

# Transport For Everyone

A Policy Initiative released by The Greens for Melbourne City Council

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## Climate, congestion and coronavirus are changing the way we move

Transport planners have been warning Government for decades. In a very fast growing metropolis we need to facilitate major shifts away from private vehicles to public transport and active transport modes, or suffer the alternative: intolerable congestion, pollution, socially inequitable transport pricing and less healthy communities.

Melbourne's CBD is blessed with wide streets. These main streets now carry tram passengers, pedestrians, cyclists and drivers, with private vehicles by far the least efficient mode in terms of surface area density. Nearly a million people visited the centre of Melbourne on any given weekday prior to the onset of the pandemic, and Council has long known that the solution to moving the greatest number of people about the city as efficiently as possible must include transferring private vehicle lanes to footpaths and cycling infrastructure, while ensuring that everybody is able to access every part of the city regardless of their access needs.

But we also have a highly fragmented governance framework when it comes to transport planning. VicRoads, now absorbed into the Department of Transport, controls all the traffic signals in the state as well as all State arterial roads, so any local road changes that require signalling changes or that change traffic flows onto State arterials – that's just about all of them – need to be approved by the Department. Any projects deemed 'significant' may need Ministerial approval. The political hurdles to converting road space to facilitate more efficient transport modes are many.

Two major breakthroughs have occurred this year. In February, before the pandemic hit, Council agreed its priorities for accelerated action to address the Climate Emergency, which was declared

## KEY POINTS

Greens on Council fought hard for the Transport Strategy 2030 and it's no surprise that other candidates are wanting to tear it up. Greens on Council also achieved the Climate Emergency Declaration Implementation Plan, which brought forward 10 years of bicycle lane infrastructure to be completed in just 4. COVID-19 is changing the way we move and is a further catalyst for aggressive change in shifting people to efficient and sustainable modes of transport.

A Greens Melbourne City Council will:

1. Complete 50km of bicycle lanes on Council-managed roads by June 2025.
2. Work with the State Government to ensure that State-managed roads have new physically separated bicycle infrastructure as quickly as possible, including on Flemington Road, St Kilda Rd and Royal Parade.
3. Keep our footpath-expansion program strong, supporting the most common and economically beneficial mode of transport in the central city: walking.
4. Resist anti-economic traffic-inducing policies and pursue floating price parking fees and road user pricing to reduce congestion.
5. Deliver on masterplans for the precincts surrounding train stations, to make the public transport to pedestrian connections as pleasant and convenient as possible.

by Council in 2019 thanks to the work of Greens Councillor Cathy Oke. These priorities are bold among cities that have declared an emergency, and include fast-tracking the 50km of new physically separated bicycle lanes identified in the transport strategy *Transport 2030*. That is, Council agreed to construct 50km worth of new lanes in 4 years.

Then the pandemic changed the way we live, work and move. No one in Government is yet confident on what commuter patterns will look like once people return to work in the central city, what social-distancing on public transport actually looks like and whether the uptake in commuting by car will cause our road network to grind to a halt.

We do know, though, that cycling has increased greatly. Bicycle Network surveys and Council's own data show that cycling has increased dramatically even through winter.

Now is the opportunity for major change, not the politically-palatable pace set by the State Government's pre-pandemic approvals process.

### **Streets for people**

Walking is the most common mode of transport in the central city, and is easily the most important. The economic benefits to the city and its retailers of safe, broad footpaths that induce greater footfall is also significant. The Greens support keeping Council's footpath-expansion program strong.

The Greens strongly supported the Little Streets transformation project in 2020 and commit to seeing its implementation through. Longer term, we will continue the *Transport 2030* agenda to fully close parts of Little Streets to vehicular traffic (other than authorised delivery arrangements), where road closure will produce safety improvements, such as Little Bourke Street's Chinatown sections.

In the short term, we will work to ensure that the outdoor dining fast-track permits program is properly resourced in order to provide a genuinely convenient service to cafes and restaurants while improving public notice and feedback processes.

As Melburnians get used to social distancing, and our cafes, restaurants and bars spill out into the streets, we can treat this as a temporary nuisance, or we can make the most of it. The Greens believe that this is an opportunity for Council to invest heavily to make the experience of being in the CBD a special one. The CBD can be a place with room to move, with lots of greenery, with clear spaces for people to stop and sit, eat and drink, and be together.

Done well, the outdoor dining program will provide Melburnians with new and exciting opportunities to draw people to the CBD, to the benefit of our collective health and to the central Melbourne economy. Done well, there is great potential in this program to mitigate some of the effects of the recession.

### **Transport equity and efficiency on constrained central city streets**

Policies that put opportunity for economic recovery and a people-focused CBD (like the outdoor dining expansion program) at risk include free on-street parking. There is simply not the capacity in on-street parking to cope with the induced demand that free parking brings. With congestion set to soar when the lockdown lifts, the Council will only make the problem worse if it promises free

parking but in reality drivers are circling CBD blocks looking for parking spots that are not available. The chief purpose of paid parking is to facilitate a turnover of car parking in areas of high demand, in the interests of safety, fairness and the management of congestion.

The Greens favour floating price parking fees to manage congestion further, and a new road user pricing system to improve transport equity and efficiency as outlined in *Transport 2030*.

### **More safe cycling infrastructure**

We support *Transport 2030* and the steps taken to date to accelerate spending in order to ensure that 50km of safe bicycle infrastructure is constructed on Council-managed roads in 4 years. We commit to resourcing these projects in order to complete this work by June 2025.

The record \$16 million budget for safe cycling infrastructure achieved by The Greens in 2020-21 will need to be the baseline for each year in this period.

*Transport 2030* seeks 40km of safe bicycle infrastructure on State-managed roads, and this will require relentless advocacy. We will work with the State Government to ensure that State-managed roads have new physically separated bicycle infrastructure as quickly as possible, including on Flemington Road, St Kilda Rd and Royal Parade.

We will pursue new Memoranda Of Understanding with the Department of Transport, and with the Transport Minister directly, to secure a shared understanding of the timing, pace and scope of delivery of these projects.

### **Better public transport interchanges**

The Council has produced extraordinary work in recent years on making the experience of arriving in the central city by train or tram a more pleasant and convenient one, with master plans for the station precincts and a focus on footpath expansions where demand requires it most. The differences in policy, resources and politics between the Council and the State prevent true collaboration on integrated transport projects.

The Greens will publish masterplans for the Flinders Street (and Town Hall), Southern Cross, Parliament, Flagstaff and Melbourne Central (and State Library) stations in the next term of Council, and seek a memorandum of understanding with the State Government on short, medium and long term projects for improving access and egress to the stations, and the commuter and pedestrian experience generally.

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