

Boroondara Council feedback on Infrastructure Victoria's Draft 30-Year Strategy

Date: 28 April 2025

Boroondara City Council supports Infrastructure Victoria's work to prepare Victoria's 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy. Many of the recommendations have implications for or require involvement of local government, and our community and municipality will ultimately be affected by the Victorian Government's infrastructure planning and delivery.

Our details

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Council Comments on Selected Recommendations and Future Options

Ref	Recommendation / Future Option	Council Comment
DR1	Build more social housing	Recommendation supported but needs to go further. It is not clear that the recommendation has taken account of projected growth of 2.24million homes over 30yrs in Plan for Victoria and the Victorian Government's Housing Statement target of 800,000 homes over 10 years. Given that 3,200 social housing homes will need to be built each year just to ensure the target for new housing meets the national average of 4% social housing, the recommendation of 4,000 per year will do little to lift Victoria's overall stock of social housing to the national average. It is noted that the current 4% target and 40,000 homes over ten years is not ambitious - the percentage social housing in Victoria and nationally has been diminishing and in 2020 the Housing Peak Alliance called for 60,000 over ten years. (refer IV Draft 30yr Strategy Endnote 67, page 260) This recommendation should go further and provide guidance on the distribution of social housing. The location of housing has implications for access to employment and services, and impacts cost of living. Without equal attention to where social housing is built, the focus will be on the lowest cost delivery and on providing housing in areas where there are large numbers of people in housing stress. This will not necessarily direct housing to well serviced established areas where people need to be living to properly address the impacts of having poor housing choice. There should also be a recommendation about recurrent, cyclical and capital maintenance of the social housing stock to ensure that a deferred maintenance/replacement liability does not take government away from the need to grow social housing stock in the future.

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DR2	Facilitate markets and invest in kindergarten infrastructure	Recommendation supported in part Councils in established areas own a significant proportion of kindergarten infrastructure. Much of this stock is ageing and at end of life. There is a mismatch in the timing of the proposed Victorian Government 5-year infrastructure plans and legislated 10-year asset management and planning documents required from local government. Aligning the timing of each would make more sense. The proposal that local government (with the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors) can fund ‘the rest’ of the required kindergarten infrastructure is not financially sustainable and cost-shifts the reforms to local government. Many of the not-for-profit sessional kindergarten providers are based in local government owned infrastructure. The required increase to existing local government owned kindergarten infrastructure must be fully funded by the Victorian Government. The ongoing maintenance responsibilities need to be fully funded by the Victorian Government, rather than passing on the cost to local government.
DR5	Build libraries and aquatic centres for Melbourne’s growing communities	Recommendation supported but needs to go further. Boroondara agrees that libraries and aquatic centres provide essential services to growing communities and deliver benefits as articulated in the Draft Strategy, but there is misalignment between level of government responsibility for funding libraries and aquatic/recreation centres, and where benefits accrue. Boroondara has direct experience that the cost of developing and redeveloping these particularly expensive pieces of community infrastructure is increasingly becoming difficult to prioritise and beyond the capacity of revenue constrained Council budgets. While these facilities are not sufficiently provided for in growth areas, in established areas these facilities are reaching the end of their economic life and needing renewal or replacement. The Plan for Victoria direction for 70% of Melbourne’s growth to be in established areas combined with Victorian Government’s Activity Centre program to increase housing capacity and density around 60 Activity

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		Centres, makes established municipalities growth areas. For example, Plan for Victoria sets a target for an 88% increase in housing in Boroondara over the next 25 years. In established areas it is harder to find space to deliver significant new community infrastructure, and higher density living increases the role of and need for library and recreation centres as third spaces. This recommendation should not be limited to the identified growth areas. It should be expanded to include established municipalities where growth is being directed, particularly those identified for significant Activity Centre densification, and it should be expanded to recognise the need for repositioning, expanding and replacement of aged and not fit for purpose libraries and aquatic centres as well as building new facilities. Service planning needs to commence now to align with planning for housing capacity and to ensure scarce opportunities for new or expanded infrastructure are not built out or precluded. Boroondara agrees that the State should fund service planning and make significant funding contributions for capital works.
DR7	Rezone locations near existing infrastructure for more home choices	Recommendation supported but needs refinement This is already underway with seven centres in Boroondara included the State Government's Activity Centres program. Boroondara agrees that there is opportunity to and need to provide for housing growth in well serviced activity centres close to transport. Boroondara does not agree with the process being run by the Victorian Government that is singularly focused on built form controls where comprehensive strategic planning is required and which involves very little consultation and no collaboration with local councils. Boroondara agrees with the observation that changing planning zones does not guarantee that more homes will be built or more diversity of housing in terms of size, built form typology, tenure, development model and

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		affordability. It also agrees that there should be better monitoring of the impact of zoning changes on delivery of homes. This should be accompanied by a commitment to make refinements where unintended consequences and poor development outcomes are materializing. The recommendation appears to place responsibility for rezoning on the Victorian Government. Boroondara does not agree that local planning should be taken over by the state. Local councils are the most spatially connected level of government and have the local intelligence to be best placed to do the planning and rezoning. The recommendation should be explicit that the state should set the strategic direction for the city and undertake metropolitan level planning, and it should require and support local councils to do the strategic planning to deliver on the wider metropolitan directions. Also, while there is a role for fast-track approval pathways as noted, these should not be a takeover of local planning by the state. It is not clear if the cost range for this recommendation is a total sum of \$1million to \$5million over five years or this much each year for five years. To do proper comprehensive strategic planning is a resource intensive and costly exercise that can be in the order of \$0.5 to \$1million per activity centre.
FO	Mandate more affordable homes near existing infrastructure	This Future Option should be elevated to a Recommendation In the midst of a housing crisis it is incomprehensible why measures to mandate affordable housing are not included as a recommendation requiring immediate response from the Victorian Government. Boroondara is one of the least affordable municipalities in Melbourne for housing. Without a mandate affordable housing will not be delivered by the development market. Without affordable housing, Boroondara will not attract and retain the diversity of population and key workers necessary for it to be an efficient and thriving place.

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		Given the previous strategy included a recommendation to “use value-capture mechanisms to deliver very low-income housing”, this option is light on detail. Boroondara generally agrees with the points made about what the Government can do (including working with local government) to determine the best approach but suggests that Infrastructure Victoria with other think tanks and research organisations should play an important role in determining the optimal approach independent of government. This option highlights that when the Victorian government is rezoning close to infrastructure (recommendation 7), it can capture some of the higher land value created by rezoning. It is critically important to consider value capture prior to rezoning land in the municipality. This demands that this Future Option is elevated to a Recommendation for urgent attention to be progressed in parallel with rezoning in activity centres which is already substantially underway.
DR8	Extend Melbourne's trams to encourage more new homes nearby	Recommendation supported The extension and selective rerouting of trams can significantly increase the reach of and accessibility to the network. While major extensions will significantly expand the network, this should not displace smaller extensions and rerouting priorities that will be less costly to implement. Opportunities for new tram route extensions identified by Boroondara are: • Route 75 along Burwood Road to Camberwell Junction – approx. 3km. • Route 48 along Doncaster Road to Shoppingtown – approx. 3.7km. • Route 72 along Burke Road to Doncaster Road and Princes Highway – approx. 1.9km. • Route 8 along Toorak Road to Camberwell Road – approx. 1.9km. • Route 6 along High Street to Ashburton – approx. 2.4km. • Improved traffic signal priority for tram services.

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		The recommendation for extending trams should go further to include general recommendations regarding road space reallocation and signal prioritization to improve the performance of tram services, combined with the progressive delivery of accessible tram infrastructure (Recommendation 6). This rethinking of tram corridors is essential to deliver the urban realm necessary to support increased population and local living and to catalyse development and densification.
DR9	Run faster bus services, more often, in Victoria's largest cities	Recommendation supported but should go further Boroondara agrees that high quality bus services form an important part of an integrated transport network and will be critical to reducing dependency on cars with associated benefits in lower cost of travel, avoiding worsening congestion as the city grows and densifies, and in reducing carbon emissions. Aiming for 20min intervals does not seem sufficiently ambitious when 10 minute headways are frequently discussed as being the threshold for a 'turn up and go' no timetable service to shift people away from private cars. The recommendation should be for turn up and go services for all at core times of day. This recommendation could go further on the structure, contracting and funding of bus operations necessary to incentivize improved services. For example, Curitiba Brazil is understood to have subsidised its bus services based on route kilometers travelled not number of passengers carried, to encourage more frequent services and longer running which in turn drives increased patronage. This recommendation could go further on integration of timetables, interchanges and infrastructure to establish a fully networked multi-mode transport system including: • A review of all routes with a view to improving frequency and an extension to operating hours and days, notably evenings and weekends.

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		• A review of existing routes including new additional routes to allow for good integration and service levels into growth areas including linking activity centres. • A connected and accessible Eastern Express Busway that incorporates dedicated bus stops with pick up drop off facilities at Burke Road and Chandler Highway. • A program of active signal bus priority to allow for reliable and fast journey times. • Road space reallocation to improve the performance of bus services.
DR14	Make local streets safer for children and communities	Recommendation supported in principle Boroondara agrees that neighbourhoods should be safe for children, pedestrians and active travel. Boroondara recognizes that there are good examples locally and internationally of lower speed limits making for more people friendly streets. Local streets are managed by Councils. Successful implementation of lower speed limits will require high quality community engagement and education - the Strategy should be clear that the Victorian Government needs support and work through Local Government to implement this change and normalize it across all municipalities. While reducing speed limits is a simple action to improve safety, this should be framed in a wider context of reconfiguring and upgrading streets and roads to prioritise people, particularly in high density neighbourhoods and activity centres including • Reallocation of road space: strategic reduction of on-street parking facilities changing traffic lanes to increase footpath widths at key locations and active travel paths. • Wayfinding Schemes: Implementation of signage and other wayfinding solutions to improve navigation for pedestrians.

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		New Infrastructure: Installation of new footpaths, lighting, and crossing facilities to enhance pedestrian safety and accessibility.
DR15	Build safe cycling networks in Melbourne and regional cities	Recommendation supported Boroondara supports the recommendation that the Victorian government should be responsible for building the strategic cycling corridors. It has the resources, necessary powers (e.g. for land acquisition), is best placed to coordinate with other authorities and can ensure an integrated response that transcends municipal boundaries and responsibilities. Boroondara supports the Box Hill to Hawthorn Cycling Corridor: - As a safe, connected, and direct east-west route for cyclists and pedestrians. - To links major activity centres, train stations, local schools, Swinburne University, and other attractions, improving access to the Melbourne CBD. - To serve both the local Boroondara community and broader regions, encouraging high volumes of cyclists and pedestrians. - to deliver expected benefits including reduced carbon emissions and improved sustainable transport options. Somewhat similar to the train and tram network, the strategic cycling corridors map for Melbourne is focused on access to the city centre. It also only recognizes a small selection of the activity centres where the Victorian Government is directing growth. The recommendation should go further to discuss:

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		• The role of the Victorian Government in supporting Councils to maintain and develop key cycling feeder routes into the strategic network. • The role of VicRoads/DTP as the road authority for facilitating and delivering on-road separated bike lanes on major routes through road space reallocation to improve cycling safety and encourage more cyclists. • The importance of micro mobility hubs and bike infrastructure at train stations to make cycling part of an integrated transport solution. As a 30 year infrastructure vision, the Strategy should include a future direction to deliver orbital strategic cycling corridors through the middle ring (similar to the function of the SRL and improved bus network) to provide high quality active travel options between higher density residential activity centres and key employment, education and service destinations.
DR16	Help government school share their grounds	Recommendation supported School grounds could be utilised more than approximately 200 school days per year. Boroondara supports school grounds being available afterhours, and on weekends and school holidays, particularly for densifying communities in established neighbourhoods. For school grounds to be properly considered part of the open space network, there needs to be in perpetuity commitments that they will be available for the community use and not subject to change with turnover of school executive and school councils. Local councils can bring management and maintenance expertise to facilitate use of school grounds as community assets. This needs to be a fair and collaborative arrangement with councils and cannot be a cost or responsibility shift from the State Education Department to local councils.

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DR24	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from infrastructure	Recommendation supported While the Victorian Government delivers large infrastructure, much of the built environment including roads and buildings are delivered, owned and maintained by local councils and the private sector. This recommendation could be improved if it articulated a pathway for the Victorian Government to support Councils to value carbon and implement mechanisms requiring private sector development to also consider and report carbon emissions in project feasibility and approvals. Recent planning reforms are a missed opportunity to strengthen sustainability requirements and consider materiality.
DR26	Better use government land for open space and greenery	Recommendation supported but needs to go further. This recommendation aligns with Council's long-term goal of increasing urban canopy cover to 30%, supporting biodiversity, and ensuring equitable access to green space. It is also consistent with the future demand for more open space in densifying established suburbs where securing new space is often unrealistic. Boroondara agrees with the need for and benefits of more urban greening. It notes the observation in the recommendation that "Developers remove vegetation when they build homes. The plants on public land must then make up for fewer trees and shrubs on private land". Recent planning changes for low rise infill residential development only require 10% tree canopy and 20% on larger sites and have increased allowed site coverage thereby diminishing the area for landscape planting. With the State target of 30% canopy across the urban area in Plan for Victoria, the recommendation either needs to be expanded to include planning controls for higher canopy requirements on private land and greater protection of existing trees, or the recommendation will need to be increased to substantially more than 30% tree and shrub cover on public land.

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		The strategy could more explicitly acknowledge the impact of broader state planning regulations and infrastructure projects on local government's ability to deliver and expand urban canopy. It needs to recommend a more ambitious target for public land, stricter requirements for private land (or an offset mechanism) and greater coordination across tiers of government to avoid conflicting outcomes in land use planning and infrastructure delivery.
DR35	Prepare and publish infrastructure plans to shape Victoria's cities	Recommendation strongly supported Boroondara agrees that better planning of infrastructure is required to support growth and the goal of a more compact city. Having agreed provision rates, accessibility/distribution standards and capacity/utilization of community infrastructure along with transparent and shared assumptions about population, employment and land use forecasts is necessary to underpin consistent and comprehensive infrastructure planning. Boroondara notes "Integrated land use and infrastructure planning requires governments to discuss options at an early stage, long before they make final commitments or budget decisions." The Victorian Government's Activity Centre program is a case where integrated and comprehensive planning is not occurring. It is also a case where the state is not sharing its plans with local governments prior to final commitments being made. When the recommendation refers to 'government' (for example the last paragraph) it is unclear if this is the Victorian Government or all levels of government. The recommendation should be more explicit about the preparation of infrastructure plans requiring close and respectful collaboration with and resourcing of local government. These plans should be a priority, and should occur prior to large, ad hoc rezonings for density across the state.

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DR36	Reform infrastructure contributions	Recommendation strongly supported Boroondara strongly supports reform of infrastructure contributions system. The existing mechanisms are complex to establish and implement. Boroondara agrees that any contributions framework should have clear strategic goals, accountability and governance. The recommendation should be explicit that the new system is designed to prevent cost shifting to local government and to ensure that infrastructure can be delivered in advance of development and demand.
DR37	Improve asset management of all government infrastructure	Recommendation supported Refer comment under Recommendation 1 about maintenance of social housing.
DR40	Use modern traffic control technology for efficient and safe journeys	Recommendation supported This recommendation could be expanded to include the use of smart technology such as dynamic pricing and signage to better integrate the use and management of roads and parking spaces as interrelated parts of an overall road transport system.

Request for Input: Long-Term Plans from Other Asset Agencies

As part of Council's integrated approach to long-term infrastructure planning, we have previously sought long term asset information from relevant asset-owning agencies operating within the municipality. This includes requests for their forward asset plans and infrastructure strategies to ensure alignment and a coordinated understanding of infrastructure needs across the region. We are currently awaiting responses and anticipate incorporating this information into the next iteration of our strategies once it becomes available. We believe that collaboration across agencies is essential to achieving a resilient, efficient, and future-ready infrastructure network that supports community needs over the next 30 years.

Conclusion

Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to Victoria's long-term infrastructure vision and supports many of the recommendations. Elevating the importance of affordable housing, climate resilience, and collaborative infrastructure planning will be critical to delivering the inclusive, sustainable outcomes Victorians expect. We look forward to seeing how Infrastructure Victoria finalises Victoria's 30-year Infrastructure strategy and are available to discuss any of the items raised in this submission.



