

25 February 2021

Biodiversity and Conservation Planning  
Natural Environment, Water and Sustainability Branch  
Brisbane City Council  
GPO Box 1434  
Brisbane QLD 4001

Dear Madam/Sir

### Brisbane Off-Road Cycling Strategy

Outdoors Queensland is the peak body for the outdoor recreation sector in Queensland. We represent more than 200 outdoor recreation organisations and individuals in Queensland, consisting of a range of outdoor industry stakeholders, including local governments, schools with outdoor education focus, commercial operators, activity-focused peak bodies, clubs and other community organisations.

The mission of Outdoors Queensland is to raise the profile, develop the capacity, and increase opportunities for outdoor recreation in Queensland. The natural areas managed by Brisbane City Council play a crucial role in the provision of space used for outdoor activities across our state's capital city.

Outdoors Queensland supports the development of the Brisbane Off-Road Cycling (BORC) strategy, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft BORC strategy.

Although Brisbane City Council is a member of Outdoors Queensland, that relationship as a member has not influenced the feedback that we are providing on the draft BORC strategy.

The remit of Outdoors Queensland covers all outdoor activities. While the draft BORC strategy primarily addresses off-road cycling, it is pleasing to see that other outdoor activities are included within the scope of the strategy. We support the statement on page 4 that says "...[Brisbane City Council] must ensure our strategy meets the demand for recreation activities, such as off-road cycling, in a way that is sustainable and protects our city's valuable natural areas."

Research clearly shows that increased access to outdoor activities increases the liveability of cities. Brisbane City Council is right to celebrate the subtropical lifestyle that is on offer for residents and visitors. A key part of this lifestyle is access to natural areas.

On page 4, the aim of the draft strategy is "to meet the needs of the rapidly growing off-road cycling community by developing a safe, well-planned and connected network of off-road cycling facilities that protect Brisbane's natural environment."

Page 11 of the Queensland Mountain Bike Strategy 2018 ([https://www.mtba.org.au/wp-content/uploads/QLD-MTB-MASTER-PLAN-Single-Pages\\_FINAL-180706\\_.pdf](https://www.mtba.org.au/wp-content/uploads/QLD-MTB-MASTER-PLAN-Single-Pages_FINAL-180706_.pdf)) describes the different types of mountain bikers or off-road cyclists, as follows:

- Leisure – the general cyclist



- Enthusiast – the recreational rider
- Inclusive – the adaptive mountain biker
- Independent – the adventurer
- Gravity – the adrenaline seeker
- Sport – the racer

Additional information is provided in the Queensland Mountain Bike Strategy regarding the different experiences sought by each different type of rider.

On page 6 of the draft strategy, Council has acknowledged that there are different types of mountain bike riders, however it is not clear how this has been applied. It is suggested that to achieve the strategy's stated aim of meeting the needs of riders, Council should take into account the different types of riders and preferred experiences when considering the opportunities for off-road cycling that might be available within Brisbane's natural areas. The provision of off-road cycling facilities needs to consider the needs of the user types to ensure social sustainability and progress towards addressing unauthorized trail building.

It would be beneficial if the draft strategy considered the needs of Brisbane's residents beyond the natural areas managed by Council, and considered a whole of landscape approach to South East Queensland. Consideration could be given to links to trail networks managed by other government authorities such as Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Seqwater or to trail networks on land managed by neighbouring local government authorities.

Outdoors Queensland supports the guiding principles set out on page 7 of the draft strategy. The stated principles of sustainability, diversity, diligent planning, collaboration, accessibility, optimal use of facilities, safety and managing risk, and education and engagement could well guide positive decision making regarding delivery of opportunities and access.

To further expand on the second guiding principle, Diversity, and the fifth guiding principle, Accessibility, it is suggested that Council should include more information in the strategy on adaptive mountain biking and provision of trails adapted to suit the needs of all riders, which could enhance the inclusivity of the strategy. There is a resource specific to providing trails for adaptive riders, the Australian Adaptive Mountain Bike Guidelines which is available from AusCycling.

Page 8 of the draft strategy is dedicated to environmental preservation, and states that "Maintaining a balance between facilitating outdoor recreation and preserving our natural environment is a key priority for Council." We suggest that it is not helpful to present this as a black and white choice between either preserving nature or facilitating outdoor recreation. Mountain bike trails built according to sustainable design and construction principles can assist to preserve the environment.

Outdoor recreation, when facilitated correctly and managed appropriately, leads to preservation of the natural environment. When people benefit from positive outdoor experiences, they become advocates for the protection and preservation of natural areas.

It is suggested that to complement the page on environmental preservation, the inclusion of a page (or a series of pages) on the multiple benefits of outdoor activities would be helpful. This additional section could describe the physical health, mental health, social health benefits, the economic drivers, and the enhanced environmental preservation that can flow from outdoor activities, including off-road cycling.



We note one of the opportunities identified is to increase access to shared use trails and fire tracks across the estate managed by Council. There are undoubtedly sites where off-road cycling could be allowed immediately with little or no impact on other users. However, at other sites, significant works would be required to ensure that the safety of all users, including walkers/runners and horse-riders, is not compromised.

Although shared use trails appear to be a positive option, there are situations where it may be better to provide separated trails for the different user groups. This is similar to the situation with concrete paths – on paths with high numbers of users, user groups are separated onto different sections of path or entirely different paths to ensure safety and improved user experience. Mountain bike single trail may be a more appropriate option to keep walkers and riders separated in some locations. When the right environment is provided for people, then it is likely that more people will use those facilities, and more people will benefit from the decisions made by Council.

Page 11 of the draft strategy is titled, “Staying safe, being considerate and rules that protect you”. Outdoors Queensland broadly supports the information provided in this section of the draft strategy. It is suggested that the first section of text on this page could be made more inclusive as follows:

*When **visiting** Council’s parks and reserves, **whether as a rider or other visitor**, everyone has the responsibility to stay safe and reduce risk to themselves and others.*

This change would indicate that all visitors, not just riders, have responsibilities, and that riders are not solely responsible for the safety of everyone.

Including a reference to the Australian Adventure Activity Standards and Good Practice Guides may also be beneficial to this section of the strategy.

Outdoors Queensland strongly supports the statement that “providing authorised, high quality and appealing off-road cycling facilities reduces the construction of unauthorised facilities in undesirable locations.” We also support the following statement “If Council provides the right facilities, in the right locations, to meet the growing demand for this activity, it is expected that the desire for unauthorised facilities will be greatly reduced.” Most off-road cyclists would prefer to ride trails, rather than build trails.

Outdoors Queensland is pleased to provide feedback on the identified opportunities set out from page 13 of the draft strategy.

We would welcome the development of a mountain bike concept plan for Mt Coot-tha Reserve, and would be willing to contribute to the development of that concept plan.

It is noted that not all identified opportunities will be delivered by BCC, however there is a significant imbalance in the off-road cycling opportunities that have been identified city-wide:

- Skills tracks, dirt jumps or pump tracks – 66 locations identified.
- MTB single trail – 13 locations identified.
- Cyclo-cross circuits – 7 locations identified.
- Riding on shared use trails and/or fire tracks – 23 locations identified, but only one location identified in the north region.

If these opportunities were delivered, it could lead to an over-supply of skills tracks, dirt jumps, pump tracks, and cyclo-cross circuits, without addressing the under-supply of MTB single track and shared-use trails. Provision of skills tracks, dirt jumps, pump tracks, and

cyclo-cross circuits is unlikely to address the identified issue of unauthorised trail construction.

We welcome further discussion on any points raised in this submission. Outdoors Queensland understands that this submission may be published by Brisbane City Council as part of the community consultation process.

Outdoors Queensland looks forward to the release of the final Brisbane Off-Road Cycling Strategy.

Yours sincerely



Dom Courtney  
Executive Officer

