

Dear Melbourne City Councillors,

Date of meeting: 07/06/22

Agenda item title: Agenda 6.9

I am writing to express my strongest support for the continued roll out of Melbourne CBD bike lanes.

There has never been a more important time to roll out quality active transport infrastructure - including bike lanes and footpaths.

By continuing to create a network of safe, separated bike lanes, the Melbourne City Council can empower members of the community with better choices to move in ways that are healthier, reduce car traffic and improve air quality - to name just a few benefits of bike lanes.

There are many reasons bike lanes are an important part of our transport system - and should be receiving increased government funding and attention:

Reduce car traffic: Creating a safe network of bike lanes, separated from roads, helps people gravitate towards bike-riding and reduces car traffic, achieving 'traffic evaporation' (1). By making riding more convenient, those who can will leave their car at home, thereby making it easier for people to move around our city. As the City of Melbourne's own research (2) shows, "Many people who want to start riding or want to ride more often would do so if bike lanes were physically protected from motor vehicles. Our research shows protected bike lanes attract more people to ride." A recent Melbourne study supports your findings, demonstrating that separated cycling infrastructure encourages the significant portion of Melbournians interested in riding to do so (3).

Increase business: Despite all the criticism that has led to this "pause", which has claimed that the bike lanes are hampering the recovery of CBD businesses, the evidence quite clearly shows the opposite. Investing in cycling infrastructure **increases economic activity**, spending in retail and hospitality venues (4). A number of car-free city centres around the world are thriving more than ever. Salt Lake City converted nine blocks of parking into bike lanes along its business corridor. These lanes led to an increase in sales from the extra foot and wheel traffic (5). Further, with the growing trend in e-cargo bikes, the ability for people to carry heavier loads (plus their kids and dog!) is only growing.

Improve safety for all road users: Research indubitably demonstrates that implementing bike lanes enhances safety for not only people riding bikes but those driving and walking (6). This is because separated bike lanes have a car-traffic calming effect, enabling vehicles to move at safer speeds for everyone.

Improving local air quality and health outcomes for communities: Air pollution from cars, trucks and fossil-fuel powered buses is responsible for an estimated 1,700 deaths every year in Australia - larger than the national road toll (7). If more people rode to work or university instead of driving, we'd see a reduction in the number of Melbournians dying from air pollution.

Improve accessibility: Improving footpaths, bike lanes and public transport can make it easier for Australia's most vulnerable and marginalised groups to get around (8). These upgrades can be of particular benefit to older people, those living with a disability, low income households and migrant communities.

Reduce emissions: Personal transport is Australia's fastest growing source of emissions (9); and fluctuates between the second and third highest source (behind only energy and land use) (10). Bottom line: our cars are a major contributor to climate change and Melbournians need to be empowered to move in different ways wherever possible. The global climate science is clear: we need to increase active transport to reduce transport emissions. Local research tells us that more separated and dedicated infrastructure is required to move the great number of people from the *interested* category to actually taking up riding. Australia needs a national strategy to move away from petrol-guzzling cars to bike-riding, walking and zero-emissions public transport and electric vehicles. To pause these bike lanes would put Melbourne on the back-foot, set to become stuck in the past as Australian cities implement innovative and intelligent transport solutions.

Reduce the cost of living as fuel prices rise and inflation rise while wages stagnant: Bike-riding and walking are the cheapest travel options (11), and improved infrastructure allows more Melbournians to experience these benefits .

To conclude, I am extremely alarmed to see Melbourne City Council considering pausing the roll out of critical infrastructure for the precedent it sets and for the message it sends across Melbourne, interstate and even abroad.

A few voices should not outweigh the benefits to Melbournians who would use this infrastructure, as well as those who stand to gain from secondhand benefits such as cleaner air, less traffic, safer roads and action on climate change

I want to express my appreciation for the bike lanes that have been rolled out to date, and the acceleration of this rollout during COVID-19. **I ask that you preserve with your bike strategy to reap all the benefits they will bring - a strategy set in motion well before the pandemic.**

References:

- 1) <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/video/2022/may/17/why-new-bike-lanes-dont-cause-traffic-jams-video>
- 2) <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/transport-strategy-2030-city-of-melbourne.pdf>
- 3) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140521003200>
- 4) <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/walking-cycling-economic-benefits-summary-pack.pdf>
- 5) https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8tOk7_upXv5djhCajg1Z0I3bmhTVTIxWldwRzA0YjJWNW9R/view?resourcekey=0-Fr7Mp141yXvXzW6u5NBjqQ
- 6) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2214140518301488?via%3Dihub>
- 7) https://nespurban.edu.au/publications-%20resources/research-reports/CAULRR06_%20%20SubmissionFuelQualityStandardsAct2000_Mar2017.pdf
- 8) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26211762>
- 9) <https://ageis.climatechange.gov.au/nggi.aspx>
- 10) <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/FactSheet-Transport.pdf>
- 11) https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CC_MVSA0154-Report-Transport_V6-FA_Low-Res_Single-Pages.pdf