Monday 28 April 2025

Dr Jonathan Spear CEO, Infrastructure Victoria Level 33, 140 William Street Melbourne VIC 3000 (via email)



Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy

A submission to Infrastructure Victoria by Calm It Castlemaine

Dear Dr Spear,

Calm It Castlemaine thanks Infrastructure Victoria for this opportunity to provide feedback on Victori's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy.

Calm It Castlemaine advocates for transport infrastructure projects and mobility solutions that meet the needs of the Castlemaine and Mount Alexander Shire communities. Our members have experience in urban and regional planning, transport planning, architecture and landscape architecture, sustainable development and community advocacy.

Formed in 2023, Calm It Castlemaine meets monthly to discuss transport issues in Mount Alexander Shire in the context of national and global trends in sustainable mobility. We amplify the community's voice to state and local governments, support active transport projects with advice and public advocacy, and provide a conduit for communication between governments and local stakeholder groups.

Although an unincorporated group, the members of Calm It Castlemaine contribute to the work of other local groups including the Castlemaine Maryborough Rail Trail, West End Resilience, Mount Alexander Cycling, Mount Alexander Sustainability Group and the Wesley Hill Hall Committee. Since forming, Calm It Castlemaine have engaged with the Department of Transport and Planning and Mount Alexander Shire Council on a range of planning initiatives and transport issues including the:

- Mount Alexander Shire 2023-2033 Active Transport Strategy,
- Mount Alexander Shire Active Transport Strategy External Reference Group,
- Castlemaine Town Centre Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan,
- McKenzie Hill to The Mill (Railway station precinct) shared pathway, and
- Safety and design issues with public roads and private developments.

Calm It Castlemaine is a small but effective group of local volunteers who work with governments and community groups to make our transport infrastructure more safe, equitable and resilient. To these ends, we were delighted to see that Castlemaine is noted in Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy under draft recommendation 15: build safe cycling networks in Melbourne and regional cities, because active transport is a key focus of our advocacy work.

Additionally, we are very encouraged to see draft recommendation 14: make local streets safer for children and communities, because it encapsulates our concerns about road safety in Castlemaine and Mount Alexander Shire, and generally reflects our view that road speed reform is urgently needed.

Calm It Castlemaine strongly supports these draft recommendations. Rather than write a lengthy and detailed submission in support of the draft recommendations, however, we take this opportunity to share several submissions to Mount Alexander Shire Council that relate directly to the draft recommendations. The submissions include:

- Two letters to Council officers about the Castlemaine Town Centre Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan, which outline a case for road speed reform including the introduction of 30 km/h speed limits.
- A joint submission by Calm It Castlemaine and Mount Alexander Cycling to the Mount Alexander Shire Council 2025/26 budget.
- A submission by Mount Alexander Cycling to the Mount Alexander Shire Council 2024/25 budget that I helped to write (with Peter Strang, Secretary Mount Alexander Cycling)









In submitting these materials to Infrastructure Victoria, we offer three observations about working on road safety and active transport projects in regional Victoria that may inform Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy. The observations are discussed in brief here, but we would welcome an opportunity to discuss them in detail with you.

1. Fragmented road governance

Castlemaine, like many regional centres in Victoria, is bisected by major roads that carry a mixture of regional and local traffic movements including people who walk, ride and mobility scoot. Regional centres have developed around major roads because they provide efficient and direct access to destinations including retail and commercial precincts, industrial estates, healthcare facilities and public transport nodes such as railway stations and/or coach interchanges.

Major roads in Castlemaine and Mount Alexander Shire feature prominently in community concerns about walking and cycling safety because they have been planned and designed to accommodate car and truck traffic. Much of Calm It Castlemaine's advocacy work focuses on safety issues with major roads because they are the most dangerous roads to use. Any cursory analysis of crash statistics, BikeSpot.com data or Council survey results supports this view.

In recent years, however, we have observed that governments—both state and local—are either unwilling or unable to meaningfully address safety issues for people who use major roads, especially vulnerable road users who do not drive a motor vehicle. Specifically, it seems that programs and grants intended to improve road safety in regional areas are evolving in ways that are unlikely to address the planning and governance gaps that underline our safety concerns.

For example, over the last 15-years, government planning for dedicated cycling infrastructure has shifted its focus from the major roads controlled by state government (i.e., the Principal Bicycle Network imitative) to the local roads controlled by Councils (i.e., the Strategic Cycling Corridors initiatives). While governments need to build cycling infrastructure on both road types, the safety concerns with major roads have dropped off the radar because no investments in cycling infrastructure—after 15-years of planning—have been delivered. The focus in Castlemaine has instead been on tracks and trails, which have a limited use profile and are prone to flood damage, and on local roads, which do not provide strong connections between residential areas and key destinations like the town centre.

A similar trend can be observed in the focus of grants administered by the Traffic Accident Commission, which encourage Councils to address safety issues with local roads instead of major roads (e.g., the Safe Local Roads and Streets Program). Notably, draft recommendation 14 is also focused on safety improvements to local roads including the introduction of 30 km/h speed limits. While safety improvements to roads around childcare centres, kindergartens and primary and secondary schools are urgently needed, we feel that a narrow focus on local roads can avert attention away from safety issues with major roads that are potentially more serious. It is also important to remember that, in regional areas, major roads often connect residential areas to early-learning facilities and schools.

We have also observed that Council is reluctant to strongly engage state government on safety issues with major roads because of the complex governance arrangements and generally higher infrastructure costs. This view is informed by our work with Council on the Castlemaine Town Centre Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan (draft version attached). Here, survey data collected to inform the strategy clearly shows that the community's most pressing safety concerns are around the major roads (see Figure 3.2 Online comments heat map), but the draft short- and medium-term interventions that aim to address road safety issues are centred on local roads (NB. to reiterate, the strategy and action plan is a draft and may be changed).

These examples suggest that governance reform is needed if we are to meaningfully address safety issues with major roads in Castlemaine and Mount Alexander Shire. Planning local and active transport networks to avoid the safety issues with major roads—the course set by current government grant programs and planning approaches—is concerning because major roads are both a thoroughfare and a destination in regional centres like Castlemaine i.e., people who walk, ride and mobility scoot will need to use them whether safe infrastructure is provided or not.

2. Design-led infrastructure planning

A place-based approach to active transport planning and infrastructure design is needed in regional centres like Castlemaine because the use profile of roads will differ to those found in the regional cities (e.g., Bendigo) and metropolitan Melbourne. Accordingly, Calm It Castlemaine advocates for a design-led approach to infrastructure planning that looks at how roads are actually used. Engaging with diverse groups in our community has not only improved our understanding of the issues with road infrastructure, but also the planning and design possibilities.

It is important to note that a design-led approach is not primarily concerned with the aesthetics of pedestrian environments, or the delivery of rolled-gold bike infrastructure (e.g., Copenhagen lanes), but rather with the delivery of infrastructure that meets local needs while responding to real-life resource constraints. This view is informed by two









observations: first, that off-the-shelf engineering solutions for pedestrian and bike infrastructure (e.g., Austroads standards) are insufficiently responsive to site conditions and, second, that regional Councils either do not have, or struggle to attract, the financial resources that are needed to construct premium infrastructure solutions.

Ideally, the federal and state government would supply a steady flow of funds so that regional Councils can, with confidence, do the detailed planning and design work that is needed to develop a pipeline of 'shovel-ready' active transport projects. However, even if governments could sustain a dedicated line of funding for 10 to 15-years, we believe that a different approach to infrastructure planning and design will be needed if governments and communities in regional centres are to leverage the full benefits of active transport investments.

In Mount Alexander Shire, this would require governments to adequately invest in community consultation to ensure that the planning and design of active transport infrastructure meets local needs. Calm It Castlemaine's experience to date suggests that planning for the Principal Bicycle Network and the Strategic Cycling Corridors was too top-down to be place-based, and that Council needs to collect data and commission research to support consultation during the planning and design phases.

The risk to the federal and state government is that active transport projects in regional areas may not leverage their full social, economic and environmental potential without adequate planning, design and community consultation. Put another way, throwing money at transport infrastructure projects that are poorly planned, designed and governed could risk wasting scare public resources.

3. Building local capacity

This brings us to a final observation: that Council will need support to effectively plan for and deliver active transport projects. This is not a critique of the Council or Council officers—many of whom work tirelessly to deliver the best outcomes possible for their community. Rather, it is a critique of the limitations placed on Council by the current set of institutional and funding structures.

If we are to continue under the current structures, then serious consideration must be given to the forms of support that will build the capacity of regional Councils. This claim is based on the observations that (a) the planning and design of active transport projects is not only fragmented across governments but also several branches of Council and (b) to our knowledge, no Council officers are specialised in transport planning and/or active transport.

To remedy this situation, Calm It Castlemaine and Mount Alexander Cycling have suggested that Council employ a transport planner and/or urban designer with expertise in active transport. This officer could work with the federal and state government and the local community to plan, design and deliver projects. However, given the current fiscal constraints on local governments, Council has informed us that it would be very difficult to fund the position from current revenues. Another model that Calm It Castlemaine and Mount Alexander Cycling have suggested to Council is to establish an active transport fund to enabled advanced planning and design work, and even to facilitate the construction of projects. However, this idea has not been taken up for the same reason.

If we are to embark on an ambitious program of active transport infrastructure investment in regional centres like Castlemaine, then governments will need to find ways to build the capacity of Councils so that projects are properly resourced, well-coordinated and skilfully designed to meet local needs. Further, we argue that building the capacity of regional Councils to deliver active transport infrastructure effectively is the optimal way to ensure that planning is place-based, and that future investments have positive social, economic and environmental impacts.

In closing, we take this opportunity to note that Calm It Castlemaine is working with the Master of Urban Planning and Design program at Monash University on research that relates to draft recommendations 14 and 15 of Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy, as well as to:

- Draft recommendation 7: rezone locations near existing infrastructure for more home choices, and
- Draft recommendation 12: run more bus and coach services in regional Victoria.

The research project is called Movin' the 'Maine: Elements of a community-led mobility plan (see one-page explainer attached). The objective of the project is to develop ideas for policies, programs and projects that regional communities can use to advocate for their mobility needs.

Movin' the 'Maine is a collaboration between Monash University and the Castlemaine Institute, a research and learning not-for-profit organisation focused on social, economic, environmental and governance issues in regional areas. The project is supported by the Department of Architecture at Monash University and in-kind contributions from









Mount Alexander Shire Council, Department of Transport and Planning and local organisations and community groups. We hope to be able to share the findings of the research with you in the second half of this year.

Thank you for your time here, Dr Spear. We hope that these observations about working on road safety issues and active transport projects in central Victoria are useful to your organisation's work on Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy. Don't hesitate to email or call me if you have any questions about this submission.

Sincerely,

James Whitten (on behalf of Calm It Castlemaine)



Attachments:

Letter from Calm It Castlemaine to Mount Alexander Shire Council dated 13 June 2024 Letter from Calm It Castlemaine to Mount Alexander Shire Council dated 3 February 2025 Submission from Calm It Castlemaine and Mount Alexander Cycling to 2025/26 Council budget Submission from Mount Alexander Cycling to 2024/25 Council budget Movin' the 'Maine: Elements of a community-led mobility plan one-page explainer Extracts from Draft Castlemaine Town Centre Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan by Bitzios







13 June 2024

Michael Annear
Director Infrastructure and Development
Mount Alexander Shire Council
Castlemaine VIC 3450

Castlemaine Town Centre Road Safety Strategy - Draft principles and recommendations

Dear Michael,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet on Friday 15 June about the Castlemaine Town Centre Road Safety Strategy (RSS). 'Calm It—Castlemaine' applauds Mount Alexander Shire Council (MASC) for its decision to prepare a RSS that will explore practical actions to improve safety for all road users in the town centre, including people who walk, wheelchair, cycle and mobility scoot.

Calm It—Castlemaine is an alliance of community members who advocate for transport infrastructure and mobility options to meet the needs of our community. Our group members have experience in urban and regional planning, transport planning, sustainable development and community advocacy. Formed in 2023, Calm It—Castlemaine meets on a fortnightly basis to discuss transport issues in Mount Alexander Shire in the context of national and global trends in sustainable mobility. We amplify the community's voice to State and Local government, supporting active transport projects with advice and advocacy, and providing a conduit between government and the community. Although unincorporated, members of the group are involved in other organisations, including the Castlemaine Maryborough Rail Trail, West End Resilience, Mount Alexander Cycling (MAC), Mount Alexander Sustainability Group and Wesley Hill Hall Committee.

We have taken the opportunity of the meeting to prepare a set of draft principles and recommendations for the RSS (attached) based on our lived experience and professional knowledge of road safety issues in the Castlemaine town centre. We prepared the document because we'd like Council to adopt best practice planning principles and design solutions.

The RSS presents a significant opportunity to support the objectives of the MASC 2023 Active Transport Strategy, 2023 Climate Change Strategy, 2020 Castlemaine Streetscape Plan and 2010 Walking and Cycling Strategy by promoting uptake of safe, efficient, healthy and climate-friendly transport modes. Unlocking this opportunity will require governments to advocate strongly for the economic and environmental benefits of active transport investments.

Thank you, again, in advance, for meeting to discuss road safety issues in the Castlemaine town centre. Calm It—Castlemaine looks forward to working with Councillors and Council Officers to achieve strong outcomes for all road users in Mount Alexander Shire.

Regards,

Matthias Bringezu, Ian Lillington, Tim Hurley, Kellie-Anne Maddaford, Joel Meadows, Manoli Photakis and James Whitten (on behalf of Calm It—Castlemaine).

CC: Cr Matthew Driscoll (Mayor), Cr Rosie Annear (Deputy Mayor), Paul Diss, Kerrie Eldridge and Darren Fuzzard (MASC), Bruno Spandonide, Benish Chaudhry and Bryan McEwan (DTP) and Peter Strang (MAC).

A safer town centre for all road users

Mount Alexander Shire Council (MASC) is preparing a Road Safety Strategy (RSS) and Action Plan to (a) increase safety for people who walk, wheelchair, cycle and mobility scoot in the Castlemaine town centre and (b) increase awareness of road safety issues for people who drive, among other objectives.¹ 'Calm It—Castlemaine' applauds MASC for its decision to prepare a RSS that will explore practical actions to improve safety for all road users in the most heavily trafficked urban area of Mount Alexander Shire.²

Castlemaine is experiencing a surge in active mobility as people look for transport options that are cheaper and more environmentally friendly than the car. This is driven by many factors, including increasing cost of living pressures, improved access to new mobility technologies (e.g., e-bikes and mobility scooters) and growing awareness of the urban and climate impacts of cars.

Demographic trends in regional Victoria present additional planning challenges (and opportunities) that stem from an uptick in active mobility. Mount Alexander Shire has a high proportion of 'vulnerable road users' compared to the national and state averages because of an ageing population, families with young children moving to the area and higher than average walking and cycling to work rates.³

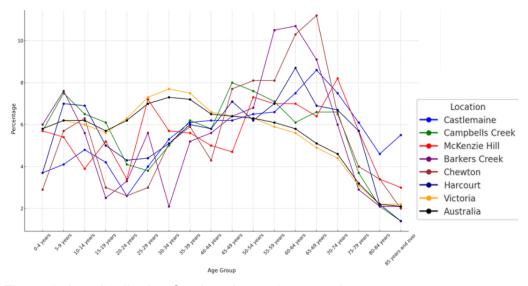


Figure 1. Age distribution Castlemaine and surrounds

Data Source: https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/SAL20516

Analysis of survey data collected by MASC for the 2023 Active Transport Strategy found that poor quality infrastructure and unsafe road speeds are the most significant barriers to active transport participation in Mount Alexander.⁴ Governments must invest in walking and cycling infrastructure to overcome these barriers, but it is unlikely that we will build our way out of road safety issues any time soon because of rising construction costs and fiscal constraints on governments.

Although welcome, small improvements to roads in the town centre (for example, a couple of wombat crossings and extending the 40 km/h speed zone) are unlikely to deliver improvements to

¹ Mount Alexander Shire Council. 2024. Castlemaine CBD Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan - Request for quotation.

² Department of Transport and Planning. 2024. Traffic Volumes. Melbourne: State of Victoria. LINK.

³ 2.5 percent and 5.5 percent of people in Castlemaine ride and walk to work, respectively, higher than the national and state averages of 0.7 percent (<u>LINK</u>), and higher than many suburbs in Metropolitan Melbourne.

⁴ Mount Alexander Shire Council. 2023. Active Transport Strategy. Community Consultation Report. pp. 6-7. LINK.

real or perceived safety for people who walk, wheelchair, cycle and mobility scoot to meet their daily needs.

Additionally, moving cyclists off state government roads—as proposed in the Victorian Government's Strategic Cycling Corridors (SSCs) program—is not a solution because access to the town centre for many walkers and cyclists is along Barker and Forest Streets, and the existing off-road options (Campbells Creek Trail and Leanganook trail) don't connect directly to the town centre, are circuitous, often in poor condition, not illuminated after-hours, and subject to damage from flood events (that are expected to increase in frequency and severity with climate change).

The RSS is therefore an opportunity for MASC, the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and the local community to take a holistic approach to the design of state and local roads in the town centre. This would involve:

A collaborative, evidence-based approach that combines local knowledge with leading-edge data analytics and creative (yet practical) design solutions to improve real and perceived road safety for all road users.

The members of Calm It—Castlemaine believe that our Shire has the potential to become an exemplar of sustainable mobility in regional Victoria if governments implement safe road speeds and invest in active transport infrastructure. However, as findings from the 2024 Parliamentary inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users suggest, off-the-shelf road infrastructure design solutions—those found in AustRoads and VicRoads guidelines—are inadequate because they place a high duty of care for safety on people who walk, wheelchair, cycle and mobility scoot.⁵

Calm It—Castlemaine offer the following '3 simple planning principles' and 'specific design recommendations' to open a conversation between governments and the community about the policies and projects needed to improve road safety in the Castlemaine town centre. Our purpose is to help governments deliver on the promise of multiple state and local government strategies that envision a more sustainable and resilient future for our community.

3 simple planning principles for safer roads

High road speeds and poor quality road infrastructure not only increases the risk of death and injury for walkers, cyclists and persons living with a disability, they also impact the overall quality of the urban environment and reduce the social and economic performance of the town centre. The following 3 principles for safer roads provide a holistic approach to planning and design of road and street environments in the Castlemaine town centre.

Minimise risk to all road users - Adopt a 30 km/h limit

Currently, roads in the town centre—state and local roads—do not 'explain' what a safe road speed is to people who drive through Castlemaine because the roads were designed as highways or car parking streets. However, changing the design of major roads and local streets to make them safer for all road users is likely to be a costly exercise that, if implemented, is unlikely to happen in the short- to medium-term.

⁵ Parliament of Victoria. 2024. Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users. Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee. Melbourne: State of Victoria. <u>LINK</u>.

Lowering road speeds is the simplest, quickest and most cost effective alternative to improve safety for all road users. Currently, 50 km/h is the predominant road speed in the town centre, except for two small sections of street that are 40 km/h: Barker Street between Lyttleton and Templeton Streets, and Mostyn Street between Hargraves and Barker Streets.

When a pedestrian is struck by a vehicle travelling at 50 km/h they have a greater than 80 percent risk of death according to the Curtin-Monash Accident Research Centre. When a pedestrian is struck by a vehicle at 40 km/h the risk of death drops to approximately 25 percent, and at 30 km/h the risk of death drops to 10 percent (see Figure 2).

Calm It—Castlemaine believes that a 25 to 80 percent risk of death from a vehicle impact is an unacceptable level of risk for people using the Castlemaine town centre. The area experiences high volumes of vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic throughout the day and especially during peak periods. Consequently, a 30 km/h speed limit in the RSS study area is required to protect the lives of all road users.

Adopting a 30 km/h limit for the town centre will align government road speed policies with the findings of evidence-based research as well as recommendations by international organisations like the World Health Organisation (WHO), which declared the 2020s the decade of action for road safety. The benefits of lower road speeds extend well beyond public safety because, according to WHO, "30 km/h (20 mph) speed limits where people and traffic mix make for streets that are safe, healthy, green and liveable, in other words, streets for life." This highlights the significant social and economic benefits of safe road speeds i.e., 30 km/h and below.

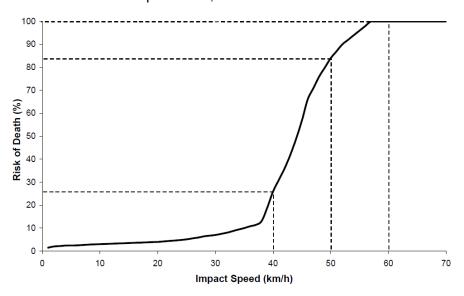


Figure 2. Risk of pedestrian death as a function of vehicle impact speed.9

Local factors in Castlemaine that are technological and cultural in nature add weight to the need for road speed policies in the town centre to adopt best-practice. First, the experience of many members of Calm It—Castlemaine suggests that adherence to signed road speeds among many people who drive is very poor. For example, it is not unusual to see motorists travelling along Barker and Forest Streets at speeds that exceed the set limits by 10 km/h or more.

⁶ Curtin-Monash Accident Research Centre. Fact Sheet No. 6. Improving Pedestrian Safety. LINK.

⁷ World Health Organisation. 2024. Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030. LINK.

⁸ World Health Organisation. 2021. Campaign launched to make 30 km/h streets the norm for cities worldwide. LINK.

Ourtin-Monash Accident Research Centre. Fact Sheet No. 6. Improving Pedestrian Safety. LINK.

Second, the increasing number and size of SUVs and Light Commercial Vehicles on our roads have significant implications for road safety, ¹⁰ especially for people who walk, wheelchair, cycle and mobility scoot around our Shire. Market forces and Commonwealth and State government policies have encouraged the rapid growth in motor vehicle size, which means that government road speed policies (and road infrastructure design) must work much harder to protect vulnerable road users.

These factors add weight to the argument that road speeds in the RSS study area must not exceed 30 km/h because of (a) the propensity of motorists to exceed the speed limits and (b) the risks that larger private and light commercial vehicles pose to vulnerable road users. The potential risk of higher road speeds is exacerbated by the demographic profile of Mount Alexander Shire, which skews towards vulnerable road users i.e., the elderly and the young (see Figure 1).

Additionally, reduced speed limits must be supported by road environments that are designed to 'explain' appropriate driving behaviour without excessive signage. Narrowing lane widths and using materials in the road surface that 'calm' traffic can encourage driving at lower speeds, make roads easier and safer to cross for pedestrians, and give more space to active transport infrastructure including wider footpaths for pedestrians and traders and protected lanes for cyclists.

A careful approach to road design can also give more space to green infrastructure including mature trees and water sensitive urban design initiatives. Mature trees that shade footpaths and streets are synonymous with high-quality urban environments and can engender slower travel speeds and safer driving behaviours. This approach to roadway design is consistent with the 2020 Castlemaine Streetscape Plan that included initiatives to "Create grand boulevards to Barker Street and Forest Street by adding canopy trees to medians."¹¹

2. Mix where possible, separate where necessary

Road speeds must be reduced to 30 km/h to minimise the risk of death or serious injury to people who walk, wheelchair, cycle and mobility scoot around the Castlemaine town centre. On roads where a 30 km/h limit is not government policy, then cyclists must be physically separated from heavy traffic, and the health of other vulnerable road users must be safeguarded by well-designed road infrastructure.

Applying the principle of 'mix where possible, separate where necessary' to roadway design can safeguard vulnerable road users by reducing the risk of death or injury occurring from an error of judgement—by a motorist, a cyclist or a pedestrian. Slowing speeds to 30 km/h gives everyone using our roads more time to react to unanticipated situations. However, separating different kinds of road users where it is not safe for them to mix can achieve the same objective.

The principle of 'mix where possible, separate where necessary' accepts that "there are no accidents" on our roads because infrastructure design must account for the potential of human error to cause a crash. ¹² Currently, roads in and around the Castlemaine town centre account for driver error with generous lane widths and road shoulders; however, it is these road spaces that cyclists and e-scooters move around the city—unprotected from traffic.

¹⁰ Peter Martin. 2023. Where did the cars go? How heavier, costlier SUVs and utes took over Australia's roads. The Conversation, October 17. LINK.

¹¹ Mount Alexander Shire Council. 2020. Castlemaine Streetscape Plan and Design Standards. Prepared by Tract Consultants. LINK.

¹² Jesse Singer. 2022. There Are No Accidents: The Deadly Rise of Injury and Disaster - Who Profits and Who Pays the Price. Cammeray, NSW: Simon & Schuster. LINK.

The Victorian Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee recognised this inequitable allocation or road user risk in their recent 'Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users'. After finding that "road users who do the most harm to others have a duty of care to reduce the dangers they pose to road users more vulnerable than them," the Committee recommended that governments adopt a 'road user hierarchy' that "puts those most at risk in the event of a crash at the top of the hierarchy." 13

In the Castlemaine town centre, where heavy and light commercial vehicles are the dominant form of traffic along Barker and Forest Streets, implementing the road user hierarchy would involve reducing road speeds to 30 km/h and/or significant investments in active transport infrastructure to physically separate vehicles and cyclists on roads where a 30 km/h speed limit is not policy.

3. Equal access for all road users

The principle of equal access underlines the first and second principles. Again, as data collected to inform the MASC 2023 active transport strategy showed, poor quality infrastructure and unsafe road speeds are the most significant barriers to active transport participation in the Shire.¹⁴ These factors combine in the Castlemaine town centre to reduce both real and perceived levels of safety for people who walk, wheelchair, cycle or mobility scoot, or would like to.

In recent years, the Victorian Government and MASC developed a network of Strategic Cycling Corridors (SSCs) to begin to address the problem of inequitable access to the Castlemaine town centre. ¹⁵ Calm It—Castlemaine generally supports the objectives of the SSCs, but questions whether current network plans will promote equal access to the town centre for all road users.

Planning for the current network design avoids safety issues associated with state-owned roads because the proposed corridors are located on local roads. While the impulse to move cyclists and other vulnerable road users away from busy roads is understandable, the problem with the current network structure is that it does not connect cyclists to urban services including areas of the town centre where commercial and retail activities are concentrated.

By avoiding state roads, the SSC program misses a significant opportunity to grant equal access to all road users by fixing severance issues caused by major roads. Severance between neighbourhoods is a significant issue for pedestrians and cyclists along the entire length of Barker and Forest Streets. Consequently, Calm It—Castlemaine would like the State government to restart planning work for the Principal Bicycle Network (PBN), which follows main roads, in conjunction with implementation of the SSCs.

Finally, we have additional concerns about prioritisation of different elements of the SSC network, which have equity and access implications. Currently, we do not consider elements of the network like a separated path along Kennedy Street to be a priority because, to our knowledge, there are no significant safety issues along that street—it is relatively quiet compared to other streets in and around the RSS study area.

Our concern is that active transport projects being considered by Stage government and MASC are not informed by a rigorous prioritisation framework that assesses the merits of projects across a range of criteria including strategic fit, use profile, cost relative to other projects and benefits to

¹³ Parliament of Victoria. 2024. Drivers need to change to protect most vulnerable. Parliament News. June 11. Melbourne: State of Victoria. <u>LINK</u>.

¹⁴ Mount Alexander Shire Council. 2023. Active Transport Strategy. Community Consultation Report. pp. 6-7.

¹⁵ Victorian Government. 2020. Strategic Cycling Corridors in Victoria. Melbourne: State of Victoria. LINK.

safety. The lack of a prioritisation framework in the 2023 MASC Active Transport Strategy was noted by the community reference group before members of that group left the project.

We note these concerns under the banner of equity and access because it appears the Kennedy Street project, among other ideas for active transport projects shared by MASC representatives with the community reference group, are targeted at recreational users including tourists instead of at people who walk, wheelchair, ride and mobility scoot around Castlemaine on a daily basis.

Specific recommendations for the RSS

The following draft recommendations are intended to provide a starting point for discussions between governments and the community about (a) methods for identifying and addressing road safety issues in the Castlemaine town centre. The list is not exhaustive and Calm It—Castlemaine will develop the draft recommendations in due course.

1. Use contemporary traffic data collection methods

The traffic data collection methods proposed to inform the RSS have limited potential to reveal road safety issues in the RSS study area. Proprietary Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology can be used to analyse traffic volumes including pedestrians and cyclists at problematic intersections and streets e.g.:

- Mostyn Street outside the historic market
- Forest and Hargraves Street intersection
- Mostyn and Barker Street intersection
- Mostyn and Hargraves Street intersection
- Barker and Templeton Street intersection

Artificial Intelligence Road Survey (AIRS) technology by Vivacity Labs (hired from <u>Bicycle Network</u>) can be used to analyse road user counts, user pathways, vehicle speeds and queue wait times and to identify conflicts between different road users. Analysis of data from AIRS technology can be used to augment findings of the 2023 Active Transport Strategy survey, RSS community consultation and conventional traffic count analyses (which, to our knowledge, do not capture pedestrian movements and bicycle traffic).

2. Extend the RSS study boundary

The study area is too small to engender a holistic understanding of, and response to, road safety issues in the Castlemaine town centre. This is because problematic traffic conditions and areas of conflict between vehicles and vulnerable road users extend along Barker and Forest Streets for several blocks beyond the RSS study boundary. We are concerned that intervening only within the study area will not address safety issues associated with road space allocation and poor design along our major roads.

Additionally, the narrow scope of the current study boundary suggests that solutions to road safety issues in the Castlemaine town centre are predetermined. To assuage this concern, Calm It—Castlemaine recommends adding 'secondary study areas' that expand the extent of the 'primary study area' (see Figure 3). This will ensure that issues with connections to destinations around the town centre—on state and local roads—are given due consideration in the analysis.



Figure 3. Current 'primary' and proposed 'secondary' RSS study areas.

After completion of the town centre RSS, Calm It—Castlemaine foresees a need to review road speeds across the entire urban area of Castlemaine (incl. Chewton, Campbells Creek and McKenzie Hill) to harmonise the current patchwork of speed limits and bring government road speed policies in line with best practice, especially on residential streets.

Ultimately, we would like to see MASC partner with the State government and local community to prepare an integrated land use and transport strategy for our Shire. This would give governments an opportunity to better understand and respond to the community's short-, medium- and long-term transport needs, and to align future transport investments with land use policies.

3. Strategies to support modal shift - Beyond the infrastructure

The number of car and truck movements that our roads carry is increasing and the impact this has on walkers and cyclists is disproportionately high. Trying to ameliorate this impact with reduced road speeds and improved traffic treatments (as advocated for by Calm It—Castlemaine) is important, but there also needs to be a focus on reducing the total number of car and truck movements on our roads.

'Mode Shift' – changing travel modes from single car trips to walking, cycling, public transport, trip sharing or trip combining requires a whole of government approach to transport and land use planning and considered engagement with the community.

There are tentatively-worded 'actions' in the 2023 Active Transport Strategy that hint at initiatives to encourage 'mode shift' in Mount Alexander Shire. For example:

- 1.1.1 Advocate for greater coordination of scheduling between public transport providers to assist with improved active transport connections, and
- 3.1.1 Evaluate accessible communication methods audio, visual, mobility and language to support the participation needs of all active transport users).

Calm It—Castlemaine believes there are concrete initiatives that governments and the community can develop together to promote road safety by encouraging mode shift. These Include:

- Initiatives to encourage local businesses to promote active transport use by staff,
- Initiatives to encourage schools, kinders and childcare centres to promote active transport by parents and students,
- Hosting and/or supporting Ride and Walk to work and school days,
- Using innovative signage along main roads to alert people to the ease of walking and cycling to the town centre (see Walking and Cycling Strategy 2010 and Easy Walk/Easy Cycle maps for Castlemaine CBD - Victoria Walks),
- Hosting new riders education days getting novice riders paired up with experienced riders,
- Supporting better delivery of Bike Ed in Schools working towards its original aim of getting upper primary school children road-ready,
- Establishing a cooperative car share scheme to help families give up their second (or third) car, and to help people live 'car-lite' in regional Victoria,
- Supporting social enterprises that improve access to e-bikes by providing affordable finance and maintenance solutions, and
- Cash incentives or rate rebates for new residents who move to Castlemaine and purchase an e-bike.

4. 'Study tour' of Melbourne and 'walk and ride with us' day in Castlemaine

We would like to invite Councillors, relevant Council officers, DTP staff and consultants working on the RSS to participate in two events that we can host in the second-half of 2024.

Study tour: The first event is a study tour of several Melbourne sites to look at pedestrian and cycling treatments that:

- Are potentially applicable in the Castlemaine town centre,
- Are at the lower end of the cost spectrum, and
- Balance the need for safety, movement and accessibility.

Examples will include:

- 30km/h streets and supporting treatments,
- Pedestrian priority at signalised crossings,
- Pedestrian priority along non-signalised routes,
- Street narrowing and 'calming' treatments,
- On-road cycle lanes that reduce car lane widths to reinforce lower road speeds, and
- Separated cycle lanes by parked cars (e.g., Copenhagen style), concrete barriers or significant paint treatments (e.g., rumble strips).

Walk and ride with us: The follow-up event will be a half-day 'walk and ride with us' session, where several Castlemaine locals will take participants on a journey through their experience of navigating the town centre as:

- A pedestrian on foot,
- A pedestrian with a mobility aid,
- An on-road cyclist,
- A cyclist with accompanying child, and

A young teenager.

5. Inquiry by design workshop

We recommend that Council undertake an 'inquiry by design' workshop with government stakeholders, representatives of community groups engaged in active transport advocacy, and representatives of other vulnerable road user groups. The purpose of the workshop would be to explore and develop options for design solutions that improve the safety of roads in the town centre for all users.

Inquiry by design is a tool that governments can use to obtain valuable information about safety road issues from the community, and to identify planning strategies and design opportunities to meet community needs. Design concepts developed by governments can also be introduced to the community and tested as part of the workshop. Alternatively, the workshop participants can develop their own ideas from scratch, based on a shared understanding of the issues and opportunities.

6. Inviting and attractive streetscapes

Many of the urban design initiatives detailed in the 2020 Castlemaine Streetscape Plan and Design Standard should be integrated into the Castlemaine town centre RSS and action plan.

Although not often considered under the heading of 'road safety', the look and feel of streets impacts greatly on how people use, spend time in and pass through a place. Improving the overall quality of the urban design of the Castlemaine town centre will have the flow-on benefit of slowing traffic, with the whole town feeling less like a truck route.

Tree canopies can supplement existing awnings to substantially cool streets throughout summer and offer shade for more hours of the day. Re-introducing trees and adding vegetation throughout the CBD will create comfortable walking and riding conditions for people and will also send a 'slow down' message to drivers.

Kerrie Eldridge, Senior Project Engineer Mount Alexander Shire Council 27 Lyttleton Street Castlemaine VIC 3450



Calm It Castlemaine Feedback on Draft Road Safety Action Plan

Dear Kerrie,

Thank you for emailing the Castlemaine CBD Draft Road Safety Action Plan prepared by Bitzios Consulting. Calm It Castlemaine appreciates Council sharing information about this important road safety project for Mount Alexander Shire.

It was terrific to meet with you, Michael Annear and Paul Diss last year to discuss the project, and to meet Felipe Irony from Bitzios Consulting to walk-around the Castlemaine town centre. We are writing to continue the conversation with Council and the consultant team by giving feedback on the draft plan.

The nature of the feedback is high-level because we feel it is important at this stage of the planning process to step-back and consider the specific initiatives in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan in relation to the big picture. While each of the initiatives can help to improve road safety in the town centre, more planning and design work is needed to ensure the full benefits of any future public investments are realised.

In sum, we are encouraged by the longer-term initiatives explored in the draft plan including the 30 km/h 'active street' for Mostyn Street, blanket 40 km/h zone for the town centre, 10 km/h shared zone for Frederick Street, and raised entry threshold treatments for several intersections. We are also delighted to see some of the ambitious projects that we discussed in our meeting last year including lane reductions and separated bike lanes on Barker and Forest Streets.

Additionally, it is good to see a phased approach to the plan because this can help to build community support for more substantial investments in road safety improvements and active transport infrastructure. The sequence of the interventions is generally sound. However, we believe that more community consultation and planning work is required to get the design and sequence of the different initiatives right.

1. Integrated network planning

Our main feedback is that planning for road safety improvements in the town centre must be integrated with current planning for the active transport network. Notably, the heatmap produced by Bitzios Consulting using data collected during the community consultation process indicates the study area cannot be treated in isolation from its context including the Castlemaine Railway Station, Western Reserve, and streets that supply overflow car parking for businesses inside the study area (e.g., Mostyn, Lyttleton and Templeton Streets west of Barker Street).

In our letter to Council dated 13.06.2024, we recommended the study area be expanded to include streets and public open spaces around the town centre. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to connect planning for both projects when the Active Transport External Reference Group works with Council to develop the 'aspirational' network maps from the 2023 Active Transport Strategy. This work is currently underway.

Additionally, it will be very important for DTP to engage with planning for both projects because the initiatives in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan must be integrated with the design of the Active Transport network. Our concern here is that investments in Council-managed roads (e.g., Mostyn Street) will be underutilised or ineffective if road safety issues on State-managed roads (e.g., Barker and Forest Streets) are not addressed by DTP.

Currently, Barker and Forest Streets are barriers to the town centre because they are unsafe for people who walk, cycle and mobility scoot. While it is good to see different treatments to these streets explored in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan, we believe that more detailed planning work is required to properly address public safety and severance issues.

2. A design-led approach

The road safety initiatives proposed in the draft plan raised many questions about the detailed design that are too numerous and complex to address in this short letter. While it is good to see a range of initiatives explored, we believe that more community consultation and 'design-led' planning work is needed to firm up the final approach. These initiatives include:

- Lane reductions and separate bike lanes along major roads,
- Intersection treatments where major roads meet local roads,
- Mostyn Street 'active street' concept development,
- Redesign of the roundabout at the corner of Forest and Hargraves Streets

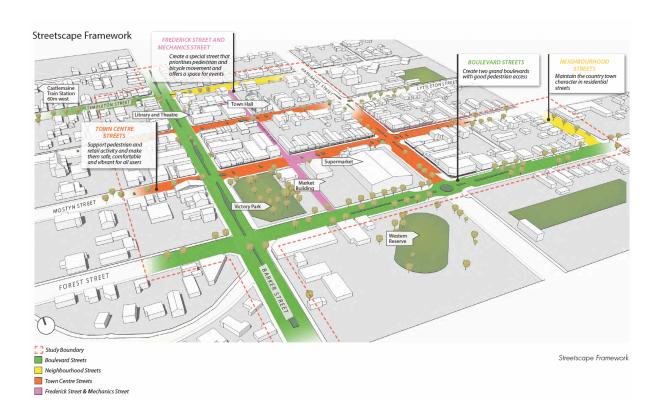
The beginnings of a design-led approach can be found in the 2020 Streetscape Plan and Design Standards that guide the development of streets and public spaces in the town centre. Unfortunately, recommendations in the Streetscape Plan worked within the constraints of the existing road infrastructure (e.g., kerb lines, medians, established landscape, etc.), and privileged heritage and aesthetic objectives instead of road safety and active transport objectives.

Despite these limitations, several aspects of the Streetscape Plan can inform thinking about road safety improvements in the town centre. First, the Streetscape Plan proposed a mid-block crossing to Forest Street, between Barker and Hargraves Streets, which does not appear in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan. This crossing point is on a designated Strategic Cycling Corridor and, in principle, is earmarked for State government investment. Currently, it is a highly problematic (informal) crossing point due to heavy traffic, turning vehicles and high pedestrian volumes (especially on weekends).

Second, the Streetscape Plan contains a 'Streetscape Framework' (see below) that can inform the extent and nature of road safety treatments in the town centre. For example, the Draft Road Safety Action Plan frames Mostyn Street as the focus of activity in the town

centre, but the Streetscape Plan envisages that Hargraves and Lyttleton Streets will also play prominent roles in the future.

One final point to add is that a design-led approach to road safety improvements integrates user experience (i.e., local knowledge) with engineering standards and other design requirements including heritage and public amenity. Consequently, a design-led approach goes beyond off-the-shelf solutions found in AusRoads (and other) engineering standards because it is place-based. We are available to discuss how a design-led approach to road infrastructure can work in Castlemaine and Mount Alexander Shire.



3. Design the streets (and the treatments)

It is good to see entry threshold treatments proposed for Lyttleton and Hargraves Streets because this will calm traffic in the town centre. However, we wonder if the 'active street' concept envisaged for Mostyn Street could also be applied to Lyttleton and Hargraves Streets. This would create a proper 'grid' of pedestrian-friendly streets in the town centre and help to spread the street life and business activity concentrated in Mostyn Street.

Again, this approach is suggested by the Streetscape Framework (p. 17) in the 2020 Streetscape Plan and Design Standards. Because the 'active street' is quite a bold and transformative concept, perhaps its application to Lyttleton and Hargraves Streets could be considered as part of a longer-term plan (i.e., a fourth step that is added to the three steps outlined in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan).

The potential for a design-led approach to inform road safety enhancements and active transport planning in the town centre leads to a third suggestion: develop road safety

treatments with a clear understanding of the existing conditions and future development of streets.

We feel that many streets in and around the town centre underperform in terms of their potential street life and levels of commercial activity. Economic development and urban design are not explicit objectives of the Draft Road Safety Action Plan but they are strongly connected. Two opportunities stand out here. First, to design streets that calm traffic movements through well-considered and high-quality 'green infrastructure' solutions that enhance urban amenity. Second, to support a recent uptick in business openings in the town centre and to increase economic development over the long term.

4. A consistent road speed framework

To recap, it is good to see 30 km/h and 10 km/h speed limits for key shopping streets and laneways explored in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan. Although many motorists already move through Mostyn and Frederick Streets at speeds that approximate 30 km/h and 10 km/h, respectively, we argue that it is good to codify good behaviour with signed speeds.

However, we are concerned that road speed reforms in the town centre could add to the confusion that stems from the current patchwork of signed road speeds across the Castlemaine urban area (incl. Campbells Creek, Chewton and McKenzie Hill). A Castlemaine-wide road speed framework is needed to ensure that road speed reforms in the town center cohere with signed road speeds across the consolidated urban area.

A road speed framework for the Castlemaine urban area could provide a set of principles that are responsive to local conditions including road safety issues and mobility needs. It could also develop a set of clear and distinct speed 'breaks' that are (generally) informed by the Victorian Government's Movement and Place framework. For example:

- 10 km/h for pedestrian priority streets,
- 25 km/h for shared active streets,
- 40 km/h for major roads that support commercial activity, and
- 50 km/h for major roads that do not support commercial activity.

Note: The above breaks in signed speeds are more consistent than breaks found in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan because they decrease in 15 km/h intervals in activity centres.

5. Data collection methods

Council is beginning to collect extensive data on factors that influence road safety and active transport participation in Mount Alexander Shire. This data sits alongside current work by Council to map the extent and condition of active transport network infrastructure in Castlemaine and surrounding townships (e.g., footpaths, bike lanes and off-road trails).

This data will benefit advocacy for Commonwealth and State government investment in road safety improvements, bicycle laneways, footpaths and trains. It can also help Council and groups like Calm It Castlemaine to advocate for specific projects. With these purposes of

data collection in mind, we would like to raise a couple of concerns about data collection and interpretation in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan.

Our first concern relates to the way that survey questions used to collect data from the community are formulated. Specifically, we are concerned that data on community preferences for signed road speeds will have limited use if the questions are potentially 'leading'. For example:

Do you support a 40 km/h speed limit for Castlemaine CBD?

It is a positive outcome that 80% of respondents to the survey support a 40 km/h speed limit in the town centre because it indicates a strong appetite for road speed reform. However, we wonder if a multichoice question with a range of road speeds would have yielded more useful data. A multi-choice question would illuminate a spectrum of community preferences that could be used to support a case for lower road speeds in particular situations (e.g., the 30 km/h limit proposed for Mostyn Street).

Our second concern relates to the applicability of data cited in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan. Specifically, it is unclear if the different categories of cyclists are derived from locally sourced data or from general data sources (e.g., the proportions of 'strong and fearless', 'enthused and confident' cyclists, etc.) Nevertheless, recent studies by Pearson et al. (2022) suggest that categories of cyclists in regional Victoria--using the same Geller (2006) typology used by Bitzios Consulting--differ greatly from those cited in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan.

Instead of citing generic data from overseas studies, we recommend digging deeper into data collected for the 2023 Active Transport Strategy, which is quite rich. This could be supplemented by local Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data on car ownership, travel to work and public health to make a case for road safety improvements that can increase active transport participation. For example, ABS data on car ownership indicates that approximately 20% of households in the town centre do not own a car, and that 3 times more people in Castlemaine ride to work than the national average.

6. Balancing competing needs

Although we strongly support proposals for serious investments in bicycle infrastructure, we are concerned that some initiatives in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan will need to be 'socialised' before they can be supported by the community. Road safety improvements and investments in active transport infrastructure can benefit motorists as much as pedestrians and cyclists because (a) bicycles take up less road space than cars and (b) every car trip starts and finishes with a walk. However, governments must think carefully about how to position and progress ambitious active transport initiatives to ensure that competing needs are balanced and there is strong community support.

Our main area of concern in this regard is the suggestion to remove car parking along a section of Barker Street to build a bike lane. Although there is evidence to suggest that this initiative could deliver strong health, economic and environmental benefits to the community, it would be likely to encounter strong resistance because of perceptions that business

revenue is connected to car parking provision. The proposal to remove lanes along Forest Street might be met with similar resistance.

We wonder if different options for Barker and Forest Streets need to be explored and debated instead of floating the most ambitious option/s without testing alternatives with the community. Again, this could be part of a design-led approach to developing the wider active transport network, where the focus of planning and engineering work is on public safety and the urban design quality of streets.

In conclusion, Calm It Castlemaine is encouraged by the directions for road speed reform and infrastructure investment explored in the Draft Road Safety Action Plan. We applaud Council and Bitzios Consulting for the ambitious initiatives explored in the draft, and we are grateful to be consulted as part of the planning process.

Don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss this feedback. We look forward to continuing to work with the Council on this very important road safety initiative.

Kind regards,

James Whitten and Joel Meadows (on behalf of Calm It Castlemaine)



4 February 2024

Mount Alexander Shire Council
Castlemaine VIC 3450

By email to: info@mountalexander.vic.gov.au

SUBMISSION TO MASC 2024/25 BUDGET

Mount Alexander Cycling (MAC) appreciates this opportunity to make a submission to the 2024/25 Council budget process.

MAC notes that Council has endorsed the 2023-2033 Active Transport Strategy (ATS), and although the ATS did not contain a list of priority infrastructure projects, it is understood that Council may have several high priority active transport projects that it wishes to advance in the short term.

To progress its vision for active transport and to deliver its priority projects, detailed planning and design work must be carried out before any grant funding is obtained to build them. Hence Council must commit funding in the 2024/25 financial year for the planning and design of priority projects.

MAC would also like to see funding allocated to additional strategic work including the engagement of suitably qualified consultants to:

- a) Deliver initiatives in the ATS Initial Action Plan including an audit of existing tracks, trails and paths (see Mount Alexander Shire Council 2023b),
- b) develop the ATS into a Community Mobility Plan with mode-share targets and implementation timeframes, and
- c) facilitate additional community consultation including workshops with stakeholder groups, to help develop the strategy into a plan.

Active transport infrastructure is a sound investment by governments because it pays strong social, economic and environmental dividends.

As noted in the ATS, investing in the Shire's active transport assets will promote sustainable mobility, enhance the health and wellbeing of the community, and make roads safer for vulnerable users including children, the elderly and people with a disability (Mount Alexander Shire Council 2023a).

In addition to these significant benefits, McKinsey & Co. (2020) estimate that every dollar invested by governments in active transport infrastructure yields more than two dollars of socioeconomic and decarbonisation benefits for the community.

It should be noted that Council funding for active transport infrastructure in the years following publication of the 2010-2020 Walking and Cycling Strategy peaked at \$1.04 million in FY 2015-16 but reduced

significantly during the years leading up to publication of the 2023-33 Active Transport Strategy (see attached).

MAC is concerned that Council could lose both state government and local community support for active transport investment if it does not have any 'runs on the board' soon i.e., deliver one or more significant active transport projects in the next year or two.

Although the 2023/24 Council budget forecast more than \$1 million per annum investment in footpaths and cycleways for the 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years, without robust long-term planning and a pipeline of 'shovel ready' projects, Council may not be able to deliver on this promise.

In light of a potential lag between project planning and delivery, and the difficulties of sustaining a long-term program of infrastructure investment, it is important to note the Climate Council of Australia (2023) argues that if Australian governments are to achieve their emissions reduction targets they must invest heavily in active transport infrastructure.

Their analysis suggests that governments must rebalance transport infrastructure investment "from now" by redirecting 50% of future transport funding to public transport projects and 20% to active transport projects (Climate Council of Australia 2023, p. 48).

"Under all emissions reduction scenarios the Climate Council modelled," the authors of the *Shifting Gear:* The path to cleaner transport contend, "a major and dramatic shift in the way most people get around is required" (Climate Council of Australia 2023, p. iii).

Therefore, as well as applying for State government grants, Council should consider committing its own funds to deliver a significant active transport project, given the considerable social, economic and environmental dividends that such investments can return to the community.

Council could also consider applying to the Essential Services Commission to increase the 2024/25 rate cap to pay for active transport infrastructure projects. Given the low cost of active transport infrastructure relative to public transport and roads, and the proven benefits of active transport investment, such an application could meet the Commission's criteria for resource efficiency and value for money. Applications to increase the rate cap close 31 March each year (Essential Services Commission 2023).

MAC stands with Council in its efforts to deliver active transport projects, but Council must lead by committing significant funds in this budget for:

- Delivering initiatives in the ATS Initial Action Plan,
- Developing a Community Mobility Plan (including Community Consultation),
- Project planning and design, and
- Project implementation.

It is MAC's assessment that any amount less than \$1.2 million in the 2024/25 Council Budget, for these activities, is likely to be inadequate.

Yours sincerely

Peter Strang

Secretary
Mount Alexander Cycling Inc.
C/- The Hub, 233 Barker St Castlemaine VIC 3450

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MASC – EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET ANALYSIS FY 2014/15 TO 2026/27

ACTIVE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURE

FY	Total Footpaths and	Total Infrastructure	Total Capital Works	AT portion of total	AT portion of total	Notes
	Cycleways (\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)	Infrastructure (%)	Capital Works (%)	
2026-27 (B)	1,303	7,403	11,953	17.60	10.90	
2025-26 (B)	1,285	7,583	11,883	16.95	10.81	
2024-25 (B)	1,037	7,433	11,613	13.95	8.93	
2023-24 (B)	207	6,084	14,499	3.40	1.43	AT lowest proportion of spend yet
2022-23 (F)	1,105	8,170	14,932	13.53	7.40	Footpath renewal program
2021-22 (F)	291	6,042	10,435	4.82	2.79	
2020-21 (F)	895	8,432	11,735	10.61	7.63	Campbells Ck trail and Fryers Rd footpath
2019-20 (F)	695	9,291	12,239	7.48	5.68	
2018-19 (F)	363	7,498	11,778	4.84	3.08	
2017-18 (F)	456	6,194	9,823	7.36	4.64	
2016-17 (F)	260	4,222	9,082	6.16	2.86	
2015-16 (F)	1,036	5,905	10,061	17.54	10.30	Maldon-Castlemaine RT
2014-15 (F)	583	5,359	11,395	10.88	5.12	Maldon-Castlemaine RT and other initiatives from 2010-20 walking and cycling strategy

Notes: AT = Active Transport; B = Budgets taken from 2023-24 proposal; F = Forecast of actual FY spend taken from relevant budget

IMPLICATIONS

- 1. This analysis suggests that there will be considerable expenditure on active transport infrastructure (footpaths and cycleways) planned in future years based on projects identified in the Active Transport Strategy (ATS). Active transport includes walking, cycling and the use of mobility scooters, wheelchairs etc.
- 2. However, the budget for next year (2023/24) indicates that very little will be spent on active transport infrastructure.
- 3. The ATS will identify a number of projects that will require planning work to be carried out to ensure delivery of projects in future years. Planning should include an audit of existing infrastructure and collection of baseline data e.g. mode share figures. The ATS will also list some minor infrastructure improvements e.g. bike parking facilities, that could be delivered next financial year.
- 4. The Council budget for the 2023/24 financial year should include a much higher figure for active transport projects to be identified by the ATS.
- 5. More broadly, the analysis of past expenditures and budget forecasts emphasises the importance of developing a robust pipeline of active transport projects to fully and effectively utilise budget commitments.

Mr Darren Fuzzard, CEO Mount Alexander Shire Council 27 Lyttleton Street Castlemaine VIC 3450



By email to: info@mountalexander.vic.gov.au

Submission to Mount Alexander Shire Council 2025/26 Budget

Dear Mr Fuzzard,

Mount Alexander Cycling (MAC) and Calm It Castlemaine appreciate this opportunity to make a submission to the 2025/26 Council budget process. We trust these inputs will be useful in helping Council to understand the investment priorities of our members and of the different communities in Mount Alexander Shire that our advocacy work is connected to.

Mount Alexander Shire Community Vision aspires to a connected, inclusive and healthy community. Quality active transport infrastructure allows our community to move freely and safely around our township on foot and bike and using a mobility aid. It provides a healthy option for people to independently get to the shops, work, school and services, particularly for the young and the elderly and other vulnerable road user groups.

Good urban planning and design combined with quality active transport infrastructure can mean fewer cars on our roads and reduced pressure on existing road infrastructure including demand for car parking. Additionally, active transport investments can pay economic dividends for communities by reducing car dependency--a strain on household budgets during a cost-of-living crisis--and increasing economic activity by enhancing the amenity of and access to commercial and retail precincts.

With these benefits in mind, MAC and Calm It Castlemaine celebrate the following wins for active transport in Mount Alexander Shire:

- Council's \$12.19 million grant for upgrades to Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane.
- Significant state and local government contributions to detailed planning and engineering work on the Castlemaine-Maryborough Rail Trail project.
- Initiatives that will come out of current planning work including the draft Castlemaine Town Centre Road Safety Action Plan--enabled by a \$30,000 TAC road safety grant--and ongoing planning work for the 2023 Active Transport Strategy.
- Council's recent application to the Australian Government's \$100 million Active
 Transport Fund for planning and construction of a separated bike lane connecting
 McKenzie's Hill to The Mill and Botanical Gardens precinct (running through the West
 End and town centre along Ray and Kennedy Streets).

These projects will move our community towards a safer, healthier and more prosperous future. We applaud the Council for these wins, and stand ready to support and assist with future active transport projects, because there is still much work to do!

In this budget submission we identify two areas where additional Council resources will be required to deliver on the promise of the 2023 Active Transport Strategy, which is connected to other Council strategies for climate action, economic development, healthy communities,

etc. The first area is project planning, where resources are needed to develop a suite of 'shovel ready' projects so that Council is prepared for future rounds of Commonwealth and State government grants. Additional resources allocated to planning and design work could be used to:

- Develop initiatives that will be contained in the Castlemaine Town Centre Road Safety Action Plan (e.g., the Mostyn Active Street, Barker and Forest Street redesign, etc.) incl. community consultation work and engagement of consultant teams,
- Deliver on the visions articulated in Council's 2023 Active Transport Strategy and 2020 Streetscape Plan and Design Standards, and the State government's 2019 Strategic Cycling Corridors initiative, by exploring the potential of active transport projects to enhance the economic and environmental performance of the Castlemaine town centre (e.g., connecting the Western Reserve to Victory Park and enhancing the amenity of Hargraves and Lyttleton Streets).

The second area where we believe that additional Council resources can pay dividends is by investing in the planning and design capabilities of Council. Council Officers are doing a terrific job of working with the community and State government to advance current strategies and projects. However, we observe that many strategies and projects that are related to active transport are disconnected because they are managed by different departments/branches within Council.

To (a) align strategies and projects (e.g., the 2023 Active Transport Strategy and initiatives forthcoming in the 2025 Castlemaine Town Centre Road Safety Action Plan), (b) ensure that Council realises the full potential of active transport investments, and (c) bring a holistic and coherent approach to the planning and design of infrastructure projects, we suggest that:

- Council employ a transport planner, urban planner and/or urban designer who specialises in active transport (e.g., an Active Transport Officer) to work with Council Officers in parks and recreation, civil engineering and strategic planning, and
- Set aside a budget to engage consultants to support the Active Transport Officer (e.g., to commission data collection and/or research to use in Council grant applications and community advocacy work).

The Active Transport Officer would perform the role of 'Active Transport Champion' that various Council Officers discussed with community members during planning for the 2023 Active Transport Strategy. Notionally, a budget of \$250k would be required to institute and support such a position.

Although significant, committing budget to active transport initiatives will save Council and the community money in the long run because investments in active transport can help to relieve pressure on existing Council resources, reduce expenditure on more costly forms of infrastructure (e.g. car parking and roads) and increase the economic performance of the region by reducing transport costs for households and enhancing the liveability and attractiveness of townships in Mount Alexander Shire.

Thank you for your time here, Darren. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about this budget submission. We would be happy to make a presentation to Council in support of this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Strang

James Whitten and Joel Meadows

Movin' the 'maine: elements of a community-led mobility plan

A Monash University Master of Urban Planning and Design project with the Castlemaine Institute

Movin' the 'maine is a Master of Urban Planning and Design Planning Project that students from Monash University will take in semester 1, 2025, as part of their course requirements. Planning Projects at Monash prepare students for practice by providing opportunities for project-based learning, that are attached to real-world settings and current research (see <u>course guide</u>).

Movin' the 'maine: elements of a community-led mobility plan aims to draw on local knowledge and experience in order to propose policies, plans and projects that will move regional communities towards a sustainable mobility future. Using Castlemaine in Mount Alexander Shire as a case study, the Planning Project will produce a Handbook of Sustainable Mobility and a public exhibition, that explore ideas to connect regional communities and make their transport infrastructure more equitable, safe and resilient. Some of the ideas could include:

- projects to better connect communities along the Bendigo railway line,
- bus service reform and enhanced public transport infrastructure accessibility,
- flexible public transport solutions including on-demand services,
- improving urban accessibility with infill development strategies, and
- regenerating streets to increase public safety, urban amenity and business activity.

Movin' the 'maine is a collaboration between Monash's Department of Architecture and the <u>Castlemaine Institute</u>, a research and learning not-for-profit organisation focused on social, economic, environmental and governance issues. It will be led by **James Whitten**, Lecturer in Master of Urban Planning and Design at Monash University, and supported by **Lisa Merkesteyn**, Principal Architect at Remark Practice and a member of the Castlemaine Institute.

The Planning Project is also supported by Mount Alexander Shire Council and the Department of Transport and Planning Loddon Mallee and Hume Regional Office. Community organisations including Calm It Castlemaine, Mount Alexander Cycling, Mount Alexander Shire Disability Advocacy Group and West End Resilience informed the brief and will participate in the project.

Up to 20 students will stay in Castlemaine from Thursday 27 to Sunday 30 March 2025 to attend meetings and workshops that connect them with community organisations, representatives of groups with unmet mobility needs, and local and state government planners. Additionally, the students will document the condition of urban infrastructure, share their preliminary research with the community, and visit areas that connect them with Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

The studio will conclude in July 2025 with the publication of the handbook and opening of the exhibition, which is tentatively called *Castlemaine 2040: A sustainable mobility future*. The aim of the handbook and exhibition are twofold. First, to support a constructive public conversation about transport planning and urban design issues in Castlemaine and surrounding townships. Second, to put forward practical yet compelling planning and design ideas that respond to the mobility needs of the community and, potentially, other communities across regional Victoria.

Contact James Whitten if you would like to learn more about *Movin' the 'maine*, a collaboration between Monash and the Castlemaine Institute.

- A number of comments were made regarding improving the existing pedestrian crossing at Mostyn Street (i.e. providing a raised crossing point)
- Community members are in favour of reducing the speed limits within the CBD
- A few community members would like to see more tree planting adjacent to the paths
- A number of community members commented on providing pedestrian priority infrastructure at the Mostyn Street / Hargraves Street intersection.

Outside the study are the comments are focused on Kennedy Street / Forest Street priority-controlled intersection and underpass, and Kennedy Street / Templeton Street priority-controlled intersection (Railway access).

Community noted issues particularly regarding vehicle speeds and safety of cyclists and pedestrians, as well as the lack of separated cycling infrastructure.

Figure 3.2 shows the on-line mapping comments heatmap.

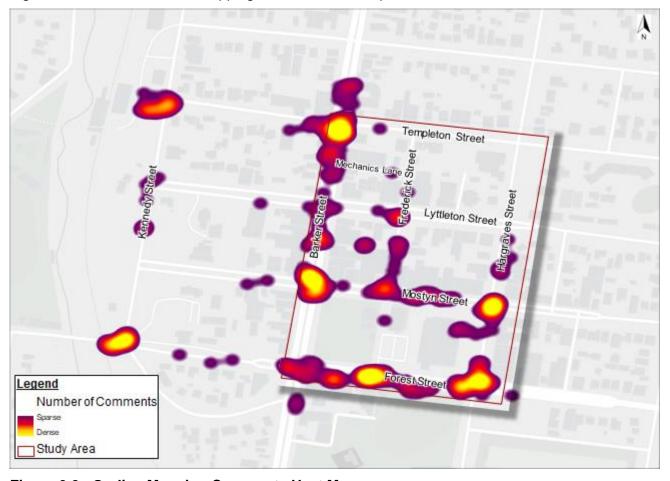


Figure 3.2: On-line Mapping Comments Heat Map

3.5 In-Person Community Drop-in Sessions

Three in-person community drop-in sessions were undertaken in Castlemaine CBD, as follows:

- 2 July 2024 from 9am to 11am, fronting the pedestrian crossing at the northern side of Mostyn Street
- 3 July 2024 from 11am to 1pm, at the corner of Mostyn Street and Hargraves Street
- 4 July 2024 from 3:30pm to 5:30pm, between the IGA and the Market Building at Mostyn Street.

The consultation was held in the form of a walk-in engagement/workshop. Due to this approach, it is difficult to infer the exact number of participants, however it is estimated that a minimum of 70 people participated in the community drop-in sessions.

The key feedback provided during these engagement drop-in sessions is summarised as follows:



Draft Action Plan

- Three Stages
- Based on community feedback and our expertise
- Further considerations
 - Community to feel ownership
 - Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper approach



