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1<sup>st</sup> October, 2008

My dear Lord Mayor

### **BCC Review of Management Arrangements for Mountain Bike Riding in Brisbane**

On 30<sup>th</sup> May 2006 Christine Hosking spoke to the meeting of Council about prohibiting mountain biking on all Council reserves. Consequently, an internal review of management arrangements within Brisbane was requested by you.

By the end of 2006, a lengthy document was drafted by a BCC committee, including staff from Natural Environment and Sustainability, City Life and City Policy divisions. The committee recommended that mountain bike access should be considered at Mt Gravatt Outlook Reserve/Toohey Forest, Brisbane Koala Bushland and Karawatha Forest. The committee also recommended that the community should be consulted, including conservation groups and mountain bikers, before a decision about MTB access is made.

The recent call for community responses to the management plan for Mt Gravatt Outlook Reserve resulted in 94% of responses referring to recreation. **50% of these supported mountain biking.** 14% opposed mountain biking.

The community has clearly responded in favour of mountain bike access at Mt Gravatt Outlook Reserve. Similar levels of support are likely for other areas on the southside that the BCC MTB review committee highlighted.

### **Will Council listen to the community regarding mountain bike access at Mt Gravatt Outlook Reserve?**

Cycling has been included in management plans for Mt Gravatt Outlook Reserve/Toohey Forest, Brisbane Koala Bushland and Karawatha Forest, but mountain biking has been prohibited in all these reserves, except Karawatha Forest where the fire roads are open to cycling.

Council has commissioned several lengthy reports on mountain biking, since 1996, including the 2006 MTB review. **In 12 years, none of these reports have been adopted by Council.**

### **Why are recommendations, contained in Council's own reports, shelved?**

### Demand for Mountain Biking in Natural Areas

Council commissioned TNS to conduct market research on mountain biking at Mt Coot-tha Forest. 77% of residents agreed that 'mountain bike riding should be permitted on designated tracks in the park'. 13% disagreed. 21% of the surveyed residents mountain bike regularly.

The Qld government Department of Sport and (outdoor) Recreation recently released the 2007 SEQ Outdoor Recreation Demand Study. The following results were found.

SEQ Outdoor Recreation Demand Study	Bicycle riding	Walking/Nature study
Percentage of SEQ residents participating in 1997	25%	60%
Percentage of SEQ residents participating in 2007	29%	35%
Median frequency in 2007	10 (average 40)	5
Participation events per year in SEQ in 2007	7.3 million	3.8 million

From 1997 to 2007, demand for mountain biking opportunities has grown significantly, while walking/nature study has diminished quite remarkably. It is significant to note that the 2007 study found the median for bicycle riding in the 55-64 year old group is 20 times per year. Demand is high amongst Baby Boomers.

Only activities conducted in natural settings were counted. Residents were asked if they participate in outdoor recreation in somewhat natural, very natural or totally natural settings. Data from studies in 1997, 2001 and 2007 has revealed trends toward increasing participation in and demand for bicycle riding in very natural settings.

The following is a summary of jurisdictions where mountain biking is permitted. Also shown are the many conservation reserves where MTB only trails are provided, due to a trail care program. All MTB single tracks occur in conservation estate.

Mountain biking destinations in the greater Brisbane region			
Land manager	Location	Multi use trails	MTB trails & total distance
QLD Parks and Wildlife	Brisbane Forest Park	✓	✓ Three MTB trails: ~3km ✓ Seven MTB trails: ~10km
	Daisy Hill Conservation Park	✓	
	Bunyaville Conservation Park	✓	
	Samford Forest Reserve	✓	
	Clear Mt Forest Reserve	✓	
	Moggill Forest Reserve	✓	
Redland City Council	D & C Burnett Reserve	✓	✓ Two MTB trails: ~3km ✓ MTB trails: ~5km
	Bayview Conservation Park	✓	
	Ford Road Conservation Park	✓	

Logan City Council	Neville Lawrie Reserve Kimberley Forest Park	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	Two MTB trails: ~3km One MTB trail: ~2km
Brisbane City Council	Mt Coot-tha Forest Karawatha Forest	✓ ✓	✓	MTB trails: ~12km
Pine Rivers District	Samford Valley	✓		

### Political Vulnerability

BCC Councillors appear to be reluctant to permit mountain bike riding in Council reserves. The most likely reason for this must be fear of a political backlash.

The MTB trails at Mt Coot-tha Forest are within the Pullenvale Ward. To date a few local conservationists have opposed mountain biking in Council reserves, but it could be argued that the presence of mountain bike trails within this ward has not lost the Liberal Party votes. There appears to be no threat to the Liberal incumbent from Green Party supporters.

It cannot be assumed that all conservationists are opposed to mountain biking, especially judging by the increasing number of rangers who have taken up the activity.

### Analysis of 2008 Election Results

Mt Coot-tha Forest						
Ward	Councillor	Lib	ALP	Green	Liberal Majority	
Pullenvale	Margaret de Wit Lib	74%	16%	10%	massive	
Toowong	Peter Matic Lib	52%	26%	22%	massive	
The Gap	Geraldine Knapp Lib	60%	23%	17%	massive	

Toohey Forest area (including Mt Gravatt Outlook Reserve and Toohey Mt)						
Ward	Councillor	Lib	ALP	Green	Liberal Majority	
Moorooka	Steve Griffiths ALP	42%	48%	10%	minor ALP lead	
Wishart	Krista Adams Lib	60%	33%	5%	massive	
Holland Park	Ian McKenzie Lib	50%	36%	14%	massive	

Karawatha Forest						
Ward	Councillor	Lib	ALP	Green	Liberal Majority	
Karawatha	Gail MacPherson ALP	49%	51%	NA	minor ALP lead	
Parkinson	Angela-Owen Taylor Lib	51%	40%	9%	comfortable lead	

Brisbane Koala Bushland						
Ward	Councillor	Lib	ALP	Green	Liberal Majority	
Chandler	Adrian Schrinner Lib	71%	29%	NA	massive	

If 29% of SEQ residents cycle in natural settings (mountain bike), then presumably any move by the Liberal Council to provide for this demand will lead to more popularity.

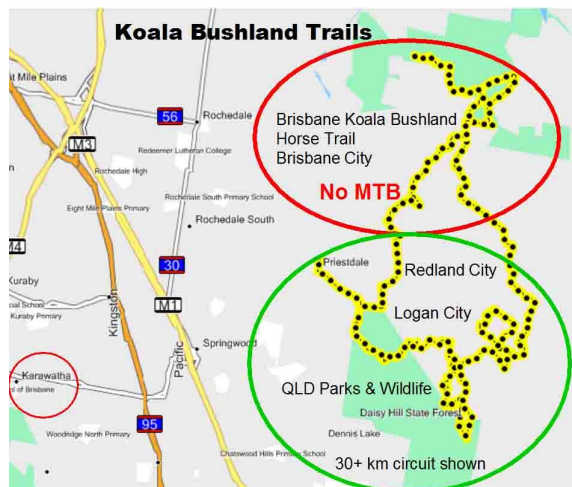
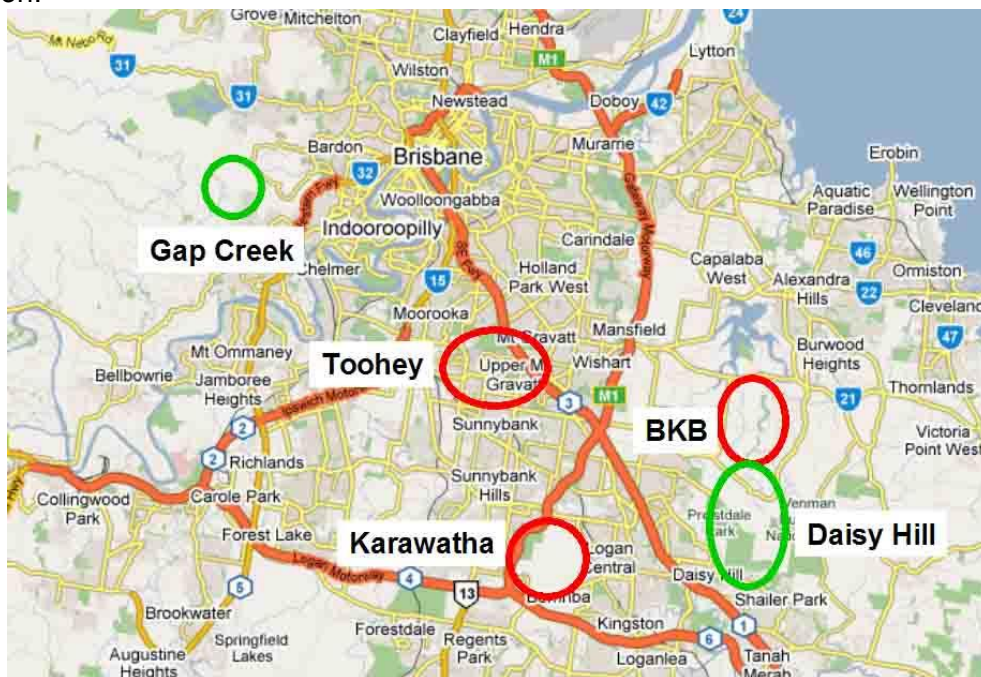
**Not providing for mountain biking is now more likely to lead to loss of popularity.**

### Potential Sites on the Southside Managed by BCC

Toohey Forest/Mt Gravatt Outlook, Brisbane Koala Bushland and Karawatha Forest are all sites suitable for mountain bike riding due to their large size.

The map below shows Gap Creek and Daisy Hill areas, which have MTB single trails, due to the presence of a trail care program. While many MTB riders cycle to Gap Creek because of its central location, most riders drive to Daisy Hill on the outskirts of Brisbane, driving passed Toohey Forest on their way.

Like Mt Coot-tha Forest, Toohey Forest is only 8km from the CBD and easily accessible by bicycle. It will become increasingly difficult to prohibit mountain biking here as the population of Brisbane grows. Proper management of MTB trail access will be a win for the recreation community and for the environment. No management will be a lose-lose situation.



Southern section of BKB adjoins Daisy Hill trails

The southern section of Brisbane Koala Bushland (BKB) adjoins the Daisy Hill trail network. Within this section of BKB, there are high quality recreational facilities for walkers and horse riders but MTB riders are prohibited. The sad fact is very few people use these magnificent facilities, making them a very expensive 'white elephant'. Allowing MTB access will increase the use and community value of the investment made by BCC,



Alperton Road picnic area

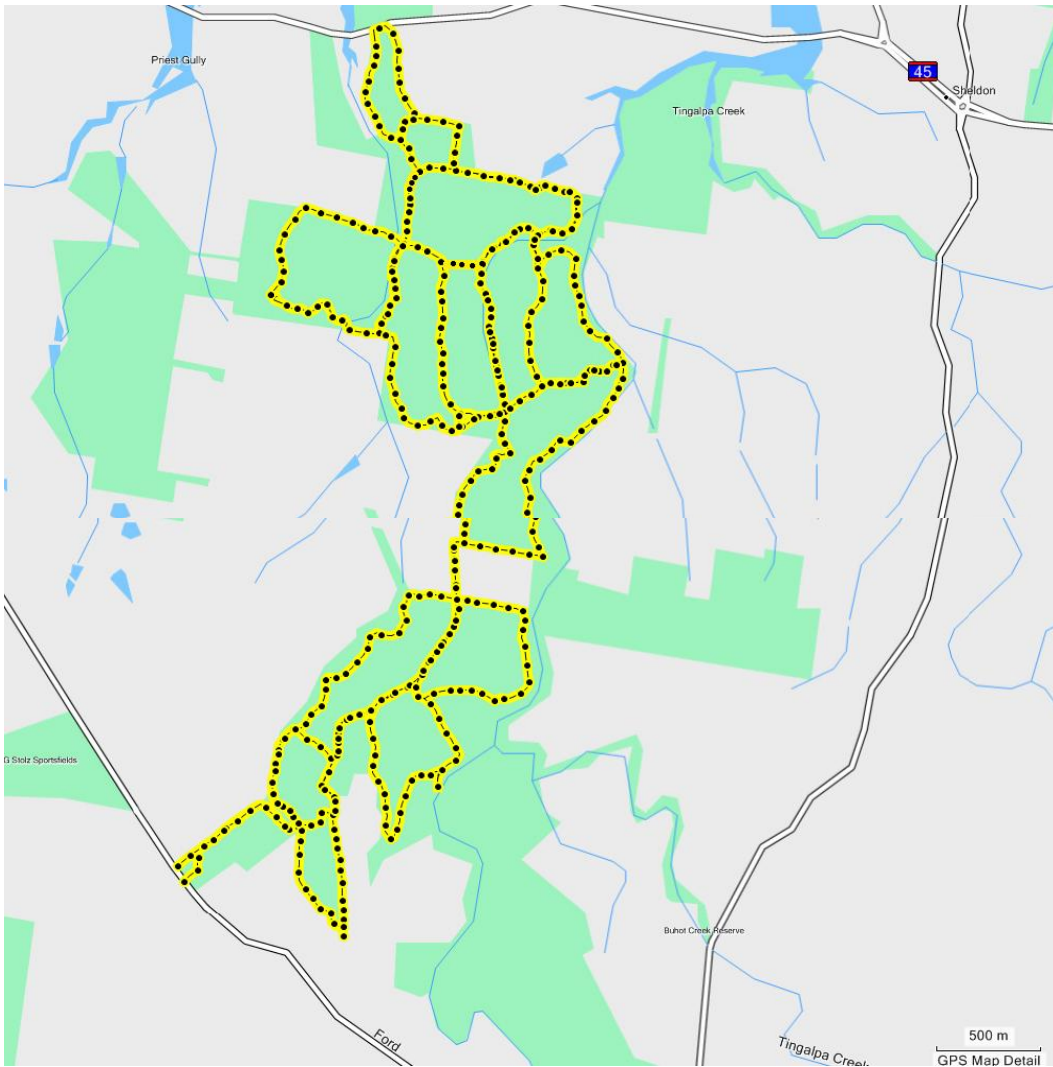
Shown in the map above and below is the marked horse trail, selected from existing management roads. Below are pictures showing that the trail is vehicle width, suitable for multiuse access. Walkers, cyclists and horse riders could share this trail.

Also shown below is a map of all the management roads maintained by BCC in the southern section of BKB. It is inexplicable that only 7.4km of trail is open when there are over 25km of management roads.

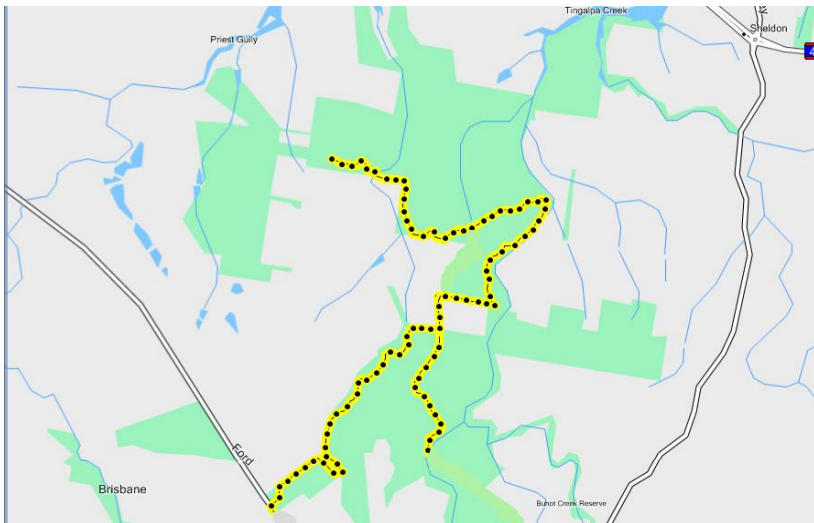
If BCC is serious about providing outdoor recreation opportunities, like other councils in this area, then all management roads should be open as multiuse trails.



Alperton Road Horse Trail - No MTB access



All trails in Tingalpa Creek and Buhot Creek Reserves, comprising the southern section of BKB.



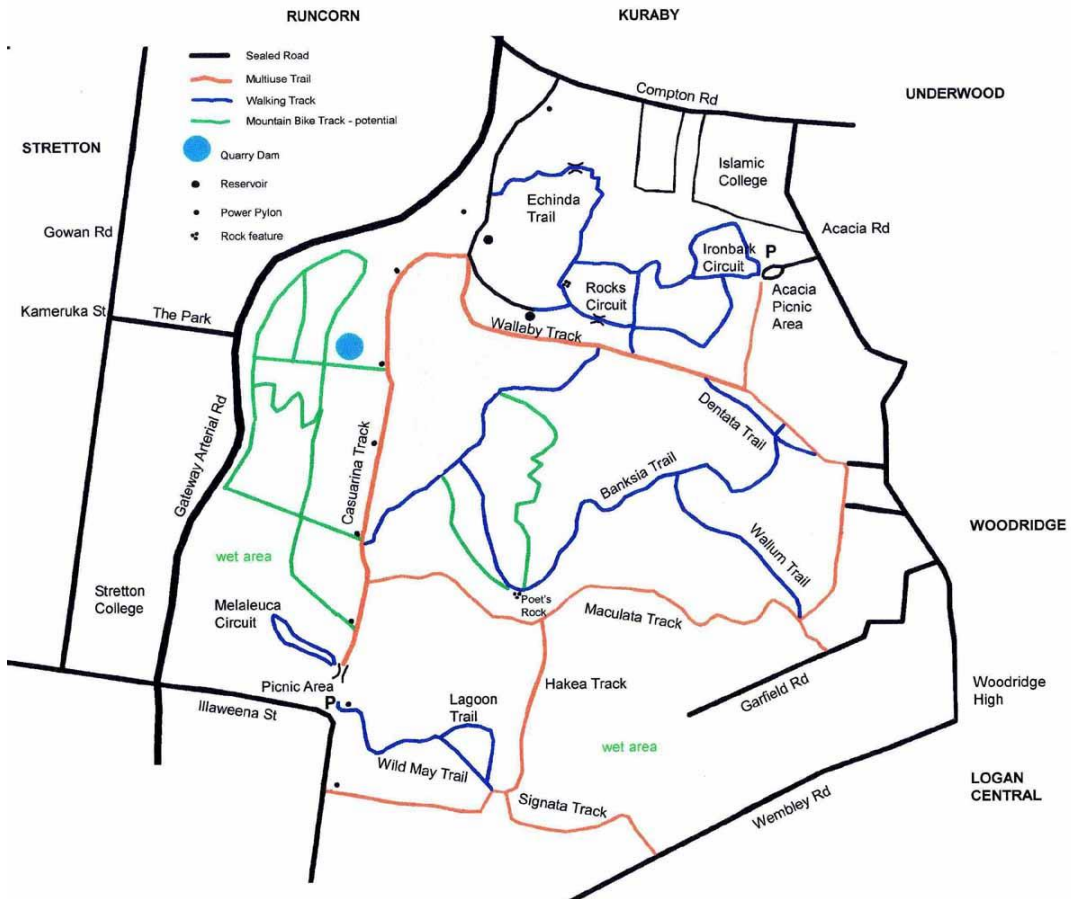
The only public access is to this 7.4km Horse Trail.

Consistent with the 1996 management plan prepared by EDAW, mountain bike riding is permitted in Karawatha Forest, but only on the fire management roads. Other trails in the network are wide enough to be classed as dual use (walking and cycling). See photos below as an example of a wide walking trail in Karawatha Forest.



Echidna Trail, Karawatha Forest

On the map below most walking trails could potentially be appropriate for shared use (cycling and walking). The area to the west of the Casuarina track needs further investigation.



Over twelve years BCC has commissioned numerous reports about managing mountain biking and not one recommendation has been implemented.

Is the barrier to providing for mountain biking solely due to opposition amongst Councillors? Or is the barrier the immense power given to an extreme minority opposing mountain biking within the community?

One thing is certain; there is support for improved mountain bike access to BCC conservation reserves within the BCC staff who contributed to the Review of Management Arrangements for Mountain Bike Riding in Brisbane, in 2006 and from a majority of Brisbane residents.

Yours sincerely



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