



# Town and Country Planning Association Bulletin

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## ***Melbourne Metropolitan Strategy: A Proposal***

A strong message is coming from members of the public attending the DoI's forums on the Melbourne metropolitan strategy that they want better public transport and more attention paid to the urban environment. At the same time, there is a strong desire not to change suburban densities by dual occupancy developments that preclude the growth of trees, limit private open space and invade privacy. A solution must be found to this dilemma, for present suburban densities are too low to support a high quality public transport service without considerable public subsidies. There are equity considerations and tradeoffs to be made with such subsidies.

One solution might be to deliver public transport extensions as a package with higher residential densities along the corridor to be served. For example, if a tramline were to be extended, the local government would be required to adopt a residential density target of 50 residences/hectare (res/ha) within 400m either side of the tramline.

In areas where there is already a rich network of train and tramlines, preferably combined with low property values or derelict industrial land, redevelopment corridors could be defined with similar parameters. For example, in Northcote the West Preston tramline (St George's Road), the Epping train line and the Bundoora tramline (High St) are within walking distance of each other. This corridor would be an ideal location for medium density development.

New suburban developments are typically as low as 15 res/ha. A residential density of 50 res/ha can easily be achieved with three-storey terraced houses with private gardens or four-storey apartments with shared private or public open space. Former industrial sites are ideal for such developments.

Medium density developments not only reduce the amount of land swallowed up by suburban extension, they can enhance public space in existing urban areas, whilst accommodating trees. They provide opportunities for better urban design with the creation of attractive urban streetscapes.

Medium density housing also supports a much denser network of shops and community facilities, allowing for much greater use of walking and cycling for access.

A targeted approach to medium density development such as this would reduce the demand for dual occupancy developments, and would increase patronage on public transport – surely a win-win solution?

*Ray Walford, President*

## ***Northern Central City Corridor Study***

The TCPA has been granted observer status on the Community Reference Group for the study. The draft strategy, to be released in March 2002, is another litmus test of the Government's commitment to an integrated transport policy. Community input to the CRG has emphasised the need for improvements in walking and cycling facilities, in public transport, and strategies to reduce the dependency on and impact of the private car.

Members can get more information on the study from the DOI's website ([www.doi.vic.gov.au](http://www.doi.vic.gov.au)). The Committee would like to hear members' ideas and comments on the Corridor Study. These will be reported in the Bulletin and forwarded to the Reference Group.

## ***Space and Bulletin Contributions***

The Committee is still interested in finding a member to assume responsibility for collecting articles and editing Space magazine. In the meantime the Committee is keen, as part of its networking and informing role, to produce more regular issues of Bulletin.

Members are invited to use the Bulletin to publish short articles on planning issues relevant to the objectives of the association and to report on local planning issues and initiatives, and activities of community groups. Letters (up to 250 words) on any issue may be accepted and reprinted. Letters should be checked for potential legal problems if there are any doubts about the nature of the material.

## ***TCPA Committee Meetings***

Meetings are held on the first Monday of each month at 7.00 pm. Any member of the TCPA is invited to attend meetings and raise matters of interest to the Association.

The next two meetings of the Committee will be held at 7.00 pm on Monday, 4th July and Monday 6th August. Please contact the Secretary (9534 5379) for details of the July meeting.

## ***Address for Correspondence***

The Secretary, Town and Country Planning Association, Box 312, Collins Street West PO, Melbourne 8007.

## ***The Victorian Bicycle Strategy 10 Years On***

### ***VicRoads Has Failed to Deliver***

Some ten years ago VicRoads assumed responsibility for making main roads safe for cyclists throughout the metropolitan area, and became host to the Victorian State Bicycle Committee (now the Bicycle Advisory Committee). It was entrusted with the job of ensuring the bike lane network would link up with an off-road network of shared footways for cyclists and pedestrians planned and built by other agencies of government. Launched in 1991, the 10 year Victorian Bicycle Strategy (VBS) planned for the creation of an integrated 3420 km network of bike lanes and shared bicycle/footway networks known as the Principal Bicycle Network (PBN).

VicRoads was to provide 2000 km of bike lanes, but is estimated to have only lane-marked 23% of them to date. Funding since 1991 has been totally inadequate for constructing the bike lane network, and still is, despite the recent increase for the years 2000 to 2003.

A network of 1370 km off-road "shared footways" was to be provided by Melbourne Water (now Parks Victoria) and local governments; only 640 km or 47% of the off-road network has been constructed.

Overall, only 34% of the network, or about 1,100 km, has been completed. The result has been massive discontinuities in the bicycle route network.

### ***A Flawed Strategy***

The VicRoads strategy rests on the assumption that the "bike lane network" can actually be implemented and that all the dangerous main road intersections can be improved. It is relatively easy to complete the off-road shared paths with the necessary funding, but the provision of on-road bike lanes faces the more intractable problems of heavy and fast traffic on arterial roads.

The Dutch experience indicates that the way to make four lane main roads safer for cyclists is to reduce the traffic lanes to two and use the space for bikeways. VicRoads faces two problems. First, it has to plan for a population growth and the consequent increasing demand for road space; reducing traffic lanes can only happen on a few main roads. Secondly, it faces the reality that over 1,000 km of existing main roads are not wide enough to provide bike lanes.

There are just too many four lane main roads 13.2 m wide or less to provide bike lanes, given VicRoads standards of 3.15 m minimum width for traffic lanes (it rarely allows the centre lanes to be less than 3.15 m) and its desirable standards for bikelanes of 1.5 m on new 60 km/h main roads and 2.0m on 80 km/h roads. As the table below shows, there are limited options for the provision of safe bike lanes and widened kerb lanes on four lane main roads less than 15.0 m wide.

Even with central lane widths of only 2.8 m (as in much of Sydney) it is impossible to provide for anything other than substandard widths for bike lanes and kerb lanes on roads

less than 13.6 m wide.

Road Width (m)	Lane Widths (m)		Lane Widths (m)	
	Between Kerbs.	Kerb	Centre	Bikelane
12.8	3.25*	3.15	0.1*	3.15
13.6	3.65*	3.15	0.5*	3.15
13.8	3.75	3.15	0.6*	3.15
14.4	4.05	3.15	0.9*	3.15
14.8	4.20+	3.20	1.1*	3.15

Notes:

\* Substandard widths for bike lanes and kerb lanes.

+ VicRoads desirable widths on new 60 km/h main roads.

VicRoads appears to lack data on which main roads are wide enough to accommodate widened kerb lanes, bike lanes, shared car parking/bike lanes or have road reserves with enough space for shared footways.

The VicRoads theoretical notion of a bike lane network on main roads is flawed. It is impractical to create a PBN network unless alternative bicycle routes to many main roads are provided and speed limits are reduced on other main roads. The solution is to cater for the silent majority by developing parallel back routes that bypass the most dangerous sections of main roads and connect to the off-road shared footways and residential streets, which now have a 50 km/h speed limit.

Dutch bicycle planning assumes that there should be two bike routes to every destination and one of them must be socially secure (well lit and perceived as safe). A useable and convenient "bikeway network" should be at least 5000 to 7500 km long to create the necessary shortcuts and to significantly reduce the trip lengths of cyclists. The VicRoads concept of a PBN with a mesh of 1.5 km is inadequate. Dutch experience shows that a 500m mesh size is necessary to provide the short cuts and convenience that will greatly encourage bicycle use.

### ***The Challenge for the Metropolitan Strategy***

Under VicRoads planning, the number of bicycle trips in Melbourne has actually decreased by 20% over the five years from 161,900 in 1995 to 128,600 in 1999 (Victoria Activity Travel Survey data). Cycling has increased only in the CBD and some inner suburban areas where local councils have done a lot to traffic calm main roads or enable cyclists to bypass them.

There remains a lack of effective co-ordination of bicycle planning, no government agency responsible for coordination and the cost of completing the local connections, and a lack of up-to date bicycle route maps documenting what has been provided and what new connections are needed.

Perhaps now is the time for the Victorian Department of Infrastructure to take over the provision of bicycle planning with sufficient funding to create a real bicycle arterial network within the next ten years.

*Alan Parker, Vice-President*