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Draft 30-year Infrastructure Strategy

Victoria Walks is pleased to make a submission on the Strategy. Victoria Walks supports:

1. Recommendation 38 – Partner with local governments to fund pedestrian infrastructure upgrades.
2. Recommendations that make walking safer, easier and more convenient.

The Strategy recognises the many diverse benefits of walking as well as people's desire to be able to walk more for both exercise and transport. Victoria Walks recommends that the Strategy include a new recommendation that state government fund the development of safer, convenient routes (Principal Pedestrian Networks) within a 15-minute walk of train stations and key public transport stops.

1. Partner with local government

Walking is a key part of the transport system in urban areas, with around 16% of all transport trips being made entirely on foot, despite the fact that pedestrians are very seldom given priority in road management.

While walking is of state-wide significance, local councils are the responsible authorities for the footpath network in Victoria¹, including maintenance. They are at the front line in interactions with the public about issues with the footpath network and often have the best understanding of local concerns and priorities. Given that the state has effectively devolved responsibility for pedestrian infrastructure to local government, it should provide some financial support. As such, Victoria Walks strongly supports the state government partnering with local government to fund infrastructure upgrades.

Unfortunately, local councils have limited control over other infrastructure aspects that influence walking. The operation of arterial roads and setting of speed limits are the responsibility of the state government. Major traffic control devices that local government have limited ability to use without state government authorisation include:²

- Speed limit signs
- Traffic signals
- Pedestrian crossings (zebra crossings)
- Shared zones

¹ VicRoads Traffic Engineering Manual Volume 2 Part 2.02 Traffic control devices for general use

² VicRoads Traffic Engineering Manual Volume 3 Part 2.02 Authorisation of Traffic Control Devices

- Some parking signs, especially clearways.

This means even if funding for walking is provided to local governments, the state government still needs to be involved to ensure a smooth process that provides holistic, integrated walking outcomes.

2. Make walking safer, easier and more convenient

While limited capacity means we have not been able to comprehensively review the Draft Strategy, we note that many of the recommendations in 'Section 2 - Manage urban change' will in some way make walking a more attractive option. Integrating land use and infrastructure planning, creating thriving urban places and steering changes in travel behaviour are all goals Victoria Walks support. Walking can also become a more attractive option by reducing the attractiveness of private vehicles.

3. Walking to public transport

Recommendations in Section 2.2 as well as Section 3.1 'Shape the transport network for better access' recognise the importance of public transport. Along with land use and walking infrastructure, public transport is closely linked to walking rates. Walking is fundamental to our transport system – 17% of Melbourne's week-day transport trips are taken entirely on foot, which is more than train, tram, bus and bicycle trips combined. In Melbourne, 66% of trips to train stations are walked, with a further 15% involving some walking³. The state government again has a major role as it oversees:

- The planning and operation of public transport, including placement of stations and stops.
- Large public transport infrastructure projects which create new routes or destinations for walking, such as level crossing removals

Local government also have a role to play in providing high quality walking environments to public transport. However, their limited funding for walking tends to focus on maintaining the existing footpath network and supporting walking to local destinations, such as shopping areas and community facilities, rather than getting people to public transport.

The Government has taken steps to make train stations cleaner, more appealing and safer, like funding Protective Services Officers, but little has been done to improve the journey to and from train stations. Subsequently, Victoria is losing opportunities to get more people walking to help manage traffic congestion. The Strategy includes many recommendations to improve public transport, but it does not appear to consider walking access specifically to bus, tram and train stops and stations.

The state should specifically support walking to key public transport stops as an integral component of the public transport system. This should take the form of a dedicated fund, which could be spent directly by state agencies or allocated to councils for specific projects.

Recommendation: Add a new recommendation that state government fund the development of safer, convenient routes (Principal Pedestrian Networks) within a 15-minute walk of train stations and key public transport stops.

If you have any queries regarding this submission please contact Jo Eady, Senior Advisor on jeady@victoriawalks.org.au.

³ Eady, J and Burt, D (2019). *Walking and transport in Melbourne suburbs*. Victoria Walks, Melbourne.