

MOUNTAIN BIKING IN BRISBANE

**SUBMISSION BY
GAP CREEK TRAILS ALLIANCE
TO
CIVIC CABINET**

**Lord Mayor Campbell Newman
Councilor David Hinchliffe
Councilor Helen Abrahams
Councilor John Campbell
Councilor Kim Flesser
Councilor Graham Quirk
Councilor Kerry Rae**



One team among 1000 competitors at the Flight Centre 100 km Epic. Sept 2005

Submission to Civic Cabinet September 2005

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Introduction

Mountain bicycle riding is a relatively new and emerging sport and recreation in Australia. During the last fifteen years competitive mountain biking has occurred at local, State and National levels. Since 1996, the cross country event has been included in the Olympics and in Athens 2004 local Brisbane rider Lisa Mathison (then two-times Junior World Cross Country Champion) represented Australia. Queensland riders are ranked the best in Australia and among the best in the world in the mountain biking disciplines of Downhill and Mountain Cross.

Mountain biking is a branch of cycling which is ideal for young people, offering safe off-road riding and adventure while fostering self-reliance. For several years Australia has imported around one million bicycles each year. While the majority are mountain bikes, only a small percentage are ridden off-road.

What is being provided to encourage cycling off-road and in particular, to assist our athletes?



Mt Coot-tha Forest

Current facilities

Mt Coot-tha Forest has been a popular destination for fifteen years. The cross country tracks adjacent to Gap Creek Reserve and the downhill tracks leading to Slaughter Falls and Simpson Falls picnic areas have been especially popular. In June 2004, mountain biking was sanctioned for the first time in Mt Coot-tha Forest, on the wide fire management roads and on selected narrow cross country tracks. The Mt Coot-tha Track Map is attached showing 12.1 km of exclusive use mountain bike tracks and 31 km of multiuse, fire management roads.

Cross country riders are grateful that tracks (previously existing) have been approved, however downhill mountain bikers have been provided with nowhere to ride.

Under the guidance and supervision of the new Brisbane City Council Trail Care Coordinator, Chris Maierhofer, designated bike tracks have been improved by volunteer Trail Care Groups, but tracks not included on the track map, such as the existing downhill tracks, have been closed.

Mountain biking has not been approved in any of the other large reserves, namely Brisbane Koala Bushland, Toohey Forest, Whites Hill, Karawatha Forest and Chemsides Hills Reserves. Track maps (for walkers) are attached which cite mountain biking is a major threat to natural areas, along with weeds, fire and pests.

Proposed Extension of Cross Country Access

Without any additional costs Brisbane City Council could approve mountain bike access to the fire management roads within these larger reserves. Throughout Australia this is common practice within conservation land.

From a regional perspective, it would be a significant achievement to link Brisbane Koala Bushland to the Co-ordination Conservation Area known as the Koala Coast. The attached map

shows that Brisbane's neighbours, Logan City and Redland Shire in co-operation with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service have developed a regionally significant, multiuse trail network. However Brisbane does not provide any multiuse trails in the contiguous Brisbane Koala Bushland, but provides a horse only trail and a walking only track. The Brisbane Koala Bushland Track Map is attached. Mountain bike riders are excluded, even from the fire management roads. This is the situation in all other reserves in Brisbane.

Approved access to the management roads existing within Enoggera Reserve and Gold Creek Reserve would benefit the whole community. This requires a change of position within Brisbane Water to recreation within its reserves, particularly to bicycle riding. Multiuse trails in these locations would be very popular and provide regionally significant trails linked to Brisbane Forest Park and Mt Coot-tha.



Toowoomba City Council Downhill Track 2005

Proposed Introduction of Downhill

Community and Lifestyle Branch have commissioned reports in 2002 and 2004 to locate sites within Brisbane for mountain biking, particularly downhill riding. There have been no positive outcomes to date.

The solution to the issues related to downhill riding is to provide one or two low-risk and sustainable tracks starting at the top of roads, such as at Mt Gravatt Mountain or Gap Creek Road. In addition, Council could support the provision of a challenging downhill track within Brisbane. Council is now in a good position to use the knowledge and expertise of Chris Maierhofer, Trail Care Co-ordinator to locate a suitable site for this track.

In Conclusion

Council's 'active and healthy' policy should encourage all forms of cycling, including mountain biking. Downhill riding is particularly popular with young people, while cross country attracts a wide age range, including retirees.

As a non-polluting form of transport and recreation, mountain biking is both 'clean and green'. Before Council can encourage bicycle-based ecotourism in our natural areas, trails (existing fire management roads) need to be open to not just walkers.

Mountain biking on fire management trails and narrow track has been occurring at Mt Coot-tha Forest and in State Forest and local government land around the greater Brisbane area, supported by volunteer trail maintenance offered by riders.

Downhill has now been embraced by the Toowoomba City Council, with a world-class competitive track down the escarpment.

Experience, knowledge and expertise exist within Brisbane to develop more opportunities for off-road cycling with minimal cost, and great benefit to the community.