



Walking and Bike Riding Project

Survey Summary

March 2021

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1 Introduction

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and VicHealth have been working together since July 2020 to support Victorian local councils to deliver projects that encourage walking and bike riding. Covid-19 has been a catalyst to improve our local infrastructure and work in collaborative partnerships.

A survey was conducted in August 2020, and again in February 2021 to help understand the context in which councils have been delivering active transport projects, what help councils may need, and how it has changed over time.

This report summarises the results of the most recent survey and compares the results to those recorded in August 2020.

2 Survey Results

2.1 Respondents

Total Responses – 47

Individual Council Responses – 39

Metropolitan – 18

Interface – 4

Regional City – 6

Large Rural Shire – 7

Small Rural Shire – 12

In the initial survey, 68 responses were recorded covering 86% of all Victorian councils. In the most recent survey, only 49% of all Victorian councils responded, however a similar distribution of council types was recorded.

2.2 Actions implemented in the last 12 months, in response to Covid-19, to support walking and bike riding

Outdoor dining – temporary removal of car parking		67.39%	31
Pop-up/temporary parklets		43.48%	20
Outdoor dining - speed limit reductions on streets		30.43%	14
New strategies or plans that relate to walking or bike riding		23.91%	11
Community engagement about changes to streets		19.57%	9
Pop-up/temporary widening of footpaths onto streets		17.39%	8
No specific actions		13.04%	6
Increased/accelerated actions delivered from existing plans		10.87%	5
Pop-up/temporary bike lanes		8.70%	4
Other (please specify)	Responses	8.70%	4
Speed limit reductions in areas of high pedestrian activity		4.35%	2
Permanent bike lanes		2.17%	1
Permanent parklets		2.17%	1
Permanent shared streets (20km speed limit shared zones)		0.00%	0

One council advised an e-scooter project is pending approval and another noted an increase in table and chair occupation of pathways/sidewalks in commercial areas.

Eleven councils identified they had implemented new strategies or plans related to walking or bike riding in response to COVID.

Actions more likely to have been implemented by metropolitan councils include:

- Outdoor dining - speed limit reductions on streets
- Outdoor dining - temporary removal of car parking
- Pop-up/temporary bike lanes
- Pop-up/temporary parklets
- Permanent parklets
- New strategies or plans that relate to walking or bike riding
- Pop-up/temporary widening of footpaths onto streets

Actions more likely to have been implemented by regional councils include:

- Permanent bike lanes
- Community engagement about changes to streets
- Increased/accelerated actions delivered from existing plans
- Other actions not specified in table

Actions implemented with a roughly even split across metropolitan and rural councils include:

- Speed limit reductions in areas of high pedestrian activity

2.3 Extent to which actions have been evaluated

Many respondents advised it was too soon for evaluations to have occurred, however, anecdotal feedback indicates success with strong community and business support and many food businesses strongly supporting outdoor dining.

One respondent noted some pushback due to loss of street parking, while another noted walking paths are often disconnected.

Of note was one council that identified they are planning to create an Inter-Township Trail Network, which has become a priority project.

There was an even split across metropolitan and regional councils in relation to the extent to which actions have been evaluated.

2.4 Projects planned for next 12 months

Yes, improved walking facilities	90.48%	38
Yes, improved bike riding facilities	83.33%	35
Speed limit reductions in high pedestrian areas (e.g. shopping strips, schools)	35.71%	15
Behaviour change campaign to encourage bike riding	21.43%	9
Behaviour change campaign to encourage walking	14.29%	6
Nothing planned at present	2.38%	1

Responses selected in this survey are distributed proportionally the same as those in the first survey.

Actions more likely to be implemented by metropolitan councils include:

- Improved bike riding facilities

Actions more likely to be implemented by regional councils include:

- Improved walking facilities
- Speed limit reductions in high pedestrian areas (e.g. shopping strips, schools)

Actions to be implemented with a roughly even split across metropolitan and rural councils include:

- Behaviour change campaign to encourage bike riding
- Behaviour change campaign to encourage walking

2.5 Barriers encountered in delivering walking and bike riding projects

Funding	Responses	82.93%	34
External (VicRoads, Department of Transport or other state agency) approval processes		36.59%	15
Community opposition		34.15%	14
Internal (Council) approval processes		26.83%	11
Other (please specify)	Responses	21.95%	9
Not delivering projects		4.88%	2

One respondent specified funding as a key issue in free text, which adds further weight to this identified barrier.

Four respondents identified external approvals as significant barriers in their free text responses, with some noting, DoT and cultural heritage approvals as being particularly difficult to navigate in some instances.

Other respondents noted internal capacity constraints, and contractor capacity constraints as key issues.

Barriers more likely to be experienced by metropolitan councils include:

- Community opposition
- Internal approval processes
- External approval processes

Barriers more likely to be experienced by regional councils include:

- Funding

Internal approval was a barrier faced equally across metropolitan and regional councils in the first survey, however, this appears to be less of an issue for regional councils more recently. External approval barriers appear to be less of an issue for all councils more recently also.

2.6 Awareness of MAV resources

Walking and Bike Riding Resource Hub (page on MAV website)	43.90%	18
Webinars relating to walking and cycling projects (e.g. lessons learnt; evaluation; behaviour change)	43.90%	18
Updates and information session on DoT project approvals processes	34.15%	14
Updates and information session on DoT walking/cycling project prioritisation framework	31.71%	13
None of these	26.83%	11
Outdoor activation information session	21.95%	9
Council case studies on recent walking/cycling projects	12.20%	5

Webinars and the Resource Hub were the most well-known resources, with approximately 75% of respondents aware of at least one resource available.

2.7 Usefulness of MAV Resource Hub

Useful	47.37%	9
I didn't visit the webpage	26.32%	5
Very useful	15.79%	3
Limited use	5.26%	1
No use	5.26%	1

Approximately 75% of respondents visited the Resource Hub, with just under two thirds of all respondents finding it useful or very useful.

Metropolitan councils were more likely to identify the Resource Hub as useful / very useful.

2.8 Usefulness of specific aspects of the MAV Resource Hub

	VERY USEFUL	USEFUL	LIMITED USE	NO USE	I CAN'T RECALL	TOTAL
Funding available to Victorian councils	23.08% 3	61.54% 8	7.69% 1	7.69% 1	0.00% 0	13
Webinar recordings	18.18% 2	27.27% 3	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	9.09% 1	11
Council case studies	0.00% 0	58.33% 7	33.33% 4	0.00% 0	8.33% 1	12
Information on government/non-government stakeholders	8.33% 1	58.33% 7	25.00% 3	0.00% 0	8.33% 1	12
Victorian strategies and guidance	0.00% 0	61.54% 8	23.08% 3	0.00% 0	15.38% 2	13
National and international strategies and guidance	0.00% 0	7.69% 1	76.92% 10	0.00% 0	15.38% 2	13

Interest and feedback aligns with areas of greatest concern to councils, with funding a particular issue. Respondents appreciate knowing what funding options are available. Furthermore, local and specific information to support project delivery is of greater interest to councils compared to national and international strategies or guidance which are seen as less relevant.

2.9 Information missing from the hub

One respondent noted a greater desire for pop up cycle lane templates, plans and resources with a local focus to be made available.

Another respondent noted they believed there could be greater support for smaller rural townships and indicated an “historic lack of current standard of infrastructure requirements and no appetite for special charge schemes due social economic barriers.”

2.10 Actions that would help councils to deliver walking and bike riding projects

Additional funding	92.50%	37
Local relevant case studies and lessons learned	57.50%	23
Facilitating interactions between state agencies and local government on specific topics	47.50%	19
Facilitating information sharing/capacity building across councils	47.50%	19
Improving DoT approval processes	35.00%	14
Webinars on relevant topics	22.50%	9
Expanded online resource hub	10.00%	4
Other (please specify)	Responses	5.00% 2

Funding is again identified as a key issue and driver to delivering more projects. Local and relevant case studies and the ability to share lessons from past projects are also important.

One respondent noted a desire for a clear and public policy direction from state government on walking and bike riding, while another noted there should be a greater focus on non-recreational programs.

Actions with greater support from metropolitan councils:

- Improving dot approval processes
- Facilitating interactions between state agencies and local government on specific topics

Actions with greater support from regional councils:

- Additional funding
- Local relevant case studies and lessons learned
- Webinars on relevant topics
- Facilitating information sharing/capacity building across councils
- Expanded online resource hub

2.11 Other support that MAV could provide

Respondents consistently indicated education, engagement and the development of case studies would assist in project delivery.

Councils were keen to see more support for community engagement, the promotion of ‘success stories’ and increased advocacy around funding and resources – specifically, the development of consistent standards.

Many respondents also noted a need to have tailored resources for rural councils. One respondent was keen to see MAV assist with setting benchmark guidelines on acceptable levels of service for small rural towns. Another noted a desire to see VicRoads / RRV develop rural specific guidelines for infrastructure treatments. They noted regions have far lower volumes of vehicles and pedestrians and that metro-centric guidelines are hard to meet.

3 Conclusions and next steps

Respondents showed a strong interest in greater funding to support project delivery, having access to practical resources such as case studies and lessons learned, as well as the ability to participate in facilitated interactions between state agencies and councils.

The MAV will continue to consider how to best support councils, including exploring the potential to run further webinars or forums at a regional tier (similar to TAC regional forums). This would enable the connection of similar councils within a broader geographic area.

The MAV will also consider a greater focus on pragmatic and practical sessions, with the potential for face-to-face delivery where possible, or webinars that enable councils to connect to other stakeholder who play a role in walking and bike riding, such as funding, advocacy or approvals bodies.

Future topics that will be considered include community engagement capability building, educating council staff on how to talk with communities to promote new approaches, rural projects, recreation-focused walking and riding, and navigating external approvals.

Finally, the MAV will consider how to best revitalise the Resource Hub and general support materials to include local, practical information and case studies. There will be less of a focus on national/international examples and resources moving forward.