

Strategic Focus Area: Live.Access.Connect

Walking Path, Strathbogie

Problem and opportunity:

The problem is the absence of a footpath along Spring Creek Road between the Strathbogie Recreation Ground and Main Street. This issue confines access between the Recreation Ground and Main Street to vehicle drivers and those prepared to undertake the increasing risk of walking on the narrow, curving Spring Creek Road with no safe surface to step off to. Locals and visitors alike are not satisfied with this situation. Resolution is supported by local community groups including STAG, The Hall and Recreation Ground and Strathbogie Tablelands Landcare Group.

The opportunity is to construct a value-for-money footpath with significant community benefit that safely connects the township's principal thoroughfare and services with the township's principal recreational activity centre. This will ensure we can move through our township on connected walking paths and we are focused on connected spaces and activities that build economic, financial and social security.

How does it affect or impact the community?

Strathbogie has changing needs and a growing population. The visitor economy has developed. There is increasing vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic across the Tableland and in the township. With increased activity at the Recreation Ground and along Main Street, more walkers are on the town paths and extended bushland walking tracks and more visitors are stopping at the Recreation Ground and town centre. There are increasing numbers of people on the township roads, particularly Spring Creek Road and Main Street.

As stated in Council's Tracks and Trails Strategy, we should and can action our vision to improve connectivity, physical activity and take a more inclusive approach to walking across the whole of our town. A Spring Creek Road footpath will close the existing gap in an otherwise continuous walking experience around the town. The physical exclusion of safe pedestrian passage between the Recreation Ground and Main Street deprives local and visitor walkers of a complete experience of the township and denies the township the chance to offer and capitalise on a complete and safe visitor experience.

Main Street has many new amenities attracting increasing visitor economy activity that should be part of a walkable connection with the Recreation Ground. Included are the new Strathbogie Heritage Trail, the revitalised General Store, the ever-improving Strathbogie Memorial Hall with public wi-fi, bike racks, shade and the only public potable water in town. Main Street also has connecting pathways to the community-maintained Bridge to Bridge walking track and its new extensions that surround the town, the attached day picnic areas and swimming and fishing spots.

Our community and visitors expect the option to safely walk between Main St and the Recreation Ground, its new pavilion and facilities. Increasing sporting, social and visitor activity there brings economic and social benefits to our town and the region. The improved facilities have and will continue to increase in use as demonstrated by our now regular community gatherings and events. The tennis club, the diesel pump, a new cricket club, the location of the town's 24-hour public toilets, plans for the CFA station to be situated there and the oval acting as the hub for emergency events mean it has become a focal space for new community engagement and social security. Much of this was not available just five years ago.

Spring Creek Rd is dangerous for walkers. It has blind corners and a bottleneck for walkers and vehicles between the Recreation Ground and Main Street that means there is no off-road option for walkers when suddenly confronted by oncoming traffic. The road shoulder is a narrow space between drain ways, ditches or high embankments. The shoulder is rough underfoot and not fit or suitable for safe pedestrian refuge. Traffic speeds are often too fast for the hazards presented by the poor forward vision along Spring Creek Road. (It would be good if speed limits could be lowered). It is becoming an increasingly high-risk hazard for vehicles, cyclists and particularly for pedestrians.

Ausnet has recently removed native vegetation from under the power lines along Spring Creek Road near Main Street. This action should be a catalyst that makes it a good time to look at what is possible.

What is your idea and what difference would it make?

Strathbogie Shire Council states in the Council Plan it is committed and taking action towards improving safety, lifestyle and wellbeing opportunities for our community. We need safe and connected walking paths between the major activity areas of our town for this to be properly facilitated. The idea is to construct a walking path on the eastern side of Spring Creek Road between the Recreation Ground and Main Street. This project would create an important safe transit route for walkers where none currently exists. It would close a gap between the principal activity centres of the town. It would improve the key local and visitor experience of the town as a walking destination. It would improve the capacity of the community and Shire to promote and deliver a complete visitor experience. It would facilitate more inclusive cross town walking access to township amenities such as day picnic areas, 24-hour public toilets and public potable water.

Further information:

Much of this section of the Spring Creek Rd roadside has over time had trees removed and been mown by adjacent land holders, including the Shire at the Recreation Ground. Significant roadside areas identified between the Recreation Ground and Main Street could be protected by installing a boardwalk to link with a footpath along the majority stretches that have already been cleared.