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SUBMISSION TO LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Thank you for the opportunity to input to the setting of objectives and identifying needs for Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy.

In keeping with the nature of the Laying the Foundations document, we have kept our submission at a high level and have not detailed how infrastructure should be provided in a way that facilitates walking. We understand that this would be better provided at the next stage of the process. Nonetheless we would be happy to provide any further information or advice to assist in subsequent formulation of the infrastructure strategy.

To discuss any aspect of this submission, please contact Duane Burtt, Senior Advisor on 9662 3975 or dburtt@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 VicHealth

Recommendations

1. Add a new Need (1d):
    - Provide infrastructure to meet the needs of an ageing society.

    AND/OR amend Objective 1 to read:

    - Respond to population growth and ageing
2. Use one or both of the following (or similar) as an indicator for Objective 2:
    - Proportion of trips between 0.4 and 1km made by walking.
    - Proportion of primary school students who walk to school.
3. Add two new principles:
    - Provide for infrastructure at a range of scales
    - Infrastructure efficiency.
4. In future strategy development, acknowledge:
    - The role of walkability in the economic productivity of centres
    - The role of walking in addressing socio-economic inequality and related health outcomes
    - The city shaping potential of infrastruicture choices and priorities.

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

PRINCIPLES

Consider non-build solutions first

Victoria Walks supports this principle. The traditional approach to transport infrastructure has been to build roads and car parking (both public and private) at great cost to the community and then provide those facilities for free or, if you consider fuel taxes, in a subsidised and non-targeted way. In economic terms, expensive infrastructure has been provided to consumers at zero/low cost, leading to artificially inflated demand (traffic).

New principle – provide for infrastructure at a range of scales

Walking is fundamental to many primary objectives of urban and transport planning – intensified urban centres, reduced vehicle use and reduced congestion, greater use of public transport, and building the knowledge economy. Despite this, walking is largely overlooked or taken for granted in both planning and transport policy.

> "Despite the importance of walking, it is often overlooked as a mode of transport." (Australian Government 2012)

Walking was virtually ignored in *The Victorian Transport Plan 2008*.

In transport policy, walking is often dealt with as a 'tack-on' to cycling, even though far greater numbers of people walk, and walking offers greater potential for modal shift. Walking requires walking specific investment.

Given this background, we applaud Infrastructure Victoria for adopting the graphic of a walking person as the symbol for transport in the discussion document.

Ironically, part of the problem in gaining investment for walking is that it does not require large amounts of funding for flasgship projects. It is a primarily local activity usually left to local government. But with the state being liable for health costs, it is undeniably a state level imperative to get more people walking.

It is vitally important that Infrastructure Victoria establishes a pathway for funding relatively small scale infrastructure, including walking infrastructure, as well as large scale projects.

New principle – infrastructure efficiency

Efficiency would seem to be an important principle of infrastructure provision.

In the transport sector for example it is important that infrastructure makes efficient use of limited urban space. This is one of the key reasons why we need to move people using alternate transport modes to private cars.

OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

New need – provide for an ageing society

The discussion of Draft Objective 1 makes it clear that the key element of population change is the ageing of the population. However this is not mentioned at all in the wording of the objective itself or the draft needs.

It is important that the ageing population is mentioned specifically in the objective and/or needs. It is such a significant feature of society that it needs to be kept 'front-of-mind' in decision making. In Victoria, the number of people aged 65 and over is likely to almost triple from 2011 to 2051 as the population increases and the proportion of older people grows (Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure 2014). This has important flow on implications – numbers of people with a disability including vision impairment will increase dramatically as the population ages.

An ageing population should flow into considerations of what kind of transport infrastructure to provide. For seniors, walking is critical to their personal mobility and their capacity to lead active, independent lives. For those aged 75 and over, walking makes up 77% of their total physical activity. And as seniors get older, their walking is increasingly about everyday life needs such as shopping and personal business (Garrard 2013).

It is also important to specifically recognise the ageing population because standard infrastructure will not necessarily meet the needs of older people. As an example, shared walking and cycling paths are the most common infrastructure provided for cycling (Austroads 2009), yet they serve older and disabled pedestrians particularly poorly.

In a survey of 1,128 Victorians aged 60 or over, 39% said bicycle riders on shared paths was a moderate or major barrier to their walking. Better cyclist behaviour on shared paths and reduced cycling speed on shared paths were the top two responses for action – of any kind – that would make walking feel safer (Garrard 2013). In a survey of 607 Victorians with vision impairment, 8% had been involved in a collision and 20% were in a near collision as a

pedestrian over the previous 5 years – 24% of these incidents were with bicycles (Oxley et al 2012).

An alternative approach to adding an additional need would be to change the objective itself, to something along the lines of:

> Respond to population growth and ageing

Draft Objective 2 and indicators

Victoria Walks supports Draft Objective 2: "support healthy, safe and vibrant communities."

We support Need A: "enable physical activity through infrastructure and urban design".

While the discussion under this need is not wrong, as such, it does not really capture the significance of urban planning, design and infrastructure in influencing physical activity (primarily walking) at a population level. A Melbourne study (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 city residents, the gains would be:

- 272 deaths avoided per annum
- 903 disease cases avoided per annum
- Productivity gains of $22.9 million per annum
- Health sector cost reduction of $12.2 million.

We won't detail here all the factors that determine whether a community is walkable, but a good easy reference document is *Made for Walking: Density and Neighborhood Form*, (Campoli 2013).

This section also includes draft indicators for tracking the objectives over time. However most of the indicators suggested are only loosely connected to infrastructure and more likely to be influenced by other societal factors. In particular, obesity and rates of chronic disease are strongly influenced by diet. Physical activity rates are more closely related to infrastructure and would therefore provide a better indicator of appropriate infrastructure provision.

One potential indicator for Objective 2 would be the proportion of transport made by walking. This could be more specifically targeted, to focus on short trips for example. Another good indicator would be the proportion of primary school students who walk to school. Walking to primary school is significantly shaped by parents' perceptions of the safety of the street environment, both from traffic and 'stranger danger.' These indicators can be measured using data from the Victorian Integrated Survey of Travel and Activity.

Need 2(d) – maximise positive impacts on amenity and wellbeing from infrastructure

This is a very important need that operates on more than one level.

It is important to recognise the city shaping impacts of major infrastructure choices. There is evidence for example that major freeway construction has little long term impact on traffic congestion but significant impact on the nature of the city (Donovan and Munro 2013).

The impact of infrastructure on a more detailed level is also important. For example a new railway line might have positive benefits for public transport patronage and access to jobs, but if the detailed design is poor it could have some negative imacts on the immediate urban environment and fail to realise the full potential increase in walking.

Draft Objective 3 – reduce social disadvantage

We support this objective, and walking for transport has a very important role to play in this space.

Walking for transport is a more socially inclusive form of physical activity than leisure-time physical activity. Wealthier people in Australia are substantially more likely than disadvantaged population groups to participate in *recreational walking* and other forms of moderate and vigorous physical activity. However, *walking for transport* is fairly evenly distributed across the socio-economic spectrum (see Figure 1). This unique feature of walking for transport means supportive environments for transport walking can be expected to contribute to reducing health inequalities in Victoria by reducing disparities in physical activity participation (Garrard 2013).

The relationship with disadvantage provides another strong reason to use levels of transport walking as an indicator of success.

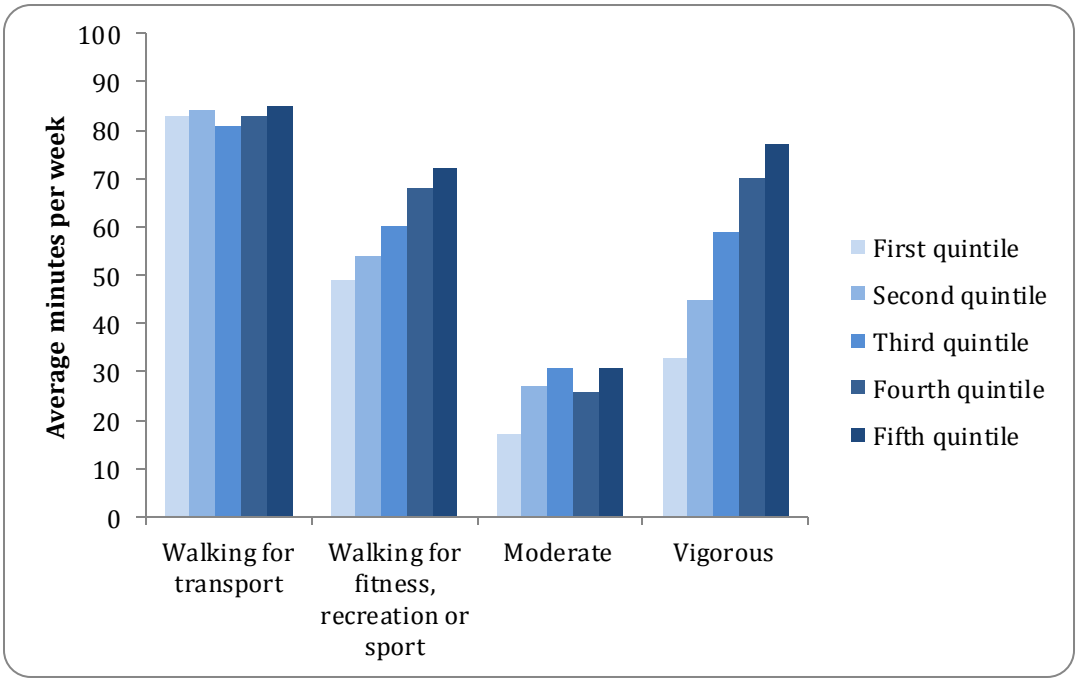

Figure 1: Average minutes per week spent on physical activity, by SEIFA Index
The first quintile refers to the most disadvantaged 20% of areas in Australia, and the fifth quintile refers to the most advantaged 20% of areas in Australia based on the ABS SEIFA Index (Source: Garrard 2013)

Draft objective 5 – lift Victoria's productivity

Infrastructure that supports walking within centres will have a strong positive impact on economic productivity.

For example, economic analysis prepared for the City of Melbourne's Walking Plan estimates that the walkability of the CBD is worth $2.1 billion to the economy (SGS 2014).

The *Pedestrian Analysis* prepared by SGS Economics and Planning considers the value of walkability to the city economy in association with business agglomeration - the ability for knowledge intensive businesses to locate close together and interact with each other.

SGS looked at the job density of the city and estimated the effect changes in walking connections would have on business ability to connect. In simple terms, if the time taken for every walking trip was increased (such as changes to light phasing or if walk speeds were reduced due to footpath congestion) then firms would be less inclined to interact with each other.

SGS estimate:

- If the walking connectivity within the CBD grid was reduced by 10%, the value of the CBD economy would be reduced by up to 6.6%, or $2.1 billion.
- Improving connectivity across King Street would add up to $400 million to the economy every year.
- Existing CBD through block connections are worth over $600 million to the economy.

In addition to productivity benefits relating to business agglomeration, higher levels of walkability in centres is strongly associated with improved retail performance (Tolley 2011).

The commercial and productivity benefits of walkable centres means that they have higher commercial rents and land values. For example, a study in the United States found properties with a Walk Score of 80 were worth anywhere from 6 to 54 per cent more than properties with a 20 Walk Score, depending on property type. They also found higher net operating incomes for the office and retail properties (Pivo and Fisher 2011).

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS TO GUIDE CONSULTATION

 What is most important to you in planning Victoria's infrastructure for the next 30 years?

Excellent provision of walking infrastructure and provision of other infrastructure (including public transport) in a manner that supports walking.

 How could the objectives be improved?

Amend Objective 1 to read: Respond to population growth and ageing

 Should any objectives be added, removed or combined?

No

 How could the infrastructure needs be improved and, in particular, what needs don't appear that you would like to see included?

Refer to recommendations

 What needs are most important and least important to you? Think top and bottom three.

Most important:

2(a) Enable physical activity through infrastructure and urban design

2(d) Maximise positive impacts on amenity and wellbeing from infrastructure

3(a) Improve accessibility for people with disabilities and/or mobility challenges through infrastructure

Least important

5(b) Move people to and from airports more efficiently

- Can you think of any examples to illustrate your points?

See above

- What evidence might support your views or help improve the strategy?

See above

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