

RESPONSE TO DRAFT COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025



Prepared by: Streets Alive Yarra Inc.
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Foreword

Streets Alive Yarra is a non-profit, volunteer, resident and ratepayer action group with a [vision](#) for more trees, wider footpaths and vibrant businesses in thriving [neighbourhoods](#). We see our streets being used by people from [all ages](#), irrespective of whether they walk, roll on a wheelchair, cycle, use public transport or drive. Residents and shoppers should be able to move safely, comfortably, and conveniently around Yarra; and park near shops.



Image credit: OCULUS Landscape Architecture and Urban Design

Streets Alive Yarra was founded in 2017 and now has over 2,800 followers on Facebook. A network of local champions develops concepts and proposals for how to improve their local street or precinct. Streets Alive Yarra is also a member of the Victoria Walks Walkability Action Group network.

Further information is available at: streets-alive-yarra.org/about.

Context

The 4-year Council Plan is Yarra's key strategic document. Unlike some other adopted policies, strategies or plans, which council has chosen to ignore, the Council Plan is important because progress against the plan is reported to the state government.

Failure to deliver the last Council Plan

Feedback on the draft Council Plan 2021-2025 should consider the progress made against the last Council Plan 2017-2021 and the last four Annual Plans. The Council Plan defines Strategies, Initiatives, and Indicators; which are translated into Actions in Annual Plans.

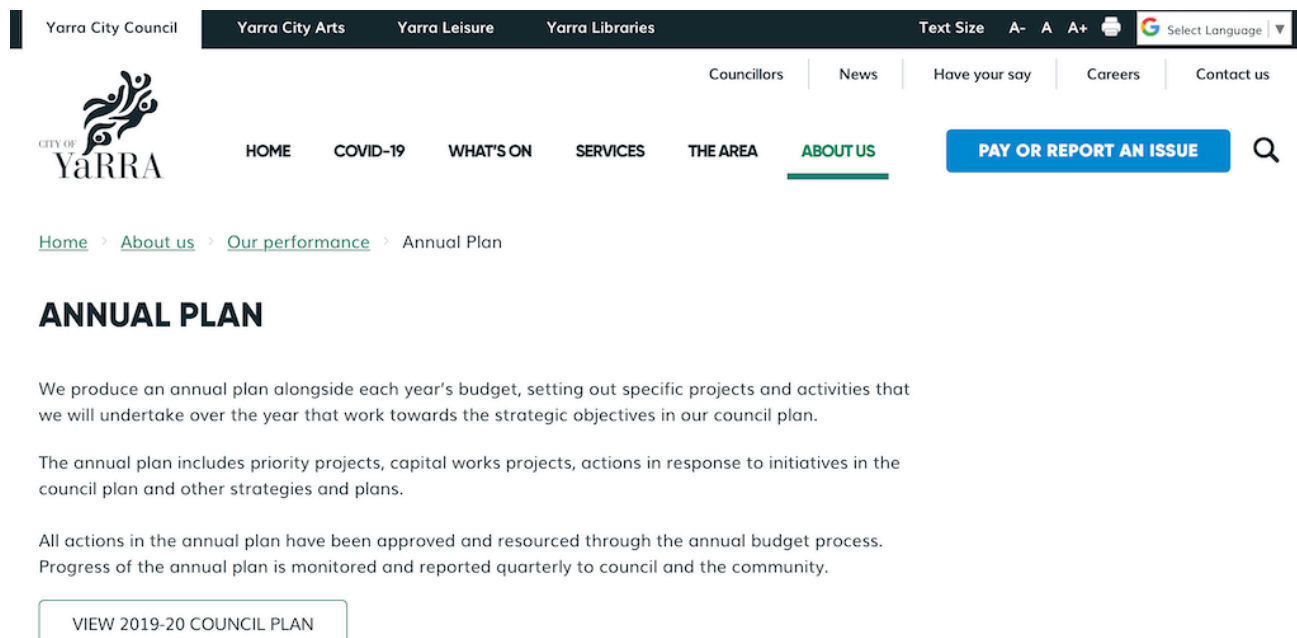


Council Plan 2017-2021 and four Annual Plans. Image credits: City of Yarra.

Failure to publish Annual Plan 2020-2021

Council is deficient in its commitment to public transparency, failing to even publish the most recent annual plan, let alone copies of past annual plans:

<https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-performance/annual-plan>



Screenshot of council website dated 3rd September 2021 showing a link to the Annual Plan 2019-2020 (mislabelled as the Council Plan 2019-2020) and failure to publish the Annual Plan 2020-2021

Initiative 1.1.1 and Action 1.15

Initiative 1.1.1 in the Council Plan 2017-2021 uses the words “strategic acquisition”, “conversion” and “creation”:

Strategies	Strategic Indicators	Initiatives
1.1 Maintain and enhance Yarra’s open space network to meet the diverse range of community uses.	Number of new open space projects planned or completed Community satisfaction with parks, gardens and open space ⁴	1.1.1 Increase the amount and quality of green open space through the strategic acquisition of land, the conversion of urban land to open space and/or the creation of pocket parks in high density areas

Council Plan 2017-2021 Initiative 1.1.1

However, in the Annual Plan 2020-2021 this is translated into a minor tweak of two existing very small spaces. This doesn’t align with the initiative.

1.15 New open space planning and design, Cremorne

Council Plan initiative

Increase the amount and quality of green open space through the strategic acquisition of land, the conversion of urban land to open space and/or the creation of pocket parks in high density areas

Council will prepare design documentation for park extension and redevelopment of the following sites:

- Gwynne Street, Cremorne – small public space on the corner of Gwynne and Stephenson Street
- Stephenson Reserve, Cremorne – small public space on the corner of Dover and Stephenson Street

Annual Plan 2020-2021 Action 1.15

Initiative 6.3.1 and Action 6.01

Similarly, Initiative 6.3.1 in the Council Plan 2017-2021 hasn't resulted in any significant change to the management of parking in Yarra.

6.3 Investigate and implement effective parking management options	Endorsement of new parking permit policy	6.3.1 Continue to utilise data, technology and community consultation to inform the management of parking
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Council Plan 2017-2021 Initiative 6.3.1

The adopted Action 6.01 is titled “review” but no review has been published, no “options” have been offered to residents, nor has Yarra communicated best practice concepts to the community, such as digital permits, automatic number plate recognition, opportunity costs, or demand responsive pricing.

6.01 Review parking practices and options throughout the municipality

Council Plan Initiative

Continue to utilise data, technology and community consultation to inform the management of parking

Action

Council will continue to promote and educate the community on the complexity and requirements of parking within Yarra and assess the use of appropriate data in decision making.

Annual Plan 2020-2021 Action 6.01

General failure to deliver Objective, Strategy, or Initiatives

A structural deficiency of the Council Plan process is the failure to commit to actions in the Annual Plans that result in the initiatives in the Council Plan actually being delivered.

Here are some examples:

- *Objective 6 Council is committed to creating a city that is accessible to all irrespective of levels of personal mobility, to support a fulfilling life without the need for a car.*
 - This hasn't been adequately translated into Initiatives and Actions, such as building a cohesive network of protected bike lanes that link 30 km/h zones within which traffic speeds and volumes have been reduced by traffic calming treatments. Nor has it resulted in council supporting a significant expansion of car sharing to e.g. 2,000 vehicles, to give people options to car ownership.
- *Strategy 6.1 Manage traffic movement and promote road safety within local roads*
 - This has been sidelined, with no progress on improving road safety on key routes to Richmond High School, such as adding slow points to Coppin Street. Nor has significant street space been reallocated to cycling as a response to COVID, as other councils have done.
- *Initiative 6.1.1 Transition Local Area Traffic Management program to Local Area Place Making programs*
 - This is being reversed, with LAPM being cancelled and the program being converted back to a traffic-focus with a "Road Safety Study Policy"
- *Initiative 6.4.2 Continue to facilitate the upgrade of local tram stops to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act to support both access and viability of activity centres*
 - This is being ignored, both the Brunswick Street Streetscape Masterplan and the Swan Street Streetscape Masterplan projects defined tram stops as out of scope.

Learnings for the next Council Plan

With this context, council should explain how the high level language in the adopted Community Vision 2036 and the soon to be adopted Council Plan 2021-2025 will be converted into Actions in Annual Plans that result in the intent of the Community Vision being delivered.

Feedback on draft Council Plan 2021-2025

Climate and environment

The draft initiatives fail to propose a way to address the carbon emissions from the existing stock of homes and buildings, which represents 70-80% of emissions in Yarra. Council needs to bring the message home. Council can do this by delivering change to something that affects each person each day, i.e. transport.

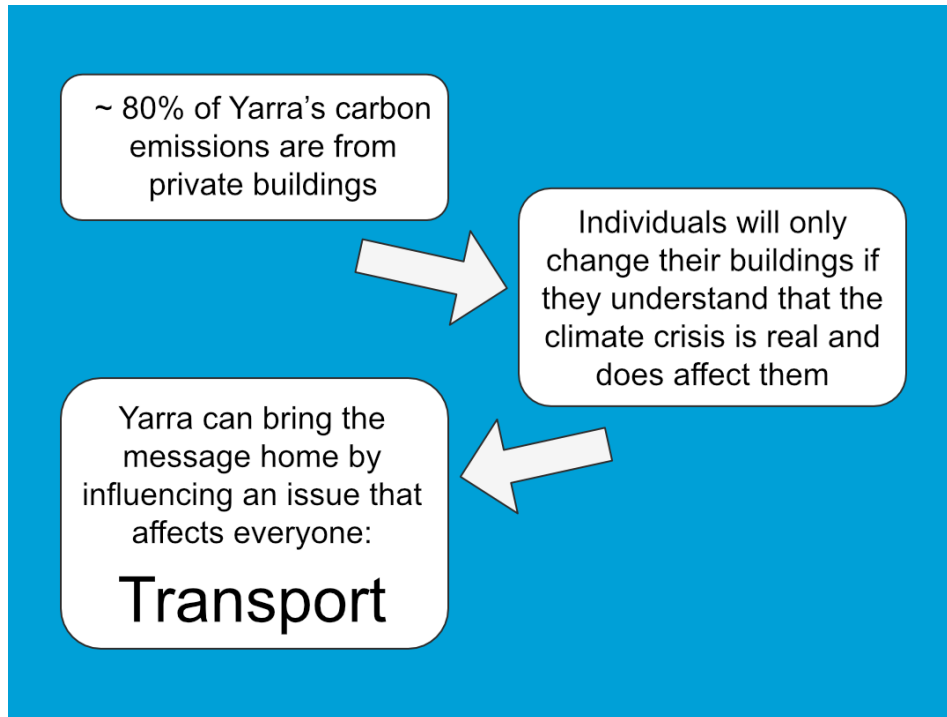


Image credit: Streets Alive Yarra

The climate and environment section of the Council Plan 2021-2025 should include initiatives such as:

- Communicate the importance of our climate crisis by removing the subsidy of high-carbon modes of transport, such as parking fees that are lower than commercial rates
- Communicate the importance of our climate crisis by reallocating space from high-carbon modes of transport to low-carbon modes of transport, such as reallocating space from on-street parking to space for walking, cycling and level access tram stops.

Note that electric vehicles are also a high-carbon mode of transport, owing to the high embodied energy (carbon) required for their manufacture, compared with the much lower (by orders of magnitude) embodied energy required for shoes, bikes or e-bikes.

Indicators should include:

- Number of people walking, cycling or taking public transport to school or work
- Cost to subsidise high-carbon modes of transport

Social equity and health

It is well known that freedom of movement (e.g. infrastructure to support safe walking and cycling) is important for equity (e.g. for people who can't afford a car) as well as for physical and mental health, including the physical and mental development of children.

Walking and cycling are not just about transport, they are also about social equity and health.

The social equity and health section of the Council Plan 2021-2025 should include initiatives such as:

- Deliver social equity by building wider footpaths, safe crossings, protected bike lanes, space for level access tram stops, and traffic calming treatments in 30 km/h zones.
- Deliver health by building wider footpaths, safe crossings, protected bike lanes, space for level access tram stops, and traffic calming treatments in 30 km/h zones.
- Deliver an environment free from traffic violence by building wider footpaths, safe crossings, protected bike lanes, space for level access tram stops, and traffic calming treatments in 30 km/h zones.

Indicators should include:

- Gender balance of people cycling.
- Mismatch between the distribution in the age of people cycling, and the distribution of age in the population.

Local economy

Yarra's Community Vision 2036 shows that we all want thriving businesses in vibrant local shopping strips. To survive and thrive, businesses need to be accessible. Unfortunately, our prior focus on car based transport is breaking down, with traffic congestion and parking congestion limiting how many people can access businesses.

Walking and cycling are not just about transport, they are also directly related to the local economy.

The local economy section of the Council Plan 2021-2025 should include strategies such as:

- Improve access to local businesses, in the face of increasing traffic congestion and parking congestion, by allocating street space and budget to geometrically efficient modes of transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport

Initiatives should include:

- Deliver access to local businesses by building wider footpaths, safe crossings, protected bike lanes, space for level access tram stops, and traffic calming treatments in 30 km/h zones.

Indicators should include:

- Number of people accessing shopping strips by walking, cycling, public transport or driving.

Place and Nature

The place and nature section of the Council Plan 2021-2025 should include strategies such as:

- Reform how on-street parking is priced and use the revenue to invest in new linear open space and new public open space

Initiatives should include:

- Reallocate space from on-street parking to space for trees, place and nature
- Decrease the number of on-street parking bays in Yarra by 5% per year
- Convert a golf course to native bushland

Indicators should include:

- Number of trees per person, in each LAPM area
- Area of public open space per person, in each LAPM area
- Number of trees per km², in each LAPM area
- Area of public open space per km², in each LAPM area

Transport and movement

We all want people of all ages and abilities to have the freedom to access any property in Yarra, irrespective of whether they choose to walk, roll on a wheelchair, cycle, use public transport or drive.

Considering how the strong high-level language of the Council Plan 2017-2021 failed to be delivered, the strategies, initiatives and indicators in the draft Council Plan 2021-2025 need to be significantly strengthened.

In the introductory text, retain the strong high-level language from the last plan:

- *Council is committed to creating a city that is accessible to all irrespective of levels of personal mobility, to support a fulfilling life without the need for a car.*

In the introductory text, remove the claim that changes to the transport network are highly contentious. This doesn't reflect the Community Vision 2036 and doesn't add value. The Council Plan 2021-2025 is meant to be derived from the Community Vision 2036, which included the most recent, most broad, most representative, community engagement yet conducted by council. The results were the very definition of non-contentious:

- 12% for more cars and parking (comprising a lot more, mostly, and I lean)
- 85% for more active transport (comprising a lot more, mostly, and I lean)

Room for active and sustainable transport

Using a slider scale with the two statements at either end we asked you which you agreed with more. Responses are grouped here into seven categories.

“By the year 2035
it will be more
important to use
Yarra’s streets
for:”



5%	A lot more cars and parking spaces
1.7%	Mostly lean more towards this option
5.7%	I lean somewhat towards this option
1.7%	Not sure
20%	I lean somewhat towards this option
11.6%	I mostly lean towards this option
53.9%	A lot more active and sustainable transport options

Community Vision 2036 shows strong support for changes to the transport network. Source: Engagement Report on Community Vision 2035

This result is replicated in the U.K. where the conservative Prime Minister clearly states that passionate opposition to reform does not reflect public views.



Department for Transport

Gear Change: One Year On

I support councils, of all parties, which are trying to promote cycling and bus use. And if you are going to oppose these schemes, you must tell us what your alternative is, because trying to squeeze more cars and delivery vans on the same roads and hoping for the best is not going to work.

Cycling and walking schemes can create passionate opposition, but there is now clear evidence that neither the opposition – nor the passion – reflects public views.

We will reduce funding to councils which do not take active travel seriously, particularly in urban areas

This includes councils which remove schemes prematurely or without proper evidence, and councils which never installed them in the first place. As *Gear Change* said, an authority's performance on active travel will help determine the wider funding allocations it receives, not just on active travel. We will require more from all local authorities, urban or rural, but we will not take a one-size-fits-all approach.

Image credit: Streets Alive Yarra, using excerpts from Gear Change: One Year On

To be clear, transport is only considered “contentious” by:

- a passionate minority, and
- journalists seeking content for clickbait articles.

For further evidence of broad community support, refer to: <https://streets-alive-yarra.org/community-support/>

In the introductory text, explain that parking is the elephant in the room, that must be addressed. It's not helpful to evidence-based policy development if council neglects to acknowledge the significant amount of public land occupied by on-street parking and its negative impact on the opportunity to deliver the community vision.

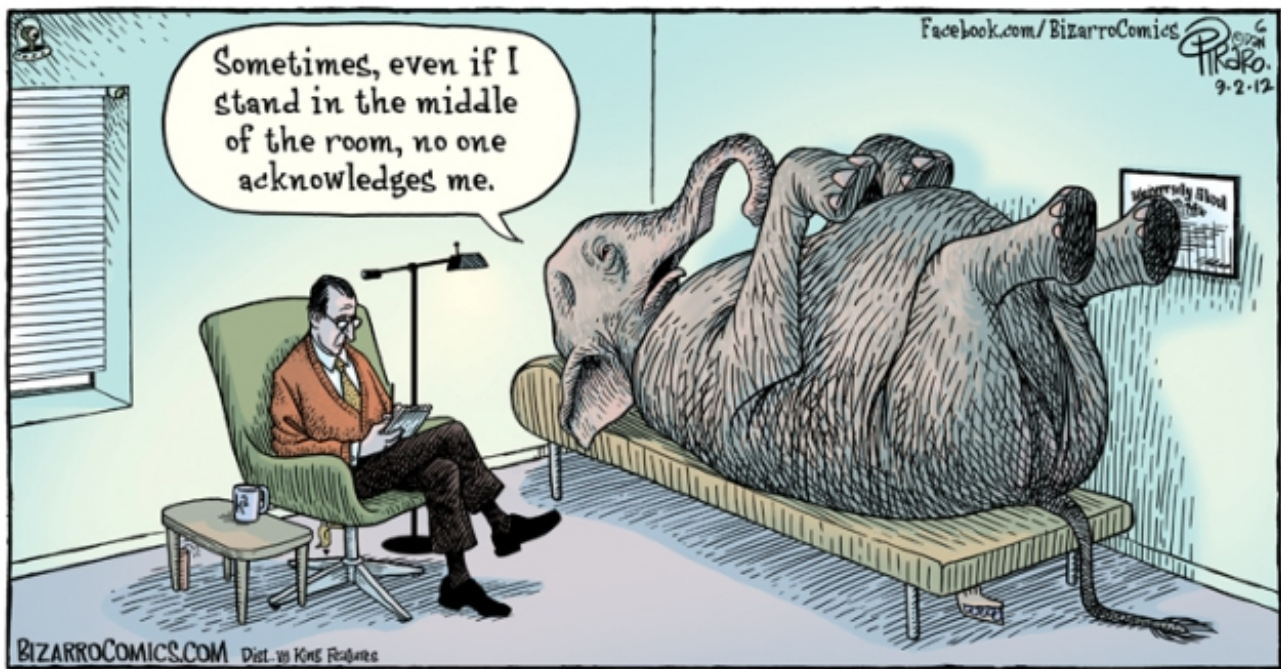


Image credit: <https://www.facebook.com/bizarrocomics/>

In the introductory text, include a graphic showing that people deserve the freedom to safely walk or cycle to any property in Yarra, including every school or supermarket:

A CITY.



WHERE CARS & PEDESTRIANS CAN GO



WHERE "THEY" THINK CYCLISTS WANT TO GO



WHERE CYCLISTS ACTUALLY WANT TO GO



Concept for graphic. Image credit: Copenhagenize Design Co.

The transport and movement section of the Council Plan 2021-2025 should include strategies such as:

- Reform the pricing of on-street parking to comply with Yarra's adopted Pricing Policy and federal and state government laws on competitive neutrality
- Hypothecate all revenue from on-street permits, meters, and fines toward infrastructure for walking, cycling, trees, place making, and open space, ideally with the revenue from each neighbourhood returned
- Foster strategic partnerships with M9 councils
- Ensure that the City of Yarra is never the barrier to reform, i.e. ensure that the state government can't blame council for holding up the construction of protected bike lanes or level access tram stops
- Reform parking requirements in the Yarra Planning Scheme

Initiatives should include:

- Review and update the parking strategy and parking management approach in the first year of the 4-year plan, including:
 - Publish the number of each type of on-street parking bay in each LAPM area
 - Number and geo-tag each on-street parking bay in Yarra
 - Publish the market (or commercial) price of annual, monthly, weekly, daily and hourly parking in each LAPM area, or the best available estimate
 - Publish the theoretical revenue foregone (also known as tax expenditure or subsidy) of council's decision to price on-street parking below market (commercial) rates, for each LAPM area (and the whole of Yarra)
 - Change all free parking to permit parking, and manage access by selling digital permits that are linked to vehicle number plates
 - Enforce parking restrictions by using automatic number plate recognition
- Explicitly, pre-emptively and pro-actively support the removal of on-street parking in the immediate area of every tram stop in Yarra to enable the state government to build level access tram stops
- Publish support for removal of on-street parking to enable the state government to build any portion of the VicRoads Principle Bicycle Network that is located on a DoT controlled street (or declared arterial) in Yarra
- Conduct an audit of footpath widths and compare them with required widths for projected future foot traffic
- Deliver traffic calming treatments (such as modal filters or slow points) to reduce motor vehicle volumes and speeds on all council controlled streets (i.e. all non-DoT arterials) that don't have protected bike lanes to below thresholds that are suitable for people driving and people cycling to share the lane (e.g. 30 km/h and 2,000 vehicles per day)
- Eliminating parking minimums from the Yarra Planning Scheme or change them to parking maximums, e.g. 1 bay per 100 m² of floor area

- Ask the state government to transfer revenue from the congestion levy back to the City of Yarra for reinvestment in walking and cycling.
- Repurpose 5% of on-street parking bays in Yarra per year, to space for walking, cycling, trees, and place making.
- Re-locate metered car-parking from shopping streets to the first 5-10 bays on each side street to free up space for wider footpaths, protected bicycle lanes, protected intersections and level access tram stops.
- Install 50 artificial intelligence vision-based mobility counters across Yarra, that can measure people walking, cycling, using public transport or driving
- Alter Council's organisational structure so that: parking design, including the quantity, location, type and pricing of on-street parking bays, is managed by the Planning & Placemaking branch, not the Finance & Compliance branch.
- Update the "Standard Concrete Vehicle Crossing" drawing YSD601 to match best practice from the Netherlands.
- Increase the target for car sharing vehicles to 2,000 by 2030 and permit them to be located on residential streets.

Indicators should include:

- Gender balance of people cycling.
- Mismatch between the distribution in the age of people cycling, and the distribution of age in the population.
- Number of people accessing shopping strips by walking, cycling, public transport or driving.
- Percentage of streets in Yarra that have protected bike lanes or have traffic speeds and volumes below 30 km/h and 2,000 vehicles per day

Democracy and governance

The democracy and governance section of the Council Plan 2021-2025 should include strategies such as:

- Transition our digital strategy from “web first” to “mobile first”

Initiatives should include:

- Develop a “City of Yarra” smartphone app that includes:
 - Validated user accounts for everyone on the electoral roll
 - Automatic language translation
 - News, including removing the need for a hardcopy version of “Yarra News”
 - Notifications, including of planning applications and community consultations
 - “Snap, Send, Solve” features
 - Paying for rates, fees and fines
 - Surveys and community consultations
 - Council meeting agenda documents
 - Library card and links to online library features
- Change (e) to “employ quantitative data driven approaches to support decision making and planning” because the phrase “smart city initiatives” is jargon that doesn’t add value

Indicators should include:

- Number of people with a validated account
- Number of people using the app to pay for rates, fees or fines
- Number of people using the app to respond to community consultation
- Number of people using the app to borrow e-books or audio-books

Concluding remarks

Streets Alive Yarra would be delighted to provide further detail or explanation of the themes raised in this document.

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