

Staffing, BACs and BUGs

Purpose

This note presents guidelines for staffing and consulting procedures to enable councils to provide for cycling in their local communities.

Definitions

This note covers three areas:

Staffing - Dealing with staffing requirements within local government for the implementation and management of cycling policy and facilities.

Bicycle Advisory Committees (BACs) - A Bicycle Advisory Committee is a local government committee comprising internal government staff, external interested parties and other agencies concerned with cycling issues. BACs focus on cycling activities in the local region.

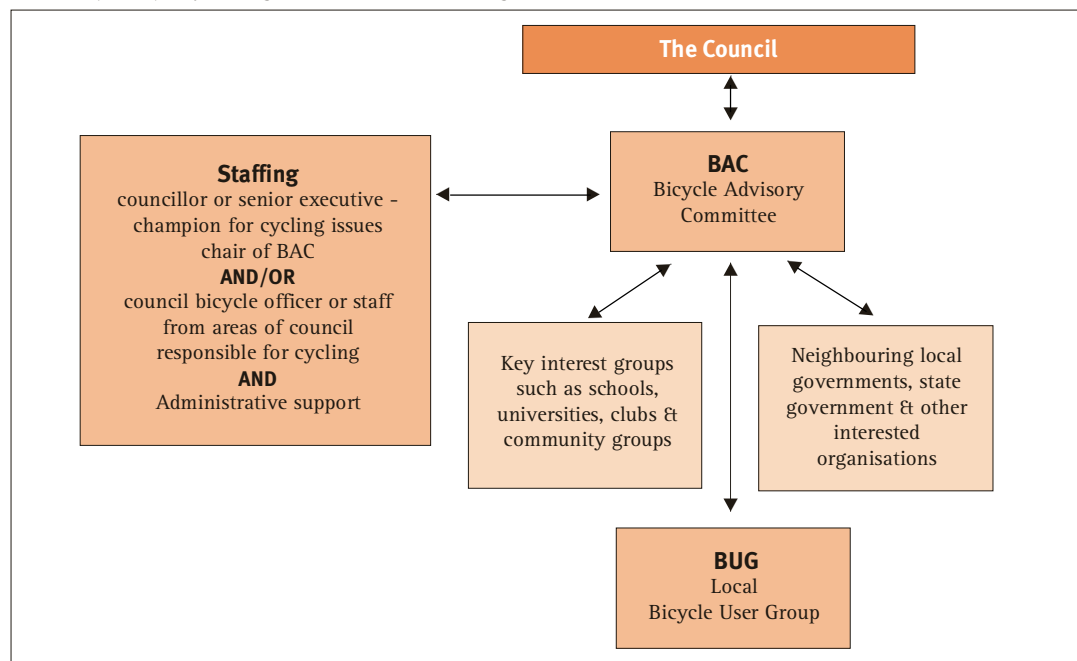
Bicycle User Groups (BUGs) - A Bicycle User Group is a non-government community-based group of people who ride bikes and advocate for better cycling facilities.

Introduction

When planning for and implementing cycling facilities, local councils can improve the final result by establishing formal channels for consultative decision making. This generally requires councils to commit staff and funding to establish a Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC). This note provides guidance on staffing, BAC formation and Bicycle User Groups (BUGs). Figure 1 shows the important roles these elements play in the bicycle planning and management process in a local government area.

Figure 1

Structure for bicycle planning & consultation in a local government



Aim

This series of notes has been designed to assist planners and engineers to provide for cycling in their local area.

The Cycle Notes should be read in conjunction with:

- *Guide to Traffic Engineering Practice, Part 14 - Bicycles* (Austroads, 1999), and
- *Queensland Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, Part 9 Bicycle Facilities*.

Contents

Staffing

Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC)

- What is a BAC?
- What are the benefits of having a BAC?
- Purpose and scope
- Different purposes affect terms of reference
- Suggested membership
- What resources are required?
- What resources are available?

Bicycle User Group (BUG)

- What is a BUG?
- How to start a BUG

Staffing, BACs and BUGs

Staffing

The responsibility for cycling can belong in a number of areas or departments within a local council. Separate responsibilities need to be recognised in the organisation's corporate plan.

The following models for staffing provide workable solutions to local governments in developing and implementing cycle strategies.¹

The Dedicated Resource Model

Some local councils employ a full time staff member to coordinate cycling issues. The position can be shared by a number of local councils.

The advantages of this model include a steady focus on cycling issues and a single point of reference for the council's staff and residents. Some disadvantages have been that the position is often relatively junior, the person is rarely strong in both engineering and recreation experience and a specialist position can allow other staff to shift their responsibilities. These issues can be overcome by regular meetings of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, ensuring all staff responsible for cycling are involved with the issues.

The Champions Model

Some councils nominate a person to be the cycling "champion" within each department or they appoint a senior member of the organisation to advocate for cycling. This model is most effective if it is part of the member's job description and they have time to undertake cycling related tasks.

The main advantage is that the "champion" can focus on improving outcomes for cycling. Cycling can also have a higher status and opportunities to provide for cycling can be more easily taken up.

A disadvantage is that the role can be lost when the officer moves. Also, the role can be deferred by other priorities and it can be difficult for residents, staff or elected members to understand who is responsible for cycling.

NOTE:

These two models work well in combination. That is, it is highly effective having a dedicated staff member to coordinate cycling activities across the council and a senior or executive staffer to represent cycling issues at a higher level.

The Contract Model

Some local councils outsource some of their cycling responsibilities as part of wider contracts. For example, contracted traffic engineering services are given the responsibility to implement works in the bicycle plan.

The advantage of this model is that when the contract is tendered a program of delivery will be developed and there will be contractual obligations to complete the program. The disadvantages include less flexibility as contracted programs can be difficult to change and the tighter focus of contracted work can also mean less coordination with other departments.

NOTE:

A dedicated officer may be contracted by a local council or group of local councils to prepare the bicycle strategy and establish the BAC over 6 to 12 months. A group of local councils may also benefit from pooling resources and forming a regional BAC. As well as the dedicated officer, consideration needs to be given to training all relevant staff in the planning and design of bicycle-considerate infrastructure.

Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC)

What is a Bicycle Advisory Committee?

A Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) is a local government committee comprising internal council staff, external interested parties and other agencies concerned with cycling issues. BACs focus on cycling activities in the local region.

What are the benefits of having a BAC?

A BAC can:

- provide a forum to focus attention on increasing cycling and improving cycle safety
- help with developing and implementing cycling strategies and plans
- provide communication links to enable the local government to understand the community's cycling needs
- provide a broad knowledge base and a source of energy and enthusiasm
- network with the community and obtain support for cycling activities and functions
- provide advice on incorporating cycling into projects (for example, a road upgrade or a parkland development).

Purpose and scope

The primary purpose of BACs is to support the development and implementation of local bicycle strategies. BACs can also provide advice and enthusiasm for the development of educational events to encourage cycling.

The local council should determine the scope of the BAC's terms of reference. They may encompass:

- local issues or regional issues
- issues affecting cycling only
- issues that also affect pedestrians
- general traffic issues.



Different purposes affect terms of reference

The terms of reference for a BAC may be extensive. The capacity of the committee to address these terms will be reflected in changing membership throughout the life of the committee. A core membership with the capacity to invite specialists and guests is an effective way for the committee to function. For example, during the early stages in the development of a bicycle network plan, the committee requires an understanding of planning issues as well as the needs of users (ie. bicycle planning expertise and input from users or potential users). During the plan implementation, a variety of site specific and user specific issues may arise that will require careful consultation across a range of government and other bodies (e.g. police, schools, planners and politicians).

Suggested membership

Internal and external representation on the committee is required for a balanced understanding of internal processes and external user needs. The table below lists suggested members.

Internal

- politician or senior executive as chair
- dedicated bicycle officer (if chosen as appropriate by council)
- support staff/minutes secretary
- staff members from the following areas:
 - engineering (planning & design)
 - social/community planning
 - sport & recreation
 - town/urban planning
 - media/public relations (as required)
 - tourism (if available in-house)
 - safety
 - works
 - environment

External

- representative(s) from
 - local BUG (Bicycle User Group),
 - cycling clubs and/or
 - places with high cycle rates (eg schools, university, recreation centres, etc.)
- Queensland Police Service
- Chamber of Commerce
- Queensland Transport
 - road safety
 - integrated planning
- Main Roads
- tourism industry
- bicycle retailers
- other government departments:
 - health
 - education
 - sport & recreation
- bicycle education trainers
- any interested organisations active in the area, for example, the Heart Foundation
- invited guests on specific issues



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There may be apprehension about inviting people not directly involved with cycling. Experience has shown that people not directly involved with cycling often have connections and resources that other committee members are unlikely to have.

What resources will be required?

The local council should provide a secretariat and a financial commitment to undertaking projects.



What resources are available?

The State Cycle Unit of Queensland Transport and established BACs can provide advice, support and ideas for cycling events (eg. Bike Week, cycle forums) and training. External members bring expertise and resources whether volunteer or organisation based.

Bicycle User Group (BUG)

What is a BUG?

A Bicycle User Group (BUG) is a group of people who ride bikes and advocate for better cycling facilities. They can be a formal association or an informal community working group. A BUG can be based in a particular region, suburb, town or workplace. It can be an advocacy group to represent the views of cyclists and potential cyclists to local and state governments. There are currently 32 BUGs active in Queensland.

How to start a BUG

Bicycle Queensland provides information on its website for setting up a BUG. The website is at www.bq.org.au or phone (07) 3844 1144.

Other references

1. VicRoads (2000), *Providing for Cycling: The Role of VicRoads and Local Councils*, Melbourne, Australia.

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