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SUBMISSION TO ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

Thank you for the opportunity to input to planning for infrastructure as set out in *All Things Considered* and supported by *Draft Options Book V1.1*.

Due to limited capacity we have not reviewed *All Things Considered* in its entirety. This submission focuses on the key need relating to walking – “enable physical activity and participation” and the options identified to achieve it.

As a general comment, Victoria Walks applauds Infrastructure Victoria for prioritising physical activity in infrastructure decision making and thinking ‘outside the box’ when it comes to infrastructure provision. Bicycle and vehicle accident fault allocation (BVA) is an example of a non-infrastructure option that could dramatically reduce the need for expensive infrastructure solutions.

To discuss any aspect of this submission or for any further information relating to walking, please contact Duane Burt, Senior Advisor on 9662 3975 or dburt@victoriawalks.org.au.

Background – Victoria Walks

Victoria Walks is a walking health promotion body, established by VicHealth in 2009, working to get more Victorians walking more every day. Our vision is for vibrant, supportive and strong neighbourhoods and communities where people can and do choose to walk wherever possible.

Our cities, towns, neighbourhoods and urban areas have become largely automobile dependent and less walkable. This has contributed to the emergence of more sedentary lifestyles in which Victorians do not engage in the recommended levels of physical activity. Physical inactivity is a significant factor in the dramatic rise in the levels of obesity and preventable diseases such as Type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Walking-friendly neighbourhoods and urban spaces are essential to encourage and enable people to walk. Walking is associated with positive health outcomes, improved fitness and better physical, social and mental health. Making towns, cities and suburbs more walkable has many health, environmental and economic benefits.

Supported by



Importance and value of investment in physical activity

Investment in active transport infrastructure (which includes people walking to a bus stop or railway station), reduces the need for 'investment' in health care and hospitals

A global review of the cost-benefit of active travel projects for the UK Department of Transport (Davis 2014) found they provide excellent value for money. The report assessed 16 British and international studies of the cost and benefits of walking and cycling programs or infrastructure. It found an average benefit cost ratio (BCR) of 5.95.

The report concludes:

"Consequently, environmental and other interventions to facilitate increased population physical activity through cycling and walking are likely to be amongst the 'best buys' across many areas of public policy i.e. public health benefits, cost savings for health services and for transport planning. The significant BCR values reported here should have a substantial influence in informing national transport ambitions."

A study in Melbourne (Beavis and Moodie 2014) included some conservative economic modelling of the benefits if more people used active transport. If the people living in Melbourne's outer suburbs achieved the same level of exercise through transport as inner suburban residents, or inner city residents, the gains would be:

- 160 deaths avoided per annum (272 if inner city exercise rates achieved)
- 531 disease cases avoided per annum (inner city 903)
- Productivity gains of \$13.5 million per annum (inner city \$22.9 million)
- Health sector cost reduction of \$7.2 million (inner city \$12.2 million).

Victoria Walks notes that the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (State of Victoria 2015) identifies pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods as a key health solution.

In May 2015 the National Heart Foundation and Cycling Promotion Fund conducted an online survey of more than 1,000 adults aged 25-59 in Australian capital cities. People had mixed views on the adequacy of walking infrastructure in their neighbourhood, but overall there was good support - more than 70% - for an increase in Government funding for cycling, walking and public transport.

Recommendations

1. Continue to advance the following options in planning for infrastructure in Victoria:
 - Active lifestyle infrastructure regulation (ALR)
 - Bicycle and vehicle accident fault allocation (BVA)
 - Active Established Areas (AEA)
 - Bicycle and walking path data capture BWP1
 - Bicycle and walking path expansion and improvement (BWP2)
2. Review (BWP3) to clarify what is intended, while maintaining an emphasis on bicycle and walking path separation, where necessary.

3. Advance other options that facilitate public transport, except where they facilitate access to public transport by car.
4. Acknowledge and embrace the role of the education sector in advancing physical activity and participation, in future planning for infrastructure.

The rationale behind these recommendations is explained in the remainder of this submission.

Active lifestyle infrastructure regulation (ALR)

Victoria Walks strongly supports this recommendation.

We note that planning regulations generally already require 'standard' walking infrastructure such as footpaths in new development. However there are a range of areas for potential improvement, including:

- Requirements for connection to adjoining development
- Reviewing car parking requirements – amongst other things, these requirements currently lead to large at-grade car parks creating hostile walking environments
- Modelling of transport demand that does not assume high levels of ongoing car dependency
- Street design that avoids the creation of hostile pedestrian environments
- Phasing of traffic signals to provide better levels of service
- Provision of separated walking and cycling paths for arterial roads, and low speed local roads.

We are not aware of any evidence to suggest that current planning requirements are resulting in growth areas that demonstrate high levels of active travel. On the contrary, it seems that poor pedestrian environments are being created. A study in Melbourne found only 9.5% of people in outer suburbs gained adequate exercise through active travel, compared to 23.5% of inner suburban residents and 33.3% in the inner city (Beavis and Moodie 2014).

Bicycle and vehicle accident fault allocation (BVA)

Victoria Walks strongly supports this option, which is commonly described as 'strict liability.' In countries such as the Netherlands this assumes drivers are at fault whenever they hit a cyclist or pedestrian, unless proven otherwise. We assume this is the model proposed in *All Things Considered*, even though this and the *Draft Options Book* both discuss this mainly as a benefit to cyclists.

This option has excellent potential to address a key pedestrian safety issue, which is drivers failing to give way to pedestrians when they are legally required to do so. Victoria walks will soon be releasing a publication on *Safer Road Design for Older Pedestrians*. A detailed review of the crash information for older pedestrians contained in the VicRoads CrashStats Restricted Access database was undertaken. This analysis included review one-by-one of the descriptions and diagrams in police reports for 1,149 crashes affecting pedestrians aged 65 or older, recorded in Victoria between 2008 and 2013.

The crash data showed that, at unsignalised intersections, motorists had an obligation to give way in at least 42% of crashes involving older pedestrians, as they collided with a

pedestrian crossing the road the vehicle was entering. At signalised intersections, motorists had an obligation to yield in at least 72% of crashes (Mantilla and Burt, forthcoming). It is likely that a legal framework that held drivers accountable for failing to give way (let alone in other situations) would dramatically improve pedestrian safety.

While we have not sought to find evidence on the effects of strict liability on rates of walking and cycling, it is clear that those countries that feature it have much higher rates of walking and cycling than Australia.

In addition to improved safety encouraging more walking and cycling, strict liability would send a strong message that walkers and riders are valued by society. This is likely to flow into further increased participation.

Bicycle and walking path data capture BWP1

Victoria Walks supports this option. Data collection in relation to walking is comparatively poor. Where it is collected, it is often not reported or poorly articulated. For example a recent summary of the Victorian Survey of Travel and Activity provided information on weekday mode share, but conflated walking and cycling to give information on 'active transport.' This rendered the information worthless in considering either walking or cycling as an individual transport mode (Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources 2016).

Data capture is critical to building evidence based action on walking infrastructure and without it there will probably continue to be under investment and design recognition for active walking infrastructure.

Bicycle and walking path expansion and improvement (BWP2)

Victoria Walks strongly supports this option. Where the footpath network is incomplete a strategic program of construction should be planned and implemented.

Bicycle and walking path separation (BWP3)

This option does not seem to be clearly articulated. All Things Considered describes it as "Modify existing road, bike and walkway infrastructure to separate cycling and pedestrian use." However the Draft Options Book seems to envisage something broader.

Victoria Walks is concerned that this is portrayed as a high cost option, at \$1-5 billion. This level of expenditure should not be necessary, if it relates only to separating walkers and riders.

It is important that walkers and cyclists have separate facilities when there are high numbers of commuter or sports cyclists (more than 50 per hour in the commuter peak) or in activity centres. However, in activity centres traffic speeds should be low and cyclists should be able to share the road with vehicles. Lower traffic speed limits and traffic calming should be considered as part of this option (Victoria Walks 2015).

A program of providing separated paths should be implemented for shared paths with high rates of commuter cycling. And separated paths should be provided as part of new infrastructure, such as arterial roads in the growth areas. However the majority of existing shared paths probably do not need to be replaced. This option should therefore be seen as a targeted program of infrastructure improvement rather than a broad-brush replacement of existing infrastructure. For a fuller description of the circumstances in which existing shared

paths need to be replaced and alternative infrastructure provisions that work for both walkers and bike riders, see *Shared Paths – the Issues* (Victoria Walks 2015).

Active Established Areas

We note that this option is under consideration, but categorised as requiring further development.

Victoria Walks strongly supports this option, but it needs to be considered in a more nuanced way than simply providing paths where they are missing. Better providing for walkers in established areas might include, for example:

- Road design that gives pedestrians priority over vehicles and reduces traffic speed, such as raised zebra crossings (examples at South Melbourne Markets)
- Changes to traffic light phasing to provide a higher level of service, such as pedestrian countdown timers or 'late introduction' (pedestrian does not have to push the button in advance of the cycle)
- Reduced speed limits (also highly beneficial to cycling).

We acknowledge the fact that walking infrastructure is usually maintained by local councils, who have widely varying:

- Levels of income
- Organisational capability
- Levels of assets (some areas already have footpaths, others do not).

Victoria Walks would support state and/or federal resourcing of councils to provide better infrastructure and management.

Prioritising the options

Prioritising the options is very difficult. In reality it will be necessary to prioritise within options as well as between them.

In simple terms, all of the options we have supported above are a high priority.

In terms of meeting the specified need to “enable physical activity and participation,” Integrated Shared Use Community and Recreation Facilities would be much lower priority than those we have supported above. However that does not mean it should not be pursued.

Other considerations

Victoria Walks agrees with the exclusion of an Online Liveability Infrastructure Platform.

We note that the options we support above would often contribute to other needs identified in *All Things Considered*, notably:

- Respond to increasing pressure on health care, particularly due to an ageing population

- Provide spaces where communities can come together
- Improve accessibility for people with mobility challenges.

Similarly, there are options under other needs that would facilitate walking, so we would support them. Generally these are the public transport initiatives such as Growth Area Bus Service Expansion.

We note that the table on pages 32-33 indicates that there is no role for the education sector in advancing physical activity and participation. Victoria Walks believes that the education sector has a very important role in building healthy lifestyles, including promotion of physical activity.

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