

Australasian Railway Association

Infrastructure Victoria Submission

Victoria's draft

30-year infrastructure strategy

24th April 2025

ABN: 64 217 302 489



**Australasian
Railway
Association**

The ARA

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) is the peak body for the rail sector in Australia and New Zealand, and advocates for more than 230 member organisations across the industry.

Our membership covers every aspect of the rail industry, including the:

- passenger and freight operators that keep essential rail services moving;
- track owners, managers, and contractors that deliver a safe and efficient rail infrastructure network; and
- suppliers, manufacturers, and consultants that drive innovation, productivity, and efficiency in the rail industry.

Our members are driven to support vibrant, sustainable and connected communities through greater use of rail across Australia and New Zealand. We bring together industry and government to help achieve this ambition.

Our advocacy is informed by an extensive research program to ensure we offer solutions that are grounded in evidence and focused on delivering tangible value in our daily lives.

The rail industry has a crucial role to play in the region's sustainable development and growth, and offers meaningful and rewarding careers for tens of thousands of people in the regions.

Our significant program of work is focused on supporting a strong advocacy agenda, and creating opportunities for the rail industry to network, collaborate and share information, and maximise the benefits we have to offer the wider community.

The ARA thanks the Australian Communications and Media Authority for the opportunity to make this submission, which has been developed in consultation with ARA member organisations.

Any questions regarding this submission should be directed to Jesse Baker, General Manager Passenger Rail and Safety via [REDACTED]

Australia's Rail Industry

Rail is a significant industry in Australia, creating economic activity through its operations and capital investments. It is an industry with activities across every major metropolitan and regional area and is supported by the full spectrum of skills in the Australian workforce.

In 2019, the rail industry contributed around \$30 billion to the Australian economy and employed more than 165,000 workers (directly and indirectly in full-time equivalent terms, FTE). The industry is made up of around 900 businesses that are located in approximately 20 major hubs.

Submission form: Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy

Your details

Name:	Jesse Baker
Organisation (if applicable):	The Australasian Railway Association
Position (if applicable):	GM Passenger Rail and Safety
Email:	██████████
Phone:	██████████

About you

Please tell us which best describes you:

☐ Victorian resident
☐ Victorian business owner/operator
☒ Industry professional
☐ Community organisation representative
☐ Local government representative
☐ State government representative
☐ Researcher
☐ Other (please specify): Click or tap here to enter text.

Your focus areas

Select the topics or regions you are providing feedback on (select all that apply):

Topics	Regions
☐ Across sectors	☒ Regional Victoria
☒ Circular economy	☒ Urban growth areas
☒ Cities	☒ Melbourne
☒ Climate change	
☒ Community infrastructure	
☐ Education	
☐ Energy	
☐ Freight	
☐ Health	
☐ Housing	
☐ Infrastructure for Victoria’s First Peoples	
☒ Transport	
☐ Water	

Your feedback

Add as many sections as you need to provide all your feedback in this submission.

Topic/area:	'Most public transport is still inaccessible' & 'Better information can help people manage barriers to access'
Recommendation name:	Make government infrastructure more accessible
Recommendation number:	6
1. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
2. Tell us why	Light and heavy rail are prioritising the accessibility of their networks/services however the scale, age and asset intensity of the industry pose challenges. Government support for compliance with the DSAPT and Premises Standards would be greatly welcomed.
3. Share any supporting evidence or examples	The challenges in railways complying with the DSAPT and Premises Standards have led to several rail companies securing temporary exemptions to a small number of requirements. This experience may foretell similar challenges in meeting the 2032 deadline for train/tram accessibility. Sufficient Government funding would unlock these challenges and support rail's efforts.
4. Include proposed changes and improvements	NA

Topic/area:	'Trams can support more homes in inner and middle Melbourne' & 'The government should deliver priority tram extensions to encourage new homes'
Recommendation name:	Extend Melbourne's trams to encourage more new homes nearby
Recommendation number:	8
5. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
6. Tell us why	The ARA welcomes this recommendation that is a pragmatic, strategic, low-cost response to Melbourne's projected population growth.
7. Share any supporting evidence or examples	ARA's 2021 publication ' The Renaissance of Light Rail.pdf ' explains that light rail has been associated with increased urban development especially where the frequency of services and ride quality are high. This increase in usage can result in an increase in land values due to demand for housing along light rail corridors. This

	has been demonstrated in Canberra with the revitalisation of Northbourne Avenue and area around Dickson interchange, as well as the revitalisation of London's Docklands precinct in the UK. In Canberra, the light rail network has attracted new businesses and commercial operations. Alongside it's construction, 1288 aged public houses were replaced leading to house price growth of 39% in the Inner North and 27% in Gungahlin (along the light rail corridor) over 2014-2018 where the rest of the ACT experienced 17% growth. Such was the demand for living near the light rail corridor.
8. Include proposed changes and improvements	NA
Topic/area:	'Melbourne's western growth areas are growing but they have little public transport' & 'Extending the train network can deliver better public transport for new suburbs' & 'Train line extensions can provide network-wide benefits' & 'A new station in Altona North can improve access to services and encourage new homes in Melbourne's inner west'
Recommendation name:	Extend metropolitan trains and run more services in Melbourne's west
Recommendation number:	11
9. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
10. Tell us why	The ARA welcomes this recommendation that is a pragmatic, strategic, low-cost response to Melbourne's projected population growth.
11. Share any supporting evidence or examples	ARA's REPORT-ValueofRail2020-1.pdf demonstrates that rail is an excellent solution generating fewer external costs than other modes of transport. In particular: • Lower carbon emissions - Every passenger kilometre travelled by rail, instead of car or motorcycle, saves an additional 50 grams of CO2 equivalent being emitted, valued at 5c per journey. • Lower congestion costs - Every commuter that changes to rail reduces the aggregate travel time across all remaining road users by up to 28 minutes, valued at between \$3 and \$10, depending on the city. • Safety benefits from reduced crash costs - Every rail journey that replaces a car trip reduces accident costs by around \$1.37. • The health benefits from increased walking and reduced air pollution - Rail passenger travel generates 75 per cent less PM10 emissions for each kilometre travelled when compared to road travel, valued at 5c a trip. Further, every rail journey generates around \$7.00 in health benefits from walking.

	If Australia can keep maintaining the increase in the use of trains and trams instead of cars, then a further 20% increase in patronage could result in \$1.2 billion in benefits per annum for society in terms of reduced carbon emissions, health benefits from reduced air pollution and more walking, less congestion and reduced road accident costs.
12. Include proposed changes and improvements	NA

Topic/area:	Adopting carbon values and measure carbon in infrastructure projects to reduce emissions
Recommendation name:	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from infrastructure
Recommendation number:	24
13. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
14. Tell us why	Infrastructure Victoria's recognition of the national approach to carbon values established by Infrastructure Australia is welcomed, as is its recognition of the need for aligned approaches with other governments and industry best practices. We support standardised approaches to maximise efficiencies across jurisdictions and ensure a shared understanding of industry and government action to decarbonise.
15. Share any supporting evidence or examples	The ARA is a member of the Infrastructure Net Zero collaboration, which released new guidance on defining net zero infrastructure in 2025. The guidance recommends the adoption of the PAS2080:2023 definition of net zero infrastructure, consistent with the recommendation from Infrastructure Victoria's <i>Opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in infrastructure</i> . The guidance also confirms the need for consistent measurement and reporting processes to help speed the sector's progress.
16. Include proposed changes and improvements	NA

Topic/area:	Emissions reduction targets in tenders and government contracts
Recommendation name:	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from infrastructure
Recommendation number:	24

17. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
18. Tell us why	Current procurement processes have traditionally led to a relatively high level of specification around the methods and materials used on rail projects, based on proven methodologies and products previously used in the industry. New products have traditionally been required to secure type approvals separately in different states and on different networks, adding cost and complexity. This constrains industry's ability to propose new solutions that have the potential to deliver improved carbon outcomes, either through using less materials or more sustainable materials. Procurement processes therefore need to evolve to support the development of more sustainable, productive and efficient solutions.
19. Share any supporting evidence or examples	The ARA, in partnership with the Infrastructure Sustainability Council and Roads Australia, commissioned <i>The Journey to Net Zero – Inspiring Climate Action in the Australian Transport Sector in 2022</i>. The report found that the planning and procurement phases of the infrastructure lifecycle are the most critical to driving emissions reductions. The report called for new infrastructure projects to incorporate net-zero targets, recognising the significant impact early planning can have on outcomes across the asset lifecycle.
20. Include proposed changes and improvements	While the ARA supports the inclusion of targets in tenders and government contracts, this requires consideration of how tenders are assessed, particularly when it comes to the adoption of new solutions that may not have been applied in previous projects or higher cost alternatives required to achieve emissions reductions. Clarity is also required from proponents on how cost considerations will be balanced against the achievement of emissions reductions. In cases where low carbon solutions are priced at a higher premium, industry will require guidance on how cost will be assessed compared to the achievement of emissions reduction targets.
Topic/area:	Non-build and low build solutions, low carbon and recycled materials
Recommendation name:	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from infrastructure
Recommendation number:	24
21. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part

22. Tell us why	The ARA welcomes consideration of non-build and low build solutions, in addition to the adoption of low carbon and recycled materials to drive emissions reductions. ‘No build’ options that maximise existing infrastructure should be part of the infrastructure strategy. However, this will require a strong focus on and investment in maintenance to ensure infrastructure remains fit for purpose over the course of its life, and can be utilised to full effect. A greater focus on maintenance will also improve efficiencies across the lifecycle, and may contribute to ongoing emissions savings over the life of the asset. The ARA supports Infrastructure Victoria’s recommendation to update standards and specifications to support the adoption of low carbon materials. Streamlining approvals processes will support greater adoption of these products and encourage their adoption more widely.
23. Share any supporting evidence or examples	A number of jurisdictions now require projects to comply with the Infrastructure Sustainability Design and As-Built Rating Scheme, led by the Infrastructure Sustainability Council. Version 2.1 of the scheme creates a process for strategic planning from the business case phase, to ensure sustainability measures are considered from the very beginning of the project. This approach helps identify sustainability risks and unlock opportunities in the design and construction phases, and embeds a sustainability commitment across all aspects of the project. The consistent application of the IS Ratings across infrastructure projects also helps build knowledge and understanding of sustainability innovations that can be adopted to reduce embodied emissions, and allows the sector to track its progress over time. The use of IS Ratings is therefore a powerful tool in supporting embodied emissions reductions.
24. Include proposed changes and improvements	Consideration of low carbon and recycled materials should be considered early in the planning process. Early consultation with industry on project requirements will enable consideration of solutions that reduce the amount of materials used in infrastructure projects through innovative construction methods and sustainable design. A focus on project outcomes will enable industry to propose the use of new materials or approaches to reduce embodied emissions.
Topic/area:	General
Recommendation name:	Better prepare infrastructure for climate change
Recommendation number:	27
25. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part

26. Tell us why	Given the growing impact of climate events on the infrastructure sector, the ARA supports Infrastructure Victoria's recommendation to fund high-priority, cost effective climate adaptation actions as part of updates to its current plans in 2026, and to fund adaptation actions.
27. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Transport resilience is an essential part of broader community resilience, with access to transport being a critical part of recovery efforts following major climate events. Funding for adaptation actions should prioritise essential infrastructure assets such as transport to ensure this investment improves the community's ability to recover from climate events in the future. Prioritising transport adaptations will better enable essential transport links to withstand climate events, or recover from them more quickly, to keep essential supply chains and passenger routes open when climate events occur. A nationally consistent approach to adaptation planning and action is also essential to drive efficiencies and promote a shared understanding of infrastructure resilience across Australia. Consideration should be given to ensuring alignment with other jurisdictions as adaptation plans are developed.
28. Include proposed changes and improvements	NA
Topic/area:	General
Recommendation name:	Prepare and publish infrastructure sector plans to shape Victoria's cities
Recommendation number:	35
29. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
30. Tell us why	The ARA welcomes a focus on placemaking to support emissions reductions and create more sustainable communities that meet Victoria's needs for the long term. Well planned transport infrastructure supports a range of sustainability benefits, including: Avoid: Reducing the amount of travel required by minimising distances between work, education and other key facilities, while also promoting greater use of active and public transport Shift: Prioritising sustainable transport modes by improving accessibility, convenience and ease of use of active and public transport facilities, as well as rail freight Improve: Creating more efficient transport networks through better integration and design, supporting more sustainable operations Basing future planning on a shared set of assumptions for future population, jobs and land use will enable these outcomes and

	ensure sustainable transport infrastructure is prioritised, meeting both current and future needs. Dedicated sector plans that articulate this long-term vision will not only improve planning and maximise opportunities for emissions reduction and improved resilience, but will also provide industry with a more certain pipeline. This certainty will improve industry's ability to plan, invest and grow in order to meet future needs and contribute to improved infrastructure outcomes.
31. Share any supporting evidence or examples	NA
32. Include proposed changes and improvements	NA
Topic/area:	Create and preserve opportunities for future major infrastructure projects
Recommendation name:	'The government has limited ability to invest in new major infrastructure projects in the short term' & 'Victoria can plan now for future infrastructure needs'
Recommendation number:	43
33. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
34. Tell us why	The ARA welcomes this recommendation as a sensible step in further planning for Melbourne's projected population growth which takes the state's financial constraints into consideration.
35. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Nothing additional – there are numerous examples, both domestically and abroad, of infrastructure projects whose costs were significantly increased due to not securing locations/routes/corridors etc.
36. Include proposed changes and improvements	NA

More feedback (optional)

Tell us about infrastructure challenges, gaps or opportunities not covered by the draft strategy. This can include things you think we should add to an existing recommendation, or suggestions for a new recommendation.

Please provide evidence for your suggestions. This can include data, specific examples, cost benefit analyses, surveys, or program evaluations. Also, explain how your suggestions align with the objectives of our draft strategy (see page 11 of the draft strategy).

Suggestions for new recommendations should point towards infrastructure opportunities that can deliver long-term benefits for Victorians. They should also be areas where the Victorian Government has a leading role.

NA

