RAC Response: State Infrastructure Strategy Discussion Paper

August 2020

For the better

State Infrastructure Strategy Discussion Paper

We thank Infrastructure Western Australia (IWA) for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *'A Stronger Tomorrow State Infrastructure Strategy Discussion Paper'* (the Paper), for consideration in informing the development of the draft 20-year State Infrastructure Strategy (the Strategy).

About RAC

RAC represents the interests of more than 1.1 million members in more than 60 per cent of Western Australian households. At RAC, we are passionate about working collaboratively to ensure Western Australians have access to transport options that are safer, more sustainable and that better connect Western Australians and their communities now and in the future.

About our submission

RAC strongly supported the establishment of IWA to provide more rigour and transparency in the planning, assessment and prioritisation of strategically important infrastructure projects. The liveability of our State and the quality of life Western Australians enjoy is intimately linked to effective infrastructure planning, delivery and operation. We are broadly supportive of the intent and direction of the Paper, which is an important step in the process of developing a robust infrastructure strategy for the State.

Now more than ever, it is essential to ensure both build and non-build infrastructure delivers increased value for money through doing more for less, quicker, to support Western Australia's (WA's) recovery and help ensure our State remains a great place to live.

Of the highest importance, an unforgivably high number of people continue to be killed and seriously injured every day on WA's roads – with our regional roads and metropolitan intersections being the two biggest road safety issues faced by our State. Apart from the immeasurable personal and social impacts, the financial cost to the nation's economy was estimated to be approximately two per cent of Australia's Gross Domestic Product (or $33.16 billion) in 2016[1]. For WA, it could be as much as $2 billion per annum[2].

Despite the enormous impact on our State, both build and non-build road safety solutions are a glaring omission in the Paper.

Most pressingly, RAC has been calling on the State and Federal governments to prioritise funding for key programs that will deliver critically important but relatively low-cost infrastructure projects[3]. Specifically, to save thousands of lives and serious injuries on our roads RAC has strongly supported a strategic regional road safety package – a landmark State Government proposal to deliver effective, low cost safety treatments such as sealing shoulders, installing audible edge lines, medians and/or centrelines to address runoff-road and head on crashes across 17,000 kilometres of the State's regional road network.

The package, announced by the State Government in August 2019, has been costed at $900 million over nine years. However, in line with delivery timescales for major road projects and given the nature of the works involved, in RAC's view this could be delivered in four years if appropriately prioritised.

State Government modelling has demonstrated the package is expected to:

- save more than 2,100 people from being killed or seriously injured;
- reduce regional road trauma by 60 per cent;
- create more than 500 direct and indirect jobs annually, which would likely result in skilled and non-skilled, as well as regional employment and training opportunities; and
- yield a strong return on investment with a high benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of 4.05 (to put this into context, in a post implementation evaluation of 19 national road investment projects delivered between 2008-09 to 2012-13, the average BCR was 1.823[4], and the Morley-Ellenbrook Line which was endorsed by Infrastructure Australia in May 2020 has a BCR of 1.14[5]).

Despite one year of the program being a mere 3.4 per cent of the State Budget spending on transport, roads and rail in 2019-20, to date, the State Government has outlined its intention to provide just 20 per cent of the required funding from the Road Trauma Trust Account (RTTA), subject to a funding partnership with the Australian Government committing the remaining 80 per cent.

Recently, the State and Federal Governments took a crucial and welcome first step, announcing they will work together to fund the first year of the program. There has been no further commitment by either the State and/or Australian governments to deliver this crucial infrastructure program in its entirety.

Our submission is structured to respond to the following aspects of the Paper:

- Guiding principles
- Imagining the future
- Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on transport priorities
- Key challenges and opportunities for transport

[1] Litchfield, F. (2017). "The cost of road crashes in Australia 2016: An overview of safety strategies". Retrieved from: <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=a37c13ee-72d4-47a9-904b-360d3e635caa>
[2] Calculated based on an average cost per fatality of $7.8 million, and $310,094 per serious injury (see Litchfield, 2017), and KSI data supplied by Main Roads WA.
[3] Refer to RAC's State Budget Submission 2020-21.
[4] BITRE. (2018). Ex-post economic evaluation of national road investment projects. Retrieved from: https://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/2018/files/rr_145_vol1.pdf
[5] Infrastructure Australia (2020). Project business case evaluation summary. METRONET: Morley-Ellenbrook Line. https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/morley_ellenbrook_project_evaluation_summary.pdf

Guiding Principles

While RAC broadly supports the proposed guiding principles for the development of the Strategy, one additional guiding principle that RAC would like to see reflected in some form is that of being 'independent'. The importance of maintaining a strong relationship with State Government agencies, industry, academia and the community is recognised under the 'Open, consultative and engaging' principle, and this is supported, but the need for independence when developing the Strategy should be prominent. WA's infrastructure projects should have regard for relevant State Government plans and priorities, but not necessarily adhere to or fully align with these – priority projects should present the best outcomes for Western Australians.

While the Strategy is legislatively required to be prepared every five years, under the Act the Premier of the day may also direct that a Strategy be prepared within a lesser period. Given the long-term nature of the 20-year Strategy and the intent of the establishment of IWA, it would be unfortunate if this direction became de rigueur for an incoming government. The potential for IWA to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of infrastructure delivery through the Strategy is dependent on the extent to which it holds broad, bi-partisan support, and that IWA is recognised as independent.

Further, while the 'Forward-looking and open to change' principle is supported to ensure the Strategy is adaptable and responsive to change over its lifetime, the commentary could more strongly emphasise the importance of being proactive in steering us towards a desired future or 'charting' change.

Scenario planning would assist in identifying a range of potential futures, and the guiding principle should reflect the importance of and need to ensure we plan our infrastructure to build the pathway towards the future we want, to ensure the realisation of the associated positive community outcomes.

Aligned with this, it is important that the Strategy strives to ensure the delivery of sustained and sustainable outcomes from investment in both build and non-build solutions. This and 'doing no harm' should be explicitly reflected in the guiding principles to maximise the community return from investments, over the medium and longer term.

Transport infrastructure planning and provision in Perth has historically been delivered based on an outdated 'predict and provide' philosophy. That is, predicting the potential future traffic demand based on expected urban development and extrapolated travel behaviour and then seeking to cater for it, rather than manage it in the first instance.

It is increasingly well known that we cannot continue to expand the supply of road space to combat congestion – it induces demand and does not lead to the most optimal outcomes in the medium and longer term.

Given the known challenges in predicting future travel demand, and recent learnings from COVID-19 discussed later, continuing to plan our future infrastructure provision in this way is highly undesirable and it will be crucial for the Strategy to move us towards a more forward looking 'vision and validate' approach as promoted by Infrastructure Australia. When consideration is being given to projects which seek to increase road capacity in the metropolitan area for example, the first port of call should be options to get more out of the existing infrastructure through non-build solutions, as well as public and active transport alternatives.

RAC recommends the Strategy:

- includes a guiding principle focused around being 'independent', to underpin the approach IWA should take in developing it;
- includes a guiding principle to ensure infrastructure decisions seek to achieve sustained and sustainable outcomes for the benefit of Western Australians, and WA.

Imagining the future

What do we want our future to be? What does success to look like? How do we know if we are on the right track? Or when we get there? These are key questions for the Strategy to respond to.

Tomorrow – 2040

The Paper sets out a snapshot of trends that might shape where we are heading over the next 20 years, highlighting technological advances in transport enabling a transition to automated vehicles and zero emissions vehicles and some of the potential impacts this may have on infrastructure, as well as behaviour change. These trends will undoubtably have far-reaching implications and how we plan and regulate for these will ultimately shape the future and the extent of benefit realisation. There is a clear role for IWA in that regard.

Under 'population', increased urbanisation is recognised as a key trend. This will require a much needed and long overdue focus on cleaner and more space efficient forms of transport such as public, active and shared transport modes, as well as greater integration of these various options with trip generating land uses. These important requirements will impact the liveability of WA's cities and towns and these should be recognised under 'transport'.

Objectives

RAC welcomes the importance placed by IWA on establishing objectives to ensure the planning, delivery and operation of infrastructure positively impacts WA's society, economy and environment to serve as the foundation of the Strategy. This will be especially important when assessing and prioritising potential infrastructure initiatives, and we are pleased that IWA will use objectives as the basis of assessment for options rather than raw comparisons of benefit-cost ratios.

While some of the objectives identified are outcomes-based and well suited to being measurable, others, such as 'Enhance cross-government coordination and planning', are more 'enablers' and may be better suited as internal objectives for IWA.

Further, to make objectives such as 'Support population growth and change' and 'Embrace technology, data and digital connectivity' more meaningful, there could be value in emphasising to what ends these are working towards. As a minimum, it is suggested the former should be amended to something like 'Plan for sustainable population growth and change'.

Preventable road trauma impacts every sector and every region; it affects all road users and modes of transport; it has devastating consequences for the lives and liveability of communities; it has a significant impact on the economy. Yet, alarmingly, the Paper does not acknowledge the role of infrastructure in preventing the tragic and avoidable loss of life and serious injuries on WA roads, and a commitment to 'zero' by 2040 under the emerging State Road Safety Strategy. It is inconceivable for infrastructure to progress without safety as a cornerstone of its development, implementation and ongoing operation. This is discussed further later but it is imperative that this is reflected in the objectives.

Measuring progress and success

In our submission on the proposed model for the establishment of IWA[6], we highlighted the need for the Strategy to include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to enable IWA to monitor and review success against its objectives. Establishing strategically important targets that support clear economic, social and environmental outcomes for WA will also be beneficial for evaluation and to inform future iterations of the Strategy.

While the Department of Premier and Cabinet's 'Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity' initiative has been postponed following COVID-19, these priorities present a good example from which IWA can look to in developing objectives with measurable targets at a state-wide level. The 'Premier's Message' concisely outlines the importance and need for measurable targets:

> *"Measurable targets from independent sources are crucial, so that accountability and results cannot be lost beneath rhetoric." – Premier Mark McGowan[7]*

Having a clear framework for measuring and reviewing progress and successes could mean the difference between simply reporting the number of projects delivered and reporting the impact of these projects and the Strategy overall on key aspects of liveability and productivity in WA. It could also encourage adoption across the whole of government, helping to overcome the competing policy objectives and priorities that can exist between departments such as Main Roads, Public Transport Authority and the Department of Transport for example.

RAC recommends the Strategy:

- visualises a desired future and sets out a clear pathway to it, including the proactive role IWA will take;
- reflects the importance of road safety as a life-saving cornerstone of infrastructure planning, delivery and operation by embedding it firmly within the objectives;
- includes a clear framework for measuring and reviewing progress and successes in working towards the achievement of its objectives (which should be outcomes-based).

[6] RAC (2018). "Infrastructure WA – Proposed Model: RAC Response", <https://www-cdn.rac.com.au/-/media/files/rac-website/about-rac/media/2018/16279--public-policy_iwa-submission_ebook.pdf?la=en&modified=20181031012132&hash=33FB46C35A27D7B84634CD4032C56EF257174A79&hash=33FB46C35A27D7B84634CD4032C56EF257174A79&_ga=2.123626379.1068843353.1597132691-950717362.1572919333>

[7] Department of Premier and Cabinet (2019). "Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity", <https://www.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/Our%20Priorities_brochure_0.pdf>

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on transport priorities

As a State and nation, we currently find ourselves in a unique and challenging situation, seeking to manage and mitigate the short and potentially longer-lasting implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health of our communities and the economy. This presents new challenges and opportunities for the transport system which will need to be considered in developing the Strategy for the short (0-4 years), medium (5-10 years) and long-term (11-20 years) outlooks.

Travel behaviour and demand

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the travel behaviour of Western Australians.

Traffic volumes and public transport patronage in Perth have fluctuated significantly since early March 2020.

While weekday traffic volumes[8] on the state road network fell by approximately 30 per cent below a pre-pandemic baseline[9] during April, they have gradually increased since mid-June to the point they now exceed volumes observed prior to the pandemic (to 14 per cent above baseline on Friday 21 August).

In comparison public transport patronage[10] on the Transperth system fell by more than 80 per cent in April 2020 compared with 2019 and in June it was still 40 per cent below 2019 levels. This suggests that traffic may continue to increase, and congestion worsen unless action is taken to turn this trend around.

In May 2020, 584 of our members[11] took part in a survey telling us about their experiences and how they moved around in April during the COVID-19 restrictions, as well as what they expect their travel to look like once restrictions are eased. When it comes to public transport, 45 per cent were worried that using it may impact their health (in February, only two per cent identified hygiene as a reason for not using it more often) and 28 per cent expected to use it less often in the future[12] (27 per cent expected to drive more often).

In a typical week in April 2020, 31 per cent of those employed worked from home (compared with just five per cent in January) and nearly eight in ten of these said they would like to continue doing so at least once a week, with the preferred average being just over two days.

Subject to organisational policies and needs, if residents of Greater Perth work from home this preferred amount, it could be equivalent to approximately 120,000 people working from home on an average weekday, or 67,000 fewer cars on the road for journey to work trips[13]. This would represent a reduction of 11 per cent of car trips to work each morning.

The significant changes in travel behaviour and commuting adopted by government and non-government employees during COVID-19 demonstrate a sizeable opportunity for managing traffic demand in the future – highlighting the importance of non-build solutions and doing things differently.

Project priorities

As indicated, RAC has been calling on the State and Federal governments to prioritise funding for three key programs that will deliver critically important but relatively low-cost infrastructure projects[14]. While the Paper states that the 0-4 years outlook is 'generally not focussed on projects and programs beyond the existing State Budget forward estimates, unless by exception', we wish to draw IWA's attention to these priorities to support funding in the short-term:

1. a Regional Road Safety Package to upgrade 17,000km of the State's regional road network with low-cost treatments to save more than 2,100 people from being killed or seriously injured and reduce regional road trauma by 60 per cent – despite a BCR of more than four, only $100 million is committed to date ($900 million to deliver the program in full);
2. a low-cost metropolitan intersection program to deliver innovative treatments to address common challenges at different intersection types to create a safer road network across metropolitan Perth (total initial program cost of $50 million over five years); and
3. a safe and connected active transport infrastructure program to accelerate the delivery of priority projects to make it easier and safer to cycle and walk in WA (total initial program cost of $80 million over two years).

While these were urgent priorities before COVID-19 to save thousands of lives and serious injuries and significantly reduce the associated economic burden, they offer significant benefits as part of the State's response. They comprise lower-cost and smaller-scale projects that can be mobilised to and through construction, quickly. They are scalable and would create significant employment and training opportunities from the

[8] Traffic data sourced from Main Road WA's Daily Traffic Data API.
[9] The baseline was established as the median value, for the corresponding day of the week, during the 5-week period Jan 3-Feb 6, 2020 excluding public holidays.
[10] Patronage data sourced from PTA website <https://www.pta.wa.gov.au/about-us/priorities-and-performance/transport-performance>
[11] 444 from the Perth and Peel region and 140 from regional WA. Age, gender and location sampling quotas were applied, and data has been post-weighted to be representative of RAC's membership (which is broadly consistent with the WA population profile) – the margin of error at total sample level is +/-4% at the 95% confidence level.
[12] Compared with their lifestyle before COVID-19.
[13] Based on comparison with 2016 ABS Census journey to work data.
[14] Refer to RAC's State Budget Submission 2020-21.

outset, many of which would draw on different skillsets to those required for major infrastructure projects, aiding delivery to occur in tandem with other commitments. They would inject much needed investment into communities throughout the State.

RAC recommends the Strategy:

- considers the potential for workplace policy changes to support flexible working arrangements to manage travel demand during peak periods;
- reflects these strategically important infrastructure challenges and that IWA acknowledges the significant opportunity presented by these crucial lifesaving and relatively low-cost programs to encourage further funding within the 0-4 year outlook.

Key challenges and opportunities for transport

This section outlines the key challenges for the transport sector, as well as opportunities that should be considered in developing the Strategy.

Challenges

RAC would like to highlight the following as key challenges for delivering safer, more sustainable and connected transport and mobility options for Western Australians:

Safe

- Preventable road trauma has a devastating impact on communities and is, unacceptably, the most common reason for injury-related hospital admissions in WA[15].
- From 2015-2019, 840 people were killed on WA roads and another 7,568 were seriously injured – or more than four people killed or seriously injured each day.
- Regional WA presents a significant challenge with more than 60 per cent of all road fatalities occurring on regional roads, despite only around 20 per cent of the population living in regional WA.
- In the five years to end-2019, around four in five regional fatal crashes were the result of a head-on crash or a single vehicle running off the road.
- In the metropolitan area many KSI (killed or seriously injured) crashes occur at intersections, in fact over the past five years, 31.4 per cent of all KSI crashes did[16].
- Vulnerable road users (e.g. pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists) are at significant risk on our roads, particularly in the metropolitan area, with cyclist and motorcyclist KSI having increased significantly over the lifetime of Towards Zero, while car driver and passenger KSI has reduced.

Sustainable

- Transport emissions currently contribute 17 per cent of WA's total greenhouse gas emissions (having increased steadily by more than 50 per cent between 2005 and 2017), and the average vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) per capita for car travel increased by 14 per cent in the past 10 years[17].
- In 2019, the average Australian CO_2 emission intensity for new passenger vehicles was 169.3g/km, compared to 169.8g/km in 2018 (only a 0.3 per cent decrease)[18] and the rate of reduction has been steadily decreasing since 2012. In 2018, the European average was 120.4g/km.
- Approximately 2,566 deaths in Australia were attributed to air pollution exposure in 2015[19], with an estimated cost of as much as $11 billion[20]. While deaths from air pollution across Europe have declined, Australian deaths rose over the same period[21].
- Uptake of low and zero emissions vehicles has been hampered by a lack of charging infrastructure[22] and impediments to owning the vehicles such as cost, limited vehicle choices[23,24], and lack of financial incentives[25].

15 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019). "Trends in hospitalised injury, Australia 2007-08 to 2016-17". Retrieved from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/6cef34e2-2422-4f11-a9f3-06e336edac3f/aihw-injcat-204.pdfspx?inline=true>

16 Calculated based on data provided by Main Roads Western Australia. (2015-2019).

17 DWER (2019). "Climate Change in Western Australian – Issues Paper", <https://consult.dwer.wa.gov.au/climatechange/issues-paper/>

18 National Transport Commission (2020). "Carbon Dioxide Emissions Intensity for New Australian Light Vehicles", <https://www.ntc.gov.au/sites/default/files/assets/files/Carbon-dioxide-emissions-intensity-for-new-Australian-light-vehicles-2019.pdf>

19 AIHW (2019). "Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2015".

20 Department of Environment and Energy, citing Marsden Jacob Associates Pty Ltd (2017). Analysis of AIHW burden of disease data, in Revised fuel quality standards: economic analysis, report prepared for the Department of the Environment and Energy. Accessed on 8 February 2018.

21 OECD (2014). "The Cost of Air pollution: Health Impacts of road Transport", OECD Publishing. <http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/environment/the-cost-of-air-pollution_9789264210448-en#page54>

22 RAC (2020). "Environmental Sustainability Survey", <https://www-cdn.rac.com.au/-/media/files/rac-website/about-rac/public-policy/rac-environmental-sustainability-survey.pdf?la=en&modified=20200813081616&hash=C5B3C0D87E24DC69BBEE59A586DA176B53E18FDE&_ga=2.156708667.1068843353.1597132691-950717362.1572919333>

23 Glenn Butler (2018). "Slow Charge - Why Electric Vehicle Uptake has stalled in Australia", <https://rac.com.au/car-motoring/info/future_slow-charge>

24 ClimateWorks Australia and the Electric Vehicle Council (2018), "The state of Electric Vehicles in Australia, Second Report: Driving Momentum in Electric Mobility", <https://www.climateworksaustralia.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/climateworks_australia_state_of_electric_vehicles2_june_2018.pdf >

25 RAC (2020). "Environmental Sustainability Survey".

- More than 40 per cent of Perth's public transport bus fleet does not meet the latest Euro V and VI emissions standards[26].
- Only one in four Western Australians have confidence in the State and Federal governments to address vehicle emissions (two-thirds believe government should be doing more)[27].
- Australia's current road user charging system is widely acknowledged as inequitable, inefficient and unsustainable[28], and has limitations as a means of funding necessary transport infrastructure enhancements and managing demand – this challenge goes beyond the implications of electric vehicles on declining Federal fuel excise.

Connected

- By 2050, it is expected the Perth and Peel region will be home to 3.5 million people (an increase of 1.5 million people)[29].
- Pre-COVID-19, the cost of congestion in Perth was forecast to more than double from $1.5 billion in 2016 to $3.6 billion per annum by 2031, and the cost of crowding on public transport to increase nearly ten-fold from $17 million to $159 million[30].
- Despite a State Government urban infill target of 47 per cent, the net infill rate in the Perth and Peel region was just 38 per cent in 2018, meaning more than 6 in 10 new homes are being built in previously undeveloped urban areas[31].
- In 2016, the average commuting distance in Perth was more than 15km (20.7km for the rest of WA, higher than in all other States)[32] and between 2002 and 2017 the average commuting times for employed persons has increased nearly 10 minutes (from 49.9 minutes to 59.3 minutes)[33], which is an 18.7 per cent increase.
- Committed major public transport investments in Perth and Peel are largely focussed on expanding the reach of the heavy rail network to and beyond the outer suburbs but 13 of Perth's 34 strategic activity centres[34], including several within the inner area, exhibit low accessibility by public transport[35] which does not support achievement of government targets.
- Perth has the second lowest proportion of journey to work trips by bus[36] and is the most expensive capital city in Australia for weekly public transport costs[37] – 80 per cent of RAC members feel it is very or extremely important for government to ensure public transport is affordable[38].
- Perth has the lowest proportion of journey to work trips by active transport (cycling and walking) of all capital cities in Australia[39], dissatisfaction with existing cycling infrastructure is high and fear of sharing the roads with motorists is a main reason for not cycling more often – Western Australians want more investment in on and off-road cycling infrastructure[40].
- WA is lacking a robust transport strategy that provides a clear strategic direction for the transport system, underpinned by appropriate policies, strategies and supporting initiatives, as well as a roadmap for embracing new and emerging smart transport technologies.

26 PTA (2019). "PTA Annual Report 2018-19", <https://www.pta.wa.gov.au/Portals/29/AnnualReport/PTA_Annual_Report_2019.pdf>
27 RAC (2020). "Environmental Sustainability Survey".
28 The need for change has been documented by several bodies including the Productivity Commission, the Harper Review and the Henry Tax Review.
29 DPLH (2018). "Perth and Peel@3.5 million", <https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/getmedia/404a6895-f6ec-4829-87df-8de5b80075b8/FUT-PP-Perth_and_Peel_Sub_Region_March2018_v2>
30 Infrastructure Australia (2019). "Australian Infrastructure Audit – Urban Transport Crowding and Congestion", <https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-08/Urban%20Transport%20Crowding%20and%20Congestion.pdf>
31 Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (2020). "Urban Growth Monitor 11", <https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/getmedia/55906379-08dd-494a-81f6-f6792ceb9c0f/LSD-Urban-Growth-Monitor-11-report>
32 ABS (2016). "2071.0.55.001 - Census of Population and Housing: Commuting to Work - More Stories from the Census, 2016", <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0.55.001~2016~Main%20Features~Feature%20Article:%20Journey%20to%20Work%20in%20Australia~40>
33 Melbourne Institute (2019). "The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA)", <https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/3127664/HILDA-Statistical-Report-2019.pdf>
34 Important hubs for employment, retail, education, as well as residential activity.
35 RAC (2016). "Transport accessibility of Perth's activity centres", <https://www-cdn.rac.com.au/-/media/files/rac-website/about-rac/community-programs/publications/reports/2016/transport-accessibility-of-perths-activity-centresfinal.pdf?la=en&modified=20161003120527&hash=A7845C62E3F36D75E35ECD8E8AC6BB91F09BA277>
36 Analysis of 2016 ABS Census for journey to work data.
37 AAA (February 2020). "Transport Affordability Index", <https://www.aaa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Affordability-Index-Q4-2019.pdf>
38 RAC (2020). "Member Priorities Tracker – Transport Choices and Priorities" <https://www-cdn.rac.com.au/-/media/files/rac-website/about-rac/public-policy/member_priorities_tracker_-_jan_2020_-_transport_choices_and_priorities1.pdf?la=en&modified=20200619023104&hash=6679E5F890B9A6D1F68A71A8B6738D44CA91C6A7&_ga=2.194920493.1068843353.1597132691-950717362.1572919333>.
39 ABS (2017). Media Release, 23 October 2017, 'More than two in three drive to work, Census reveals', <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyreleasedate/7DD5DC715B608612CA2581BF001F8404?OpenDocument>
40 RAC (2015). "Cycling Survey", <https://www-cdn.rac.com.au/-/media/files/rac-website/car-and-motoring/survey/cycling-survey-2015.pdf?la=en&modified=20160622120003&hash=68B550A39C10E1032D4AB1846E953651AB01868F>

Opportunities

Building a safer, more sustainable and well-connected transport system

In developing the Strategy, IWA must give adequate consideration to the transport challenges identified in this submission and set out a clear strategic direction to guide the planning, delivery and operation of the transport system our State desperately needs – that is, one that is safer, more sustainable and that better connects communities now and into the future.

Our top three infrastructure project priorities have been discussed earlier.

Public transport

Another important area of focus in developing transport priorities within the metropolitan region is to improve public transport accessibility to Perth's major activity centres, as well as to and through the inner and middle suburbs. This would boost employers' access to the labour market, and residents' access to job opportunities.

Heavy rail is an integral component of the public transport system and while continued investment is supported, the introduction of new dimensions to the transport system such as light rail and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) would present significant opportunities by providing high-frequency, high-capacity public transport services connecting suburban activity centres and to the heavy rail network to facilitate enhanced and more seamless cross-city mobility.

Buses also remain the heavy mover and a vital component of the public transport system, connecting local centres to enable improved mobility for many in our communities. In urban areas, bus priority initiatives along high frequency corridors can greatly improve travel times and reliability, boost patronage and reduce operating costs and the Auditor General's 2017 report highlighted the need for strategies to facilitate bus priority. In regional WA where there are fewer public transport options, a greater bus network coverage and increase in services are needed and this will require more innovative service operation models and funding approaches.

Integration with land use

While IWA acknowledges the importance of integrated transport and land use planning in defining the 'enhance cross-government coordination and planning' objective, further discussion of this important issue is absent in the key challenges, opportunities and issues for the transport sector.

In developing the Strategy (and the approach taken to assessing project need and prioritisation), IWA should have consideration of the impact that transport initiatives will have on the long-term land use development of Perth and Peel at both a strategic and precinct scale.

Assessing initiatives against a broad range of future planning scenarios can help to ensure we are not trying to solve tomorrow's transport challenges with yesterday's solutions.

The importance of effective land use planning and integration with transport, through greater infill development, is not lost on the community. In a recent RAC survey[41], over half of Perth and Peel residents agreed a greater amount of infill development should be built to better manage congestion and accommodate growth. Further, when it comes to managing the additional travel demand created, priorities for government action were expansion of public transport within / around central Perth (67 per cent ranked it a top three priority), investment in higher frequency public transport corridors (66 per cent) and decentralisation of employment to suburban activity centres to improve access to jobs (64 per cent).

41 RAC (2019). "Urban planning and connected communities survey", <https://www-cdn.rac.com.au/-/media/files/rac-website/about-rac/public-policy/urban-planning-and-connected-communities-_-final-_ebook-_-02072019.pdf?la=en&modified=20190718021442&hash=1520B6EDCFE85CB195A2B644600AE5A6FA8A6757&_ga=2.126698637106884335315971326 91-950717362.1572919333>

Active transport

As mentioned previously, with increasing urbanisation, the need for more sustainable and space efficient forms of transport will only continue to increase, and it will be essential to cater for that. There is also strong evidence of the high return on investment for active transport infrastructure (as well as and travel behaviour change programs). RAC's Cycling Business Case, released in 2012, highlighted that the economic, social, health and environmental returns for the community on investment in cycling projects are between 3.4 and 5.4 times the costs incurred, higher than for many other urban transport investments.

Regional road safety

When it comes to the regions, the Paper notes that infrastructure may include 'efficient road, rail and aviation systems that allow people to easily and quickly travel to and from other regions, including Perth'. This does not reflect one of the greatest infrastructure needs and priorities for regional WA, that is, the need for safety upgrades to address road trauma occurring on the broader network in regional WA[42], beyond the 17,000km where low cost safety treatments are proposed as part of the Regional Road Safety Package discussed earlier.

Non-build solutions

RAC welcomes the focus that IWA has established in the Paper on the potential for non-build measures, such as policy, regulation, pricing, technology and governance, to enhance the performance of existing infrastructure. There are several opportunities in this regard which should be considered by IWA, and these could be explored within the 0-4 years horizon.

Pricing

An RAC survey[43] revealed that nearly two in three Western Australians know little or nothing at all about how motorists currently pay for road use, reinforcing the limitation of the current system in influencing travel behaviour.

Infrastructure Victoria has recently released research on the potential role of transport network pricing that shows "paying differently for roads, public transport and parking can reduce road congestion and public transport crowding"[44].

RAC has been calling for an inquiry into road-user pricing as part of a broader reform of motorist taxation that would remove revenue raising fees and charges, and / or hypothecate money collected for the provision of transport infrastructure and services (RAC is not supportive of the use of blunt instruments like tolls and area cordon charges, imposed on top of existing fees and charges).

WA consistently does not receive an equitable proportion of the revenue collected from WA motorists and this should be rectified to help ease the burden of transport funding on the State.

RAC commissioned research shows that of the $3.091 billion collected by the Federal Government in 2019-20 in motoring-related fees and charges, 41 cents in every dollar ($1.281 billion) will be returned to the State for roads and related infrastructure spending, directly benefitting WA motorists (with an additional 13 cents in every dollar to State public transport projects, indirectly benefitting WA motorists)[45].

42 The total length of road network in regional WA is approximately 130,000km.

43 RAC (2018). "Road user charging survey", <https://www-cdn.rac.com.au/-/media/files/rac-website/about-rac/public-policy/road-user-charging-survey-2018.pdf?la=en&modified=20190321011510&hash=7C0499E00B39D6F2A5259B7014480444F6610B58&hash=7C0499E00B39D6F2A5259B7014480444F6610B58&_ga=2.96299164.1068843353.1597132691-950717362.1572919333>

44 Infrastructure Victoria (2020). "Good Move: Fixing Transport Congestion".

45 A report to RAC: Acil Allen Consulting (2020). "Benefits to Western Australian motorists from taxes, fees and charges", < https://www-cdn.rac.com.au/-/media/files/rac-website/about-rac/public-policy/motorist-taxation-revenue-and-spending-in-western-australia-march.pdf?la=en&modified=20200807050731&hash=E543E4029FC809276754B5484A71B4673421E9F3&_ga=2.96808095.1068843353.1597132691-950717362.157291933>

RAC's survey confirmed community views are mixed and there are several matters that will need to be explored and managed in considering any changes to the way in which motorists pay for road use. While just under half (45 per cent) are opposed to the idea of introducing a 'pay-as-you-go' type system, there is a higher level of support if it were to replace the current motoring-related charges (58 per cent support) or it was introduced with equivalent reductions in public transport fares (52 per cent).

Further, to encourage increased public transport patronage, particularly in the wake of COVID-19, pricing policies will need to be considered, including initiatives like:

- daily or weekly fare caps to encourage more frequent usage by outer urban commuters;
- discounted fares for off-peak travel, including weekends, to encourage trips outside of peak periods.

Regulation

There are many areas of regulation where IWA should have a leadership role, including in relation to planning for the transition to automated and electric vehicles as mentioned earlier.

The State Government has an important role in regulating 187,000km of road infrastructure in WA, an essential part of which is regulating speed limits to manage the efficiency and safety performance of the network and this is another area where IWA as an independent authority could drive positive community outcomes.

There is a significant and growing body of national and international evidence around the substantial life-saving benefits of reducing speed limits[46]. The role of speed limit reductions was previously acknowledged in Towards Zero: "... speed limit reductions, applied where infrastructure improvements are not feasible in a reasonable timeframe, would make a substantial contribution to reducing road trauma in Western Australia". Despite this, and the opportunity to save an additional 4,300 lives and serious injuries, the optimal safe system option was not pursued due to community opposition to speed limit reductions. Efforts to achieve travel speeds which are safer, and appropriate for the road environment, will require courageous leadership by a government truly committed to saving lives lost in crashes today, not in years to come. To support implementation and effectiveness, speed limit reductions would need bipartisan support.

Leveraging technologies, such as pure battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, partnered with low carbon intensity fuels, will also be important in reducing harmful vehicle emissions in Australia and globally.

A recent RAC survey[47] found almost one in two (46 per cent) of Western Australians would consider buying an electric or hybrid vehicle when they are next in the market for a new car. However, tackling the many reasons for the slow uptake will be crucial to achieve this and realise the benefits.

Western Australians ranked incentives for purchasing low or zero emission vehicles (56 per cent), transitioning the public transport fleet (41 per cent) and investing in electric vehicle charging infrastructure (38 per cent) as the top priorities for government investment to tackle vehicle emissions.

While the rest of the world is moving to address vehicle emissions, Australia is lagging a long way behind – including being the only developed nation without a mandatory CO_2 standard for new light vehicles. IWA is well-placed to influence the development of a roadmap from government on how we can accelerate the transition to cleaner transport through regulation and policy.

Technology

The timely development and implementation of technology solutions (or Intelligent Transport Systems, ITS) to enable a smarter transport system is essential to ensuring the State's future productivity and liveability.

Smart transport technology can not only increase the value of existing infrastructure by providing a more sustainable approach to 'build' capacity into the system, but it can also optimise the delivery of future infrastructure investments.

RAC recognises that effort is being made to progress ITS initiatives in WA, with Perth's first Smart Freeways project recently implemented. This project is delivering features including active lane management, variable speed limits and coordinated ramp signalling. A key component of this project however has been to utilise ITS technology to enable an increase in physical lane capacity through all lane running, rather than first utilising the technology itself to optimise travel efficiency and safety.

Technology has developed considerably in recent years and other jurisdictions across Australia have progressed trialling and implementing a range of emerging smart transport technologies that have yet to be introduced in WA. Examples include the NSW Government's Smart Traffic Lights Program to upgrade 500 intersections[48] and the Queensland Government's upgrade of 300 pedestrian crossings with smart technology[49].

It is important that similar smart transport technology initiatives are identified, developed and delivered to enhance the value our state's existing transport infrastructure.

46 Refer to RAC's submission to the WA State Road Safety Strategy 2020-2030 for evidence and rationale around speed management.
47 RAC (2020). "Environmental Sustainability Survey".
48 NSW State Budget – Infrastructure Statement 2019-20, Retrieved from: <https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/budget-2019-06/Budget_Paper_2-Infrastructure%20Statement-Budget_201920.pdf>
49 Queensland Government (2019). Media Statement 15 March 2019, 'Queensland pedestrian crossings get smart', Retrieved from: <http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2019/3/15/queensland-pedestrian-crossings-get-smart>

RAC recommends the Strategy:

- gives due consideration to the transport challenges identified in this submission;
- sets a clear strategic direction for an integrated transport system – and a framework for considering the impacts of transport on land use planning outcomes as part of the assessment and prioritisation process;
- includes solutions which seek to deliver an active and public transport future through accelerated delivery of safe and connected active transport infrastructure, sustained and widespread investment in and increased priority for public transport, and better planning of communities to encourage uptake of these modes;
- considers the potential for pricing to help manage demand and optimise our transport system, and identifies IWA's role in working with Government to progress this;
- recognises the opportunities presented through regulation to improve safety, efficiency and accessibility for users of our transport infrastructure, not least through demonstrating bold leadership on contentious but lifesaving issues such as lowering speed limits;
- outlines a roadmap for accelerating the transition to cleaner transport through state-based policy, investment in renewable energy and fast/rapid charging infrastructure and incentives to achieve a goal of net zero emissions by 2050;
- identifies the need for and potential of smart transport technologies to enhance the State's existing transport infrastructure and increase the efficiency and safety of travel for not just private vehicles but also pedestrians, cyclists and public transport;
- appropriately elevates the importance of non-build solutions.

Summary

We trust RAC's response will be of use to IWA in developing a robust Strategy, which will be crucial for the State's future liveability and productivity, and we look forward to further opportunities for involvement as the process continues.

In support of our submission we enclose our:

- State Budget Submission 2020-21;
- response to the next State Road Safety Strategy;
- response to the Climate Change in WA Issues Paper;
- Environmental Sustainability Survey 2020;
- Urban Planning and Connected Communities Survey 2019.

RAC's previous submissions and publications are available for viewing and download via https://rac.com.au/about-rac/advocating-change/reports.

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