

RAC Response: Draft State Infrastructure Strategy

September 2021

Draft State Infrastructure Strategy

We thank Infrastructure Western Australia (IWA) for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft State Infrastructure Strategy '*Foundations for a Stronger Tomorrow: State Infrastructure Strategy - Draft for public comment*' (the Strategy) for consideration.

RAC is a purpose-led member organisation, and we exist to be a driving force for a Better WA. We work collaboratively with government, industry, our 1.2 million members and all Western Australians to champion change that will deliver safer, sustainable and connected communities.

RAC strongly supported the establishment of IWA to provide more rigour and transparency in the planning, assessment and prioritisation of strategically important infrastructure projects (both build and non-build). The liveability of our State and the quality of life Western Australians enjoy is intimately linked to effective infrastructure planning, delivery and operation.

We welcome and congratulate IWA on the draft Strategy, which as the inaugural State Infrastructure Strategy is a landmark document in shaping the vision and future for our state. It is pleasing to see the promotion of a holistic, system-based approach to transport infrastructure planning and prioritisation, and the attention paid to better managing demand and seeking to optimise our existing assets for more sustainable and sustained outcomes from investment. In support of this, it is also pleasing to see the focus on a data and digital-first approach to inform decision-making and optimise infrastructure efficiency.

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

- Strategy vision and objectives
- Measuring progress and success
- Transport and planning opportunities

Strategy vision and objectives

In RAC's submission to the *A Stronger Tomorrow State Infrastructure Strategy Discussion Paper* (Discussion Paper)¹ we recommended that the Strategy visualises a desired future and sets out a clear pathway to it.

We welcome the inclusion of a "Strategy vision and infrastructure outlook" section, including a vision statement in the draft Strategy and are broadly supportive of the vision and objectives for Western Australia (WA) in 2042, as well as the outlook for some of the "shifts sought over the next 20 years", specifically in relation to planning and coordination and the transport sector.

Alarming however, a clear gap still remains in acknowledging the critical role of infrastructure in preventing the tragic and avoidable loss of life and serious injuries on WA roads. Road safety - the most critical problem faced by the transport sector - must have greater prominence.

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; and is, unacceptably, the second most common reason for injury-related hospital admissions in Australia (first in WA)². In fact, land transport crashes represent the leading cause of death for Australians aged 1-14, and the second and third leading cause of death for Australians aged 15-24 and 25-44 respectively³.

¹ RAC (2020). "RAC Response: State Infrastructure Strategy Discussion Paper", <https://www-cdn.rac.com.au/-/media/files/rac-website/about-rac/public-policy/17648--publicpolicystateinfrastructurestrategyebook.pdf?modified=20201208020515&_ga=2.213648532.1887777404.1628473943-1819603568.1592884139&_gac=1.253371837.1628559298.EAlalQobChMIslixkKil8glVC1pgCh197QreEAAAYASAAEgKZg_D_BwE>

² 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.pdf.aspx?inline=true>.

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021), "Deaths in Australia", last updated 25 June 2021, <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/life-expectancy-death/deaths-in-australia/contents/leading-causes-of-death>>

On average based on the last five years (2016-2020), there are 156 Western Australians who lose their lives each year on our roads, and a further 1,554 who are seriously injured⁴. If action is not taken and this average were to remain constant over the course of the 20-year timeframe of the Strategy, that would represent more than 3,100 Western Australians who would be killed while using essential infrastructure and more than 31,000 who would be seriously injured.

This level of safety performance would be unacceptable for any sector of infrastructure outside transport, yet it is currently only reflected in the vision in terms of technological advances and has not been mentioned within the Strategy's objectives.

It is inconceivable for infrastructure to progress without safety as a cornerstone of its development, implementation, and ongoing operation. **The Strategy must reflect the importance of road safety by embedding it firmly within both the desired end-states and objectives. RAC recommends a separate bullet point for road safety within the transport section of the "Outlook for Western Australia" in 2042 which should be aligned with the government's commitment to 'zero' by 2050 under *Driving Change: Road Safety Strategy for Western Australia 2020-2030* (State Road Safety Strategy). In addition, road safety could be recognised within the objectives, at a minimum within: "Get the most from our infrastructure and improve maintenance". Moving forward, road safety performance should also be a governing criterion for IWA assessments.**

Another gap within the Strategy's vision for transport, is affordability. While briefly touched on in terms of reduced energy costs, affordable transport should also be clearly set out as a desired 2042 end-state. The AAA's latest Transport Affordability Index⁵ estimates that the total transport costs for a typical household in Perth is in excess of \$17,000 per annum⁶. This is a significant proportion of a typical household budget and ensuring that transport remains affordable (including through pricing, enabling greater choice in travel options, more effective land use planning to reduce the need to travel so far and so often, etc.) should be a key consideration in maximising wellbeing and liveability for Western Australians into the future. **RAC recommends the Strategy incorporates affordable transport as a desired end-state in the 2042 'Outlook for Western Australia' with any annual increases in costs at or below CPI.**

Measuring progress and success

In our submissions to both the proposed model for the establishment of IWA⁷ and the Discussion Paper¹, RAC highlighted the need for the Strategy to include a clear framework for measuring and reviewing success against its objectives. The importance of and need for developing measurable targets to review progress in working towards the achievement of outcomes-based objectives was identified.

IWA's Consultation Outcomes Report noted that the need for measurable targets was a common theme in feedback submitted on the Discussion Paper:

"A common perception was that State Government's long-term vision for WA was lacking, and that the Strategy should address this by providing strategic direction supported by a set of clear and measurable targets." – IWA Consultation Outcomes Report⁸

⁴ Fatal and seriously injured crash statistics provided by Main Roads as per March 2021.

⁵ AAA (2021), "Transport Affordability Index – Quarter 4, 2020 Released March 2021", <<https://www.aaa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Transport-Affordability-Index-Q4-2020.pdf>>

⁶ AAA's Transport Affordability Index considers a range of cost categories including car loan payments, tolls, fuel, public transport fares, registration, compulsory third party and licencing costs, servicing and tyres, insurance and roadside assist.

⁷ 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>

⁸ Infrastructure Western Australia (2020). "A Stronger Tomorrow – State Infrastructure Strategy Discussion Paper: Consultation Outcomes Report", p. 17, <https://www.infrastructure.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-07/DP_Consultation_Outcomes_Report.pdf>

As noted in the draft Strategy, the *Infrastructure Western Australia Act 2019* (IWA Act) only requires IWA to prepare annual reports on the government's progress in implementing the recommendations in the Strategy. It is a positive then to see the draft Strategy recognise that "analysis of progress against outcomes rather than just actions is also required".

While it would have been ideal to present the proposed monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework as part of the draft Strategy, RAC welcomes the indication that an outcomes-based approach will be adopted that will draw upon data collected from relevant state agencies to ensure the Strategy is driving the right outcomes. **However, it is critical that each desired outcome is made clear – Recommendation 53 for example, refers to transport system outcomes, however these have not been clearly defined within the Strategy (and the vision end states are too broad to enable effective measurement).**

RAC recommends a clear framework for measuring and reviewing progress in driving outcomes rather than just actions be included within the Strategy. Consistent with the intention to improve accountability and transparency, it is also important that the annual reports contain sufficient detail on both the framework and progress against each element of it.

Transport and planning opportunities

This section outlines the key opportunities across the transport sector, as well as the cross-cutting theme of planning and coordination, that RAC feels should be given further consideration in finalising the Strategy.

Governance and planning

Portfolio governance and funding

RAC commends IWA in taking on a leadership role and recommending "reforming governance arrangements for the Transport Portfolio to achieve a strategic, mode-agnostic approach to transport network planning and delivery". For clarity however, greater detail around the nature and extent of reforms that are proposed would be helpful given the potential range of different interpretations that could be made. Without being overly prescriptive and recognising the need for further work to determine the finer details, in IWA's independent expert opinion, is there a model or are there learnings from practice in other jurisdictions nationally and internationally which could provide a strategic framework to guide such reforms? Further discussion on the impact of competing transport priorities across the Transport Portfolio is included in the "Public Transport" section of this submission, however such competing objectives also impact on planning and operational decisions across a range of modes, including active transport.

RAC also strongly supports IWA's recommendation to reform funding hypothecation arrangements for motor vehicle licence revenue to fund the planning and delivery of projects across all modes. It has been a long-standing position of RAC that the State Government should investigate the distribution of revenue collected from all vehicle licensing fees, which are currently paid to the Main Roads Trust Account, to ensure it reflects government priorities across all modes of transport, with a view to increasing the proportion directed towards active and public transport, and road safety. **More broadly however, this reform should also be considered in the context of the required broader reform of road-user charging/pricing and associated considerations around sources of funding essential transport infrastructure.**

In the interests of supporting improved decision making relating to transport infrastructure, amongst other policy areas, **we would encourage IWA to also consider the potential need for a Parliamentary Budget Office for Western Australia.** The establishment of an independent Parliamentary Budget Office to provide policy costing and advisory services to all Members of the Parliament of WA would improve the accuracy and transparency of costings for policies and election commitments. The establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office was a recommendation of the Special Inquiry into Government Programs and Projects from 2018⁹.

⁹ Public Sector Commission (2018), "Special Inquiry into Government Programs and Projects".

Planning

Over many years, several strategic transport plans have been prepared and either released in draft and never finalised, or not released at all. While Transport@3.5 million was adopted, it has subsequently been replaced by Perth and Peel@3.5million - The Transport Network, which was developed and adopted with little public or stakeholder consultation.

This plan sets out the current and future transport networks with limited information about proposed transport projects, many of which require further development and evaluation to determine their feasibility. Policies and strategies, and supporting initiatives, underpinning the future transport system are required to provide clearer strategic direction and give clarity to all agencies involved in planning the State's spatial development and transport networks, as well as industry and the community.

RAC strongly welcomes IWA's recommendation to develop a new 20-year+ Perth and Peel transport plan across all modes, as well as a regional transport plan. **The former must address the deficiencies of the current network plan, and provide a shared vision for the transport system, objectives and mode share targets which must be agreed across the Transport Portfolio to guide planning, design and operation.**

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 promising to see the draft Strategy help to move us towards a more forward looking 'vision and validate' approach. While we note the recommendation to finalise development of the new Perth transport model, it will be important that the model is used to support effective scenario planning rather than enabling a continuation of a predict and provide approach to transport planning.

Integration with land use

The challenges that the expected level of population growth and the current low rate of urban infill development being achieved in Greater Perth present for achieving a more compact, connected city were identified in our submission to the Discussion Paper. We highlighted the importance of integrated transport and land use planning as being essential in addressing these challenges.

With six in ten new homes in Perth and Peel currently being built in previously undeveloped urban areas¹⁰, it is clear current planning and policy settings are not enabling the State Government's urban infill target to be achieved. With each progressive year that the target is not met, the required net infill rate to achieve the long-term infill target of 47 per cent is increasing. In terms of transport, the consequence of not achieving the state's infill target is increasing car dependency and more Western Australians needing to travel further for longer.

We strongly welcome IWA's recommendation that the State Government prepare and implement an urban consolidation action plan to address these challenges within the 2022-2027 timeframe. IWA's suite of recommendations to support greater infill development, including supporting liveability and amenity improvements in infill locations, and a range of incentives to further support infill development present a good approach to achieving a greater proportion of infill developments while being sensitive to the character and nature of these areas.

It is important that such developments of increased density are primarily focussed around activity centres and public transport hubs. It is pleasing to see that planning for station precinct urban intensification and better connectivity to activity precincts is included as part of Recommendation 56 in "Demand Management". While this is an important recommendation for existing stations, **it is also important that the potential land use impacts and opportunities for future rail projects to support developments of increased density are considered when developing the 20-year+ Perth and Peel transport plan.** Not all station locations lend

¹⁰ Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (2021), "Urban Growth Monitor 12", <https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/getmedia/52a56679-241e-46f7-9eff-a2b12be45b15/Urban-Growth-Monitor-12-report>.

themselves to urban intensification and considering transport outcomes in isolation of land use and economic development opportunities may inhibit the potential community benefits of public transport projects.

RAC also supports IWA's recommendation to introduce state priority areas to ensure a more coordinated approach to strategic planning, infrastructure design and delivery. While State Planning Policy 4.2 currently sets out an activity centre hierarchy, there is currently a lack of clarity around which should be the priority focus areas for investment, and the relative strategic importance with regard to infrastructure decisions, and public transport connections in particular, is unclear. This has impacted on their connectivity by public transport and as a consequence access to potential employment opportunities for residents and to employees from an economic context.

An RAC report released in late-2016 found that 13 of Perth's 34 activity centres¹¹ exhibit low accessibility by public transport¹². While the study showed that 12 activity centres had high accessibility by public transport, the top two are lower order Secondary Centres and six of Perth's 10 Strategic Metropolitan Centres do not feature in this list.

Public transport

Light rail and bus rapid transit

The need to improve public transport accessibility to Perth's major activity centres, and to and through the inner and middle suburbs, has been a longstanding priority of RAC's and was highlighted as an important area of focus in our submission to the Discussion Paper. In particular, the introduction of light rail and bus rapid transit were identified as a significant opportunity to provide high-frequency, high-capacity public transport services to connect suburban activity centres and to the heavy rail network to facilitate enhanced and more seamless cross-city mobility.

RAC strongly welcomes IWA's Recommendation 59 to "undertake planning of light rail and/or bus rapid (mid-tier) transit for the next stage of major public transport priority investment in Perth". In a recent survey of RAC members, the construction of a light rail network serving inner Perth suburbs and activity centres was identified as the top change most likely to encourage greater public transport use, with 61 per cent of Perth members saying they would be likely or very likely to use public transport more often if it were to be delivered¹³.

We are supportive of light rail and bus rapid transit not being presented as mutually exclusive options for mid-tier transit in Perth. As the draft Strategy notes, a light rail system would present an opportunity to stimulate a greater degree of urban infill development. Not all movement corridors in Perth have the same potential for higher density land use development however and a separate but complementary bus rapid transit network has the potential to improve public transport access to more people and places with lower upfront capital expenditure.

The timeframe allocated in the draft Strategy to undertake planning of light rail and/or bus rapid transit, including completing a business case is 2027-2032. **Given the planning nature of the recommendation and opportunities to leverage and build on the extensive work previously undertaken around key connections and alignment options, etc., RAC believes it would be valuable and achievable to bring completion of this task forward to the 2022-2027 horizon.**

¹¹ Important hubs for employment, retail and education activities, as well as residential development.

¹² 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> >

¹³ RAC (2021). 'Member Priorities Survey: Public Transport'.

Bus priority measures

RAC welcomes the inclusion of bus priority measures as part of the discussion associated with Recommendation 59 but there would be value in explicitly acknowledging this (and the important role of bus services in moving people) in the recommendations. We agree that there is a need for issues arising from overlapping transport agency responsibility for planning and implementing bus priority measures to be resolved. In RAC's latest Mobility Bulletin *Prioritising the bus: Low cost, high impact*¹⁴ we recommended that the Department of Transport, with its strategic transport planning function, should be empowered to have greater responsibility for decision making relating to road use priority on key urban corridors to better balance the competing priorities between State Government transport agencies (including PTA and Main Roads WA). These competing priorities were noted by the Auditor General's Report¹⁵ as contributing to extensive delays in delivering bus priority measures. **RAC recommends the development of road network operations plans with specified service goals for all road user groups reflective of the movement and place functions of corridors to aid decision making.**

Although the potential for bus rapid transit is identified in the draft Strategy, we would also encourage IWA to include support for greater investment in other bus priority measures. **Bus lanes and signal priority at suitable locations on high-frequency bus corridors (such as the 900 series for instance) present a low-cost, high-impact opportunity to move more people more efficiently within the 2022-2027 timeframe.**

On a cost per passenger basis Perth's high frequency '900 series' bus services typically carry passengers at approximately half the cost of our rail services, with the 950 bus service carrying passengers at less than a quarter of the cost per boarding¹⁴. This is achieved with only a fraction of the upfront capital expenditure that is required for rail. In the right locations bus lanes present an opportunity to enhance the capacity of existing infrastructure, with a dedicated bus lane able to carry three to four times more people per hour than a mixed traffic lane with frequent buses¹⁶.

Heavy rail

Investment in smart transport solutions to optimise Perth's heavy rail system, such as signalling system and supporting station upgrades, has been a longstanding priority for RAC. We are pleased to see investing in high-capacity signalling, along with staging of other investments from the Rail Growth Plan included as part of Recommendation 58 in the draft Strategy.

RAC also welcomes the recognition of the need to investigate the feasibility of longer-term heavy rail projects, such as the East Wanneroo Rail Link as well as the Perth metropolitan orbital rail route (recommendation 58, identified for completion in 2027-2032). Such projects have the potential to catalyse urban development and influence Perth's urban growth patterns into the future and getting the land use response right will also be crucial in ensuring positive outcomes and maximising the value of such investments. **It is therefore essential for such major heavy rail projects to be considered in the strategic context of the transport system as a whole and with consideration of effective land use development and integration. Initial planning exercises should be completed in time to inform / feed into the development of the 20+ year Perth and Peel transport plan (proposed for 2022-2027).**

Active transport

One of the three project priorities set out in RAC's submission to the Discussion Paper was for a safe and connected active transport infrastructure program to accelerate the delivery of priority projects to make it safer and easier to walk and cycle in WA.

¹⁴ RAC (2021). "Mobility Bulletin - Prioritising the bus: Low cost, high impact", < https://www-cdn.rac.com.au/-/media/files/rac-website/about-rac/advocacy/18067-public-policy_bus-priority-mobility_bulletin_ebook.pdf?modified=20210621070901&_ga=2.211896468.1887777404.1628473943-1819603568.1592884139&_gac=1.241510838.1628559298.EAlalQobChMIslixkKil8glVC1pgCh197QreEAYASAAEgKZg_D_BwE >

¹⁵ Western Australia Auditor General (2017), "Planning and Management of Bus Services", https://audit.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/report2017_23-Buses.pdf

¹⁶ National Association of City Transportation Officials (2020), "Transit Street Design Guide", <https://nacto.org/publication/transit-street-design-guide/introduction/why/designing-move-people/#>

As the draft Strategy notes, the lack of safe cycling infrastructure and the need to share the road with vehicles is a key barrier to more people choosing to ride a bike more often. In a recent survey of RAC members¹⁷, less than one in ten (9 per cent) of those who regularly ride bikes¹⁸ said they feel safe when sharing the road with vehicles. Less than one in three (31 per cent) regular bike riders indicated that they feel safe when riding on the road in a cycle lane. The top barrier to cycling more often was “fear of sharing the road with motorists” for both regular bike riders and non-regular bike riders.

RAC strongly welcomes the inclusion of Recommendation 60, which recommends that the State Government allocate a greater proportion of state funding to local government bike projects based on the Perth Long Term Cycling Network priorities and equivalent regional plans. **We would encourage IWA to propose that a specified proportion of transport spend that should be allocated to active transport be identified as part of the development of the new 20+ year Perth and Peel transport plan.**

We also welcome the recommendation that the State Government seeks federal funding contributions for a program of bike infrastructure priority projects. RAC has had a longstanding priority for the Federal Government to “commit to an infrastructure investment program for strategically important cycling connectors”. The inclusion of active transport infrastructure, including the new Causeway Bridge, as part of the Perth City Deal is a promising step.

It is important that active transport infrastructure such as new Principal Shared Path (PSP) and other high-quality connections continue to be planned and delivered as part of major road and rail infrastructure projects in Perth, to enhance connectivity and support greater choice in travel options. The recent announcement of a change in scope to the Metronet Yanchep Rail Extension project, removing the previously planned PSP connection from Butler to Yanchep, highlights that this is still an area for improvement. It is important for residents in urban growth areas to have early access to well-connected active and public transport infrastructure and services to help minimise car dependency and encourage more sustainable travel behaviour.

While RAC strongly supports Recommendation 60 in the “Cycling and walking” section, it is important to note that it focuses exclusively on bike infrastructure. **RAC would encourage IWA to consider the essential role of walking in supporting vibrant, liveable communities, improved health outcomes and a strong, diversified economy.**

While the importance of ‘movement and place’ principles in supporting greater priority for walking and cycling in activity corridors was recognised in the context of the “Road network” section, there are no recommendations to support this discussion.

Commentary within the health sector section also recognises the impact of the built environment on health outcomes, noting the importance of “designing neighbourhoods that are well-served by public transport and within a walkable catchment...” in promoting active living, and this is supported. However, the associated Recommendation 77 is relatively high level and by itself it would not seem to be a sufficient consideration of the importance of walking.

Many streets within strategic activity centres in Greater Perth, including the CBD, prioritise the movement of low occupancy private vehicle over that of other modes, including pedestrians, as well as the place function of the streets. Making it easier and safer for people to walk enhances the vibrancy and prosperity of retail and dining precincts, with walking interventions being found to increase the number of people entering shops and trading up to 40 per cent¹⁹. There are many lower cost, high-impact opportunities that could be adopted across Perth’s activity centres to provide greater priority for pedestrians, including redesign of traffic signal phasings and timings, reallocation of road space and redesigning streets for people in targeted locations, as well as traditional methods such as greater delivery of quality pedestrian crossing facilities.

¹⁷ RAC (2020), ‘Member Priorities Survey: Cycling’

¹⁸ Those who ride a bike at least once a week.

¹⁹ Victoria Walks (2018), “The economic case for investment in walking”, <<https://www.victoriawalks.org.au/Assets/Files/The-Economic-Case-for-Investment-in-Walking-FINAL.pdf>>

RAC believes recommendations specific to making it safer and easier to walk should be included in the Strategy, including optimisation of existing infrastructure as well as provision of greater priority for pedestrians in the Perth CBD and other activity centres. This will be important to help ensure walking is given appropriate consideration in developing the new 20+ year Perth and Peel transport plan.

Road safety

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 2016²⁰. For WA, it has been estimated to be \$2.4 billion per annum²¹.

To address these important issues, RAC welcomes Recommendations 57 a) and c) to "progress targeted expansion and improvement of the road network through road safety programs in line with the State Road Safety Strategy, including urban design innovations, speed reductions on local streets where appropriate, regional road safety treatments", and a small-scale intersection upgrades program.

However, these recommendations currently fall within the 2027-2032 timeframe. In recent years our road safety progress has stalled²². It is absolutely critical that these recommendations are brought forward so that more lives and injuries are saved, today.

Safety-focussed build and non-build solutions have little prominence within the Strategy. As mentioned in RAC's submission to the Discussion Paper, 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, most importantly, the two below²³.

Regional road safety

The draft Strategy recognises that "continuing to improve the safety of regional roads, in line with the Road Safety Strategy for Western Australia 2020-30, should be a priority".

To save thousands of lives and serious injuries on our regional 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 date, the State and Federal Governments have committed \$663 million over four years towards this life and injuring saving program. **RAC recommends the Strategy identifies and prioritises the Regional Road Safety Program for full funding and delivery over four years (within the 2022-2027 horizon).**

²⁰ 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>.

²¹ WA Government. 2020. Driving Change: Road Safety Strategy for Western Australia 2020-2030. Retrieved from: <https://www.rsc.wa.gov.au/RSC/media/Documents/Road%20Data/Driving-Change-WA-Road-SafetyStrategy-2020-2030-FINAL.pdf>.

²² Australian Automobile Association. (2019). Benchmarking the performance of the national road safety strategy. Retrieved from: https://www.aaa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/AAA-Benchmarking-Report_Q1-2019.pdf.

²³ RAC State and Federal Budget Submissions 2021-2022. Retrieved from: <https://rac.com.au/about-rac/advocating-change/reports>.

Metropolitan intersections

The second of RAC's top infrastructure priorities to address the one in two serious crashes that occur at intersections within the Perth metropolitan area is 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.

Major grade-separations and other significant infrastructure works (e.g. installation of traffic signals, construction of roundabouts and turn pockets or slip lanes) can greatly enhance safety while maintaining, and even increasing, operational performance when applied in appropriate situations. However, these can be costly with longer lead times, limiting the number of intersections that can be treated and the lives and serious injuries saved each year.

RAC welcomes the inclusion of a “small-scale intersection upgrades program” within the Strategy, however in recognition of its importance, seeks that program development and commencement occurs within the 2022-2027 timeframe.

Speed management

As identified within our submission to the Discussion Paper, the State Government has an important role in regulating 187,000km of road infrastructure in WA. An essential part of this is regulating speed limits to manage the efficiency and safety performance of the network and we feel 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. RAC welcomes the inclusion of “speed reductions on local streets where appropriate” within Recommendation 57, however, recommends **this should be brought forward to the 2022-2027 timeframe, broadened to speed management, and informed by the development and implementation of a speed management plan which considers appropriate road/street design and enforcement strategies which are crucial to ensure safer travel speeds.** RAC, has been calling on the State Government to develop, share and implement a speed management plan providing a framework and near-term deadlines for reviewing and setting speed limits across the road network that reflect the tolerances of the human body and prioritises safety performance above network efficiency.

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.

Demand management

Pricing

As noted in our submission to the Discussion Paper, 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).

We are broadly supportive of Recommendation 55 in the draft Strategy which proposes working with other jurisdictions to “design a fair and nationally compatible alternative to fuel excise”, including undertaking a review to investigate the merits of location and time-of-day pricing signals being incorporated. **However, given the likely timeframes to investigate and conduct a proper review, it is appropriate that these actions are commenced in the short term, from 2022-2027.**

Much of the discussion in the draft Strategy with respect to pricing is in terms of developing an alternative to fuel excise with a revenue objective. The draft Strategy does however also consider the potential of an alternative scheme in terms of a demand management objective. These objectives of revenue and demand management are very different, and while we welcome both perspectives, it is important that a review is undertaken on the likely social, economic and environmental impacts of any proposed pricing scheme.

We note that Recommendation 55 refers to an “alternative to fuel excise for low and zero emissions vehicles”. Outside of broader tax reform, RAC does not support the introduction of a new and additional tax targeting EV users in WA; the preferred approach is to incentivise uptake, particularly in the early stages while fleet penetration remains low. To respond to issues associated with declining fuel excise revenue and the need for a more equitable, efficient and effective funding model, RAC supports consultation on, and development of, a new road user charging model encompassing all vehicles and considering the holistic impacts of road use to replace the array of existing fees and charges used to generate revenue. This should occur only as part of a genuine national reform of taxation on road users and be informed by a rigorous cost-benefit analysis of all social, economic and environmental impacts including equity considerations. While not ideal, with some States already moving forward with their own schemes, it will be critical that any data and learnings be used to inform this broader reform.

We would also encourage IWA to consider the potential role of public transport fares in demand management to boost patronage and make better use of existing infrastructure. In our previous submission to the Discussion Paper, we put forward daily or weekly fare caps to encourage more frequent usage by outer urban commuters, as well as discounted fares for off-peak travel, including weekends, to encourage trips outside of peak periods. We strongly welcomed the State Government’s recent commitment to introducing a two-zone fare cap in January 2022.

There is still the opportunity to consider the potential for discounted fares for off-peak travel. Such an initiative has high support in the community, with 86 per cent of respondents in a recent RAC survey supporting discounted off-peak fares²⁴. Of Perth and Peel residents, 60 per cent indicated that they would be likely to use public transport more often if cheaper off-peak and weekend fares were introduced.

Behaviour Change

RAC strongly supports IWA in recommending an action plan be developed to increase public transport patronage through non-build measures, including through greater use of demand management initiatives such as the Your Move program.

RAC supports the Your Move program (and its predecessor travel behaviour change program, TravelSmart) in helping to reduce non-essential single private car trips and encourage the uptake of more active transport modes such as cycling, walking and public transport.

There is strong evidence of the high return on investment for active transport infrastructure, as well as and travel behaviour change programs. An evaluation of the WA State Government’s Local Government and Workplace TravelSmart programs delivered between 2000-01 and 2010-11, estimated a total net annual benefit of \$2.4 million, with each \$1 spent returning \$4.50 in community benefits²⁵.

RAC supports the role that behaviour change programs play to make more efficient use of existing as well newly constructed infrastructure. The success of major public transport projects can often be enhanced by the awareness and education provided prior to the project’s opening so people know that a viable alternative transport option is available.

It is crucial that behaviour change programs be delivered in conjunction with all funded METRONET projects, as well as any future major public transport projects, to support increased patronage and to maximise the return on investment in public transport infrastructure.

Technology

Smart transport technology

The timely development and implementation of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) can enable a smarter transport system that can help to move more people, more efficiently. The potential for such technology to

²⁴ RAC (2020), “RAC Member Priorities Tracker: Cost of transport”, <<https://rac.com.au/about-rac/advocating-change/reports/-/media/2655927208ef4281807333fe5fae4435.ashx>>

²⁵ Wake, D. (2012), “Engaging Perth workplaces for sustainable transport: an evaluation of the TravelSmart Workplace program”, <https://www.australasiantransportresearchforum.org.au/sites/default/files/2012_Wake.pdf>

enhance the value of our existing infrastructure aligns strongly with the Strategy's objective of "Get the most from our infrastructure and improve maintenance".

As noted in our submission to the Discussion Paper, RAC recognises that effort is being made to progress ITS initiatives in WA, including through Perth's first Smart Freeways project on Kwinana Freeway. A key component of this project however had 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 and efficiency. We welcome then as part of Recommendation 57 the potential for greater use of technology as a priority option to unlock capacity and increase efficiency of our freeways and major urban highways.

We also strongly welcome the recommendation for "expanding the use of technology on arterial roads and trials for dynamic bus prioritisation". The potential for enhanced detection technology at signalised intersections to improve safety and efficiency for all road users, along with technology to support bus priority has been identified as emerging priorities as part of the "A Smart Transport Technology Roadmap for Perth" project, which is currently underway²⁶. RAC is undertaking this project in partnership with the University of Western Australia and iMOVE Australia, and we thank IWA for their assistance to date as an important stakeholder.

We would encourage IWA to support trials of promising smart transport technologies within the 2022-2027 timeframe to inform planning and investment decisions on greater rollout of intelligent transport systems across the transport network in the 2027 – 2032 horizon.

RAC also welcomes Recommendation 62 which supports the introduction of connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs) by ensuring the anticipated infrastructure and technology requirements are incorporated in strategic planning. RAC has been working closely with the State Government to support a firmer understanding of these anticipated requirements by testing vehicle to infrastructure (V2I) technology at traffic signals as part of the Intellibus[®] automated vehicle trial. **It is important that planning for a sustainable future with CAVs (including their role in complementing mass and rapid transit) is considered as part of the development of new 20 year + transport plans.** Scenario planning will be important in ensuring desired safety, efficiency and accessibility outcomes at a network wide level, as well as at a precinct level with regard to balancing the competing movement and place needs within activity centres.

Low and zero emissions vehicles

The uptake of electric vehicles in Western Australia is growing but is extremely slow, with EVs currently accounting for less than 0.1 per cent of all our registered vehicles. RAC welcomed the WA Government's Electric Vehicle Strategy released late last year which included investment in charging infrastructure and targets for electrifying part of the government fleet. We also strongly support IWA's recommendation in the draft Strategy that further steps be taken. In particular we support Recommendation 61 that a more ambitious target be set for the State Government light vehicle fleet uptake, supporting the private sector to provide charging infrastructure and expanding the rollout of charging infrastructure on government land and buildings.

As identified in our submission to the Discussion Paper the barriers to greater take-up of low and zero emission vehicles are shifting. A recent RAC survey²⁷ found almost one in two (44 per cent) of Western Australians would consider buying an electric or hybrid vehicle when they are next in the market for a new car. While there are many barriers to overcome the top barrier identified by members was cost, with 57 per cent saying "the cost is too high". There is strong support for government action, with 72 per cent saying they believe the government should be doing more to address vehicle emissions. The top action members identified for government to take to reduce vehicle emissions was to provide incentives for purchasing low emissions vehicles.

²⁶ iMOVE Australia (2021), "A Smart Transport Technology Roadmap for Perth", <<https://imoveaustralia.com/project/smart-transport-technology-roadmap-perth/>>

²⁷ RAC (2020), "RAC Member Priorities Tracker – Sustainability", <<https://rac.com.au/about-rac/advocating-change/reports/-/media/2dedfe0c0fac47028f749880175dfb1c.ashx>>

WA is lagging other states and territories, particularly due to its lack of incentives and subsidies to encourage take up. Most other states and territories have implemented policies such as reduced registration fees, reduced vehicle duty or targeted subsidies for the purchase of electric vehicles. **RAC would encourage IWA to include consideration of such policy levers as a non-build recommendation in the final Strategy that would help to bring WA in line with other states and territories.**

Summary

We trust RAC's response will be of use to IWA in developing the final Strategy, which will be crucial for the State's future liveability and productivity, and we look forward to further opportunities to engage with IWA in the future.

In support of our submission we enclose our State Budget Submission 2021-22 and our response to the Discussion Paper. RAC's previous submissions and publications are available for viewing and download via <https://rac.com.au/about-rac/advocating-change/reports>.