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Submission to the City of Melbourne Transport Strategy Update 2011

Victoria Walks welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the City of Melbourne Transport Strategy Update 2011.

Victoria Walks is a walking health promotion body funded and supported by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). Our vision is for vibrant, supportive and strong neighbourhoods and communities where people can and do choose to walk wherever possible. Our mission is to promote the health of all Victorians by increasing the number of people who walk every day.

Our urban areas have become largely automobile dependent and less walkable. This has contributed to the emergence of more sedentary lifestyles in which Victorians do not engage in the recommended levels of physical activity. Physical inactivity is a significant factor in the dramatic rise in the levels of obesity and preventable diseases such as Type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Walking-friendly neighbourhoods and urban spaces are essential to encourage and enable people to walk. Walking is associated with positive health outcomes, improved fitness and better physical, social and mental health. Making cities more walkable has much health, environmental and economic benefits.

Neighbourhoods in which people walk are more welcoming and inclusive: they have a stronger sense of 'community'. People who live in walkable areas are more likely to know their neighbours, participate politically, trust others, and be socially engaged. When people walk, it also creates a stronger sense of safety and security. Traffic volume and speed is a clear barrier to walking for leisure, health, community connectedness and/ or transport.

Victoria Walks recognises that with the growth in the City's residential population and, more particularly, the continuing surge in employment it is essential that private motorised travel is no longer prioritised. Simply put, car based travel has reached its capacity to deliver the jobs growth that will sustain Melbourne over the long term. It is obvious that the City of Melbourne can no longer prioritise private car based travel while providing for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and the movement of freight.

Victoria Walks congratulates the City of Melbourne for continuing to take a leading role creating walkable communities and urban spaces. We support the key directions of the Transport Strategy:

- Go anywhere, anytime public transport for inner Melbourne.
- Support public transport, walking and cycling as the dominant modes of transport in inner Melbourne.
- Develop high-mobility pedestrian and public transport streets in the Central City
- Make Melbourne a true cycling city.
- Foster innovative low-impact freight and delivery in central Melbourne.

Victoria Walks supports the intention to maximise pedestrian access at key public transport nodes and give pedestrians priority at traffic lights in central Melbourne. However, we are concerned that too little attention is made to making all streets more walkable. Victoria Walks believes a more holistic approach that works to make all areas of the City of Melbourne more walkable is essential if the City is to reach its targets for walking and public transport to, and within, the City.

Victoria Walks believes that residents and visitors to the City of Melbourne should be aware that they are in walking priority environment the moment they enter the municipality and not only in pockets around key public transport nodes and the Central City.

As Victoria Walks believes walking priority and investment cannot be approached by concentrating on the highly busy pedestrian spaces alone, the breadth of our submission includes recommendations for addressing a variety of walking issues, big and small, around a number of key headings below. We have included some examples to illustrate particular types of issues.

Victoria Walks looks forward to working with the City of Melbourne to continue ensuring that Melbourne is the walking capital city in Australia. The impressive list of actions will go a long way to positioning Melbourne as one of the international walking cities.

Yours sincerely



Dr Ben Rossiter
Executive Officer



Car free zones

Victoria Walks applauds the City for the highly significant decision to make Swanston Street car free. This will make for a much more pleasant walking environment and will increase the social and economic vitality of the area. Victoria Walks recommends the City of Melbourne examine expanding car free zones in the municipality, particularly to include Elizabeth Street and to expand the Bourke St Mall.

Centre road bus lanes

Victoria Walks supports the plan to investigate designing centre of the road bus routes. For example, improvements are needed to Lonsdale St, which has areas of highly congested, narrow pavements immediately next to bus lanes making for an extremely unpleasant walking environment. Victoria Walks recognises and supports the need for bus priority on Lonsdale St; however we also recommend widening the footpaths and improving pedestrian amenity. Consideration should be given for installing central bus only lanes on Lonsdale St, with segregated bicycle lanes next to the wider footpaths (with more trees) which will also provide a buffer from traffic. This would entail the loss of on street parking and some established trees.

Cycling

Victoria Walks supports the Council's efforts to encouraging cycling in the City of Melbourne and believes that more bicycles on the roads generally mean a safer walking environment. Victoria Walks believes that as bicycles are vehicles they belong on the road, both in terms of riding and parking.

Footpath space should not be given over to bicycles as has occurred with the creation of the Nicholson Street shared path which is highly disadvantageous for pedestrians and not ideal for cyclists. It has also created the situation where many bike riders continue to ride on the footpath, and across signalised crossings, beyond the end of the shared path (e.g. crossing Victoria St and along Nicholson St). This is in part due to the mixed and confusing message the shared path sends to bicycle riders (where the path starts and ends and what riders legal obligations are). Clearly, in being vehicles, bicycles belong on the road; the issue is the roads need to be made safer for bike riders. There needs to be better policing of illegal bike riding on footpaths and on crossings.

Victoria Walks supports strongly the position taken by the city not to allow bicycles to be ridden in parks such as Carlton Gardens. Parks and Gardens are not only pedestrian walking routes, they are spaces to sit, play, talk, relax, learn, play and have fun. Melbourne's world standard parks and Gardens should not be turned into vehicle transport routes.

Victoria Walks urges the City address the shortcomings of many shared signalised crossings as a matter of urgency. The Canning Street/Princess Street crossing is a case in point whereby many pedestrians, including some of the most vulnerable (children and older walkers) are forced to walk outside the safety of the crossing, see below.



Note: pedestrians are forced to get off the path and on to the grass as quick as possible lest they be hit by a cyclist.



Note: pedestrians including children are forced to walk on the unmarked roadway rather than risk being hit by a bike and this is when the crossing is supervised. Urgent and significant action is needed to resolve this issue (we believe that this is not an issue relating to supervision, it is a design and infrastructure issue).



Conflict between walkers and cyclists is increased by the inadequate infrastructure and policing that enables vehicles to block the crossing. This photo of the Canning St crossing was taken in 2009. This is a typical scenario where the truck is completely blocking the crossing, note the green walk sign. Despite VicRoads since making minor alterations to the phasing of the lights, this major crossing continues to be blocked numerous times daily, particularly in the afternoon peak. Furthermore, despite the issue of unclear marking of the crossing being raised at the Victorian Bicycle Advisory Council (2009), the crossing remains to be adequately marked (e.g. the south western bike crossing is not marked with a line so it can be legally blocked by vehicular traffic).

Conflict occurs between cyclists and people walking at numerous other signalised crossings across the municipality, particularly those where it is illegal to ride bicycles. Another example is the crossing on Clarendon St and Normanby Road, particularly on the Western side. Apart from being an extremely badly designed crossing for pedestrians cyclists appear to routinely disobey road rules and ride on the crossing often in an aggressive manner towards pedestrians.¹

Victoria Walks supports strongly the action to install on street bicycle parking corals at high demand locations, as the City has done outside Lygon Court. Victoria Walks believes that bicycles, including blue hire bikes, should not be parked on footpaths as a matter of course. As is occurring in many world cities, footpaths need to be decluttered of objects that diminish walkability and public space more generally and this includes bike parking.

Footpaths

Victoria Walks strongly recommends greater attention be given to enforcing laws aimed at keeping footpaths accessible, such as when cars block footpaths over driveways and crossings, goods are placed on footpaths, vegetation on footpaths and cafe seating etc.

Trees are vitally important to walking and the health and vitality of the City. More trees should be planted however; Victoria Walks believes that they should be planted on existing road space to shade footpaths not take up valuable footpath space.

Footpaths should be widened on most streets in the CBD. Victoria Walks suggests taking a creative approach to issues such as loading zones where this occurs. Firstly, by reducing the need for loading zones by developing more efficient ways to deliver freight, particularly into the CBD. Secondly, by enabling current road space to be reallocated to pedestrians when not being used for loading/unloading of goods, as per the photo below.



A loading zone in central London where the road space has been given over to pedestrians when it is not been used for loading/unloading of goods. Note trees sited on road space, not the footpath which both declutters the established footpath and protects people walking in the loading zone.

Laneways

¹ In June 2011, Victoria Walks conducted a walkability audit of the area for approximately 30 international delegates of the International Society for Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity conference and was dismayed to find that when walking directly across the crossing many delegates were forced to stop for fear of being hit by a nine commuter cyclists illegally riding on the crossing and cutting off their path.

We recommend installing stop signs, or at the very the least stop lines, at the exits of all laneways across the municipality so that cars must give way to pedestrians who are crossing laneways entrances while walking on footpaths (it is our understanding that without stop signs/lines cars do not have to give way to pedestrians). Stop signs/lines should be on installed as the City has done on Royal Lane exiting to Bourke St, Grattan Place exiting to Grattan St, and on streets such as Little Latrobe onto Elizabeth St.

Below are two examples of unsafe walking conditions around laneways. Laneways in residential areas where, even though pedestrian numbers maybe lower, may be a greater risk to pedestrians as drivers possibly less expect walkers.



Watt Lane, Carlton. The lack of stop signs endangers pedestrians, particularly children and toddlers travelling towards the camera from the dance studio (where pram is against the building) are completely obscured from cars exiting Watt Lane (which have right of way).



York Place, Carlton. Currently walkers have to give way to cars on this busy pedestrian street.

Measuring walking

Walking is a unique mode of travel. Measuring walking poses significant challenges. Unlike all other modes of transport (including cycling) where measuring is essentially about flow (number of people/vehicles getting travelling between two points), walking should also be measured by presence. That is, conventional measurements of transport centre on movement such as the number of trips which does not capture the pedestrian experience including sojourning, stopping, shopping, talking, meeting etc. Thus it does not account for the many health benefits: social; physical; mental and economic. This relates to the slower one travels the more they spend. We urge the city to measure walking in ways that take into account these complexities.

Motorbike parking

Between 2005 and 2010, in Victoria the registrations of motor bikes grew by 45%.² Similarly, there has been an obvious massive growth in the number of motorbikes coming into the CBD. This has resulted in a marked increase in the number of motor bikes legally and illegally parking on footpaths in inner Melbourne.

² *Motor Vehicle Census, Australia, 31 Mar 2010* Australian Bureau of Statistics February 2011.

Victoria Walks believes that Victoria Road Rules are outdated and should be revised to disallow the parking of motorcycles on footpaths under any circumstances. The organisation also believes current laws relating to motor bikes are poorly enforced in two key areas:

1. Not enough attention is given to issuing infringements to motor bikes that are parked in ways that obstruct pedestrians, delivery vehicles and public transport users.
2. The vast majority of motorbike riders who park on footpaths, illegally ride their motor bikes on the footpath to park.

Victoria Walks recommends The City of Melbourne:

1. Advocate to Victoria Police to issues infringements to motor bikes riders who ride on footpaths to park.
2. Install signage to ban motor bike parking on footpaths.
3. Enforce laws when parked motor bikes block footpaths.
4. Advocate for a change in Road Rules to disallow motor bikes from parking on footpaths

It appears that the City is spending large sums of money, under the guise of increasing walkability, to build what are effectively motor bike parking lots (as indicated in the photo below).



Collins St: a motorbike parking lot

Parking

The issue of on-street parking needs to be addressed. It is pleasing that the City recognises that on-street parking will play a less significant role in the future. Victoria Walks believes that the Key Directions are unlikely to be enacted if infrastructure supporting private car based travel continued to be prioritised as it has in the past. As indicated elsewhere in this submission, on-street car parking will need to be reduced in order to achieve the desired outcomes of the *Transport Strategy*. Victoria Walks believes that the current provision of low cost on-street car parking is a poor use of public space that does not recognise its true economic and social value.

Victoria Walks is concerned that issues relating to potential losses of revenue from reduced on-street parking may undermine the decision making process relating to the Key

Directions. Potential losses in revenue should not be a barrier to the implementation of the improvements necessary to achieve the Key Directions.

Victoria Walks recommends exploring the possibility of implementing variable on-street car park pricing that is determined by demand to ensure that approximately 15% of parking places free at any one time. This should reduce the number of drivers who congest city streets by driving around blocks looking for cheap on street parks. It may also possibly resolve the issue of the loss of revenue if parking pricing was determined by the market. Victoria Walks recognises that there may be issues of equity involved with this approach; however the current car-parking approach undermines the long-term economic, social and environmental health of the city, its visitors and residents.

Pedestrian networks

Victoria Walks is pleased that a road network operating plan, that includes high level pedestrian priority, will be developed in cooperation with VicRoads and the Department of Transport. Victoria Walks recognises the work the City has already done to identify and develop pedestrian networks in the CBD in particular. However, Victoria Walks suggests that the City utilise the State level Principal Pedestrian Network methodology to identify and develop pedestrian networks across the entire municipality.

A municipal wide pedestrian network is needed to both increase the level of walking and to overcome gaps in the walking network that act as barriers to walking. Clarendon St between the CBD and the City of Port Phillip is one example of where this occurs. Pedestrian amenity in the neighbouring Port Phillip appears high and constantly improving (speed limits, footpath surface, quality and width, trees, seating, number of walkers etc). However, the City of Melbourne section of Clarendon St (and surrounding streets) is in parts of a poor standard and discourages walking to the CBD.

Pedestrian Plan

Given that the City of Melbourne does not currently have a Pedestrian Plan, and walking is the dominant mode of transport for trips within the municipality, it seems incongruous that the development of the Pedestrian Plan is not scheduled to occur until 2012/13. Victoria Walks recommends that the development of the Pedestrian Plan to be bought forward to 2011/12.

Pedestrian safety

Victoria Walks commends the City for aiming to reduce pedestrian death or major trauma by 25%. However, we also urge the City to take a holistic view to pedestrian safety and to recognise the extent to which 'pedestrians suffer severe trauma from falls in public space'. In OECD countries a 'large but under-estimated share of pedestrian injuries involves pedestrians falling in public spaces, accounting for up to 75% of all pedestrian injuries. These injuries are partly due to an inadequate environment or maintenance of facilities. This problem will increase with the ageing of the population'.³

Pedestrian safety is compromised when incorrect signage and/or inadequate infrastructure is installed as in the photo below. Crossing such as these need improvement to ensure that pedestrians are protected and vehicles are aware they must yield. One option is to install a raised crossing as in the example below from Darebin. Victoria Walks

³ 15th Session of the Joint Transport Research Committee Working Group on Pedestrian Safety, Urban Space and Health Report for Approval 5-6 April 2011, OECD International Transport Forum 23-Mar-2011, p 73.. http://www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/118632/JTRC20116_Pedestrian_Safety_Eng.pdf

recommends the City investigate installing such crossings with a different coloured surface at all crossings around the municipality (whether or not vehicles must yield to pedestrians).



Vehicles are required to give way to pedestrians crossing this slipway on Exhibition St (near corner of La Trobe St), yet the signage indicates otherwise.



A more appropriate treatment for Exhibition St would be for a raised crossing as in this example from Darebin.

Public Transport

Victoria Walks recognises that a high functioning and reliable public transport system is fundamental to creating a walkable city. We agree with the necessity of reducing congestion to increase public transport travel times however, we believe that this must be balanced with the needs of pedestrians. That is, the existing poor level of pedestrian service, particularly at signalised crossings should not be made worse by giving tram movements traffic signalling priority.

Designing tram stops to better integrate with the pedestrian network and giving pedestrians priority access to train stations is key to increasing both walking and public transport travel.

Roundabouts

Victoria Walks is pleased that the City no longer installs roundabouts, which are dangerous and/or inconvenient to pedestrians (who, without zebra crossings on roundabouts, must yield to all other traffic).

In building on the work already undertaken by Council in this area, Victoria Walks recommends retrofitting roundabouts with zebra crossings and doing so in the style of the Faraday and Cardigan Streets roundabout (that is, zebras are not set back from the intersection). An unfortunate example where this has not occurred is the recent improvements undertaken to the roundabout on Pelham and Drummond Streets. Observation indicates that pedestrians are the dominant mode of transport at key times through the day on this busy and key pedestrian route that links Carlton Gardens, Rathdowne St and the Museum with Lygon St and beyond.

Safe speed

Victoria Walks commends the action to continue to lobby the State Government to implement 'safe speeds'.

Whereas the planned 40 km per hour speed limit for the CBD is a long overdue, Victoria Walks believes that 40 km hour is still too high and the CBD limit should be 30 km hour as

it is in many European cities, such as Den Hague, Stockholm and Zurich. With traffic lights on the North/South grid of the CBD barely 100 meters apart, 40 km/ hour remains too fast.

As the City would be aware, in the five years between 2005 and 2009, 12 pedestrians were killed, 412 seriously injured and 522 sustained other injuries in the City of Melbourne, 68% of these occurred in the CBD. The evidence clearly indicates that the probability of death when a pedestrian is hit by a car increases dramatically at speeds in excess of 30 km hour. Apart from causality rates, there are a number of additional benefits of lower speed, including reduction in pollution, noise and driver aggression and more vibrant, liveable and sustainable streets that encourage physical activity and social interaction.⁴

In other parts on the municipality, particularly residential areas, the limit should be 30 km hour and the limit should be imposed more by design speed than posted speed limits. Victoria Walks recommends the City work with the State Government to develop safe speed demonstration projects in residential areas.

Furthermore, speed limits (and design speed) should be lower than 30 km per hour in other high pedestrian areas and expanded shared zones (see below).

Shared zones

Victoria Walks recommends strongly that the City implement more shared zones (like Hardware Lane) in thoroughfares like Royal Lane and Flinders Lane with 10 km per hour speeds. Victoria Walks also recommends shared zones at Tram stops such as has been installed at Tram stop 135 on Jacka Blvd in the City of Port Phillip.

Traffic lights

Victoria Walks recommends an audit to assess the phasing of all traffic signals in the City. All traffic lights should have auto green and advance start for pedestrians (and bicycles and public transport).

The phasing of many lights in the City are archaic and a barrier to walking. An example is the lights on Princes St and Nicholson St where the green cycle for vehicles is relatively long but unnecessarily short for pedestrians – it is assumed that the timing has been set to aid vehicle travel and the expense for pedestrian amenity. The 120 second phasing of traffic signals on King St (and Spenser) are nothing short of appalling – the message is clear: pedestrians (and trams) are not important.

Current traffic light phasing is geared towards the moving the greatest number of vehicles they should be timed to move the greatest number of people (pedestrians and public transport patrons). For example, a pedestrian walking a number of CBD blocks at the average walking speed is usually forced to wait at every major traffic light.

When new lights are installed, Victoria Walks urges the city to work with VicRoads to ensure that the maximum pedestrian amenity is the default, rather than the apparent current minimum. Examples of poor pedestrian amenity at recently installed lights include are the signalised entrance to QV on Russell St and Faraday and Drummond Streets lights (no advance start, short green time and poor call up time – and these lights are not relevant the wider network).

⁴ 15th Session of the Joint Transport Research Committee Working Group on Pedestrian Safety, Urban Space and Health Report for Approval 5-6 April 2011, OECD International Transport Forum 23-Mar-2011. http://www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/118632/JTRC20116_Pedestrian_Safety_Eng.pdf

We also recommend exploring the possibility of expanding the number of pedestrian user-friendly intelligent crossings (puffin) when looking at issues relating to making signalised crossings more responsive to pedestrians.

Victoria Walks recommends that the City of Melbourne advocate Victoria Police pay greater attention to issuing infringement notices when cars block intersections or fail to stop behind the stop line at traffic lights in particular (apart from being inconvenient, illegal and intimidating a lack of policing reinforces the belief that cars have absolute priority on our roadways).

See also issues included under Bicycles.

Walking and walkability forum

Victoria Walks believes that the City of Melbourne has a leading role to play in working with the State Government to create a more walkable Victoria.

There is currently no forum through which walking-for-transport issues, including strategic policy and program advice, can be provided to the State Government as Victorian Bicycle Advisory Council does for cycling and Victorian Road Based Public Transport Advisory Council does on matters relating to road management for trams, buses and taxis. This is a significant gap in the capacity of governments to address transport issues.

Victoria Walks believes that Victoria would benefit greatly from a high-level forum to coordinate walking issues across government, local government and communities and recommends the City advocate the State Government establish such a forum.