

ACRS Submission on Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy



About the Australasian College of Road Safety

The Australasian College of Road Safety was established in 1988 and is the region's peak organisation for road safety professionals and members of the public who are focused on saving lives and serious injuries on our roads.

The College Patron is Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

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Introduction

The Australasian College of Road Safety is the region's peak membership association for road safety with a vision of eliminating death and serious injury on the road. Our members include experts from all areas of road safety including policy makers, health and transport professionals, academics, community organisations, researchers, federal, state and local government agencies, private companies and members of the public. The purpose of the College is to support our members in their efforts to eliminate serious road trauma through knowledge sharing, professional development, networking and advocacy. Our objectives include the promotion of road safety as a critical organisational objective within government, business and the community; the promotion and advocacy of policies and practices that support harm elimination; the improvement of relative safety outcomes for vulnerable demographic and user groups within the community; the promotion of post-crash policies and practices; and the promotion of a collegiate climate amongst all those with responsibilities for and working in road safety.

The College believes that we should prevent all fatal and serious injuries on our roads; the road traffic system must be made safe for all road users; system designers should aim to prevent human error and mitigate its consequences; life and health are not exchangeable for other benefits in society; and that all College policy positions must be evidence based.

The current consultation on Victoria's draft 30-year Infrastructure Strategy follows one during 2023 on the strategy objectives, with the final strategy due to be tabled in the Victoria Parliament in late 2025, according to the consultation website.

Infrastructure design and improvement is considered to be a priority intervention in road safety, and the World Health Organization has stated that "road infrastructure has traditionally focused on motorised transport and economic efficiency at the expense of safety, particularly for pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists" (1)(p23). With the number of people in Victoria being killed or seriously injured in road crashes increasing over the last 5 years,(2, 3) the importance of infrastructure cannot be ignored. Almost half of road deaths are among those with least protection – cyclists, pedestrians and motorcyclists, and a lack of infrastructure is a key vulnerability.(4, 5) Improving infrastructure to 'create walkable, bikeable, liveable streets' is listed as one of the top 10 interventions cities can make to address non-communicable diseases and road trauma.(6)

The importance of road safety and infrastructure to improve road safety are reflected in Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 which aims to half road deaths by 2030 and the most recent Road Safety Action Plan 2.(7)

ACRS response to 2023 consultation on strategy objectives

In our response to the 2023 consultation, ACRS noted a failure to recognise the connections between infrastructure and road safety, and recommended:

- Comprehensive value assessments of infrastructure, including safety;
- Re-distribution of funds to support neighbourhood improvement projects including safety;
- Infrastructure which decreases rather than increases car dependence;
- Inclusion of safety in comprehensive integration of land use planning and transport planning; and
- The inclusion in the Strategy of a recommendation to implement the Victorian Road Safety Strategy and Action Plans.

ACRS response to the current Consultation Draft

ACRS supports several of the recommendations included in the draft Strategy:

Recommendations 8-13 around provision of public transport

- 8 Extend Melbourne's trams to encourage more new homes nearby – increase services on key tram routes in activity centres that have been designated for additional housing development. Complete a detailed assessment of tram extensions in Melbourne's established suburbs. Start building extensions in areas that can support more new homes. Rezone land around the extended tram lines so more homes are built.
- 9 Run faster bus services, more often, in Victoria's largest cities – run buses more often, for longer hours, and give buses priority on the road. In stages, straighten out existing bus routes so they are fast and direct.
- 10 Build a new bus rapid transit network – complete a detailed assessment, reserve the required land, and build a new bus rapid transit network. Start with routes that connect train stations and busy destinations in Melbourne's north, west and south-east, and extend the new Eastern Busway along Hoddle Street.
- 11 Extend metropolitan trains and run more services in Melbourne's west – extend and electrify metropolitan trans to Melton. Reallocate trains that serve Melton to other areas in Melbourne's west and regional Victoria. Assess delivery of a new train station at Altona North accompanied by land rezoning.
- 12 Run more bus and coach services in regional Victoria – deliver more bus services in regional cities. Run more V/Line coach services to better connect small towns to regional cities. Start with routes that improve access to jobs, education and healthcare.
- 13 Make off-peak public transport cheaper and simplify regional fare zones – after upgrading the myki ticketing system, charge lower fares for off-peak travel on Victoria's buses, trains and trams. Simplify fares and reduce the number of regional fare zones.

Public transport is the safest form of transport, and the provision of safe, accessible, reliable, convenient, affordable public transport is encouraged.(8) Australian research has confirmed that a mode shift from private vehicle to public transport (i.e. train, light rail or bus) for commuting would not only reduce total crashes, but also the severity of crashes.(9) Better public transport access and coverage will also reduce the incidence of risky driving behaviours such as inattentive, drink and drug driving.(10)

Recommendations 14-15 around transport infrastructure

- 14 Make local streets safer for children and communities – reduce speed limits to 30 km/h on local streets, starting in places that children often visit around schools, playgrounds, childcare centres and kindergartens.
- 15 build safe cycling networks in Melbourne and regional cities – continue building protected and connected cycle corridors across Victoria. Publish updates to the strategic cycling corridor network.

These recommendations are strongly supported. Australian and International evidence clearly shows the road safety benefits of 30 km/h speed limits in areas where vehicles interact with pedestrians and cyclists, with accompanying economic and health benefits.(11-13) Purpose-built bicycle-specific infrastructure reduces crashes and injuries;(14) and cities with protected and separated bike facilities tend to have better safety for all road users.(15)

Improved safety through speed management can also address barriers that discourage people to travel via active transport. The adoption of 30km/h in areas of high pedestrian activity, such as on residential streets, could help encourage active travel participation, not only by reducing the potential for trauma should a collision occur between a vehicle and a person walking or cycling but to also improve the perception of safety that stops many people from participating in active travel.(11, 16)

However, there must be consultation with cycling networks and the cycling community to ensure appropriate placement of cycling infrastructure to maximise patronage and safety.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The ACRS recognises the importance of infrastructure in improving road safety, and the urgency of making those improvements to prevent deaths and serious injuries on our roads. In the Consultation draft:

- ACRS supports recommendations 8-13 around provision of public transport
- ACRS strongly supports recommendations 14 and 15 around transport infrastructure, implementing 30km/h on local streets and building safe cycling networks in Melbourne and regional cities
- Consultation with cycling networks and the cycling community to ensure appropriate placement and maximise patronage and safety.

The ACRS appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft Infrastructure Strategy for Victoria, and to contribute to reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. Please let us know if you would like any further details.



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