

# Streets are for everyone

A consensus statement to support more walking and bike riding for Victorians



Image: Courtesy of City of Melbourne

## Our Vision

**Vibrant, active and connected communities where people can walk and ride bikes for leisure, running errands or commuting.**

This consensus statement has the support of key advocacy, health promotion and research groups operating in Victoria. It outlines the benefits of walking and bike riding to the economy and the health and wellbeing of Victorians; highlights barriers to the vision; and provides detail on 3 clear and practical recommendations for implementation by the Victorian Government. These recommendations are:

1. Include walking and bike riding as an essential part of integrated transport planning.
2. Prioritise streets for people in residential areas, around schools and shopping strips.
3. Upgrade cities, regional centres and local neighbourhoods by improving footpaths, bike lanes, crossing opportunities and completing missing links.

The group welcomed the recent [announcement](#) by the Victorian Government to allocate \$15.9 million to 100 kilometres of new and improved bike riding routes in inner Melbourne suburbs.

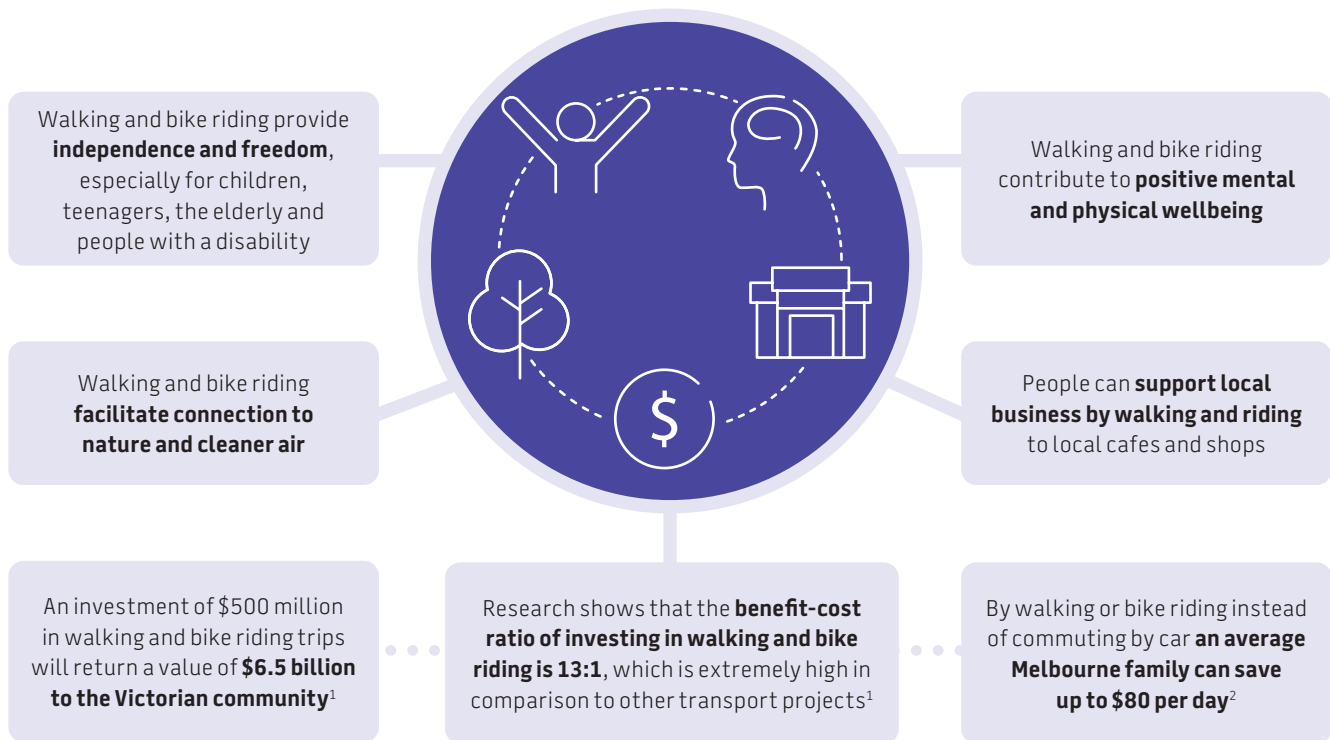
However, while this addresses some issues with bike riding in the inner Melbourne suburbs, there are not enough well-connected bike riding paths outside the Melbourne CBD. There is also a need for more safe places to cross the street and wider footpaths in many areas.

Victoria needs further investment in infrastructure so everyone can feel safe and comfortable walking and bike riding as part of their daily lives, whether for leisure, running errands, commuting or accessing other local destinations.

**An investment of \$500 million in walking and bike riding trips will return a value of \$6.5 billion to the Victorian community<sup>1</sup>**

## What are the benefits of walking and bike riding?

Investing in walking and bike riding will lead to a significant range of benefits for the people of Victoria. Both are core pillars of healthy, vibrant and liveable cities and neighbourhoods. Enabling people to walk and ride as a part of their daily lives builds the communities people want to live in, where places are more welcoming, and people feel connected and safe.



## What is stopping Victorians from walking and bike riding?

Key barriers to walking and bike riding include:

- ✘ **traffic speed in highly populated areas such as shopping strips, high streets, residential streets, and near schools and parks**
- ✘ **non-separated bike lanes in areas of high traffic**
- ✘ **narrow footpaths and lack of places to safely cross streets**
- ✘ **lack of networks to connect neighbourhoods with each other and the CBD.**

It shouldn't matter what your postcode is, everyone should be able to walk or ride bikes around their neighbourhood, and access local services easily and safely.

Unfortunately, there's a disparity. Some areas have less walking and bike riding infrastructure than others making it difficult for many Victorians to access public spaces and local services without a car.

The coronavirus pandemic also presents unique barriers to how we travel around due to the need for physical distancing. Victorians will need to regain confidence that public transport can safely handle large volumes of people. Lower use of public transport will lead to more cars on our roads, adding to traffic congestion and increasing travel times.

## The scene is set for the government to take action

### 2020 paved the way

In 2020, coronavirus (COVID-19) disrupted our lives in many ways. But, with many Victorians working and living closer to home, communities opened their streets for everyone.

More people rode their bikes, jogged, scooted and walked, exploring and connecting with local neighbourhoods and communities.

Research shows that more than 1 in 3 Victorians planned to travel more by foot or bike than they did pre-coronavirus, but safety is a barrier for many<sup>3</sup>.

As Victoria recovers from the pandemic, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to design cities, regional centres and neighbourhoods that people truly want.

### Victorians are ready for new infrastructure

When there are good options for walking and bike riding, they are used. A recent study by Monash University found that approximately 4 in 5 Victorians are interested in riding a bike if high-quality bicycle infrastructure is provided<sup>4</sup>.

Studies and polls carried out by the Heart Foundation, RACV and the Amy Gillet Foundation all show that people want safer paths, and support temporarily removing car parks to make way for pop-up bike lanes and wider footpaths in their local area.

### Local councils are ready but lack funding

A recent survey by the Municipal Association of Victoria revealed that more than 80 per cent of local councils have adopted plans to improve walking and/or bike riding options in light of the pandemic. However, 80 per cent of those surveyed reported funding as the greatest barrier to getting plans off the ground<sup>5</sup>.

### It's time for action

The benefits of walking and bike riding outlined previously make it clear that more investment in infrastructure will give a high return on investment.

We urge the Victorian Government to increase funding and commit to investment in a future where everyone feels safe to walk and ride bikes for leisure, errands and commuting to work.

Our group of key advocacy, health promotion and research groups has developed a detailed list of recommendations for action, outlined below.



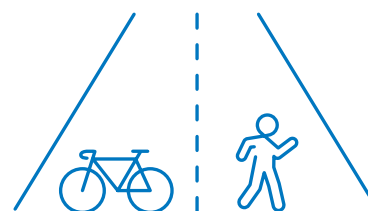
More than  
**1 in 3**

Victorians planned to travel more by foot or bike than they did pre-coronavirus, but **safety is a barrier** for many<sup>3</sup>



**4 in 5**

Victorians are interested in riding a bike if **high-quality bicycle infrastructure** is provided<sup>4</sup>



**8 in 10**

**local councils** plan to improve walking and bike riding options but **funding is the greatest barrier**<sup>5</sup>

## Recommendations to create streets for everyone



### 1. Include walking and bike riding as an essential part of integrated transport planning

This should include a whole-of-government response led by the Department of Transport to:

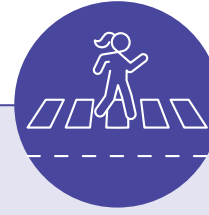
- develop and implement a walking strategy and action plan within the next 12 months
- continue to implement the Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018–2028
- ensure there is strong senior leadership for walking and bike riding within government
- ensure there is dedicated walking expertise and dedicated bike riding expertise within government.



### 2. Prioritise streets for people in residential areas, around schools and shopping strips

This should include:

- funding high quality walking and bike riding infrastructure for local and state government roads/streets
- lowering traffic speed
- increasing the priority of walkers when crossing streets
- providing a COVID-safe environment, for example, facilitating greater ability to physical distance.



### 3. Upgrade cities, regional centres and local neighbourhoods by improving footpaths, bike lanes, crossing opportunities and completing missing links

Invest in projects that provide environments which:

- allow walkers and bike riders to be separated in areas where there are high numbers of walkers or bike riders, or fast-moving bike riders
- allow bike riders and drivers to be separated in areas of high traffic speed or volume
- improve strategic links and key priority routes
- focus on areas of greatest need, including neighbourhoods with:
  - recognised strategic importance
  - lower socio-economic status
  - higher rates of inactivity
  - higher car dependence
  - poorer quality existing walking and bike riding paths.

## More information

For more information visit the Bicycle Network website.

[www.bicyclenetwork.com.au](http://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au)

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Badawi, Y, Maclean, F, and Mason, B, (2018) *The economic case for investment in walking*, Victoria Walks, Melbourne. Accessed [here](#) February 2021.
- <sup>2</sup> National Growth Areas Alliance (2020), *Jobs and commuting in outer growth suburbs*, A report by Astrolabe Group, Melbourne. Accessed [here](#) February 2021
- <sup>3</sup> VicHealth (2020) *Active Transport Research - a study of community attitudes and behaviours in a coronavirus environment*. Unpublished.
- <sup>4</sup> Pearson L.K, et al (2020) *Cycling Typologies in Victoria*, Monash University.
- <sup>5</sup> *Municipal Association of Victoria (2020) Victorian local government walking and cycling survey*. Accessed [here](#) February 2021.

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## Acknowledgements

This consensus statement was prepared with input and participation from a working group, which includes:

Amy Gillett Foundation, Bicycle Network, Cycling and Walking Australia and New Zealand, Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN) – Deakin University, Heart Foundation, Monash University – School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Municipal Association of Victoria, ORIMA Research, Parents' Voice, Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, VicHealth, Victoria Walks, We Ride Australia.

