

South Brisbane Sailing Club Inc.

PO Box 3714 South Brisbane QLD 4101



31 March 2021

Mercedes Staff
Governance and Strategy Manager – Green Bridges Program
Brisbane Infrastructure
Level 1, 69 Ann Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Mercedes,

Further to my letter of 2 December 2020, I am pleased to present to you the South Brisbane Sailing Club's submission on proposed Green Bridges between Toowong and West End, and between St Lucia and West End. In summary the Management Committee and the members of SBSC have substantial concerns on the potential impact of proposed 'Green Bridges'¹ on the safety and viability of sailing, rowing and other watersports on the Milton and St Lucia reaches of the Brisbane River, which has been practiced for over 120 years (**Figure 1, Figure 2**).

Figure 1. Family sailing craft on the Milton reach Brisbane River (Nov 2020)



Figure 2. Sailing on the Milton reach of the Brisbane River approx. 1910 (State Library of Queensland).



¹ <https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/traffic-and-transport/roads-infrastructure-and-bikeways/green-bridges>

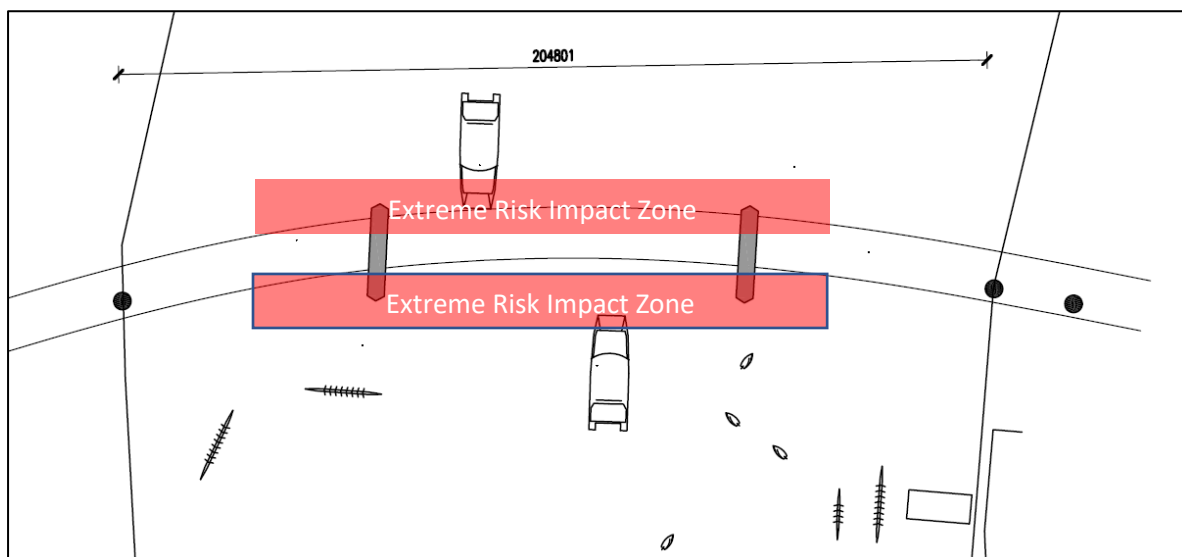
Principle safety impacts

With reference to the recently completed report of the *Green Bridges Expert Panel on Maritime Safety Impacts* (dated 31 Mar 2021) (provided to you under separate cover), our conclusion is that 'Green Bridges' with two or more piers would present an unacceptable risk to the safety of sailors and the viability of sailing on the Milton and St. Lucia Reaches of the Brisbane River due to safety and reputational impacts including:

- Loss of life or serious injury via vessel-to-vessel impact or vessel-to-pier impact and entrapment
- Significant impact to the sport of sailing as a result of reputational consequences
- Significant economic impact to commercial charter and CityCat ferry services as a result of negative reputational consequences
- Significant tourism and cultural impact risks to the City of Brisbane as a result of negative reputational consequences

A schematic representation of a 'Green Bridge' with two piers is given in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3. Schematic illustration of "green bridge" with two bridge piers



SBSC also supports conclusions of the Expert Panel that a two-span bridge with one pier would also pose a moderate to high risk, dependent on placement of the pier and other mitigation measures.

In addition, I also draw to your attention the additional risks of a 'Green Bridge' with one, two or more piers on navigational safety. Of particular concern is the restricted visibility to vessels travelling between the Milton and St. Lucia Reaches. Any such bridge would also place the proposed 'Green Bridge' in conflict with the State Planning Code for Accepted Development for Tidal Works, and State Code 7 regarding Maritime Safety.

SBSC Inc also supports conclusions of the Expert Panel report that the advised 'standard navigational channel width' of 70 meters, as applied to bridges in other reaches of the Brisbane River, is not justifiable and is not applicable to the design of bridges on the Milton, Toowong or St Lucia reaches of the Brisbane River, because of the high use by rowing craft, canoes, river kayaks, sailing craft, powered recreational and commercial vessels on these reaches. It is implausible that a standard width of 70 meters would ensure safety outcomes that are consistent with State Code 7 regarding Maritime Safety requiring that "Development does not impede the safe movement of vessels in a navigable waterway."

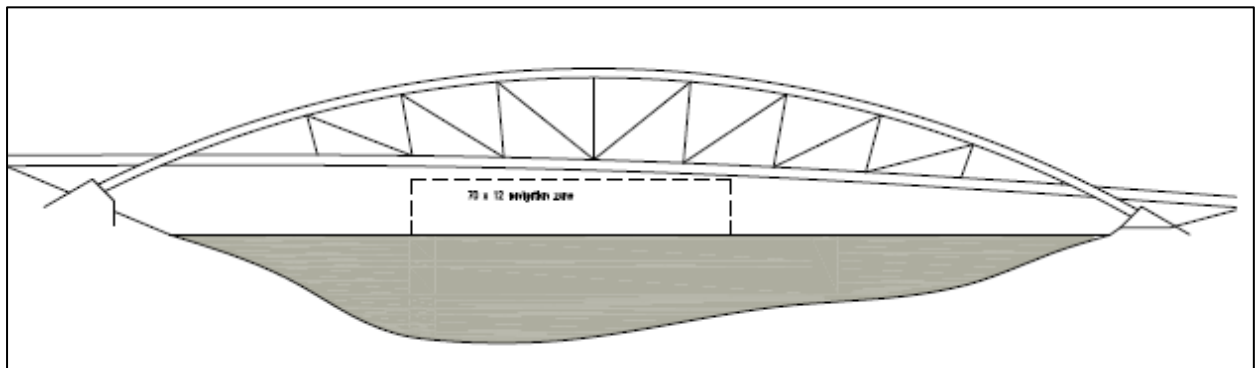
We would also like to raise concerns that the proposed 'Green Bridge', if designed with one, two or more piers, would also conflict with the Queensland Government's State Planning Policy to prevent encroachment of development on sporting and recreational facilities².

Regarding the proposed crossing locations with greatest risk, SBSC supports conclusions of the Expert Panel that proposed crossings from Toowong to West End are a high risk to rowing, sailing and paddling boats, with greatest risks associated with Option C, and that proposed crossings from St Lucia to West End are of lesser risk, with least risk at location B.

Proposed design solution

SBSC endorses the conclusion of the Expert Panel that the only design solution which would resolve maritime safety impacts is a single span bridge with no piers as depicted in **Figure 4**. This design solution would present an acceptable risk to sailors and is likely to enhance spectator interest in the sport of sailing, rowing and other water sports.

Figure 4. Proposed single span "green bridge" design



A practical example of such a design is the famous "Three Countries Bridge" which crosses the Rhine between France and Germany within a metropolitan area of Switzerland (Figure 5). It is the world's longest single-span bridge dedicated to pedestrians and cyclists with a main span of 229.4 meters³.

Figure 5. "Three Countries Bridge" single-span bridge dedicated to pedestrians and cyclists



² <https://cabinet.qld.gov.au/documents/2017/May/SPP/Attachments/Policy.pdf>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Countries_Bridge

Other direct impacts

Other concerns that SBSC would like to see addressed in future planning of Green Bridge designs are:

- **Pier design:** Any submerged pier thickening or buttress would introduce additional navigation hazards for sailing boats, significant entrapment risks and would generate considerable conflict between powered vessels and sailing craft. Piers also reduce visibility for all watercraft. It is essential to maintain visibility both upstream and downstream for all commercial and recreational users.
- **Parking.** Parking for sailors and other users of the SBSC clubhouse hall facility is likely to be impacted by an increased demand for parking space during bridge construction and subsequently. Those adversely affected would include parents of children in learn to sail classes, owners of boats and other users of the SBSC Community Hall, noting that SBSC usually hires the hall to 15-20 community groups each week. With current parking space already at a premium, it is strongly recommended that consideration be given by BCC to the need for dedicated parking or time-management of parking space for users of the club.
- **Flood risk.** The SBSC Community Hall and Clubhouse has been heavily impacted by both the 1974 and 2011 floods. While we have recovered from these floods and remain financially viable and buoyant, SBSC is unable to afford flood insurance, which has risen substantially in recent years. All bridge piers and infrastructure would need to be located in a way which does not increase flood risk to the SBSC Community Hall.
- **Cultural and build heritage values.** The SBSC Clubhouse and Community Hall has significant heritage values as recognised by council heritage architects, local historians, past and current members of SBSC and the wider community. The bridge would need to be located and designed in a way that does not diminish the visual amenity and character of SBSC and its environs.
- **Impact on sailing courses.** As depicted in Figure 6 and Figure 7, the proposed bridge locations would significantly impinge on our Usual Course Area unless the proposed single pier design option is adopted.

Figure 6. SBSC Usual Course Area (St Lucia Reach)



Figure 7. Usual Course Area (Milton Reach)

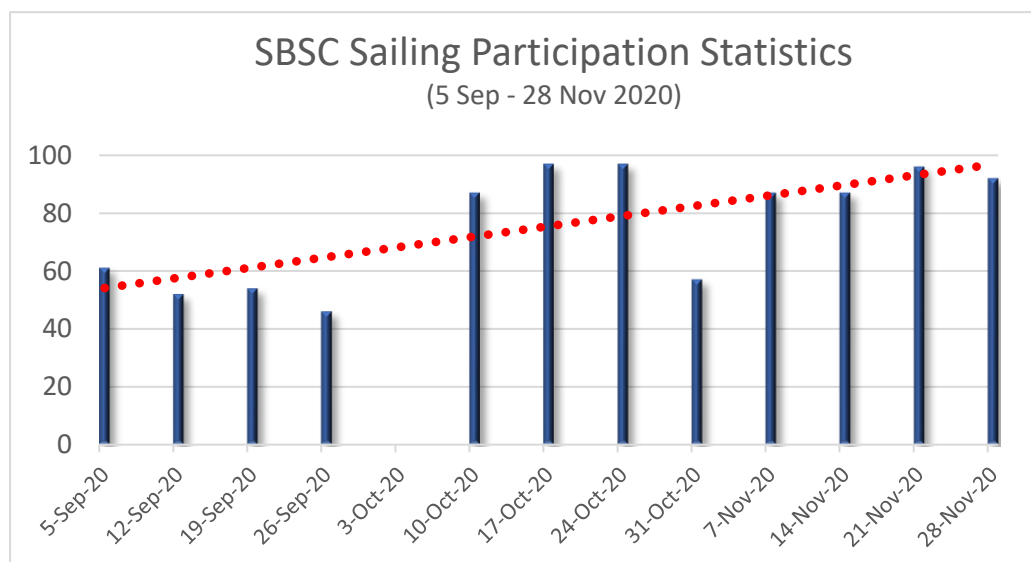


Impacts on the viability of sailing

May I also draw to your attention the following characteristics of sailing at SBSC which will be important to consider in the cost benefit analysis of the proposed bridge options.

- **Viability and growing participation in sailing.** Since 2019, the SBSC Management Committee has embarked on a program to grow participation in sailing, in response to the BCC policies and increasing demand for recreational use of the river. As you can see from Figure 10, SBSC has been able to rebound from the impacts of COVID.
- **Youth and family participation:** In 2019 SBSC embarked on an expanded Learn to Sail program targeting local youth and families. We are now at a peak level of service for our Junior and Adult Learn to Sail programs where approximately 45 people attend classes each week. We have also recently commenced an After School Learn to Sail program and have conducted a successful School Holiday program targeting families from West End and nearby suburbs. We have attracted 40-60 youth to these classes now on Saturdays, Sundays and week-days.

Figure 10. SBSC Sailing Participation Statistics



- **Continuity of sailing.** Since at least 1903, sailing on the Milton and St. Lucia reaches of the Brisbane River has been a regular Saturday afternoon social event, with only World Wars and flooding events interrupting the clubs' activities. Since the 2011 flood and more recent times, the SBSC Management Committee and volunteers have been successful in promoting and attracting sailing enthusiasts to river sailing. In doing so, we have seen a resurgence of Saturday afternoon racing with a regular fleet of 25-30 boats, including our novice and youth sailing teams. These races create a great deal of enthusiasm among competitors of all ages and create a great scene for spectators from both the Toowong and West End sides of the river.
- **Riverfire Regatta:** The 2011 Brisbane flood event had a large impact on SBSC operations; 2017, the SBSC Management Committee, Sailing Committee and members were pleased to re-introduce our signature sailing event, the Brisbane Riverfire Sailing Regatta <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqDhjrr50k4> which is held annually to coincide with the end of the Brisbane Festival.

Conclusions

On behalf of the SBSC Management Committee and members I submit these concerns to you so that any further progression of the Green Bridge design can take these matters into account to also include a single span option that would allow continued safe sailing, rowing and other watersport activity.

As stated previously, SBSC would not like to see the Brisbane City Council credited with the construction of Green Bridges that would result in the demise of sailing, rowing and other watersports on the Milton and St Lucia reaches of the Brisbane River.

I and other members of our Management Committee would be happy to meet with you or other members of your team to further explain our concerns and proposal.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert Preston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and the last name "Preston" clearly distinguishable.

Robert Preston
President
South Brisbane Sailing Club Inc.
E president@sbsc.org.au