



# LIVEABLE CITIES

## ACTIVE TRAVEL – Healthy Living Landscape Solutions

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### Introduction

Australian cities are car dominated and low in density with close to the world's highest per capita carbon footprint. Fortunately, change is underway with density increasing and mixed use development becoming more common.

Cycling, walking and use of public transport will become increasingly important factors in moving towards greater sustainability and liveability of Australian towns and cities. We have the right climate and topography, and active modes of transport are becoming a lifestyle choice for increasing numbers of younger adults living in inner areas of our cities.

The Australian government released a ministerial statement "Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport: Supporting Active Travel in Australian Communities" in 2013. The statement includes detailed principles and actions for all levels of government.

The statement sets out the role of active travel within the broader transport system including its increasing importance as we move towards more sustainable cities and towns. The clear benefits are explained in terms of the efficiency of our transport systems and public health. The statement makes clear that the costs and benefits of new walking and cycling infrastructure will vary by project but will generally be relatively low in cost with good returns.

# Key issues

The benefits of active transport include:

- reduced transport congestion, leading to better use of time and greater productivity
- less fossil fuel use, leading to fewer greenhouse gas emissions and less air pollution
- improved health and wellbeing from walking and cycling, which means reduced public health costs from a more active population
- less household cost through reduced expenditure on fuel and maintenance of cars.

Designing streets, squares and open spaces for pedestrians, cyclists and accessible public transport is a task that should involve landscape architects because it requires integrated design thinking that is a core professional skill.

Current provision for cyclists in Australia is geared to the needs of recreational cyclists and younger risk-taking cyclists who are willing to share road space with cars and often ride at high speed. The number of cycling trips to work in Australia is 1.3%, while some northern European countries achieve over 30% and others, like UK, have targets of around 20%.

The next phase in increasing active transport in Australian towns and cities requires the development of safe, fully off-road networks. These networks will encourage and facilitate young and older, less confident riders to walk and ride to work, schools and other regular destinations within five kilometres as the preferred method of travel in terms of time, safety and convenience.

The key to improved health and reducing car use in cities is to develop fully off-road cycle infrastructure, streets that encourage walking, and efficient public transport.

# AILA position

AILA supports the provision of and investment in active transport by governments on behalf of their communities.

AILA advocates for the design of active transport systems as an integral component of new and redeveloped urban structure, ensuring that they are fully integrated into the network of travel modes to efficiently meet the needs of the community.

- meet the social and economic needs of the present without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own needs
- protect the environment, locally and globally in the short and long term
- provide and promote lower carbon transport options
- enable safety and efficiency of the whole journey
- facilitate improved health and well-being through active travel choices.

AILA recommends that landscape architects be an integral part of teams that undertake transport system design and documentation to resolve issues such as:

**integration of the different transport modes (e.g. walking, cycling) to link with public transport**

**provision of safety, functionality and comfort to encourage use of the services**

**enrichment of places (place making) with lighting, signage, public art and street furniture**

# Case Studies

## Swanston Street Melbourne

Before being converted to a restricted traffic strip in 1992, Swanston Street was one of the busiest roads in Melbourne, carrying a large volume of private automobiles. The street was made partially car-free, with limited exemptions for small freight, buses and private automobiles during certain times of the day. Since the 1990s, proposals for the street to become entirely car-free have gained support and momentum.

Nine tram routes currently run along the street, with the frequency of trams being the highest in Melbourne. Two of the busiest railway stations in the city are located on Swanston Street: Flinders Street Station at its southern end, which is the hub of the suburban railway network; and Melbourne Central Station, an underground station beneath Melbourne Central Shopping Centre at La Trobe Street.



Source: Bruce Echberg

Swanston Street is also a major route for commuting cyclists, with bike lanes from the northern suburbs and from St Kilda Road in the south, and the Capital City Trail on the Southbank of the Yarra River.

On 27 January 2010, it was announced that the entire length of Swanston Street would become car-free. The \$25.6 million proposal included plans for several city squares along the street and several large tram stops. Aside from trams, the only motorised vehicular access was to be for small-scale freight at certain times, and emergency vehicles. The construction program commenced in late 2011 and was completed in late 2012.

Swanston Street is one of very few streets in Australia that demonstrates the full potential of active transport with very high pedestrian numbers, fully off-road cycle facilities, and integrated public transport.

## Melbourne Docklands, Walker Street Dandenong, Marcus Clarke Street Canberra

Harbour Esplanade Melbourne Docklands, Walker Street Dandenong, and Marcus Clarke Street Canberra are projects designed by landscape architects that provide fully off-road cycle paths.

In Canberra, the Marcus Clarke Street section provides two metre-wide, separated cycle lanes on each side of the road for the majority of its length and a connection to the Rudd Street section of the Civic Cycle Loop.



Source: Bruce Echberg



Source: Bruce Echberg

## Münster Germany

This university city of Münster, Germany, with a population of around 300,000, is claimed to be Germany's most bicycle-friendly city. It is a model of good practice and in many ways typical of the active transport movement that extends from Dutch and Scandinavian cities and towns to many in France, Spain and Italy.



Source: Bruce Echberg



Source: Bruce Echberg

In Münster in 2007, vehicle traffic (36.4%) fell below bicycle traffic (37.6%).

Münster maintains an extensive network for bicycles including the popular "Promenade" which encircles the city centre in the footprint of medieval fortifications.

Cars are banned in Münster's city centre where the streets are pedestrianised.

Additional bicycle paths link all city districts with the city centre and traffic lights have customised signals for cyclists.

Münster Bicycle Station, in front of the main railway station, is Germany's largest underground bicycle park, with 3,300 parking spaces.



Source: Bruce Echberg

## Supporting research/links

1. Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure and Transport: "Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport: Supporting Active Travel in Australian Communities" [https://infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure/pab/active\\_transport/files/infra1874\\_mcu\\_active\\_travel\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure/pab/active_transport/files/infra1874_mcu_active_travel_report_final.pdf)
2. Austroads: <http://www.austroads.com.au/road-operations/bicycles>
3. Bicycle Network: <https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/>
4. Australian Bicycle Council: "National Cycling Strategy 2011-16 Implementation report 2014"
5. [http://transportinfrastructurecouncil.gov.au/publications/files/National\\_Cycling\\_Strategy\\_Implementation\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](http://transportinfrastructurecouncil.gov.au/publications/files/National_Cycling_Strategy_Implementation_Report_2014.pdf)
6. Liveability Case Studies: "Case Studies on Transit and Liveable communities in Rural and Small Town America" <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/2010LivabilityCaseStudies.pdf>
7. Non-profit urban economics firm, Centre for Transit Oriented Development, California, 2008, "Capturing the Value of Transit"
8. <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/resource-center/books-and-reports/2008/capturing-the-value-of-transit-3/>

### Other relevant position statements

Public Transport

Light Rail

### Further information

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