

Active Transport Strategy 2023-2033

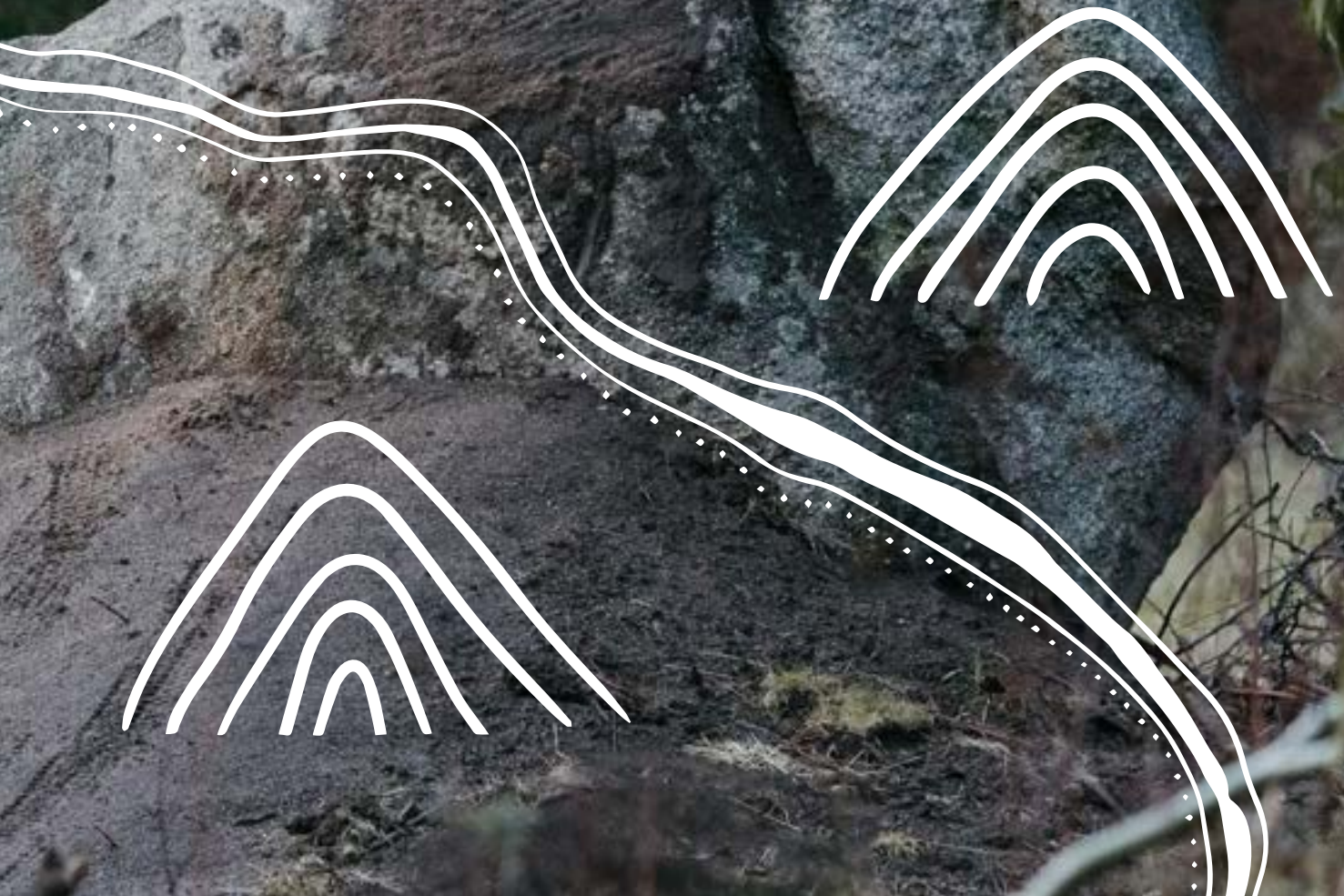
Working towards a safe, sustainable, accessible and connected network to encourage our community to become more active, more often.



Acknowledgement of country

Mount Alexander Shire Council acknowledges that the traditional custodians of this land, the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples, proudly survive. We acknowledge their continued practise of custom and their close cultural, spiritual, physical, social, historical and economic relationship with the land and waters that make up their country, which includes Mount Alexander Shire.

Council recognises the Victorian Government's Recognition and Settlement with both the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the Taungurung Land and Waters Council.



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Mayor and CEO's message



Councillor Rosie Annear
Mayor

Mount Alexander Shire Council

Growing up in Castlemaine, I lived at the top of a hill, with a mum who didn't drive. Suffice to say, I spent the majority of my childhood getting from here to there on foot.

I don't think I appreciated the benefits of walking everywhere at the time, but there were so many: health, fitness, wellbeing, connection to people and nature. More than these, though, I learned the shape of my town and community, its context, how places connected to each other – and this knowledge and appreciation has served me well over the years.

These days, with kids of my own, and a busy life, I don't have as much time for active transport as I'd like. But we still walk, cycle, scoot and skate when we can.

The Active Transport Strategy acknowledges the many direct and indirect benefits of active transport. It also demonstrates Council's commitment to promoting and improving ways for our community to engage in active transport in the shire, regardless of age or ability.

We are grateful for the amount of input and engagement that community members provided to inform the development of this strategy. We appreciate the passion there is within our community to improve and extend active transport opportunities in the shire.

In developing this strategy, we tried to find a happy medium between aspirational and achievable. We wanted the document to set out our intentions and directions regarding active transport over the next ten years (and beyond). We were also mindful of the limitations and challenges we face as a small local government area, and the needs and expectations of our community. We considered it vital that the strategy be flexible enough to ensure we could respond to changing Council and community needs and priorities, and pursue opportunities as they arise.

I am pleased to present Council's Active Transport Strategy 2023-2033, and look forward to being guided by it in the years ahead. I'm confident that Council and community can work together to achieve improved active transport opportunities for all.



Darren Fuzzrd
Chief Executive Officer
Mount Alexander Shire Council

As the saying goes, it's not the destination but the journey that matters. And that concept is really at the heart of our new Active Transport Strategy.

No matter our circumstances, we can all find reasons not to leave the car at home and instead walk, ride or scoot to where we need to be.

By delivering on this strategy over time and doing our part to make the Shire's roads, footpaths and trails easier and safer for all to enjoy, it is our hope that we can help reduce some of those reasons.

We also hope that through helping more people to know and consider the personal benefits of having active transport more often in our daily lives, many more of us will choose to do so.

As always, community input has helped guide and develop this strategy together with its goals and the initial actions that we have committed to.

The nature of the strategy means that we will need to continue to draw on the wisdom and passion of our community over time as we determine priority projects amongst the many possibilities that exist within the resources available to us. So we thank you in advance.

I look forward to seeing more people, more active, more often.



Purpose

The purpose of this document is to detail the strategy for improving active transport participation within Mount Alexander Shire over the next decade and beyond.

The strategy drives focus on three key outcome areas: raising awareness around active transport options through advocacy, education and communication; increasing participation in active transport to enhance community health and wellbeing outcomes through active transport activities; and planning and delivering a safe, connected and sustainable network.

The scope of the strategy covers all modes of active transport so that we can address the needs of as many active transport users as possible. This includes:

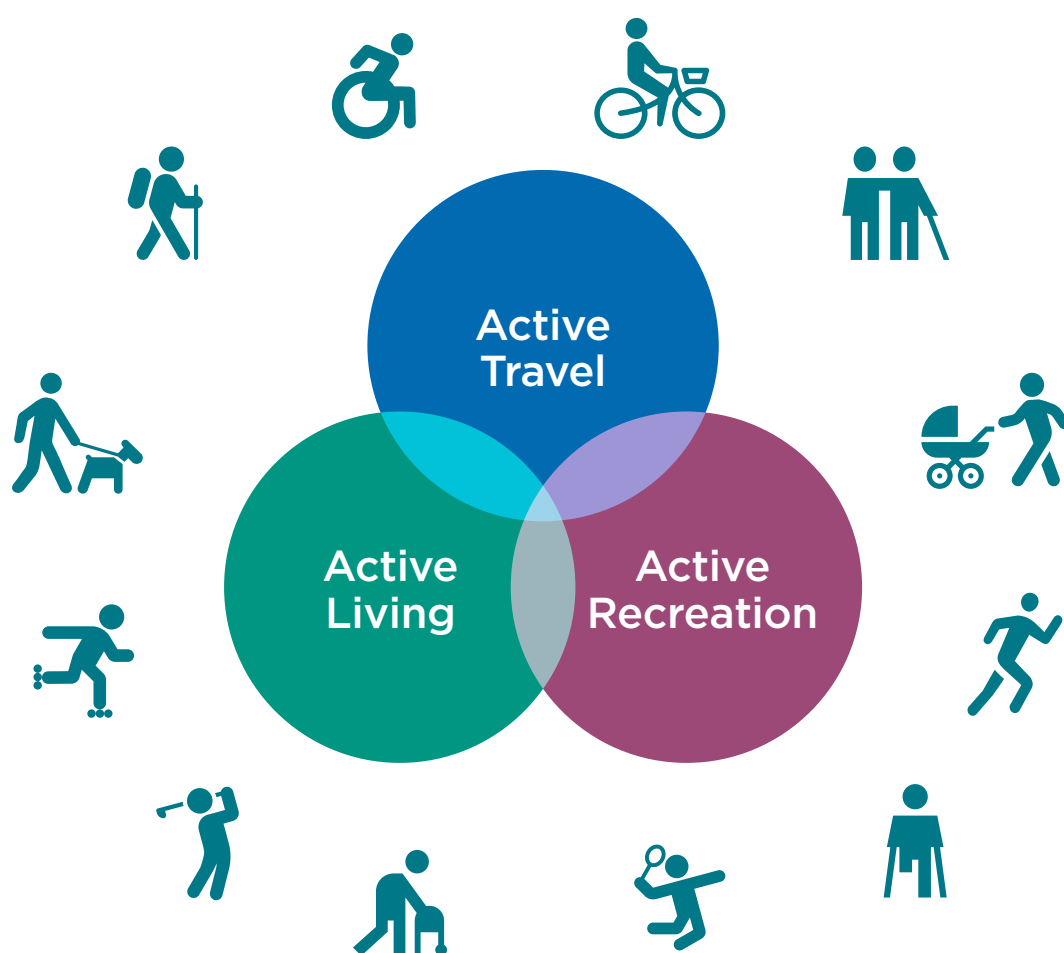
- A broad range of community outcomes that can be achieved through greater participation in active transport
- Community perspectives and local data to support decision making
- The intersection with other Council plans and strategies reinforcing a holistic perspective in what we do
- Engagement with community organisations and programs to deliver positive active transport outcomes
- An evaluation and review framework to measure outcomes against key actions.



What is active transport?

This Active Transport Strategy acknowledges and incorporates a wide variety of active transport activities supporting our community members to travel to key destinations whilst reducing the reliance on motor vehicles.

For the purposes of this strategy, Active Transport describes walking, cycling and the use of mobility devices (eg. scooters, wheelchairs, walking aids) and small wheeled transport (e.g. skateboards, skates) on paths, roads & trails, for the whole or part of the journey.



Active Travel

Getting from place to place through physical activity for the whole or part of the journey. For example to/from school, work or shops.

Active Living

Physical movement that is part of everyday life and contributes to physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Active Recreation

Physical, non competitive activities engaged in for the purpose of relaxation, health and wellbeing or enjoyment.

Key themes

This strategy is informed by the implementation of the Walking and Cycling Strategy 2010-2020, advances in transport safety, recreation and infrastructure standards, guidance from peak body organisations, as well as being informed by community input.

The following themes have been identified, which have informed the development of the strategy goals and future direction.



Safety - For active transport participants safety is a key concern, and an overarching principle that has informed the development of this strategy. The increased provision of safer active transport infrastructure is a strong enabler of active transport participation. The creation of a safe environment builds confidence in all age groups and all levels of ability, allowing young people the opportunity to learn and build their skills, families to transit and move together and more mature participants the time and opportunity to maintain their movement. Providing safer and more connected infrastructure promotes active transport participation across all ages, as does providing facilities that promotes increased accessibility. Path or route conditions and increased options for secure end of trip facilities could break down barriers for all modes of active transport

Public and Community Transport Connection - plays an increasing role in encouraging and facilitating active transport participation. Active transport users wish to increase the connection with and use of public and community transport as a component of their journeys. This is evident more so, in the connection of the shire's outer lying townships to Castlemaine and the services provided within our urban centres (employment, school, shopping, medical etc.).

Actions such as advocating for improved public transport scheduling and route connections, increasing end-of-destination facilities at public transport hubs to cater for increasing patronage or improved accessibility to public transport services with active transport equipment (bicycles, scooters, prams, wheelchairs, etc.) will be considered within the strategy delivery.

New Residential Areas - Mount Alexander Shire, like many regional areas, is experiencing population growth, and has planned for this with new residential development areas in McKenzie Hill, Campbells Creek South and Harcourt. Connecting new residential and commercial developments to existing networks, or having them inform new routes, and providing the infrastructure to encourage safe active transport participation is a key area which this strategy aims to address.

Emerging modes of Transport - new and emerging modes of transport, especially mobility scooters, cargo bikes and e-bikes requires specific consideration for route infrastructure and capacity. They also require consideration of end of trip facilities that provide increased security for user property, to avoid this becoming a barrier to participation.

Health and Wellbeing - the engagement in active transport activities is seen as a positive influence on people's mental health, and physical health and wellbeing. Connection to other people, and to the natural environment are intrinsically linked to an individual's wellbeing. While facilities that enable people to socialise and interact with others provides the building blocks for enhancing community cohesion.

Intergenerational consideration - whilst active transport may start with the young, many of the shire's participants are older adults. Benefits to remaining active during middle to later life are magnified, particularly in terms of health and social connections, and often provide different perspectives on active transport from purely a fitness or transport option.

Creating a network that caters for all abilities and ages will provide increased active transport participation opportunities, and deliver better outcomes (health & wellbeing, social connection, environmental and financial) for more community members.

Vision

Mount Alexander Shire Council worked closely with the community in 2020 to produce the following 10-year vision which represents our aspirations for the next decade:

In 2031, our community is connected to each other, and comes together to build and celebrate an inclusive, creative shire. We are a healthy community that values the natural beauty of the Djaara Country we live on. We know that preserving our natural environment means living sustainably and caring for country. We are protecting our shire from the threat of climate change by working together at the local level. We are a welcoming community where everybody has access to services and supports, and opportunities for housing, education, employment and creative and social pursuits. We're known as a vibrant place which draws upon its creative spirit and shared heritage. We're building a place where everyone can enjoy the beauty, history and friendliness of the shire.

The Community Vision 2021-2031 of a connected, inclusive, healthy community continues to inspire the development of current and future Council strategies and plans including the Active Transport Strategy 2023-2033.

The Active Transport Strategy Vision 2023-2033

Inspired by the Community Vision and developed in consultation with the community, the following vision guides all aspects of the Active Transport Strategy.

Our vision

We will work towards creating a safe, sustainable, accessible and connected network to encourage our community to become more active, more often

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Love being able to walk from home and into nature, getting to work and kids getting to school, getting fit, smelling the flowers, meeting neighbours

”



Strategy goals

The strategy is guided by three overarching goals that will help achieve the Community Vision and increase active transport participation across our shire. A number of action areas have been defined that will guide the achievement of each goal. Collectively the three goals respond to the key themes which were identified during the development of the strategy.



Goal 1 - Increase active transport awareness

Supporting improvement in active transport outcomes will require strong advocacy, engaging communication and comprehensive education programs. These actions will strive to achieve increased participation through a greater understanding of accessibility needs, safety requirements and behaviour change.

The consideration of the social determinants of a health model when identifying active transport routes for community members for whom active transport may be a necessity and not a recreation activity will further inform our future actions.

Action Area One

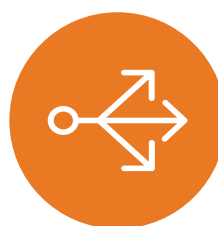
Advocate to reduce active transport barriers for participation

Action Area Two

Establish communication platforms to support and promote active transport awareness

Action Area Three

Support programs which improve active transport opportunities across the shire



Goal 2 - Develop and deliver safe, connected and sustainable active transport infrastructure

The provision of infrastructure standards (Appendix One) relevant to the purpose of an active transport route will create greater connection opportunities and deliver a safer environment to promote increased participation. The establishment of active transport routes that when combined form a wider active transport network within, and between townships (Appendix Three) will enable the long-term aspiration of providing an environment where people feel confident, safe and encouraged to participate in active transport activities across the shire.

This will be achieved by seeking innovative and courageous solutions in the delivery of sustainable and accessible transport routes that address intergenerational requirements of active transport participation. While also reducing or eliminating (where possible) the interaction with motor vehicles. Providing and maintaining quality infrastructure across the breadth of the network is intrinsic to delivering this goal.



Action Area One

Active transport routes enables safe connection throughout the network

Action Area Two

Active transport infrastructure renewal and development promotes a safe and efficient network

Action Area Three

Accessibility and sustainability improvements are considered within the active transport network

Goal 3 - Enhance community health and wellbeing outcomes through active transport activities

Driving positive active transport health and wellbeing outcomes through increased participation in active transport activities is at the core of this strategy. Council and community partner programs are important facilitators in the creation and delivery of active transport activities for groups of people who may not have the means, confidence, support or opportunity to participate.

Health and environmental benefits are widely promoted as key benefits of active transport activities, as participation in active transport activities can provide social connection, friendship, support and motivation for vulnerable groups in the community. Direct and indirect support of community active transport participation programs (through this strategy) will provide flow on benefits to individuals, and the broader community.

Action Area One

Implement innovative solutions to increase active transport participation

Action Area Two

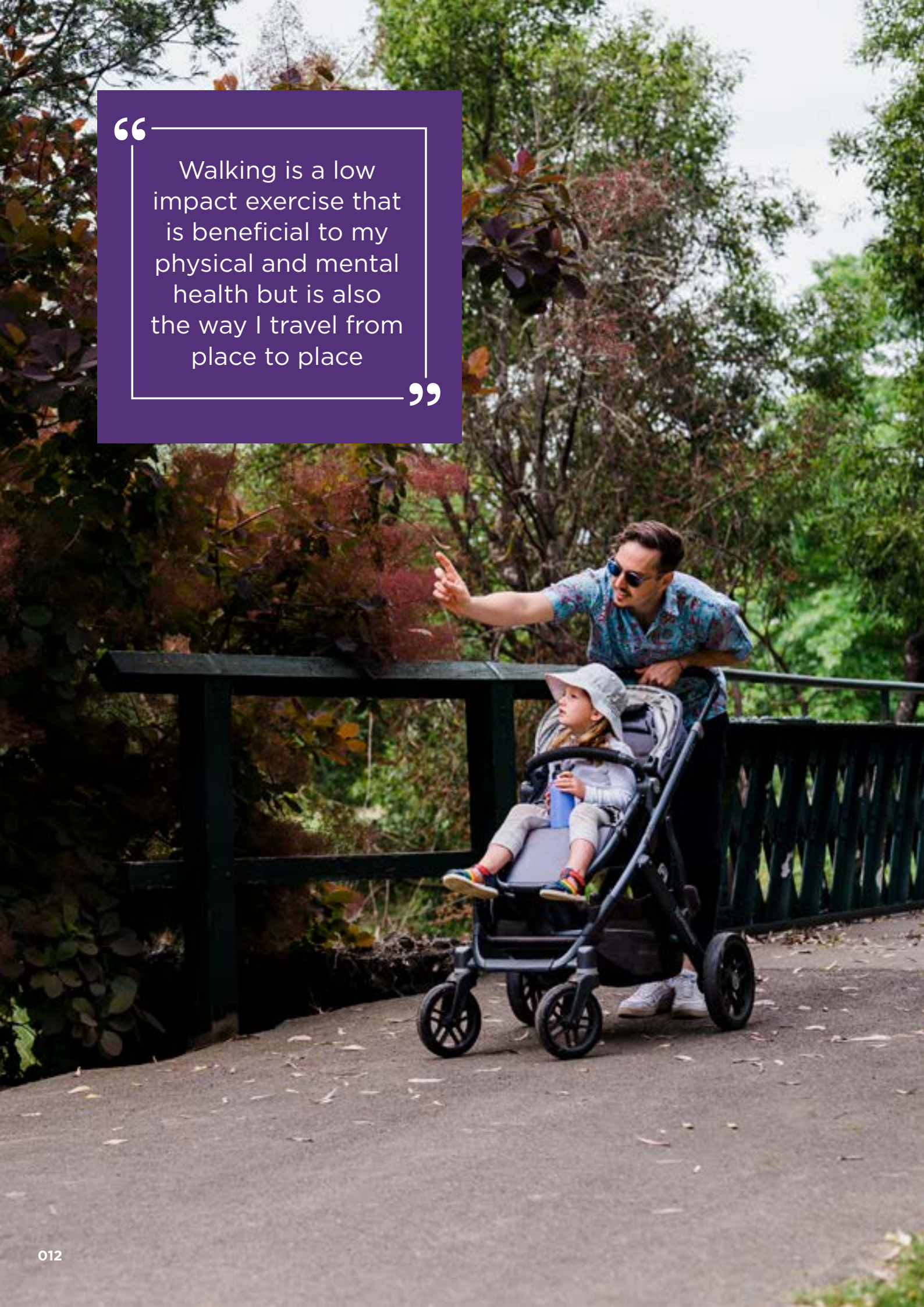
Implement measures to evaluate active transport participation



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Walking is a low impact exercise that is beneficial to my physical and mental health but is also the way I travel from place to place

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How will Council deliver this strategy?

It is recognised that enabling increased active transport participation requires a long-term perspective building existing active transport networks and informing societal change. In responding to this need, the three strategic goals have been designed to support Council's vision of working together for a healthy, connected shire.

Action areas outlined above have been identified for each strategic goal. These will be achieved through the establishment of annual action plans, detailing individual actions, time frames and resource requirements. Annual action plans will be informed by the current and future Council Plans and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans. Aligning annual action plans to each four year Council term will also guide how active transport outcomes

are integrated into Council's Annual Plan and other Council initiatives and strategies, whilst informing external advocacy to support delivery of the strategy.

This strategy will support, and be supported by, other Council plans and strategies which commit to and guide prioritisation and decision making in areas which effect active transport infrastructure and participation.

The following outlines the alignment of the Active Transport Strategy with key strategic plans such as the Council Plan, the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, the Annual Council budget, Federal and State Government strategies and plans, and related Council Strategies and plans.



Evaluation and review

An Evaluation and Review Framework (Appendix Two) is critical for monitoring delivery against action areas, and track performance against goals and targets developed after baseline data is finalised. The framework establishes how evidence will be captured, while specific indicators are contained in annual action plans.

A key aspiration of the strategy is to provide an ongoing evidence base for informed decision-making. Supporting data will be collected through community engagement to ensure consideration is given to providing active transport opportunities for all, as well as monitoring the achievement of agreed actions.

Data and information collected through the development of the strategy and ongoing evaluation of active transport participation will be analysed and retained to provide the platform for future discussion and decision making.

Central to the evaluation will be aligning the review periods to key Council events, future Council Plans and strategies. The strategy will be reviewed, and action plans developed annually in line with the Council term.



Strategic alignment

The following plans and strategies have influenced the review and development of this strategy.

- Council Plan 2021-2025
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025
- Public Open Space Strategy 2016
- Castlemaine Urban Waterways Management Plan 2018
- Castlemaine Streetscape Plan and Design Standards 2020
- Maldon Streetscape Plan and Design Standards 2018
- Mount Alexander Planning Scheme
- Mount Alexander Shire Council – Roadmap to Carbon Neutrality 2020-2025
- Resourcing Recreation 2019
- Infrastructure Asset Management Plan – Part B Pathways -2020
- Open Space Asset Management Plan 2021
- Climate Change Strategy 2023
- Road Management Plan

This strategy has also been informed by other key strategies and plans in development relating to access and inclusion, sustainability, economic development and strategic planning.

References and acknowledgements

- Mount Alexander Shire Council Walking and Cycling Strategy 2010-2020
- Active Living Census 2019
- Strava Metro data
- Victorian Strategic Cycling Corridors Overview Document – October 2019
- Department of Transport
- Healthy Loddon Campaspe

Community members

Council would like to acknowledge the individuals, community groups and project working groups who provided valuable information which helped to guide and develop the strategy, goals and actions, along with the many community members who took part in engagement activities.

Appendix 1: Active Transport infrastructure considerations

The Active Transport network will establish transport routes that when combined form a wider network provide an environment where people feel confident, safe and encouraged to participate in active transport activities.

The network will comprise of a variety of infrastructure components responding to the varied needs of the community and will be informed by:

- defining the 'main purpose' of use for each route
- connecting education facilities within the Shire
- enhancing linkages to public transport options and central business districts across the shire
- accessibility to key community assets such as hospitals, and public meeting places like parks and recreation reserves
- the recognition of the physical connection and social interaction that active transport provides

Importantly the active transport network will provide the vision for where active transport journeys prevail. Where a combination of infrastructure standards will strive to create a safe and efficient network, whilst meeting the needs of participants across their various activities. Creating levels of infrastructure to support and enhance participants experience will lead to greater participation and enjoyment. Traffic stress, for cycling in particular, demonstrates the correlation of the provision of safer infrastructure and participation confidence.

The following provides a brief outline of the infrastructure elements that will be included within the collective active transport network. The elements listed are a guide, and will evolve and be complemented by future infrastructure innovations that are yet to be developed.

Ideally, infrastructure is delivered to the highest available standard (eg. shared pathway), but in each case this will be

determined by a large number of factors including but not limited to: environmental conditions and capacity, level of activity, available resources and community benefit.

Footpath network

Sealed footpaths

Sealed footpaths for active transport participants. May or may not abut a roadway or include kerb, channel and crossings. Provide structured routes for pedestrians, with surface treatments enabling greater accessibility than unsealed paths. Sealed footpaths provide direct and legible routes from residential areas to retail/commercial centres, schools, community amenities and local attractions. They typically have surface treatments (including tactile indicators) that enhance safety for people with visual and mobility impairments.

Unsealed footpaths

Unsealed footpaths for active transport participants. Surface remains in natural state, formed by informal use.

Urban network

Shared Pathway

Shared pathways in road-reservations that are physically protected from vehicles; can be one or two-way (i.e. on one or both sides of the road); aimed at providing optimal safety conditions for active transport participants including less experienced cyclists (e.g. primary school students); would provide sealed pathways in neighbourhoods/streets where footpaths are scarce or non-existent.

Separated Cycle Lanes

Dedicated pathways in road-reservations where cycling lanes abut a vehicle lane (road shoulder); cycling lanes typically provided on both sides of road; both lanes separated by on-road markings and, where appropriate, flexible bollards; on-road markings have 'thickness' to promote

safe/legal distance between cyclists and passing vehicles; aimed at improving road safety for more experienced cyclists using busier streets and arterials (e.g. Barker and Forest Streets).

Shared lanes

Shared lanes integrate vehicle and cyclist movements into a single lane. Traffic levels and vehicle speeds in shared lanes are reduced to enhance the real and perceived safety of cyclists. On street markings and signage make it clear that vehicles and cyclists have an equal right to use the street. Crucially, reducing vehicle speeds not only enhances cyclist safety but can also enhance the safety of pedestrians including children and older people and people with a disability. Shared lanes will generally be utilised by cyclists with a high level of confidence

Trail network

A combination of sealed and unsealed tracks and paths providing access through and between townships, including shared pathways that follow creeks or other natural features (i.e. not in road reservations). These can be sealed or unsealed depending on local conditions (e.g. expected usage, local character or engineering requirements), but typically sealed in urban areas and unsealed outside of urban areas, provide access to, and alternative connections within, the urban network.

This network will provide the majority of connections between townships within the Shire. The benefit of a trail network

is separation from motor vehicle traffic which will provide the optimal safety environment for participants.

There are many formal and informal trails throughout the Shire. Connection to and between these networks will provide greater opportunities for active transport activity.

Town Centre Zones

Town centre zones see the greatest volume of traffic, the highest interaction between active transport users and motor vehicles. Safety and infrastructure considerations in these zones remains paramount.

Footpaths that provide maximum accessibility for pedestrians and mobility assisted movement, road and gutter crossings that are clearly marked and visible to motor vehicle traffic, traffic calming measures (reduced speed limits, raised pedestrian crossings, speed humps etc) and informative wayfinding signage all contribute to a safer active transport environment.

Provision of end of destination facilities such as secure bicycle storage (for a wide range of cycles in use - including cargo bikes, electric bikes etc) will assist in the promotion of active transport as a valid and viable alternative to motor vehicle use within these zones.

Enhancements, and greater access, to public transport infrastructure will also play a role in supporting active transport journeys.



Image: *Level of traffic stress for cycling.* The Mineta Transportation Institute

Appendix 2: Strategy evaluation framework

Goals	Monitoring and evaluation questions	How we will answer the monitoring and evaluation questions
1. Increase Active transport awareness	What advocacy has Council undertaken to reduce active transport barriers for participation?	Record details of advocacy submissions, partnerships and meetings. Record advocacy actions developed with the Community Active Transport Reference Group. Record external partnerships driving active transport participation. For the internal review of the strategy, conduct an audit of Council documents and decisions to understand how active transport considerations are being integrated (e.g. Council reports; new strategies, action plans and policies; major projects documentation; media releases, human resource documentation).
	Have communication platforms been established which support and promote active transport awareness?	List key platforms, programs and outcomes which have been delivered. Record communication delivered from the Community Active Transport Reference Group.
	Has there been Council support provided to programs which improve active transport opportunities across the shire?	Record any resources Council provides local groups and organisations for active transport initiatives. Record of partnerships established to promote engagement in active transport.

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Being able to walk or cycle to work and the shops means our family only needs to have one car

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Goals	Monitoring and evaluation questions	How we will answer the monitoring and evaluation questions
2. Develop and deliver safe, connected and sustainable active transport infrastructure	What has Council done to encourage connection throughout the network?	List key programs and advocacy, renewal and upgrades, and outcomes delivered and link to connection impacts. Conduct an annual review and updating of township aspirational active transport network maps.
	How has Council's active transport infrastructure renewal and development promoted a safe and efficient network?	List relevant renewal and upgrades delivered, and link to safety and efficiency impacts. List key advocacy approaches to State Government infrastructure managers that support a safe and efficient network.
	How has Council delivered accessibility and sustainability improvements within the active transport network?	List relevant upgrades delivered, and link to accessibility and sustainability impacts. List key advocacy approaches to State Government infrastructure managers that support improved accessibility.
3. Enhance community health and wellbeing outcomes	What innovative solutions has Council explored to increase active transport solutions?	Details of active transport initiatives including programs, infrastructure trials, traffic calming measures, etc.
	What measures has Council implemented to evaluate active transport participation?	Record data collected and data collection initiatives. Where relevant, include the number of participants for programs and initiatives.



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