fact sheet

Bike Tracks

The introduction of wheeled toys into a playspace is an ideal way of encouraging social and imaginative play in combination with active play. However, providing a pathway for wheeled toy play within a playspace requires careful consideration to minimise potential conflicts of use.

Planning

Ideally a bike track should be located independent of other activity areas, preferably to the rear or side of the site, away from the main playspace and building access points. Avoid disturbance to the intention and purpose of quiet areas and other specific activity zones such as sandpits.

The track should be designed to traverse points of interest to make the riding activity enjoyable, encourage a sense of exploration and extend play and learning opportunities.

Tracks can be designed to cater for a variety of capabilities, providing simultaneously for young children (to ride and use push / pull toys), more capable and adventurous riders and for children who may have additional needs.

Limiting a track to one-way usage will help minimise the occurrence of collisions. However, segregated usage may also be needed to minimise conflicts between users of differing ages and capabilities.

Provision of a wider track, sufficient for wheelchair access, will allow children with special needs to experience ride activity.

Bike tracks require a hard surfaced path for good traction, 900-1500mm wide and graded to allow easy movement along the route. Ideally the track surface could be of variable texture to allow children the opportunity to experience both vibration and sound as they travel along the track. Such sensory play experience is invaluable in playgrounds, particularly where children with additional needs are part of the community.

Bike tracks can be used for a variety of wheeled toys.
A sensory experience can also be incorporated into the track.

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Surfaces

An array of surfaces have successfully been incorporated as rumble strips in bike tracks.
Such materials include:

- timber sleepers laid across the width of the track, butted together
- timber decking constructed flush with ground level
- expansion strips laid across the width of the track, butted together
- a panel of corrugated iron embedded in concrete
- a panel of pool fence / iron grille laid in concrete
- stone flagging
- granite / timber setts
- brick / unit pavers
- compacted crushed sandstone
- exposed aggregate concrete
- stamped / stencilled concrete
- concrete / asphalt
- wetpour rubber / tiles / rubber grid mats

With the use of any of these materials, care must be taken to avoid the introduction of trip hazards along the length of the bike track.

Many hard surfaces are renowned for radiating heat in summer. Whilst shade from adjacent plants/structures can reduce this potential problem, it is worthwhile considering this issue in the final selection of track materials and colours.

Finishing

Edging of the track with materials such as bull nosed bricks or concrete kerbing can enhance definition of the activity zone from the rest of the playspace. Edging will also provide a prompt to encourage users to stay on the track.

Speed humps can also be incorporated into bike tracks to vary both the profile and texture of the surface to challenge children's skill levels.

Line markings and pedestrian crossings can be embedded into or painted onto tracks for added interest and educational value, complemented by accessories such as reduced sized road signs and traffic lights to add a third dimension to the play feature.

Activity stations with parking bays, such as shop fronts, bus stops, petrol stations, car wash bays, low level bridges for fishing off and raised scented gardens can be scattered along the route to further the possibilities for role play and social interaction.