

Townsville / Thuringowa Bikeways Map

Name of Author: Eion Wheeler

Organisation: Queensland Transport

Abstract:

After a Queensland Transport organised cycle forum in Townsville in December of 1998 a Townsville / Thuringowa and Districts Cycle Committee (TTDCC) was established early in 1999. The committee consists of representatives of government agencies concerned with promoting cycling as an alternative to private car usage, improved health for participants and better community infrastructure for safe commuting and recreational cycling. Local Governments, educational bodies and private users are also represented on the committee.

A set of objectives was drawn up for the operation of the committee with an underlying tenet to be strategic and to compliment the National and State cycle strategies released at about that time. In particular the committee targeted the State goal for Queensland of achieving 8% of transport trips using a bicycle by 2011. Knowing that the current figure for Townsville from 1996 data was about 5% this seemed an achievable target.

A number of strategies were considered with the production of the cycle map being universally considered a vital aid for cyclists and a way of encouraging more people to consider cycling a viable, ecologically friendly, fun and healthy mode of transport. How to gather the resources and produce such a map was the dilemma.

Twelve months later with funding from Queensland Transport, a project officer from Queensland Health and a small committee to steer the project the cycle map appeared to be achievable.

With the combination of Department of Main Roads, Townsville City Council and City of Thuringowa Global Information Systems, data showing the location of bike paths and on road bike lanes as well as key points of community interest and traffic generation in the twin cities was developed. The map was compiled from this data for release at the end of June 2000. The reverse side of the map lists cycle safety tips, road rules and equipment information for cyclists.

The project is a triumph for inter-agency cooperation and with ongoing assessment of its effectiveness for future improvement may become a permanent feature of the Townsville/Thuringowa cyclists tool kit.

Background of Townsville Thuringowa and Districts Cycle Committee

In December of 1998 Queensland Transport arranged a cycling forum to be held in Townsville with stakeholders from the twin cities and surrounding Local Government areas as well as representatives from Government agencies and the community at large. Members of the State Cycle Committee attended with the Queensland Transport State Cycle Unit facilitating the presentations and discussions. A group of about thirty people attended and received information about cycling activities across the State including the activities of Bicycle Users Groups (BUGs) and local committees which have contributed to the development of cycling as a popular form of transport in their areas. These committees have also been closely involved with recommendations about new cycling infrastructure and identifying needs for upgrading of existing facilities.

Following the presentations from the Local Governments and many of the Government agencies, a series of syndicate groups were formed for discussions about options for the development of cycling within the Townsville Thuringowa community. As a result of the outputs of these groups a number of suggestions for the advancement of cycling were identified as well as benefits for the community and the environment from the possible reduction in private car use if cycling as a viable alternative form of transport could be promoted. One of the common suggestions was for a local cycling committee to be formed to meet regularly and to include as members' representatives of the Councils, the bicycle users groups and the interested agencies. It was agreed at that time that Queensland Transport would chair the committee and assume responsibility for coordination of committee activities.

Numerous suggestions were also made at that forum for projects the committee could undertake to advance cycling within the local area. The view of the meeting was also to encourage adjoining Local Government areas to participate if they believed there would be some benefit to be gained for their communities.

The Townsville / Thuringowa and Districts Cycle Committee was established and held the first meeting in early 1999. At that first meeting the mission, objectives and purposes of the committee were established as reproduced below.

" The mission of the committee is to promote cycling as a sustainable form of transport by developing safe, continuous and extensive cycle routes and facilities to improve the health and environment of our community.

The objectives of the committee are to:

- ensure integration of cycling as a transport mode within the transport system;
- achieve a sustained increase in the level of cycling in the Townsville/Thuringowa area; and
- contribute to reducing the frequency and severity of crashes involving cyclists.

The role and purpose:

- enables direct and meaningful input to all planning levels for cycling activities and proposed expansion of infrastructure according to areas of need and priorities.
- provides an active link to Councils traffic and road safety committees.
- provides people with enthusiasm for cycling an avenue for involvement with provision of cycling facilities.
- provides a channel for the expression of cycling commuter views.
- creates a local point of focus for research into cycling issues.
- enables the creation of mechanisms for monitoring cycle usage in the region.
- creates a cycling interest group to propose developments for cycling and review proposals including cycling facilities, prepared by other organisations.
- creates an organisation that can be directly involved in promotion of cycling and the conduct of safety audits and reviews of facilities.
- provides support for the establishment of a database (GIS) of the cycling network. "

Strategic Focus

It was the view of the committee that if their role was to be in line with the objectives and purpose as above then the work of the committee should always be of a strategic nature. This necessitated an understanding from all of the members that day to day operational matters would not be discussed or resolved by the committee. There is always a temptation with these types of community groups for participants particularly users of infrastructure provided by Government or Local Government, to see such forums as an opportunity to raise local specific matters requiring resolution with the representatives of agencies who attend. In the early meetings there were some of these types of issues raised and some tolerance was given for discussion and suggestions as to how to resolve the matters. At subsequent meetings the members were willing to be brought back to a strategic focus if there was a lapse into operational matters. The person or group with the concerns addresses Operational or day to day matters through direct contact with the responsible agency.

To ensure the strategic focus adopted by the committee was in-line with State and National Strategies the latter were obtained and when the local strategies were drawn up a cross reference matrix provided the necessary links. A number of possible strategies were identified through group working then discussed and documented to produce a record of potential projects listed against the strategies.

Shown below is a sample of the table of the three levels of strategies:

TOWNSVILLE/THURINGOWA AND DISTRICT CYCLE COMMITTEE

OBJECTIVES	NATIONAL STRATEGIES	STATE STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ACTION
<p>Achieve a sustained increase in the level of cycling in the Townsville and Thuringowa area.</p> <p>STRATEGY Develop facilities for cyclists to encourage cycling for all trip purposes.</p> <p>ACTIONS Prepare a bikeways map for the twin cities area.</p>	<p>Promote the benefit of cycling to the community.</p> <p>Build cycling into education, training and professional development.</p>	<p>A framework for achieving the Government's target of 8% of trips by bicycle by 2011.</p> <p>A long term program of funding for cycling initiatives.</p>	<p>TTDCC and the individual and organisation members.</p>

Options for Committee Actions

At an early point in the committee's discussions about appropriate strategies the production of a cycling map for the twin cities of Townsville and Thuringowa was identified as a desirable project. The map was seen as a way to address the objective of encouraging both residents and visitors to use cycling as a pleasant and healthy way of completing a trip or exploring the local environment. The promotion of cycling as an alternative form of transport to the use of private cars, particularly for short regular and local trips, is in line with the principles of sustainable transport solutions for communities. These strategies are advocated by governments and those who have studied the current and future impacts of increasing use of vehicles powered by fossil fuels on the quality of our global environments and particularly those in our cities.

Research into cycling through Townsville has been carried out by Douglas Goudie MSc. of the School of Tropical Environment Studies and Geography at James Cook University as part of a yet to be published doctoral thesis 'Toward Sustainable Urban Travel'. Mr Goudie produced in November 1999 an information paper for Queensland Transport which identified through household surveys that were conducted in late 1996, that 4.9% of urban travel trips in Townsville were by cycle. Although that percentage is already considerably higher than other centres in Queensland the State Government target is 8% of trips by cycle by the year 2011. To achieve this goal it is necessary to promote cycling and the expansion of infrastructure to encourage cycling across this area.

The committee found that there were no existing maps for the Townsville area which showed cycling paths or on road marking for bike lanes although Local Government and State agencies had such data recorded on street plans and within Global Information Systems (GIS). The committee discussed ways of producing a map or maps and printing them in sufficient quantities to distribute widely throughout the community. The unavailability of resources to carry out such a project was a barrier to following through with what was seen as a very worthwhile project.

Sub-committee Formation

There are a number of Government agencies represented on the committee and the Health and Sport and Recreation representatives were particularly keen to support the concept of a cycling map. As there were a considerable number of complementary objectives between their programs and those of Queensland Transport and the cycle committee, it was agreed that a joint approach to the project was a possible way of obtaining the skills and resources to produce the cycling map.

At that time Queensland Transport was also managing a project to develop a Townsville Thuringowa Integrated Regional Transport Plan (TTIRTP) which was to include planning options for the twin cities covering all modes of transport. Again a clear link between the data gathering for the cycling, walking and use of mobility aids component of the TTIRTP and that required for the map production was identified.

A sub committee from the TTDC was formed with an agreement that a project officer would be employed by Health with their contribution to the production of the map being the salary of this person for the agreed time period of the project. Contributions from the other agencies was in the form of cash for production and printing from Queensland Transport, GIS data and an officers time from the Department of Main Roads, GIS data and assistance with promotion from the Councils and administrative support from Sport and Recreation. Without this cooperative approach to the project the availability of 75,000 maps for wide distribution across the cities of Townsville and Thuringowa would not have been achieved.

Although this paper and the project being reported on is about the production of the Townsville and Thuringowa Bikeways Map it is also about a success story of pooling of resources and cooperation between many agencies and their staff to achieve a common worth while goal for the community. A very good example of what is possible when the individual 'silos of separate agency programs' are made transparent and the barriers to cooperation are removed.

Development Method

The sub-committee known as 'More Bums on Bikes', developed an understanding of what information was available from the Agencies and Councils through their GIS systems and how up to date that data was. They also needed to have an appreciation of how much data could be shown on a map before clutter rendered it useless for cyclists' use.

Issues that needed to be resolved were:

- Types of maps to be produced. The final decision was to produce one map at this time. There are many valid arguments for the production of different maps for different uses such as;
 - (a) commuter map for cyclists needing to go directly to their places of work ie. shortest distance between two points.
 - (b) tourist map for routes of interest around the city centre, convenience of access not time is important.
 - (c) recreation map for those wanting a leisurely scenic route primarily off road.
 - (d) a map for school children showing safe routes to the school being attended.
- The size of the map. The final decision was a map which when folded three times is an A5 size. This provides a map big enough in area to show detail of cycle routes on streets or through parks but when folded can be placed in a back pack, diary or students exercise book. Other options such as folding "Z" cards were considered however that option with copyright costs was too expensive for the project budget.
- The boundaries for the map. The decision was to include the bulk of the built up areas of the two City Councils. An insert was used for one extended route along the Upper Ross River to ensure the scale of the map was not adversely effected and blank spaces were limited.
- The legend and colours used.

Different coloured dotted lines were used for on and off road cycling infrastructure. There is always a compromise with colour combinations and when the review is carried this is one aspect which will be reconsidered.

- The trip generation sites and points of interest

Seventeen sites that are considered to be the main locations of interest for the creation of demand for transport trips, are numbered on the map. Examples are the university, the military establishments, major shopping complexes, sporting venues and key entertainment centres. Other points of interest such as schools and parks have been colour coded. Suburban names and key road names are also shown on the map.

- Cycling infrastructure detail that is shown.

The choices here were to show future infrastructure and even to differentiate by use of various line types between new facilities to be provided in the next 12 months and those to be built beyond that time frame. The final decision made was to show only existing infrastructure. This option was chosen as it was considered that showing future routes may cause confusion particularly if work is not completed as planned.

- The reverse side of the map.

The reverse side of the map is an integral part of the usefulness of the package. The reverse side is divided into four sections providing useful information for cyclists on the project background, legal and safety tips, relevant road signage and local contact information.

The other critical decisions related to the method of production and the level of budget that would determine the numbers able to be produced. Negotiations with the printing industry identified the ability to print the map from a download of the prepared data from the GIS. Although there were some initial difficulties with this process in terms of accuracy of the reproduced data on paper, these were overcome and this process proved to be efficient and effective.

Paper quality was also a variable and the choice made was to use a relatively low cost paper to maximise the total number that could be printed. It is expected that the maps will last the required time for casual users such as tourists and long enough for locals to learn the regular routes they wish to access. There are also sufficient quantities available for locals to obtain additional copies if required.

Strategy for Review

The committee has resolved to conduct a review of the map over the next 6 to 12 months to ensure that all suggestions for improvements to the existing format are considered. The production of the map has been a significant project for the committee and the agencies involved with total outlays and contributions in kind amounting to about \$20,000.

The review may also reinforce the views held by some committee members that consideration needs to be given to the options of producing maps for particular segments of the community as was discussed above.

The review process will need to include a viable method of obtaining feedback from all bikeways map user segments in the community to provide a balanced picture of the acceptance of the current product. The user friendliness of the map attributes such as detail included, layout, colours, legends and size will need to be a part of the surveys conducted. No decision has yet been made as to the form the review will take although there has been some discussions of options such as written responses on survey feedback forms printed in local newspapers.

Users themselves should be consulted as to their opinions of the most effective form of feedback and what aspects of the map are the most important to be considered for review to ensure the next product better meets their collective and diverse needs.

Conclusion

This project although producing a similar map to those produced in other parts of the State is unique in a number of ways. The most significant feature is the way in which the need for the map was perceived by members of a community committee and then produced by cooperative effort through a range of agencies and organisations that did not have the information, skills or resources to produce it individually. Cost of production was minimised through the contributions in kind from those organisations that could not contribute cash, which enabled maximisation of the available cash for setting up and printing.

The map has been accepted well by the community and although the formal feedback process is yet to commence there has been much positive comment from users of the map as well as community leaders. This has also been reflected in the comments from media outlets and the press.

The Townsville and Thuringowa Bikeways Map has been a very satisfying project to have been involved with and will it is expected contribute to increased cycling in the twin Cities leading towards the achievement of the target of 8% of trips made by cycle by 2011. With continued development of the concept and with future versions being improvements on the original, the map should be a permanent inclusion in the tool kits of all cyclists in the Townsville Thuringowa area.