



SUBMISSION TO INFRASTRUCTURE VICTORIA -DRAFT 30 YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

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Introduction

The Metropolitan Transport Forum (MTF) is a transport interest group for Melbourne metropolitan local governments. The MTF has been established for over 25 years and has a membership of 25 metropolitan councils, and meets regularly to discuss transport topics of interest and relevance to local governments and their communities. The MTF also acts to liaise between local and state governments, and advocates on behalf of member councils on key transport issues of metropolitan significance. The MTF works closely with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).

The MTF informs, researches and debates transport issues with metropolitan local governments throughout the year. Our strategic plan identifies three main areas of attention within the Victorian transport planning agenda:

- Active – to achieve more funding for cycling and pedestrian infrastructure and projects that improve rider and walker safety;
- Buses – to increase patronage on buses; and
- Choice – to provide alternatives to private cars for the wider Melbourne community to move around Melbourne for recreation, employment and education.

General comments on IV Summary

The draft IV strategy notes that the Victorian Government has made progress or implemented 80% of the 2021 strategy. It would be helpful to have this more clearly quantified, showing how much progress has been achieved, rather than “made progress”, and which items have not commenced at all.

Public transport is included as a broad category where existing infrastructure does not meet Victoria’s needs. This submission will focus on this aspect of the draft strategy, but it is noted that public transport is closely linked to the other broad areas of social housing and community infrastructure.

The strategy does not explicitly reference health and education facilities in its opening section, only referring to these important services deeper in the document.

The IV strategy does make reference to climate change impacts, and the state’s goal of delivering 800,000 new homes by 2034. The MTF wants to stress that the delivery of these new homes should not be considered a standalone outcome; if public transport is not delivered in tandem with these homes, the success will be severely undermined, as forcing residents to own and operate multiple cars per dwelling in order to fully participate in the education, employment and social connectedness, adds considerably to their day to day costs.

It is good to see that costs and timeframes for the recommendations are included.

The draft strategy includes local government as a potential funding partner in some projects, but this does not reflect the considerable constraints under which local government capital works operate. Caps on rate rises, and strict requirements about long term financial viability of councils effectively means that discretionary budgets are very tight. Without direct funding

to local governments for these projects, reflecting their often long term strategic consultation works with their communities, local governments have almost no ability to partner on such projects, except for perhaps on an in-kind basis.

Summary of recommendations and future options

It is pleasing to see that so many of the nominated recommendations and future options are related to transport. As stated above, transport is critical to how people live – how they get to, where and when they can choose they work, learn, recreate and are able to have their mental as well as physical health needs addressed.

A summary of our comments is:

The MTF supports:

- Urgent delivery of bus reform projects
- More tram routes operating at a higher frequency, and operating for 24 hours per day 7 days per week.
- Careful infrastructure planning so that new services are able to continue to perform as climate change impact become more evident.
- Annual progress assessments of all actions listed
- Deadlines for the delivery of items (eg infrastructure sector plans)
- Make infrastructure contribution schemes include transport upgrades, and recognise that changing financial circumstances can quickly erode contributions.
- Engage with local government early on freight delivery investigations – to bring the community along and ready them for potential change.
- Increased uptake of Electric vehicles, and appropriate road user charges for all vehicles. Social equity considerations must play a role in any such charges.

Below are more specific comments for selected recommendations.

Section: Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities.

IV Recommendation 6: Make government infrastructure more accessible.

Cost and timing:

The estimate is \$1.5 billion for both bus and tram stops over 10 years.

The more detailed notes on this recommendation state:

- Most public transport is still inaccessible
- At this rate it will take 155 years to complete {the required upgrade}.
- The government should fund the highest priority stop upgrades and aim to finish them by 2030.
- By 2030 it should also approve funding for the next wave if accessibility upgrades.

MTF Comment:

- MTF believes the urgency of this work is highest above all other projects.
- 17% of Victorian residents can be considered to have ability restrictions (ABS) Our public transport system must urgently be improved to allow these residents to fully participate in life.
- To commence new major transport projects while the upgrade of the existing public transport network proceeds at a glacial speed is inadequate.

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
6	Complete priority public transport stop upgrades to meet legal accessibility requirements and fund further upgrades	The wording on this should be much stronger. This recommendation does not reflect that this upgrade is now well overdue and that there is still no publicly available plan against which to measure progress. This work is considered critical to improving the lives of a large sector of the Victorian community. It is considered that this recommendation should include a commitment to complete the upgrades within 10 years.

IV Recommendation 8: Extend Melbourne's trams to encourage more new homes nearby.

Cost and timing:

The estimate is up to \$5.5 billion for both bus and tram stops over 5 years.

The more detailed notes on this recommendation state:

- Most public transport is still inaccessible
- At this rate it will take 155 years to complete {the required upgrade}.
- The government should fund the highest priority stop upgrades and aim to finish them by 2030.
- By 2030 it should also approve funding for the next wave of accessibility upgrades.

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
8	Increase services on key tram routes in activity centres that have been designated for additional housing development	The MTF supports all of the proposed extensions. MTF supports more trams, with higher frequency services operating 24/7.
8	Complete a detailed assessment of tram extensions in Melbourne's established suburbs.	Transport planning must also allow for greater walking and cycling.
8	Start building extensions in areas that can support more new homes.	Any new extensions must be fully accessible.
8	Rezone land around the extended tram line so more homes are built.	Transport planning must also allow for greater walking and cycling. Local government is well placed to assist in the engagement process which will be vital through the planning as well as construction stages of these projects.

IV Recommendation 9: Run faster bus services, more often, in Victoria's largest cities

Cost and timing:

The estimate is \$1-\$1.5 billion over 5 years.

The more detailed notes on this recommendation state:

- The benefits of running buses more often are similar to any one of Victoria's big road or rail project, *but they are far cheaper.* (our italicisation).
- Bus routes should be more direct for faster travel times
- The Victorian Government should redesign bus routes.
- The government should give buses priority on the road to improve travel times.

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
9	Run buses more often, for longer hours, and give buses priority on the road.	MTF supports more buses, with higher frequency services operating 24/7. Local government has participated for many years (over a decade in some cases) and is keen to assist in the implementation of these route and service redesigns. Much needed improvements to facilitate pedestrians include construction of more pedestrian crossings near bus stops to assist passengers approaching and departing the stops. These may not be within the new lower speed zones, but will be important to encourage greater use of buses.
9	In stages, straighten out existing bus routes so they are fast and direct	MTF supports a more efficient bus network, connecting well to train services. High frequency buses will remove the need for timetables and greatly improve passenger numbers and experience. The already completed bus review work should be implemented over the next 5 years.

Recommendation 10: Build a new bus rapid transit network

Cost and timing:

The estimate is \$3.5 billion over 5 years. The first tranche of rapid bus routes will provide welcome new services in undersupplied areas.

The more detailed notes on this recommendation state:

- The buses should run every 5 minutes in peak hours and every 10 minutes at other times

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
10	Complete a detailed assessment, reserve the required land, and build a new bus rapid transport network	The new frequent services should also be planned to operate 7 days a week.
10	Start with routes that connect train stations and busy destinations in Melbourne's north, west and south east, and extend the new Eastern Busway along Hoddle Street.	MTF supports the creation of new bus routes, especially in the west and south east. The proposed high frequency of the services is supported. Much needed improvements to facilitate pedestrians include construction of more pedestrian crossings near bus stops to assist passengers approaching and departing the stops. These may not be within the new lower speed zones, but will be important to encourage greater use of buses.

IV Recommendation 11: Extend metropolitan trains and run more services in Melbourne's west

Cost and timing:

The estimate is up to \$5.5 billion over 5 years.

The more detailed notes on this recommendation state:

- This prioritises Melbourne's west.
- This includes two new train stations at Thornhill Park and Mount Atkinson
- This will allow for faster Geelong, Ballarat and Wyndham Vales V/Line services

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
11	Extend and electrify metropolitan trains to Melton.	Enhancements to the wider metropolitan rail network are supported.
11	Assess delivery of new train station at Altona North accompanied by land rezoning.	

IV Recommendation 13: Make off-peak public transport cheaper and simplify regional fare zones.

Cost and timing:

The estimate is \$1 million per year.

The more detailed notes on this recommendation state:

Fare reform should be matched with service upgrades.

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
13	After upgrading the myki ticketing system, charge lower fares for off-peak travel on Victoria's buses, trains and trams.	Reducing off-peak fares will likely increase patronage. This should lead to more frequent services which will better reflect modern work contexts, and change economic frameworks where many jobs are in service, rather than manufacturing industries.
	Simplify fares and reduce the number of regional fares.	Continuing work from home practices have likely reduced the use of year long tickets. A review of fares should reflect this change in work practice.

Section: Victorians are healthy and safe

IV Recommendation 14: Make local streets safer for children and communities

Cost and timing:

The estimate is up to \$45 million.

The more detailed notes on this recommendation state:

- Funding can be used to improve footpaths and add crossings and other infrastructure to slow cars down.

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
14	Reduce speed limits to 30 km/h on local streets, starting in places that children often visit including schools, playgrounds, childcare centres and kindergartens.	MTF members' experience is that compliance with reduced speed limits is improved if done on an area by area basis rather than a street section by street section basis. Drivers comply better with speed limits which change less frequently, and are less likely to "accidentally" exceed the limit. Speed limits should be set for 24/7 (not only for school hours). Lowering speeds across the wider metropolitan area will simplify engagement for the project, and greatly reduce potential motorise confusion. Local government budgets are likely to be very limited in their ability to contribute to upgrades. Most councils only deliver a few streets/networks of traffic calming each year. The lower speed project should be complemented with many new crossing facilities on major roads. Much needed improvements to facilitate pedestrians include construction of more pedestrian crossings near bus stops to assist passengers approaching and

		departing the stops. These may not be within the new lower speed zones, but will be important to encourage greater use of buses.
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IV Recommendation 15: Build safe cycling networks in Melbourne and regional cities

Cost and timing:

The estimate is up to \$600m over 10 years.

The more detailed notes on this recommendation state:

- The cost estimate includes construction of a protected cycling corridor, including physical barriers, traffic signal upgrades, and new cycle pavements ..”.

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
15	Continue building protected and connected cycle corridors across Victoria.	The construction of protected cycle paths is supported the MTF. Any new protected cycle paths should be fully funded by the State. Our experience is that these projects require considerable engagement effort. It is also our experience that the use of “pop up” facilities can be an excellent way to experiment with this infrastructure, and address community concerns. Any budget must allow for deep engagement, and temporary works to trial proposed infrastructure. The use of unprotected cycle paths should also be supported as a precursor to protected lanes.
	Publish updates to the strategic cycling corridor network	

Section: Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy

IV Recommendation 36: Reform Infrastructure contributions

Cost and timing:

The estimate is up to \$5 million.

The more detailed notes on this recommendation state:

- The Victorian Government is working with property industry stakeholders to identify a new model for infrastructure contributions in 10 activity centres.
- The Victorian Government begins work to reform infrastructure contributions as soon as possible.

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
36	Simplify Victoria's infrastructure contribution schemes to cover all types of housing developments and reflect the cost of infrastructure in different development settings.	Infrastructure contribution schemes should reflect that improvements to infrastructure may be required <i>beyond</i> the development perimeters (eg tram extensions). Eg: The schemes should require the developers to upgrade nearby tram stops to meet accessibility requirements. Local government should be involved in the development of any new contribution models, and the legislation covering contributions should be reviewed.

IV Recommendation 40: Use modern traffic control technology for efficient and safe journeys

Cost and timing:

The estimate is up to \$3 billion over 10 years.

The more detailed notes on this recommendation state:

- On some tram routes almost 20% of travel time is spent waiting at red lights.

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
40	Further extend modern traffic control technology like sensors and cameras along arterial roads in Victoria's largest cities. Begin expanding smart motorways into Melbourne's growth are freeways.	The emphasis of this recommendation is private vehicles rather than public transport. This recommendation should include clear reference to improve on road public transport efficiency – such as prioritisation of buses and trams at intersections, and wider use of tram and bus only lanes. This recommendation should also provide greater emphasis to support pedestrian and cycling modes. It is noted that pedestrians are prioritised within the Melbourne CBD. Other high pedestrian locations could be piloted for similar prioritisation.

IV Recommendation 42: Encourage off-peak freight delivery in urban areas

Cost and timing:

The estimate is up to \$5 million over 5 years.

The more detailed notes on this recommendation state:

- ... should set up a pilot in Melbourne for off-peak freight delivery to test feasibility and confirm benefits. The pilot should:
 - target dense residential and commercial areas, such as inner Melbourne
 - focus on a single sector Draft recommendation 42 139 Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy
 - remove barriers to participation, for example by relaxing truck access restrictions and helping freight.

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
42	Prepare for growing freight volumes in urban areas by piloting an off-peak freight delivery program in a high density area of Melbourne.	Community engagement will be critical to such a pilot providing useful data for permanent implementation, and possible expansion.

IV Recommendation 43: Create and preserve opportunities for future major infrastructure projects

Cost and timing:

The estimate is up to \$150 million over 5 years.

Rec No	Summary wording	MTF comment
43	Create and preserve opportunities to build major infrastructure projects which might be required in the long term	Such corridors are vital, and can also be considered as early transport routes to build the patronage of future transport services (eg bus services could be running along the route of SRL while it is being constructed over 25 years)
	This includes...City Loop reconfiguration, extending and electrifying metropolitan trains to growth areas in Melbourne's north and south east, Melbourne Metro 2, the Bay West port, the outer metropolitan ring road and rail corridor and connecting western intermodal freight terminal	Standalone recommendations for each of these major projects would allow better tracking against your recommendations for current and future governments.
		It is important that any new infrastructure projects are planned and designed to ensure maximum flexibility. Often projects are strongly directed to one mode (eg cars) and result in disruption to existing alternate transport modes, or prevention of new routes.

COMMENTS ON FUTURE OPTIONS

Future Option		MTF comment
Charge people fairly to use roads	Introduce road charges that help manage congestion and improve productivity.	The costs of maintaining all roads are greatly increasing. The impacts of heavy vehicles including heavier passenger vehicles should be considered when proposing road user charges. Social equity must be considered in any road charges, which could reflect the availability of alternative transport modes to commuters.
	Consider options such as car parking levies, off-peak freeway tolls, congestion pricing trials, or road user charging for all motorists with lowered fixed road charges.	Funding allocations should reward communities which mode shift to cycling and walking, to allow further expansion and improved maintenance of walking and cycling facilities.

Future Option		MTF comment
Plan for more efficient and sustainable urban freight	Develop a network of urban freight delivery precincts in Melbourne to improve freight productivity and reduce emissions	Freight delivery issues are important to local government. Increased housing density creates more expectations for greater residential precinct protection when developments are approved. Engaging with the wider community to improve understanding of freight economics is important.

Future Option		MTF comment
Reconfigure City Loop for more frequent and reliable trains	Reconfigure the City Loop by splitting City Loop 2 tunnels into 2 separate cross city train lines.	MTF supports more frequent and reliable train services.
	Build around 3 kilometres of new train tunnels and upgrade related power and signalling.	
	Increase service frequency to Craigieburn, Upfield and Frankston lines..	

Future Option		MTF comment
Extend metropolitan trains to growth areas in Melbourne's north and south east	Extend and electrify metropolitan trains to Clyde and towards Kalkallo to support growth in new suburbs.	The extension of train services to these areas is supported. The pressure on infrastructure due to the lag between delivery of housing and public transport services results effects all metro residents.

Other comments:

Overall infrastructure review

It is noted that IV does not comment on existing projects.

However, MTF believes existing projects should also be considered in the mix, as funding allocated to these projects will effect the commencement and period to deliver any new infrastructure projects.

SRL which has an overall delivery time of 25 years is a good example where funding could be re-directed to other infrastructure projects that deliver greater return not just in investment, but also on number of residents who will benefit. While it may be that SRL exceeds the return of other proposed projects, given the common occurrence that major projects budgets are exceeded by significant amounts, the continuing evaluation of the benefits of these projects is important.

Gender Impact Assessment

Projects should also be considered through a gender assessment lens. It is arguable that the entirety of Melbourne's transport infrastructure projects has been built on assumptions from the 1950's where a single bread winner (usually the male) worked 9-5 in the city.

Services, routes and timetables do not reflect the evolved social context of the 2020s and beyond where women participate in the workplace in huge numbers, hours of work in a service economy run 24/7, and people with disabilities contribute to the economy and social fabric in ways not anticipated 70 years ago. This will no doubt evolve further, and the transport infrastructure must account for this, and be flexible to adapt to future changes we cannot yet imagine. Funding analysis should reflect this more complex understanding of society.

Benefit Cost per Capita

It is considered that it would also be useful to also consider the number of potential beneficiaries of each recommendation, so that projects can be ranked in terms of a BCR analysis that addresses not just financial RoE, but also benefit to people. Historically small budget projects appear to get overlooked against "block buster" projects. This new metric may reframe the political benefit of smaller projects and provide momentum for their commencement and greater positive community impact.

Review of funding needs for existing infrastructure.

Recommendation 34 refers to preventative maintenance making exiting infrastructure more productive.

A critical element of Victoria's infrastructure is the adequacy and upgrade of its existing infrastructure. An example is rail infrastructure which has seen little (or no) system upgrade since the majority was constructed over 100 years ago. New technology is proposed for new segments of the network, but the old segments, which will remain the vast proportion of the network are still operating as in the early 1900s.

These improvements appear to be deemed maintenance, but planning and funding allocation for wholesale upgrades must commence. IV's assessment of the importance of these upgrades would add greatly to the discussion.

Conclusion

This is a comprehensive set of recommendations for the current and future governments to use to meet the needs of all Victorians.

It is pleasing to see that so many of the nominated recommendations and future options are related to transport. As stated above, transport is critical to how people live – how they get to, where and when they can choose they work, learn, recreate and are able to have their mental as well as physical health needs addressed.

MTF members have been actively involved in many major transport infrastructure projects. They have experienced mixed results in terms of reducing identifiable long lasting impacts on communities.

A summary of our comments is:

The MTF supports:

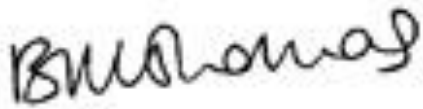
- Urgent delivery of bus reform projects
- More tram routes operating at a higher frequency, and operating for 24 hours per day 7 days per week.
- Careful infrastructure planning so that new services are able to continue to perform as climate change impact become more evident.
- Annual progress assessments of all actions listed
- Deadlines for the delivery of items (eg infrastructure sector plans)
- Make infrastructure contribution schemes include transport upgrades, and recognise that changing financial circumstances can quickly erode contributions.
- Engage with local government early on freight delivery investigations – to bring the community along and ready them for potential change.
- Increased uptake of Electric vehicles, and appropriate road user charges for all vehicles. Social equity considerations must play a role in any such charges.

The “Future Options” are welcomes as discussion starters for important potential changes to how we view delivery and use of transport infrastructure. These will be difficult conversations but should commence. Any changes will take decades, and it would be valuable to find a way to engage sooner rather than later. Deferring the necessary discussions will not make them easier to resolve.

Lastly the MTF has suggested some additional matters to be considered as a formal part of the development of any infrastructure proposal to maintain a high fitness for purpose and to ensure that projects provide greatest future options, as well as addressing current needs. These are:

- To conduct annual infrastructure project reviews of projects in progress
- To undertake a gender impact assessment of all projects
- To undertake a benefit cost per capita assessment of all projects
- To review the funding needs to maintain existing infrastructure.

I would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this submission and can be contacted at mtf@mtf.org.au.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bernadette Thomas'.

Cr Bernadette Thomas
Metropolitan Transport Forum Chair

Cc President of MAV