

Yarra Bicycle Users Group comments on City of Yarra's Draft Strategic Transport Statement released October 2005

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Yarra Bicycle Users Group (YarraBUG) thanks the City of Yarra Council (CoY) for releasing a strategic transport statement and fostering community debate on issues surrounding transportation. YarraBUG believe an effective transport policy is an important tool in Council's efforts to implement sustainable development.

YarraBUG is particularly supportive of the City of Yarra's explicit commitment to sustainable transport. The draft policy's identification of physically active, non-motorised transport modes, as the preferred method of travelling in and through the Yarra area, is particularly commendable. Walking and cycling are the most inclusive, most healthy and least polluting means of transport and YarraBUG supports council in its efforts to prioritise these modes over private motorcar use.

The City of Yarra has powerful tools to promote sustainable transport.

Local government can exert considerable influence on the ways citizens move through their municipality, when their various functions are co-ordinated with a coherent strategy.

Here are just some of the tools council has to promote sustainable transport:

- ☒ CoY has responsibilities for local roads, and considerable influence with VicRoads when administering arterial roads within the municipality.
- ☒ CoY owns much of the land used for off road pathways and maintains the footpath network.
- ☒ CoY regulates private land use via town planning.
- ☒ CoY is also a public transport provider as a part of its aged and community care programmes.
- ☒ CoY offices and libraries are a key resource for residents seeking information about services in the municipality and an ideal place to promote sustainable transport.
- ☒ CoY organised street festivals create opportunities to explore street life in a more pedestrianised friendly environment.
- ☒ Council staff must also travel throughout the city whilst performing their duties. CoY has an opportunity to foster more sustainable transport behaviours by setting a good example.
- ☒ Like any other political actor, CoY can attempt to use its influence to change state and federal government policy.

Act locally

The current draft places considerable emphasis on the need to lobby for the State Government to change its transport infrastructure funding priorities. Whilst this is understandable within the context of a state government recently described as "the most freeway friendly" Victorian government in history. (Professor Bill Russell quoted in *The Age* 2005/11/04), this 'big picture issue' has obscured many practical urban design measures, which CoY is capable of achieving with its own resources.

YarraBUG believes a strategic transport policy document must focus on what the council can achieve with its own resources, have a secondary emphasis on what council can achieve in partnership with authorities such as VicRoads, Parks Victoria, and as a side note discuss lobbying efforts to remove institutional impediments (such as federal government FBT arrangements and state government tollway contracts) which create obstacles to achieving a sustainable transport mix.

Whilst we may all celebrate the heroic efforts of Fitzroy Mayor Bill Paterson mounting the barricades across Alexandra Parade in the 1977 campaign to prevent the completion of the F19 YarraBUG does not believe diverting resources from council services to a similar campaign to prevent the construction of the Mitcham-Frankston eastern freeway extension is an appropriate way to implement sustainable transport.

Share the road: Rethink the streets

Despite long term difficulties for global oil supply (Simmons 2005; Goodstein, 2004: ASPO 2005,) YarraBUG recognises the continuing role for the car in the city's transport mix. YarraBUG encourages CoY in all efforts to create road environment in which cars share road space as the equals of cyclists and pedestrians. Reducing car speed is a key part of this strategy. Cars dominate spaces where their speed makes them potentially lethal to other road users.

A key strategy to prioritising pedestrian and cyclist traffic above car traffic is a radical re-think about what streets are for. YarraBUG believe streets are not arteries for the flow of car traffic, but environments for people to live, shop and socialise.

Reduce speed, save lives

The risk of fatality in a car versus pedestrian impact decreases dramatically as car speed decreases. The recent British "Kill your speed, not a child" campaign is based on accident research showing:

- at 40mph, (64km/h) most children are killed in a car v child impact,
- at 30mph, (48km/h) half are killed,
- at 20mph, (32km/h) only one child in 20 is killed.

<http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/roads-transport/road-safety/information/drivers/speed.html>

YarraBUG supports moves to introduce a blanket 40km/h speed limit streets administered by council. It is an important first step toward achieving a more sustainable transport mix. 40 km/h significantly reduces the risk of death, but YarraBUG believes that even at this speed the risk of serious injury to a pedestrian or cyclist remains unacceptably high.

YarraBUG encourages CoY to consider the application of a 30-km/h speed limit, especially near primary schools where pedestrians with limited road awareness are common. YarraBUG encourages CoY to consider a trial of 30km/h speed limits around primary schools and residential aged care facilities. A successful trial would provide valuable data to argue for 30km/h zones in all residential streets and designated activity centres.

YarraBUG supports all moves to ensure these speed limits are enforced, including obtaining delegated speed enforcement powers from Victoria Police and additional speed cameras in the municipality.

YarraBUG sees no reason why the 40km/h limit should not also be applied to VicRoads administered secondary roads (the roads marked in red in the Melways) and actively encourages CoY to work with VicRoads to introduce a 40km/h speed limit on all roads in the municipality. The activity areas of Brunswick Street, Victoria Street, Bridge Road and Swan Street are ideal candidates for a reduced speed zone.

Local Area Traffic Modifications

Reducing car speeds to the point where cyclists and pedestrians feel confident moving near them creates an urban environment where roads are no longer barriers. Speed zones are a cheap means to achieve this goal, but are only as effective as the enforcement effort. Local area traffic modifications are a little more expensive but far better as they are longer lasting and can incorporate street plantings, public art, benches and water fountains to create an inviting road space. Bicycle Victoria (BV) have excellent resources for designing LATM (<http://www.bv.com.au>). YarraBUG supports additional LATM built to BV standards.

Cost is always a significant constraint when implementing an engineering solution such as LATM. A counter-intuitive but highly successful alternative is the removal of all traffic controls – a strategy pioneered by Hans Monderman and gaining popularity under the name 'naked streets'. The removal of all traffic controls places drivers, walkers and cyclists on an equal footing. Cars and cyclists slow to pedestrian speeds, make eye contact and negotiate their way across in much the same way drivers deal with a broken traffic light. The approaches are clearly signed, but otherwise road users are left to work it out for themselves. Its counter-intuitive but European practice shows it works well enough for British and Canadian municipalities to try it. YarraBUG encourages CoY to investigate the feasibility of a similar treatment within a highly pedestrianised shopping precinct.

Freeways

Moves to create high speed segregated car environments are not supported by YarraBUG as they create barriers for non-motorised travel and add unnecessary detours to designated crossing points. Non-motorised modes need direct routes as they have a much shorter range (typically 1 km for walkers and 5 km for cyclists) than motorised modes. The barriers of Alexandra Parade and Hoddle Street represent a powerful disincentive to cross-city travel by non-motorised mode. Moves to slow traffic on these streets and introduce additional crossing points are supported by YarraBUG as an important means create a more supportive environment for walking and cycling.

Cycling Infrastructure provision

An effective cycling strategy recognises there are several types of cycling types with different infrastructure needs. The off road shared pathway network is important for slower moving (10-15 km/h) social cyclists who are riding to enjoy parklands or get light exercise. These riders tend to have lower experience levels and require separation from cars and interesting places to ride around. These riders are well suited to off road-shared paths they are riding as a way of recreating in parklands. They require flat or slowly undulating continuous paths (no steep hills or steps) and clearly marked pathway signage notifying them of upcoming roads, and controlled road crossings.

Fast moving (25 - 30 km/h) commuters require direct routes to get them quickly to their destination. These cyclists are using their bikes as a car substitute because it is faster on heavily trafficked roads. They require on-road bike lanes and road environment to slow cars to a speed where they can safely mix. On faster moving arterial roads these cyclists benefit from road modifications to create a physical barrier between them and faster moving traffic flow. In areas where car parking is needed consider placing the bicycle lane to the left of the parking bay so parked cars form the barrier.

The provision of an on-path network should be considered separate from the off-road shared pathway network. Fast moving commuter cyclists create a potential hazard to walkers, especially slower recreational walkers. Recreational walkers tend to use the entire pathway either by walking two abreast walking and talking, or by walking with a dog. Whilst the risk posed to walkers by cyclists is small (Drummond, A. E. 1989) and can be managed by appropriate signage it is preferable that the space allocated to commuter cyclists comes from road space, rather than from pedestrian areas.

Allowing these faster cyclists to use the road, rather than forcing them to travel via the footpath best serves the interests of both walkers and fast cyclists and is a better fit in the CoY transport mode hierarchy.

The remainder is commentary on specific sections of the draft document.

Yarra Transport Hierarchy

How is the sustainable transport modes ranked.

A measure such as CO2 emission per passenger kilometre is a good one if regulating greenhouse gas emissions is a priority.

Social sustainability issues centre on accessibility. This is a composite measure involving both the cost of the using the transport mode and the destinations available in a 30-minute journey envelope. A short description on what makes one mode better than its others will help explain why, for example, buses are considered more sustainable than trains.

2. Yarra's Community and Amenity

Health

The health and transport link passage does not mention the health impacts of road trauma, especially road trauma associated with non-resident motorists impacting with residents.

2.4 Yarra's Mobility Impaired Population

Directional signage is an important part of a 'state-of-the-art' pedestrian environment. Suitable signage can also assist in multi mode travel (by informing people when to leave an activity area by providing "next tram leaves in X minutes" information)

Shelter against winter rain and summer sun is also important when planning a pedestrian area. Use planning policies to encourage continuous verandah coverage in commercial areas.

Affordability

this section can be strengthened by describing what transport services (community buses etc) provided by council for under \$200pw households. Indicate if existing service levels are to be maintained, decreased or increased. Discuss how, as a transport provider, council seeks to quantify the environmental cost of the service in terms of emissions per passenger kilometre and document strategies to minimise this cost over time.

Fleet management

Vehicle selection criteria should seek to minimise petrol consumption per passenger.

Vehicle selection criteria should give preference to vehicles with design features damage to pedestrians in a car v ped impact. Vehicles for public use must meet requirements under Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act.

Council should attempt to quantify the emissions from its fleet, (including the vehicles used by subcontractors) and minimise these emissions.

STO1

1.5 "make them more responsive" This is better worded to explicitly say reduce pedestrian wait time between signal activation and crossing?

1.6 Provide shelter and shade where appropriate.

1.15 balconies - passive balcony surveillance is actively discouraged by the overlooking provisions in ResCode. This will require a change to the planning scheme to define passive balcony surveillance as a desirable neighbourhood character objective. A local planning policy to relax this provision may also be required. In the short term a local practice note that provides architectural advice on how to maximise passive surveillance into public open space whilst minimising overlooking of private open space should be considered.

1.17 Also Lobby VicRoads, Victorian Police for fixed speed cameras on Activity centre strips with 40km/h speed limits.

1.19 Since all new crossovers require CoY approval this can be strengthened to read, "Discourage the installation of new crossovers, particularly in areas with an existing rear access right of way. Insert provisions in the planning scheme to require the creation of rear right of way access in new subdivisions."

STO2

2.1 - Is the cost of writing an updated bicycle plan an efficient use of bicycle resources? A master plan will cost several thousand dollars to produce whereas the current CoY Bicycle Advisory Committee process allows this budget to be spent on line marking and other bicycle infrastructure. A master plan is only justified if you believe the current process is failing to address the needs of Yarra cyclists, or if the BV / VicRoads bicycle network plans contain deficiencies an updated plan can address.

3.8 Seating, shelter and timetable information plus a local map (for people getting off the public transport service).

3.12 is the same as STO 4

7.11 Work with MAV to lobby the federal government to modify current fleet management tax structures to favour fuel and CO2 efficient vehicles.

Work with MAV to provide group purchasing influence to encourage fleet management companies to provide fuel and CO2 efficient vehicles such as compact four cylinder cars, LPG vehicles and hybrid engine vehicles.

Examine the fuel efficiency of existing fleets and maintenance of community transport vehicles. Investigate the viability of converting diesel-powered vehicles to waste vegetable oil bio-diesel (or oil diesel blend) fuels.

References:

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