



# Submission to Plan Melbourne Refresh

In May 2015, the Victorian Government announced an update to the 2014 Plan Melbourne, known as the Plan Melbourne refresh.

**A Discussion Paper was developed to guide consultation with local government, industry, planning experts and the community. Interested parties were invited to provide a response to the Discussion Paper.**

**The following submission is GTA's response to the "Plan Melbourne Refresh"**

Every day we help governments and private clients make increasingly difficult decisions about cities. Decisions that may limit our children's opportunities if not linked to a clear view of our collective future.

Plan Melbourne needs to define that future and generate a sense of shared purpose.

We applaud the emphasis given to implementation. When the community understands, and accepts the trade-offs implicit in city plans, and the need for action, bi-partisan political support is more likely. If we can learn anything from the experiences of the last 10 years, it is that these are the pre-conditions for informed community discussion and progress.

Our interest lies at the intersection of transport with the challenging themes of climate change, affordable living and Melbourne at double its current population.

## Introductory Comments

### Transport is Key

The role of transport in shaping cities cannot be overstated. Transport is not only a means of moving people and goods from one place to another, but influences a cities' urban form, its productive output, sense of community, environmental performance and social opportunities. We reinforce the need for a coherent city transport plan that integrates with and supports Plan Melbourne. Transport is one of the keys to becoming the city we want to be in the future.

### Focus on the Reform Agenda

Transport is one of the remaining services ripe for reform following changes to the energy, water and telecommunications sectors in recent years. Infrastructure Australia has reform as a central plank of its platform in the near term and we suggest the Refresh Paper should focus on it as well. Many of the fundamental, low cost and enduring benefits such as road pricing are imminent, and should be carefully pursued to correct some of the perverse incentives that exist now. The national taxation discussion is an opportunity to encourage more sustainable outcomes to help shape the future form and functioning of Melbourne.

### Government Needs Help

With a tight fiscal outlook and challenging structural demographic trends, governments can't deal with city building challenges on their own. Melbourne is no different. A successful implementation plan needs a constructive discussion about what the government can reasonably achieve, and where the private sector has a role. The management and pricing of risk is one determinant, as is the way in which we manage our transport networks' return to the community.

### Change is Coming

Game changing technologies are now effectively with us. Ride sharing services, autonomous vehicles, intelligent transport systems: all of them combined are likely to be transformational in terms of how we access and use transport in future, and the manner in which they affect decisions about city planning. We highlight the need for this new future to be factored into a plan for Melbourne that is resilient, adaptable and responsive to changing circumstances.

## The future is now

Infrastructure development takes time. Infrastructure also possesses a long design life. In just over five years Victoria's population will be 6.5 million people. In 15 years, it will be almost 8 million. The speed at which we progress through community discussion, planning and delivery of infrastructure solutions must increase. Further, are the discussions, planning and designs we are conceiving truly fit to meet future capacity?

## Key Principles and Challenges (Chapter 2)

Addressing the key challenges facing Melbourne, and using these as opportunities for growth, requires a strong sense of Melbourne's brand and identity, and how this informs a vision of what Melbourne will be and should be like in the future.

We believe that collective understanding of what Melbourne's urban form will look like is particularly important in this respect, including recognising the tradeoffs that may be required to realise this vision.

The Victorian Government may need to make big decisions such as locking down the urban growth boundary and finding ways to encourage much stronger growth towards a truly polycentric city. However, big decisions such as these cannot be made in isolation and must be developed with regard to cities as a system. For example, locking down the urban growth boundary cannot occur without complementary measures to ensure housing affordability, and polycentric city policies must include planning reforms to facilitate employment growth in activity centres.

Within the context of budgetary restraint, we need to work hard to optimise our existing assets, not just relying on megaprojects to meet our needs. Thoughtful collections of smaller interventions designed with a network view are often more effective than single large projects.

## Jobs and Investment (Chapter 3)

Planning for Activity Centres, especially the larger Metropolitan Activity Centres, must facilitate the development of genuinely mixed use neighbourhoods to minimise the need to travel, particularly as urban density increases across Melbourne.

This is a major opportunity to take pressure off Melbourne's largely radial public transport network and reduce average trip distances, increasing the likelihood of active travel.

Clearer policies for new activity centres should be developed, including establishing transport mode share outcomes, as well as commitments towards the provision of public transport and facilities for active travel.

This will help guide integrated transport and land use planning and, where appropriate, discourage private vehicle travel to provide priority to other more sustainable modes of transport.

Adopting these measures will not only provide good transport outcomes in terms of efficiency and sustainability, but will provide more liveable and attractive nodes across the city ripe for investment and employment growth.

## A More Connected Melbourne (Chapter 4)

We support the inclusion of the Principal Public Transport Network as a useful basis for integrated transport and land use planning. We suggest that this could also be the foundation for a frank and robust discussion with the community about urban intensification, as this is likely to occur along public transport corridors and at key transport nodes.

We also support referencing Active Transport Victoria in the refreshed Plan Melbourne, along with recognition of the importance of integrated planning in achieving mode shift to walking and cycling.

As mentioned previously, the Victorian Government should look at opportunities to make the best use of existing assets to meet the needs of our growing and changing city. We would suggest consideration of measures such as congestion management programs, which have been successfully introduced in Sydney and Perth.

## Housing (Chapter 5)

We believe that metropolitan planning should focus on unlocking housing supply in established areas to best utilise existing infrastructure, including transport supply.

Housing targets should be established for Melbourne's sub-regions (as set out in Plan Melbourne 2014) to provide a more concrete and equitable basis for the distribution of urban intensification, allowing the actual distribution of housing within these sub-regions to be determined collaboratively by their respective local governments.

The refreshed Plan Melbourne should also clarify which locations can support population growth, such as along public transport corridors and in activity centres, as well as explaining to the community how this intensification represents an opportunity to improve liveability rather than threatening it.

The Victorian Government should also look at ways to ensure greater consistency between the strategic visions of local and state governments, and their planning and operational activities. For example, there are numerous instances where sustainability-focused aspirations such as increased public transport use are promoted at the strategic level, but undermined by incompatible car parking policies.

## Resilience and Environmental Sustainability (Chapter 6)

The Refresh comes at an interesting time with the recent release of the Paris Agreement as an outcome of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change.

The contribution of transport to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions must be acknowledged, along with a plan to achieve the necessary emissions reductions.

This could be achieved in a range of ways such as encouraging a shift to more sustainable transport modes and new technologies that reduce emissions. In particular, active travel should be recognised as a key tool in tackling climate change, as it generates close to zero emissions and has much wider community benefits in terms of health and well-being.

## New Planning Tools (Chapter 7)

We support the use of code assess approaches for medium density development, as the associated lower costs and reduced timeframes should encourage this type of development and better balance urban densification goals with liveability outcomes.

In our view, further clarity on desired outcomes at the building and street level are necessary to generate community support, and to create places that work well for people.

In terms of new zones for national employment clusters, we make the point that whichever solution is adopted, zoning should be used to work towards integrated transport and land use planning. This is the key to promoting public transport and active travel in these places.

## Implementation (Chapter 8)

We support an approach that periodically updates Plan Melbourne with sensible adjustments, but which retains its core building blocks.

However, there is always scope to regularly promote the core principles of the Plan to the community, to explain why they are important, and to illustrate why they will lead to better outcomes in future for their local community.

Many of these benefits should be presented at the individual level so they make sense. For example, an approach to urban densification in activity centres that creates a range of housing choices (size, configuration and price) allows people to age in place rather than being forced out of their suburb when they retire. There is always more work to be done explaining the rationale behind the Plan to the community.

Much of the debate and opposition to population growth centres on the lack of any real and commonly accepted urban form model for those areas where high growth is to be encouraged.

We recommend ongoing effort be focused on describing and working towards acceptance of a density model for activity centres, transport corridors and the residual suburban area, that balances housing and employment supply against the concerns of height, affordability and the like.

In other words, what is the density model that Melbournians will embrace over time and what does it look like? How do we then incentivise the community and the industry to work towards it? It needs to be a Melbourne solution to a Melbourne problem.

Lastly, performance monitoring is essential for accountability, as well as providing a basis for updates or revisions as circumstances change. Clear targets and metrics should be in place to inform the debate around the pace of change and resulting decisions regarding investment priorities.

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