex street and Cumberland Road, a distance of 960 metres. This is despite the presence of Pascoe Vale Gardens Retirement Village to the north of Boundary Road, just west of the Derby street intersection..

A set of traffic lights would help resolve traffic safety at this intersection. It would also provide movement of cyclists from a shared use path on Boundary Rd to connect with the on-road bike lanes along Derby street installed by VicRoads.

The cycling lane on the east side of Derby Street could be extended to the intersection with traffic lights. The cycling lane on the west side of Derby Street could continue on to Boundary Road and the nature strip.

Further East-West connection

The connection of alternate Route 2 directly with the Upfield Bike Path at Merlynston should be factored into the route consideration.

On 8 July 2020 there was a Council motion to remove parking on Boundary Road between Derby and Sussex street.⁷ What actions have been taken for this? Cyclists seldom ride this section of Boundary road as this is a slight incline with cars often parked in the kerbside bike lane on either side.

If there were unobstructed bike lanes down to Sussex street intersection, then the bike lanes beside the cemetery along Boundary Road, provide a good east-west route to the Upfield Bike Path at Merlynston. While this connection is beyond the scope of this consultation, it provides another useful cycling connection to factor in.

Alternate Route 3.

While the route looks direct the elevation change makes this route one that will likely be strongly avoided. Not attractive and certainly not comfortable.

Alternate Route 4.

This route has a similar elevation change to the Pascoe Vale Shimmy. The route bisects Cole Reserve. This may be disruptive when sports are being played at Cole Reserve. It is not only those playing the sports, but people on the sidelines watching the sports that often obstructs paths.

It is not the most obvious and direct route.

It retains the elevation change through KW Joyce Reserve and Northumberland Avenue and supports a small section of protected bi-directional path on Kent Road.

⁷ Clearing the bike lanes on Boundary Road between Derby and Sussex St.
See Merri-bek Council minutes 8 July 2020 (D20/252317)

<https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/globalassets/website-merri-bek/areas/my-council/council-and-committee-meetings/council-and-parm-meetings/minutes/2016-2020-minutes/council-minutes-2020-07-08-july.doc>

Conclusion

In terms of directness, minimal elevation change, consideration of cycling desire lines, connecting people to local destinations, and comfort, Alternate Route 2 along Pascoe Street and Boundary Road is the most appealing.

The Conversations Merri-bek website fails to mention the wide nature strips on Boundary Road which a shared use path would be able to use, providing a safe route as far as Derby Street.

The green painted bike lanes on Derby street can also be extended to Boundary Road.

The intersection of Boundary Road and Derby street is in need of a pedestrian crossing and better traffic management at this intersection.

The proximity to Pascoe Vale Retirement Village should make addressing traffic safety at this intersection a priority. Traffic lights would provide a safe pedestrian crossing, and a safe crossing transition from a shared use path to the Derby street on-road bike lanes, and resolve traffic safety concerns about this intersection..

Background

Climate Action Merribek is a grassroots group of Merribek residents active on climate and sustainable transport issues since 2008.

I am a resident of this municipality for some 34 years living in several of the suburbs, the last 14 years in Fawkner. I have been a cycle commuter to work to the Melbourne CBD, and to Preston. My daughter cycled for a while to Pascoe Vale Girls College, before giving up due to the lack of safe cycling infrastructure and poor support by the school.

This is a group submission by Climate Action Merribek

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