Extension of the Women’s Pioneer Trail to Hahndorf

SITE STUDY

May 2013

The Pioneer Women’s Trail is an important recreational trail asset for the state with strong historical significance; the trail provides an important link from the foothills into the heart of the Adelaide Hills from Beaumont to Verdun. Historically, the pioneer women started their journey from Hahndorf and therefore the trail is considered unfinished until it reaches its correct and final destination. The Walking Federation is now investigating the feasibility of route alignments and the crossing of the Onkaparinga River to extend the Women’s Pioneer Trail from Verdun to Hahndorf.
This report is a short study to investigate potential trail alignments for the extension of the Women’s Pioneer Trail to Hahndorf in relation to the wider Adelaide Hills trail network and in context with the Adelaide Hills 20 Year Trail Strategy (currently in planning stage by Meechi Road Consulting).

The Adelaide Hills 20 Year Trail Strategy seeks to provide an overarching framework for trail development in the hills to provide greater connectivity between townships and recreational facilities, including existing trail assets. The vision for the strategy is to provide a trail network that supports tourism through unique trail experiences linked to the environment, culture, wine and produce of the Adelaide Hills, and to create a network of useful trail connections for hills residents and all other recreational trail users to promote healthy lifestyles and sustainable living.

The Pioneer Women’s Trail a key part of the broader trail strategy as a connector for walkers between Beaumont and Verdun where access to safe walking routes is limited, particularly between Crafers, Stirling and Bridgewater due to narrow roads, undulating terrain and the South Eastern Freeway (see Map 1). The Pioneer Women’s Trail is one of the few existing trails in the Adelaide Hills to be aligned west to east; a majority of other trails follow ridge lines in a north to south direction or are contained within designated parks. Linking the existing Pioneer Women’s Trail to Hahndorf will not only provide a historically correct destination, but will also create a formal trail link to tourist activities, cafes, cellar doors and shops for trail users.

Importantly, the connection to Hahndorf, a key tourist centre provides a key contextual link to planned trails further south to Mount Barker, and north-east to Balhannah and Oakbank, the start of the existing Amy Gillett Trail, connecting trail users eventually to Mount Pleasant as part of the Adelaide Hills 20 Year Trail Strategy currently in development (see Map 2 below).
Whilst the current Pioneer Women’s Trail is designed for walking only, the Adelaide Hills 20 Year Trail Strategy seeks to provide trail infrastructure for the widest trail user group possible (depending site conditions and safety), including walking, cycling and potentially horse riding. It is therefore recommended that all new trail sections consider a shared use arrangement where possible to increase usability of trail networks throughout the Adelaide Hills.

There are four potential routes identified to connect the Pioneer Women’s Trail to Hahndorf, these include;

1. Sandow Road Connection (and potential link to the Cedars)
2. Mount Barker Road Link
3. Heysen Trail – Waters Road
4. Onkaparinga Road – Rail Link (and potential link to the Cedars)
There is also a potential alignment through private property from the bend in Sandown Road to the Cedars. This connection would only be possible if land owners were agreeable. This link would avoid crossing a section of Onkaparinga Valley Road, resulting in improved safety and possible increased visitation to the Cedars gallery for options 1 and 4. It should be noted that a number of other alignments were discovered but abandoned due to significant engineering and investment required.

1. **Sandow Road Connection**

The Sandow Road Connection is 7.16km in length and would take trail users from the current end of the Pioneer Women’s Trail, Silver Road, under the underpass and on to Onkaparinga Valley Road to Sandow Lane (passing the Hills Christian Community School). At this point the trail could cross the Onkaparinga River (bridge required) and continue along an unformed road reserve, linking to Sandow Road and then taking trail users along the existing Heysen Trail via Heysen Road, Ambleside Road and Selma Avenue to Mount Barker Road and into Hahndorf. There is also a potential link on private property at the bend of Sandow Road to the Cedars. This alignment would only be possible with support from landowners. It would offer improved safety, allow for a more direct route and potentially increase visitation to the Cedars.

![Figure1:HeysenRoad](image1.png)

![Figure2:HeysenRoadandEntrancetotheCedars](image2.png)
The Sadow Road Connection is very scenic with good gradients, passing across the river into bushland and displaying views over local vineyards. These gradients assist in finding a cost effective bridge solution for the crossing. This option would also reinforce access to the Cedars, family home of Sir Hans Heysen and gallery.

Figure 3: Sadow Road

Figure 4: Unmade Road Reserve between Sadow Road and Sadow Lane
The existing site of the river crossing at the end Sandow Lane is currently in need of maintenance due to eroding banks and weeds. The site could also benefit from improved safety measures, particularly due to its proximity to the Hills Christian Community School. Arguably this site will require work to be undertaken in the near future to clean up weeds and improve safety. A bridge and formalised access would improve the safety of the site, whilst creating an attractive trail link to Sandow Road and on to Hahndorf.
There are some considerations in relation to this connection. In particular, the provision for an off-road trail along Onkaparinga Valley Road to link Silver Road and Sadow Lane. Onkaparinga Valley Road is currently unsafe for pedestrians due to narrow width, blind corners and vehicle speeds. An off-road trail along Onkaparinga Valley Road will require careful planning, possible negotiations with land owners, engineering over a large drain and reductions in vehicle speed limit for the section of road between Silver Road and Sadow Lane. Speed reduction would also improve safety for children attending the Hills Christian Community School. Landowner compensation may include new fencing or lease arrangements. If negotiations with landowners were successful, the trail may provide a width suitable for shared use (walking and cycling), and therefore the bridge across the Onkaparinga River would need to support both these user groups. Horse riding is not recommended through this area due to safety and environmental considerations, mainly; the close proximity of the Hills Christian Community School and the trail becoming part of the water catchment into the Onkaparinga River.

Figure7:SadowLanetowardsSchool
Figure 8: Narrow road corridor on Onkaparinga Valley Road

Figure 9: Potential route on western side of road
A native vegetation survey should also be undertaken to identify any potential impacts on vegetation both along the uniformed road between Sandow Lane and Sandow Road, and roadside vegetation. Any development will require consideration of DEWNR’s Roadside Marker System for native vegetation (no tags could be found on site) and compliance with the Native Vegetation Act 1991.

Another consideration is the utilisation of the existing Heysen Trail. Both trails would benefit from improved pedestrian crossings and a reduction of speed limits on Onkaparinga Valley and Mount Barker Roads. Currently trail users are brought onto busy roads with little warning, also vehicles are unaware pedestrians may be crossing. Reflective signage and road markings for pedestrians and vehicles at these locations (as per Department of Planning Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) standards) are required.
2. Mount Barker Road Link

The Mount Barker Road Link is 3.67kms and could take trail users from the current end of the Pioneer Women's Trail on Silver Road, under the underpass, along Mount Barker Road, crossing the Onkaparinga River twice and into Hahndorf. This alignment is considered the most direct to Hahndorf and is closely aligned to the historical walkway of the pioneer women.

This alignment offers good gradients (excluding river crossings) and can utilise existing sections of footpath on Mount Barker Road. Provision for an off-road trail between Grumpy's Brewhaus and the existing footpath on Mount Barker Road would be required, as well as two bridges across the Onkaparinga River (one large crossing and one smaller crossing). These crossings could potentially require very costly engineering solutions. The lifespan of the existing vehicle bridge should be considered.

Figure11: End of Silver Road and need for pedestrian crossing

Figure12: Underpass
A reduction in vehicle speed limits into Hahndorf may also be required to improve safety of trail users. An additional crossing is also required further along Mount Barker Road to utilise the existing footpath on the southern side of the road and into Hahndorf. Reflective signage and road markings for pedestrians and vehicles at this location (as per DPTI standards) are required.

This alignment could support a shared use arrangement for walkers and cyclists. There is however two pinch points at Grumpy’s and a vineyard land owner closer to Hahndorf. It would be beneficial to discuss land access with these land owners, to support shared use. The potential increase in visitation and improved aesthetic of front lawn area may create positive benefits for all parties concerned. Horse riding would not be considered suitable use for this alignment due to proximity to vehicles on the road and to diners at Grumpy’s.
Figure 14: Pinchpoint at Grumpy’s
Figure 15: Wide embankment

Figure 16: Onkaparinga River Crossing Point
Figure17:Roadcrossingrequiredtoutiliseexistingfootpath

Figure18:ExistingfootpathintoHahndorf

Engineering considerations for the section off-road trail along Mount Barker Road should include water run-off and flood mitigation as this section currently acts as a water catchment.

3. **Heysen Trail – Waters Road**

The Heysen Trail - Water’s Road is an 10.3km alignment option for the Pioneer Women’s Trail. This alignment could make use of the current Heysen Trail from Bridgewater to Hahndof via Verdun and avoid crossing the Onkaparinga River at all. This option would most likely be considered unsuitable from a historical perspective and leave the existing section of the Pioneer Women’s Trail between Bridgewater and Verdun underutilised. This alignment could only support walkers as the existing Heysen Trail route. If this alignment was to be considered, significant safety improvements should be looked at for trail users on Onkaparinga Valley Road.
4. **Onkaparinga Road – Rail Link**

This link could potentially utilise the rail underpass near Bridgewater and the verge of the South Eastern Freeway (all public land) to connect to Sandow Lane. The 8.75km alignment would pick up from the existing Pioneer Women’s Trail at Second Avenue and take Onkaparinga Road to cross the freeway at the rail underpass. The trail could be picked up on the other side utilising the verge of the freeway, to Onkaparinga Road and follow directly over Onkaparinga Valley Road to Sandow Lane and follow Option 1 into Hahndorf. This includes the potential link across private land. This alignment would only be possible with approval from landowners.

If supported by DPTI and rail authorities, the underpass is narrow and extensive engineering would be required to meet safety requirements to support a co-located arrangement. The gradients around Onkaparinga Road are steep and suitable for walking and mountain bikes. A pedestrian crossing and signage is suggested across Onkaparinga Valley Road. This alignment offers a most scenic route into Hahndorf.

![Figure19:SecondAvenueandMountBarkerRoadintersection](image1)

![Figure20:SecondAvenuefootpathonleft](image2)
Figure 21: Rain underpass site

Figure 22: Narrow carriageway width of underpass
Figure 23: Engineering solution required for a co-located arrangement

Figure 24: Onkaparinga Valley Road crossing to Sandow Lane

Figure 25: Onkaparinga Road
Summary of Considerations

It is difficult to make a single recommendation to one alignment without further investigation e.g. access to private land, native vegetation surveys, lifespan and engineering capacity of the existing Mount Barker Road bridge etc. The table below offers a list of pro’s and con’s for all options to help compare and discuss further with Councils. It would seem that Options 1 and 2 are most feasible if landowners are amenable to grant land access. Both of these options cross the river and will require a bridge/s to support shared use walking and cycling.

Linking Hahndorf to the Adelaide Hills is an important section for the overall trail strategy in order to continue further south to Mount Barker and to link to Balhannah and then to Oakbank and the existing Amy Gillett Trail. Community consultation conducted for the Adelaide Hills 20 year Trail Strategy revealed this link is a priority for the community and is also a current safety concern (mainly for the walking community). Whichever alignment is chosen by the Councils to pursue, a safe link between Hahndorf and the Adelaide Hills will be well used and popular by locals and visitors alike.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alignment</th>
<th>Pro’s</th>
<th>Con’s</th>
<th>Further Investigations</th>
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</table>
| 1. **Sandow Road Connection** | Good gradients  
More bridge design options due to good gradients  
Sandow Lane and Onkaparinga River site will require maintenance in the near future in any case  
Improved safety for children | Onkaparinga Valley Road has poor access for an off-road trail due to narrow width and blind corners  
Private land may be required to make an off-road trail along Onkaparinga Valley Road | Discussions with landowners  
Native vegetation survey  
Consultation with School |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>2. <strong>Mount Barker Road Link</strong></th>
<th>Historically well aligned</th>
<th>Two river crossings</th>
<th>Lifespan of existing bridges</th>
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<tr>
<td>Most direct alignment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Less bridge design</td>
<td>Capacity of existing bridge to support additional elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pass Grumpy's Brewhaus</td>
<td></td>
<td>options due to steep</td>
<td>Discussions with landowners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilise sections of</td>
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<td>gradients at one river</td>
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<td>existing footpath</td>
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<td>Support walking and</td>
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<td>Less scenic than</td>
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<td>cycling</td>
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<td>Sadow Road</td>
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<td>Health of river improved</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pinch points at</td>
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<td>due to weeding and</td>
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<td>Grumpy's Brewhaus</td>
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<td>revegetation</td>
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<td>landowners</td>
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<tr>
<th>3. <strong>Heysen Trail – Waters Road</strong></th>
<th>Utilise existing infrastructure so no need to cross the river</th>
<th>Significant safety improvements required for Onkaparinga Valley Road</th>
<th>Safety improvements along Onkaparinga Valley Road</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follows Heysen Trail so less historically significant</td>
<td>Leave existing section of the Pioneer Women's Trail underutilised</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Support walking only</td>
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<th>4. <strong>Onkaparinga Road – Rail Link</strong></th>
<th>Public land utilised</th>
<th>Narrow access and safety considerations at rail underpass</th>
<th>Discussion with DPTI and rail authority</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support walking and potentially mountain bikes</td>
<td>Leave existing section of the Pioneer Women's Trail underutilised</td>
<td>Discussions with landowners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very scenic route into Hahndorf</td>
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<td>Steep section on Onkaparinga Road</td>
<td>Native vegetation survey</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering solutions for underpass and Sadow Lane bridge</td>
<td>Consultation with School</td>
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