

## Response to Maribyrnong Council Proposed Annual Budget 2021-2022

The Proposed Annual Budget for Maribyrnong Council 2021-2022 states in the executive summary that \$1.37 million has been allocated to footpaths and bicycle paths. This is misleading as closer inspection of the budget shows that \$878,000 of that figure is allocated specifically to footpaths. There is \$500,000 for “New” and “upgrade” bicycle and pedestrian upgrades for the whole of the municipality.

It is not possible to ascertain how much of this \$500,000 is allocated to bicycle infrastructure. However, assuming half of this figure is for bicycle infrastructure that equates to \$250,000 for a population of 97,454. This is approximately \$2.57 per person for bicycle infrastructure. As a point of comparison the UK government has recently allocated approximately £30 (~\$50) per person to cycling infrastructure.

At this rate it will take approximately 100 years to build a comprehensive protected bicycle network. In the same Proposed Annual Budget Maribyrnong Council has allocated \$12.47mil to roads (this is 50 times the money allocated to bicycle infrastructure).

This is particularly galling given Maribyrnong Council’s recent Climate Emergency Declaration with this decade being the decade of action with respect to climate change and cycling is ten times more important than electric vehicles in order to reach net zero for cities<sup>1</sup>. Action of climate change is dependent on tech / infrastructure but also on individual and collective behaviour change. Getting more people on bikes epitomises this balance. 5 star safety infrastructure<sup>2</sup> is needed to ensure cycling is the default choice for local trips. Only when it is safe, easy, and enjoyable will it trump the dominant paradigm.

Given the Bicycle Strategy was also completed before the Covid19 pandemic which highlighted the willingness of residents to get on bicycles, the Bicycle Strategy should be rolled out in 2-3 years instead of 10 with additional efforts to address the gaps in the strategy. Covid-19 has significantly changed our work and travel demands and expectations. With greater work location flexibility there are less people doing the dawn and dusk city commute, but for those that do, alternatives to public transport are desirable. Provision for CBD commuters remains important but with more people staying local it is increasingly important to ensure mobility within the municipality. More local commuting is also more likely to be the type of riding undertaken by household caregivers and managers, who are invariably women. Improving local connectivity ensures these local trips to schools, shops, sporting and civic venues can be taken by bike. It also facilitates greater economic participation in small local businesses in preference to large distributors. Given the need to ensure the economic revival of our business community this is also incredibly important to facilitate.

The budget allocation is also inconsistent with Maribyrnong Council’s Transport System Hierarchy as described in Maribyrnong Council’s Integrated Transport Strategy:

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<https://theconversation.com/cycling-is-ten-times-more-important-than-electric-cars-for-reaching-net-zero-cities-157163>

<sup>2</sup> <https://irap.org/3-star-or-better/>

“In managing and developing a safe and well-connected transport system, the City of Maribyrnong will give consideration and priority to transport modes in the following order:”<sup>3</sup>



Clearly the budget allocation shows Maribyrnong follows the System Hierarchy in reverse. The way transport performance is assessed in Maribyrnong Council through its Service Performance Outcome Indicators reinforce this view. The only form of assessment relates to a satisfaction out of 100 with how council has performed on the condition of sealed local roads<sup>4</sup>. No assessment is made of the safety, quality and connectedness of bicycle infrastructure. Consequently, the extremely poor quality and disjointed nature of the bicycle infrastructure is never considered.

Maribyrnong Council should reallocate its budget to reflect its own Transport System Hierarchy to help achieve the many benefits that flow from more people cycling more often including:

- better physical and mental health,
- increased turnover for local traders (up to 30%),
- improved educational outcomes for school kids,
- reduced congestion,
- increased productivity and reduced days off sick,
- reduced pollution and
- stronger community links.

<sup>3</sup> Maribyrnong Council 2012 Integrated Transport Strategy p25

<sup>4</sup> Maribyrnong Council