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Tourism & Transport Forum Submission: Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy

About Tourism & Transport Forum Australia

The Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) is the peak industry group for the aviation, tourism, transport, and related infrastructure sectors. TTF is a national, member-funded CEO forum, advocating for the public policy interests of our members. TTF represents a broad range of operators which include airports, airlines, tourism, attractions and travel operators, accommodation providers, major events, retail and hospitality businesses, and leading private & public transport operators with a state and national presence. TTF is the leading industry voice and plays an important and active role in advocating for the policy interests of our members.

Introduction

The Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Victoria's Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy ("the Draft Strategy"). We recognize the significant effort behind this comprehensive plan, particularly its evidence-based and consultative approach. TTF is pleased to present the perspectives of our members, focusing on transport and tourism infrastructure considerations.

TTF acknowledges the Draft Strategy's robust planning framework, which effectively integrates data analysis with extensive community engagement. This inclusive approach has delivered a well-rounded infrastructure vision that balances policy reform with investment priorities. TTF particularly welcomes the Strategy's alignment with net zero emissions targets and its emphasis on climate resilience. The integration of circular economy principles and sustainability in infrastructure delivery, highlights Victoria's leadership in embedding environmental stewardship within long-term economic planning.

Overall, TTF supports the Draft Strategy's forward-looking orientation and many of its proposals. We support continued transport infrastructure investment and innovation, aligning with our vision for a connected, sustainable, and prosperous Victoria. At the same time, we have identified several gaps and areas for improvement relevant to the transport, aviation, and tourism sectors. Our submission below outlines member feedback across three categories:

1. Tourism, aviation, and cruise industries
2. Emerging transport modes and innovation
3. General feedback on the Draft Strategy

Key Gaps and Areas for Improvement

Tourism, aviation and cruise industries

- a) **Limited Focus on the Visitor Economy:** The Draft Strategy, as it stands, does not explicitly prioritise the tourism sector or aviation infrastructure – a notable gap given the visitor economy's importance to Victoria. While some general recommendations (e.g. improving public transport, enhancing natural precincts) may indirectly benefit tourism, there is **no dedicated strategy for tourism infrastructure or visitor facilitation**. Similarly, the state's aviation gateways, Melbourne Airport, Avalon Airport and cruise ports are not prominently addressed, despite their critical role in bringing visitors and business to Victoria. The sector contributes billions in revenue and thousands of jobs across both metropolitan and regional areas, yet there are no specific projects or policies in the draft aimed at enhancing the visitor economy. The final strategy should incorporate a dedicated tourism infrastructure plan or a set of recommendations to support this sector.
- b) **Strengthening Recognition of Aviation Infrastructure and connectivity:** The Draft Strategy rightly emphasises freight, tourism, and public transport connectivity but fails to sufficiently recognize aviation infrastructure, particularly Melbourne Airport, as a critical economic and transport asset for the state. Melbourne Airport supports over 20 million passenger movements annually, is integral to Victoria's international gateway status, and underpins both business and tourism sectors.

TTF recommends that aviation is included as a core infrastructure pillar in the final strategy, focussing on the connectivity of airports and preserving aviation capacity (rather than the asset itself). This would also include the integration of airport safeguarding into state and local planning through consistent application of the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay (MAEO) and ensuring alignment with the National Airports Safeguarding Framework (NASF) to prevent incompatible development and preserve aviation capacity.

- c) **Addressing Melbourne Airport Access and Connectivity Gaps:** Melbourne Airport is Victoria's second-largest employment precinct but remains poorly served by high-capacity public transport. This undermines airport accessibility for passengers and workers and creates bottlenecks in broader freight and logistics movements. Connectivity between Melbourne

Airport and the wider transport network remains fragmented. TTF recommends the prioritisation of Melbourne Airport Rail, with a published delivery timeline and integration commitments. As well as extensions to public transport and road infrastructure that better connects the airport for travellers and its staff.

- d) **Supporting Air Freight Infrastructure:** Air freight plays a critical role in time-sensitive industries such as agribusiness, advanced manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and e-commerce. Co-location with passenger infrastructure at Melbourne Airport provides efficiency and scalability advantages. Air freight is not explicitly addressed in the Draft Strategy's freight planning recommendations. Air freight should be recognised as a strategic freight mode within the broader logistics network. This would include investing in digital freight tracking technologies and integrated logistics solutions. As well as highlight Melbourne Airport's 24-hour operations as a unique strength that supports global supply chain resilience. Melbourne Airport's curfew-free status is a rare and significant strategic asset. It enhances Victoria's competitiveness in global air freight, facilitates flexible passenger services, and contributes materially to state GDP and employment. The Draft Strategy does not acknowledge or seek to preserve curfew-free operations, despite their economic and logistical value.
- e) **Strengthening the recognition of cruise infrastructure:** Similar to the feedback on aviation infrastructure and connectivity, the draft strategy does not adequately recognise the importance of the cruise industry and the required infrastructure to support Victorian's growing tourism industry. Investment is needed in key assets to support the cruise industry. For example, Station Pier is currently no longer fit for purpose, it is a sub-par guest experience compared other states, and has severely limited access. Prioritising a Cruise Industry Strategy, including upgrades to cruise terminals (e.g. Station Pier) – would strengthen Victoria's position as a cruise destination. Further to this, as part of the strategy, consideration needs to be given to shore power. Other jurisdictions are moving towards decarbonising shore power assets, and this will eventually become a table-stakes expectation for global cruise operators.
- f) **Regional Connectivity and Tourism Infrastructure:** The draft strategy's focus is overly metropolitan, with insufficient attention to infrastructure needs in regional and rural areas. The plan does not fully address transport connectivity for regions – for example, improving rail or coach links between Melbourne and key regional tourism destinations, or upgrading local roads and visitor facilities in areas with high tourism potential. This is a missed opportunity, as better connectivity would not only benefit residents but also encourage dispersal of visitors beyond Melbourne. This could include improved regional public transport services (such as faster, more frequent train services on the Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo corridors and better bus connections within regions), investment in roads that form vital tourist routes (like Great Ocean Road maintenance and scenic route improvements), and support for regional airports.

New modes and innovation

The Draft Strategy's is forward-thinking on transport innovation and embraces emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles, Mobility-as-a-Service, and smart traffic systems while balancing these innovations with pragmatic infrastructure upgrades. TTF supports the strategy's cost-conscious focus, including its prioritisation of underutilised assets and lower-cost, high-impact solutions like rapid bus transit and road safety reforms. These initiatives reflect a smart, outcomes-based approach to improving mobility, economic opportunity, and liveability across Victoria.

- a) **Emerging Mobility Modes – Micro-Mobility and Drones:** The Draft Strategy's treatment of emerging transport modes is a good start but remains incomplete, especially for micro-mobility (e.g. e-scooters, e-bikes) and aerial mobility. It is encouraging that active transport is supported generally, with commitments to better walking and cycling infrastructure. However, there are no specific recommendations to guide or expand micro-mobility usage, such as providing dedicated safe lanes or parking for e-scooters, or consistent regulations across jurisdictions. Without such guidance, the adoption of micro-mobility could remain disconnected, varying by local council, which risks user confusion and safety issues. Similarly, drones and urban air mobility (e.g. drone deliveries, air taxis) are not addressed at all in the draft. Given the rapid advances in these technologies, ignoring them could leave Victoria unprepared. Proactively embracing these modes in the strategy will position Victoria as a leader in transport innovation and prevent the 'scramble' to retrofit policies later.
- b) **Autonomous Vehicles and Ride-Sharing Integration:** The Draft Strategy acknowledges autonomous vehicles in the context of freight but does not fully consider their broader impact on passenger transport, nor the integration of ubiquitous on-demand transport (ride-sharing) into the public transport ecosystem. On autonomous vehicles (AVs), the plan is relatively silent on how to manage the eventual introduction of self-driving cars for personal use. Without policy interventions, widespread private AV use could increase congestion, especially whilst a mixed fleet is operating. It also lacks concrete measures such as integrating ride-share with mass transit or creating first/last-mile subsidy programs to connect people to train stations. The absence of these details means missed opportunities to leverage ride-sharing to complement mass transit, especially in areas where regular transit is less feasible.

General feedback on the strategy

Lastly, TTF also offers the following general feedback relating to the Draft Strategy as a whole:

- a) **Funding and Financing Challenges:** The Draft Strategy's ambition must be matched with credible financing plans. The draft recommendations are significant in scale, at a time when Victoria's budget is under heavy strain. The state's net debt is projected to reach record levels by mid-2025, constraining the government's capacity to fund new projects through general revenue alone. Indeed, the Draft Strategy itself acknowledges ongoing fiscal pressures, noting that partnerships between government and the private sector will be critical to sustaining infrastructure investment and innovation. What's missing is a detailed financing framework. TTF recommends the final strategy include innovative funding mechanisms to bridge the gap. By identifying clear co-investment opportunities and funding models, the

strategy can ensure its bold transport initiatives (rail upgrades, new bus networks, etc.) are financially achievable without over-reliance on state debt.

- b) **Workforce and Skills Capacity:** Delivering an infrastructure program of this scale will require a sufficiently large and skilled workforce, which is currently a point of concern. The Draft Strategy acknowledges the need for skilled workers but does not detail how to secure them. Without proactive measures, projects could be delayed or costs escalated due to labour constraints. TTF suggests incorporating workforce development initiatives into the strategy. This could include expanding training and apprenticeship programs in transport construction trades, incentivising STEM education for transport and aviation infrastructure-related professions and coordinating with the Commonwealth on skilled migration in critical fields.
- c) **Need for an Integrated Transport Plan:** The Draft Strategy lays out many recommendations but could better articulate how they combine into a cohesive, long-term transport plan. There is a risk that various projects and policies (roads, rail, active transport, new technologies) remain siloed initiatives. For instance, improvements in one mode (like rail) should be coordinated with others (like bus networks and first-mile/last-mile solutions) to truly improve system-wide mobility. We urge that the final strategy explicitly present a unifying Integrated Transport Vision. This could be a framework within the document that shows how all recommendations interconnect – for example, how a new rapid bus network will feed into rail services, how road pricing reforms will complement public transport investment, and how emerging modes will integrate with existing ones. By demonstrating an integrated plan, the strategy will provide clearer guidance to government and industry on prioritisation and sequencing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, TTF and L.E.K. Consulting strongly support the overarching intent and direction of Victoria's Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy. The strategy's long-term vision, its evidence-based development, and its emphasis on sustainable, innovative transport solutions will set Victoria on a positive trajectory. In particular, we urge the Victorian Government and Infrastructure Victoria to better integrate aviation, tourism and the cruise industries. By incorporating these recommendations, the final Infrastructure Strategy can better reflect the full scope of Victoria's economic and transport ecosystem. The aviation and cruise industry are not only a gateway to the state but a foundational enabler of freight, tourism, regional development, and global competitiveness. Addressing these gaps will help future-proof Victoria's infrastructure portfolio. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this public consultation and stand ready to assist in the refinement and implementation of the final Strategy. I encourage you to reach out to TTF Head of Strategy & Public Affairs Mitch Coveney at [REDACTED] to engage further during the consultation or for further information.

Yours sincerely,



Margy Osmond

Chief Executive, Tourism & Transport Forum