



**BICYCLE
NETWORK®**

Tasmanian Budget Submission 2024–25

November 2023



About Bicycle Network

With over 48,000 members, Bicycle Network is one of the top member-based bike riding organisations in the world.

With a proud history reaching back close to 50 years, we are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all Australians by making it easier for people to ride a bike.

Operating nationally, we have a measurable and large-scale impact in community participation and the promotion of healthy lifestyles through bike riding.

We achieve this in Tasmania through:

- improving the bike riding environment by working with government at all levels to provide better infrastructure, data, policies, legislation and regulations
- delivering Ride2School and Back on your Bike programs to get more people riding across the state for transport and recreation
- providing services that support bike riders through membership
- encouraging more people to ride by providing free social rides
- being a key spokesperson on issues related to cycling and physical activity.

Bicycle Network would like to thank the Tasmanian Government for the opportunity to provide a submission for the Tasmanian Budget 2024–25. We look forward to working with you to get more people riding bikes and reaping the resulting health, economic and environmental benefits.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alison Hetherington".

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Executive summary: infrastructure provides choice



Photo: new Whitewater Creek path allowing a safe route between Huntingfield and Kingston.

We are at a critical time in Tasmania, where we have enthusiasm and plans to change our transport habits to bring down climate emissions, reduce traffic congestion, cut cost of living pressures, make our roads safer and improve our overall health, but we don't have the infrastructure or programs we need at the scale to make it happen.

If we are going to give people genuine transport choice and provide opportunities for them to stay physically active, we need to invest more in safe active transport routes and provide certainty of funding to local government. In those places where safe infrastructure is starting to come together to provide useable networks, there is a need to help people get riding again and understand the benefits of e-bikes.

Bicycle access to public transport could play an important role in providing more choice but without secure bike parking and the ability to take bikes on board buses we are currently limited to one ferry route.

The government should consider bringing these multiple strands together to create a unit/body to oversee the transition to an active transport state. It could be responsible for planning, delivering, educating and communicating the actions needed to reduce emissions, improve physical and mental health, reduce traffic congestion and reduce transport costs.



Summary of budget requests

| Financial year | 2024–25 \$m | 2025–26 \$m | 2026–27 \$m | 2027–28 \$m | TOTAL \$m |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Bicycle infrastructure Fund | 14.3 | 14.3 | 14.3 | 14.3 | 57.2 |
| Ride2School program | 0.14 | 0.14 | 0.14 | 0.14 | 0.56 |
| Back on your Bike program | 0.11 | 0.11 | 0.11 | 0.11 | 0.44 |
| E-bike support | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 1.6 |
| Bikes on public transport | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 1 |
| Cycling tourism | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 6 |

The funding we are calling for would enable the delivery of Bicycle Network Tasmania's key asks of the Rockliff Liberal government:

1. Increase funding and establish an ongoing bicycle infrastructure budget to deliver more AAA cycleways.
2. Increase funding for the Ride2School and Back on your Bike programs to cover running costs & expand the programs.
3. Fund programs that encourage the uptake of electric bicycles for transport.
4. Fund a trial of bikes on buses and activate bike parking at park-and-rides and ferry terminals by installing secure bike parking.
5. Fund a feasibility study for a Derwent Valley rail trail, detailed plans for outstanding sections of the Coastal Pathway, cost overruns for NE Rail Trail and marketing help for businesses tapping into cycling tourism.

Getting the cycling networks we need

- Increase funding and establish an ongoing bicycle infrastructure budget to deliver more AAA cycleways.

The development of the Better Active Transport Grants provides a basis the government can build upon to provide ongoing funding to the active transport network. We are well past the point where cycling paths should be considered one-off grant expenditures – we need to build consistent networks of all ages and abilities (AAA) infrastructure if we are going to drive down climate emissions, reduce traffic congestion, reduce road trauma and improve public health.



We need a Better Active Transport program that receives regular annual funding just as our roads and public transport areas do. Local governments, which are responsible for most roads in the state, have no indicators for when state or federal governments may release money for cycling infrastructure, which means they are often unprepared when funding is made available.

Having a stable funding stream means state and local government can work together to plan and deliver valuable sections of network to get more Tasmanians to work, school, services, shops and other activities. Many councils cannot afford large cycling infrastructure projects that would benefit their communities, just as they can't afford most road projects, so alternatives to matched funding should be on the table.

While we have plans for a AAA transport cycling network in greater Hobart, we don't have the secure funding that will enable it to be rolled out at the pace we need. We still don't have a AAA greater Launceston cycling plan and the north west coastal pathway is being held up because two sections need more funding to go ahead.

The United Nations Environment Program has called on governments at all levels to invest at least 20% of transport budgets on walking and cycling infrastructure. With years of underspending on transport bicycle infrastructure in Tasmania, a strong argument could be made for a big boost in spending just to catch up to other states.



Image: new path around the University of Tasmania's Cradle Coast Campus



Bicycle Network believes a good start would be a commitment from state and federal governments to establish cycling infrastructure funds at just \$25 per head of the population per year. In Tasmania that means \$14.3 million in the first year – a drop in the ocean compared to the many hundreds of millions that goes to roads spending. Any funding should be on top of the Tasman Bridge project as that is a one-off spend rectifying the mistakes of the past and mixed in with bridge strengthening work that has to happen regardless of the path build.

Educating new riders

- Increase funding for the Ride2School and Back on your Bike programs to cover running costs & expand the programs.

While infrastructure is critically important to getting more people riding, there are also many children not getting taught to ride and older Tasmanians who never learnt or haven't ridden for such a long time they need to learn all over again.

Bicycle Network offers two education programs through government grants, however, running costs for both programs have increased and we need a supplement to the grants to keep going.

Ride2School

Bicycle Network currently runs the Ride2School program in primary schools around the state, funded by a four-year grant from the Road Safety Advisory Council. The grant has enabled us to employ a full-time program manager and buy bikes and a van to get around to every school that requests a visit, but is now failing to cover ongoing running costs due to superannuation changes and general inflation.

Ride2School provides children with improved riding skills and knowledge of how to look after their bikes. It can also work with schools to install adequate bike parking, track the rates of children riding, scooting and walking to school, and develop mapping to highlight the most comfortable routes to ride to school.

The program therefore addresses much more than road safety improvements. There is also scope to expand the program to secondary schools and to improve the intensity of training in the schools we are in, but the Road Safety Advisory Council doesn't have the capacity to increase funding.

Other relevant areas of the government could contribute to Ride2School funding, such as the departments of Education, Sport and Recreation or State Growth.

We'd like to employ a part-time instructor in the north of the state to work with the full-time instructor in the south to ensure better coverage of the state. Another instructor would also give greater flexibility in delivery of the program allowing for staff leave and part-time work and could also be called on to help with the Back on your Bike program.



Image: Ride2School program being delivered at Dodges Ferry Primary School.

Creating an ongoing funding agreement within Sport and Recreation, State Growth or Education could allow the program to expand and improve outcomes, while providing more certainty for employment and administrative planning.

The current annual grant is \$90,000. To cover the running costs of the programs and employ a part-time instructor to cover the north-west and north of the state, we are

looking for another \$50,000 a year. We would seek corporate sponsorship to buy another van and bikes for the north.

Back on your Bike

Our Back on your Bike program has been operating via a Healthy Tasmania grant which was renewed this year and expires in June 2025, however, it is not enough to cover the costs of a statewide full-time program.

We deliver small-group and one-on-one riding skills sessions with adults who haven't ridden for many years or who were never taught to ride as children.

We have delivered sessions in partnership with groups working with people with disabilities, new migrant arrivals, people facing challenging life circumstances, employers and local councils. We are filling a much-needed gap for new migrants, people in socio-economic distress, middle-aged and older Tasmanians, people wanting to learn to ride on the road, to ride an e-bike safely, and people with disabilities.

Participants in the program are overwhelmingly positive about the experience and follow-up surveys show it works to get people riding again.



Image: Launceston Womens Friendship group Back on your Bike session.



The program is a relatively low-cost intervention but we need more funding than the current \$50,000 per year to allow it operate full time and to prepare for the transition from grant funding to recurrent funding.

The scope of the program's participants means the Department of State Growth, RECFIT, Department of Health, and Department of Premier and Cabinet all benefit from its operation.

Like the Ride2School program we need more money to cover running costs and to offer a FTE staff position. The current position is funded .6 FTE from the \$50,000 grant and Bicycle Network covers the .4 FTE component of salary. Due to a downturn in income from our events, which is hitting all event providers post COVID, we are looking for our .4 FTE contribution to be covered by an additional grant. Another \$60,000 a year would cover running costs and an FTE salary.

Bicycles connecting with public transport

- Fund a trial of bikes on buses and activate bike parking at park-and-rides and ferry terminals by installing secure bike parking.

If bicycles could be used in conjunction with buses, as they are with ferries, it would give more people a viable transport option and others the option of travelling further.

This requires a network of secure bike parking stations at transport hubs and/or the ability to take bicycles aboard buses just as you can with ferries.

There is scope for an independently run trial of bikes on buses to assess passenger demand and preferences, and the logistics for bus companies. While racks on the outside of buses are used in Canberra, New Zealand, many north American cities and are set to be rolled out in Victoria, Metro Tasmania doesn't believe they are suitable for Tasmanian roads. However, with low-floor buses now comprising 100% of the Metro fleet, bikes could be wheeled on and strapped/fitted inside the bus, as occurs in some buses in North America and the UK and is happening on light rail in Canberra.

The proposed rapid buses would ideally carry bikes on board via external or interior racks. The problems Metro identified with retrofitting racks to existing buses and utilising existing bus stops would be negated as rapid buses would be new and stops could be built to the specifications of a longer bus.



Image: Swift Rapid Bus Transit in Washington state, US has bikes on board.



Image: Border buses in the UK have nifty racks for bicycles inside.

Secure bike parking cages or electronic parking docks should also be implemented at transport hubs and major stops along high-frequency bus routes and ferry terminals.

Such bike parking should have a system that provides another level of security on top of a good quality lock to give people the confidence their bike will be there when they



return many hours later. New technology is also providing options such as app-activated locking docks that also have ebike charging options and don't require riders to carry their own locks. Locking docks are being used in New Zealandⁱ and some European and North American citiesⁱⁱ and are starting to be installed in Australia.ⁱⁱⁱ

Current and planned park-and-rides in Hobart have bike cages but no system to provide security. This needs to be rectified with funding to come up with an appropriate security layer to be used at these cages as well as planned expansion of ferry terminals.

Climate Change Action

- Fund programs that encourage the uptake of electric bicycles for transport.

The government has launched its first grant scheme for e-bikes this year and we look forward to evaluation of the scheme and expansion of it to other ideas like bike libraries, no-interest loans and business bike grants.

While electric cars will be a big part of our future, electric bicycles are cheaper to buy and run and offer genuine transport options for the majority of trips most people take each day in our urban centres.

If the e-bike grant scheme meets its objectives then there is the opportunity to offer another round of grants under the same parameters or targeted at particular groups such as low-income Tasmanians, businesses and families.

The Tasmanian Government could offer a no-interest loan, similar to the Tasmanian Energy Efficiency Loans to help Tasmanians who can't afford the upfront cost of buying an e-bike for transport. Helping people delay payment of the purchase price gives them time to save money they would have spent on petrol and parking and see the worth of an e-bike over a car.

E-bike libraries loan bikes to people for 2-4 weeks so they get an idea of how an e-bike or cargo e-bike would fit into their lives. By directly experiencing how convenient and easy it is to get around by e-bike it can help people make that final decision to buy a bike. Bicycle Network has been talking to the City of Hobart about establishing a library for greater Hobart but it would need funding to buy the bikes and help employ staff.

Salary sacrificing and leasing schemes that help people buy e-bikes are currently possible in Australia – if the Tasmanian Government started offering salary sacrificing of e-bikes it could help build momentum.

Because commercial leasing operators have not come to Tasmania, there may be a place for governments to help subsidise short-term and long-term rentals or run them



themselves. An example of this would be to encourage the current e-scooter hire companies to bring e-bikes to Tasmania by offering subsidised passes to low-income Tasmanians. The government could also fund a scheme where low-income Tasmania's could rent/lease an e-bike month by month – this could be part of a broader e-bike library.

While e-bikes are easy to ride and convenient for short trips, a lack of secure bike parking can stop people using them as frequently as they could. The high value of the bikes means they are a target for thieves so we need secure options for short-term and long-term bike parking. Other cities and states have invested in secure bike parking options to encourage people to ride more often, as referred to in the public transport section.

Adding to MTB benefits

- Fund a feasibility study for a Derwent Valley rail trail, detailed plans for outstanding sections of the Coastal Pathway, cost overruns for NE Rail Trail and marketing help for businesses tapping into cycling tourism.

The first rail trail of useful length for cycling tourism in north-east Tasmania now has all its planning approvals and the coastal pathway is consistently increasing its length and will soon have a stretch from Latrobe to West Ulverstone suitable for overnight stays and day trips.

The government should be looking to expand rail trails and shared paths and start marketing this type of family- and retiree-friendly cycling tourism to complement our successful mountain bike experiences. This sort of rail infrastructure involves people staying for multiple days and looking for food, drink and arts experiences.

A rail trail along all or part of the disused Derwent Valley rail line needs a feasibility study, especially as there is growing local support for such a project. While the Dorset Council may need help meeting the costs of more complex permit requirements that resulted from appeals to the project.

And the coastal pathway needs funding for detailed designs for the outstanding sections between West Ulverstone and Penguin, and Wivenhoe to Heybridge to ensure it becomes a multi-day experience that will draw tourists from interstate.

There is also a need to educate businesses on how they can cater to cycling tourists. Accommodation that provides secure bike parking, washdown and maintenance facilities and a place to dry wet clothing is essential, as is e-bike charging facilities in accommodation and hospitality venues. New opportunities for bike hire, shuttles along the pathway and luggage forwarding should be promoted. Once businesses are on board to provide a quality experience, government can start marketing the pathway as one of the must-do Tasmanian experiences.



i <https://www.lockydock.co.nz/> accessed 14 September 2022

ii <https://bikeep.com/> accessed 14 September 2022

iii E-Micro has recently provided electronic docks to RAC Arena and Belmont Forum shopping centre in Western Australia, University of NSW, and the Pacific Fair Shopping Centre on the Gold Coast.