

Challenges and Opportunities - Consultation Summary

Greater Shepparton Movement and Place Strategy

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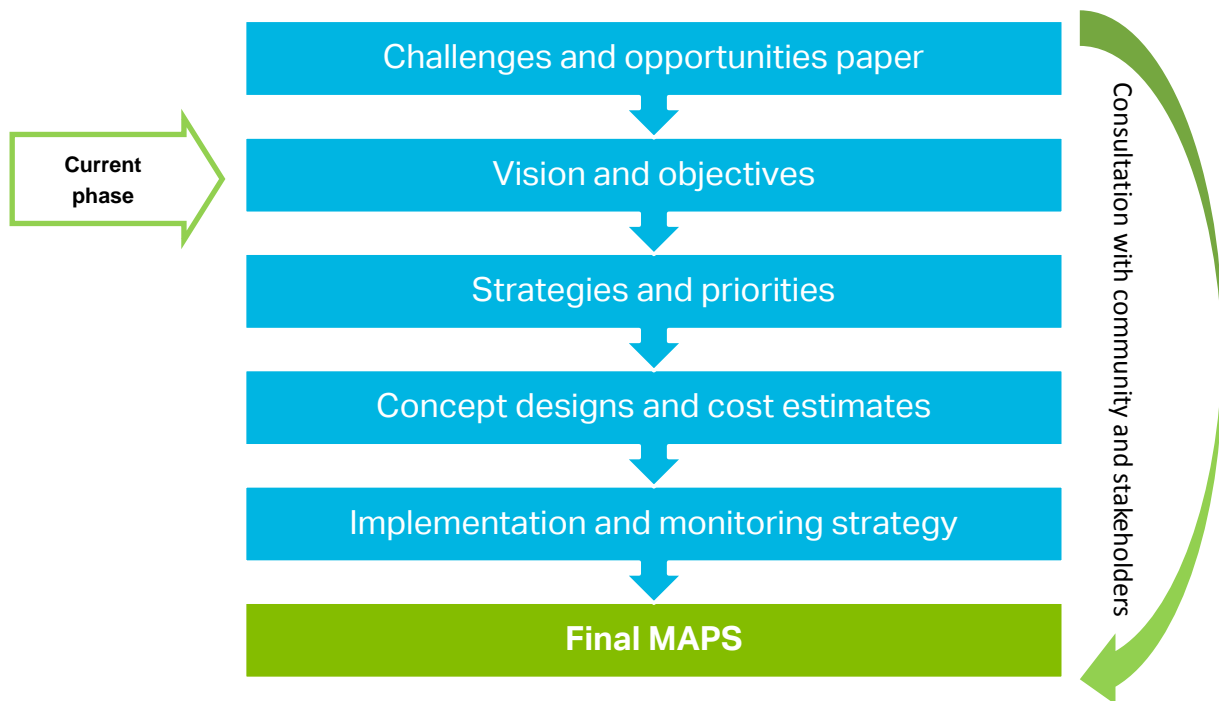
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview

The purpose of this report is to summarise the results of the stakeholder and public consultation undertaken as part of the initial stages of the Movement and Place strategy (MAPS).



Consultations in the form of a stakeholder workshop, a public drop in session and an online survey were used to gauge community sentiment and generate data on the major issues perceived to be facing Greater Shepparton residents and visitors.

1.2 Process

1.2.1 Stakeholder consultation workshop

The most recent stakeholder consultation workshop was conducted on 1st February 2017. The organisations who attended were:

- Kreskas Brothers Pty Ltd
- Go TAFE
- VicRoads
- Office of Suzanna Sheed
- Shepparton Transit
- Disability Advisory Committee (DAC)
- VicPolice
- GV Health
- Shepparton RAILS
- Tourism Greater Shepparton
- Chamber of Commerce.

The key issues discussed at the stakeholder consultation workshop were:

- The impact of population growth
- Shepparton as a growing regional service centre (e.g. for health services)
- The need to address and support an ageing population
- Impact of freight and high car volumes, particularly on city centre liveability
- The need for more efficient freight transport out of Greater Shepparton – interstate, to Port of Melbourne and via air freight
- Challenges with improving public bus transport, particularly driven by dependency on State subsidy
- Problems with perceptions of car parking availability, public demand for CBD parking, and the poor state of the multi-deck car park.

The following strategic projects that Council is already working on or pushing for were also discussed:

- Goulburn Valley Highway Shepparton Bypass
- Improvements to passenger rail and links to health provision, education, economic and social development
- GV Link
- Improvements needed to the facilities and presentation of the railway station.

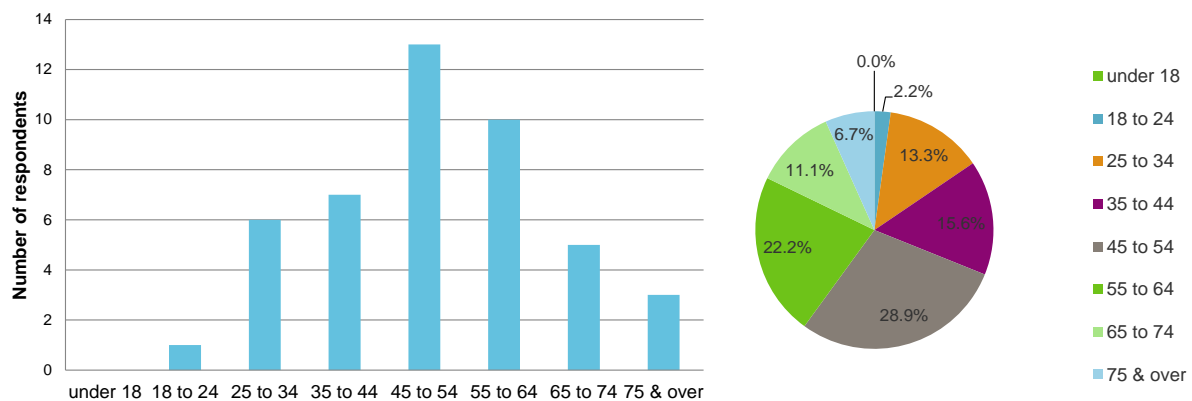
1.2.2 Public drop in session

A public drop in session was held on 1 February 2017 at the Maude Street Mall. A canopy and table were set up in the mall and the project team and other Greater Shepparton City Council staff handed out flyers advertising the online survey and a paper version of the online survey.

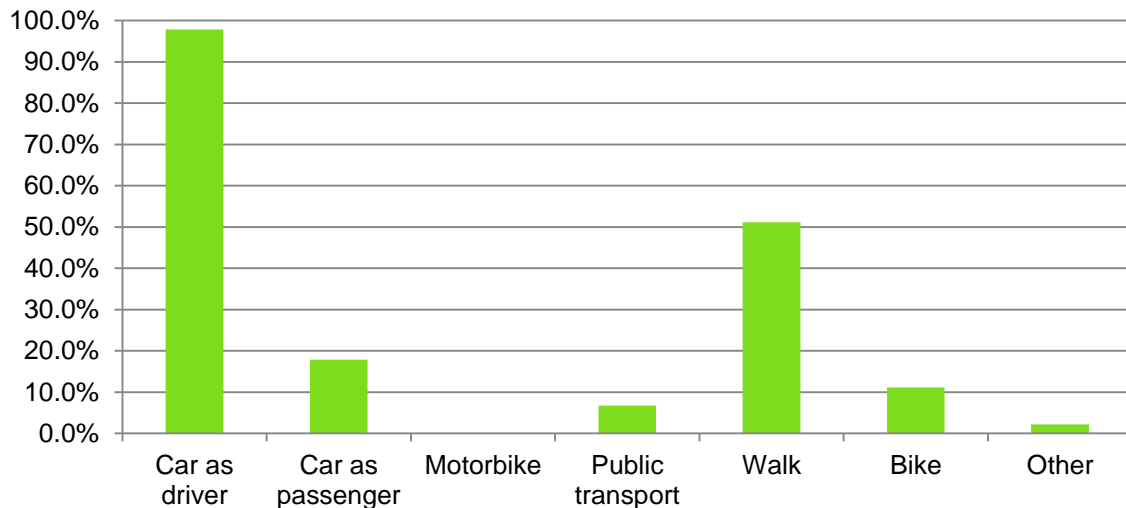
1.2.3 Online survey

The most recent survey was conducted online through *SurveyMonkey* between 14th January and 20th February 2017. There were 45 respondents with zero below 18, only 1 below 25 and over half between the ages of 45 to 64. The median age of the respondent was estimated as roughly 50 years old while the 2013 census indicates that the median age in Greater Shepparton is only 38. Furthermore 45 is a small sample size hence the survey may not reflect the precise viewpoints of Greater Shepparton as a whole but rather serves as a guide. It is recommended that higher participation is encouraged for any future surveys to provide greater confidence in outcomes.

Figure 1 - Number and demographic of respondents



Currently 51% of survey respondents identify walking as one of their modes of transport. Cycling (11%) and public transport (7%) are significantly lower. By comparison, a heavy reliance on cars was confirmed as 98% of survey respondents identify driving as a mode of transport. This forms the basis of many of the issues facing Shepparton in terms of health, streetscape, amenity, parking, congestion and sense of place.

Figure 2 – The proportion of survey respondents who use each mode of transport

2.0 Results

For continuity with the Vision and Objectives report, consultation feedback is summarised under the three themes:

- Theme 1: Vibrant cities and liveable neighbourhoods
- Theme 2: Sustainable local connections
- Theme 3: Effective broader connections

Naturally most of the feedback was centred on Theme 1 and Theme 2 as these have the most direct influence on the daily lives of Greater Shepparton residents.

2.1 Theme 1: Vibrant cities and liveable neighbourhoods

The impact transport has on Greater Shepparton's sense of place was discussed in detail during the stakeholder workshop. Concerns arose from both businesses and residents. GV Health specifically voiced concern about the safety of the road design, in particular where there is parking in the centre of the road.

Among suggestions to help solve community identified issues, improvements in the CBD were the most prevalent. The demand for increased number of bus services and improvements to encourage walking and cycling around the CBD through pedestrian walks, shared paths and bike lanes were also common themes.

The main sentiments from workshop minutes and survey responses are listed as follows:

- Liveability improvements to town centres are needed through:
 - Developments that are aligned with community visions and goals
 - Shared paths and bike routes.
- There also needs to be multiple modes of transport to choose from:
 - Bus services between neighbourhoods
 - Cycling routes to connect new developments
 - Incentives that will help to transition from car to public transport.

- Additional ideas to improve safety and amenity in the CBD include:
 - Improved vehicle circulation and parking options
 - Attractive public transport facilities
 - Safety of middle of road parking (complementary to GV Health’s comments).
- There were many complaints about parking, generally implying that:
 - Parking options (or awareness of them) and street appeal are lacking.
 - Signage and wayfinding to parking options could be improved.
 - People who are healthy should be prepared to walk short distances from their cars as opposed to always trying to park right outside the destination.

There were also several more aggressive ideas mentioned pertaining to the future evolution of Greater Shepparton as a less car-reliant region such as:

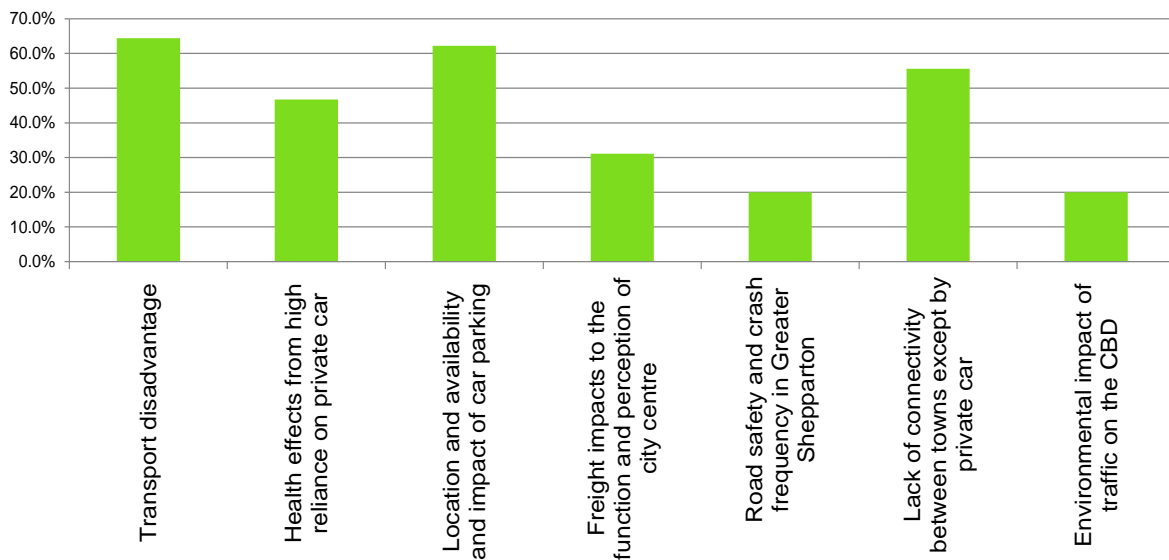
- Moving most car parking to car parks at the edge of CBD
- Create a “cycling city” or “active city” culture.

Online survey results are analysed and discussed below.

The mode share of respondents that are presented in Figure 2 (see Introduction) are supported by the fact that only 36% of respondents currently believe it is easy to cycle in Greater Shepparton compared with 80% thinking it is easy to drive.

87% of respondents would support strategies to be implemented in the CBD to make it safer and more attractive to walk and cycle. Furthermore the high reliance on private cars contributing to poor health was identified as the fourth biggest issue affecting transport, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Responses to survey question: What are the 3 biggest challenges affecting transport in Shepparton?



Transport disadvantage (difficulty for some people to access transport due to cost, availability or accessibility) was revealed as the number 1 challenge perceived to affect transport in Greater Shepparton (see Figure 3). Therefore significant attention should be given to improving public transport services within Shepparton and the surrounding towns.

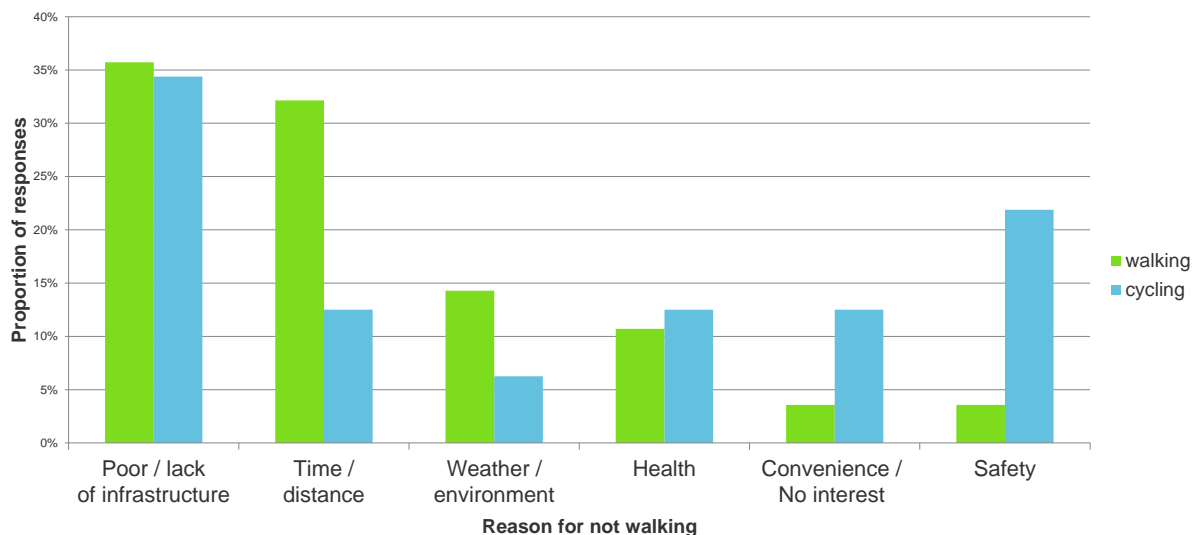
The second biggest issue affecting transport in Greater Shepparton is perceived as the location and availability of car parking and its impacts on the look and feel of the city centre. It follows that there may need to be an effort to reduce parking demand to help address these issues. However, until people's reliance on driving to get around is reduced by offering viable alternatives, adequate parking will be needed to maintain standard of living. Thus parking presents a trade-off between the present/near future and longer term vision of Greater Shepparton. Disincentivising on-street parking by pricing mechanisms and time limits, and improving off-street parking through way finding and upgrades, will be important to improve amenity and safety whilst allowing the community to travel effectively.

84% of respondents said they would use off street car parks more often if they were safer and more accessible, although others have expressed that the present facilities are sufficient and do not believe it is necessary to park directly out the front of the final destination. Notably 63% of respondents said they were prepared to park in the CBD for less than \$1 per hour and 33% for less than \$2 per hour. Hence a price setting strategy could also help optimise parking to alleviate congestion.

For cycling and walking to gain mode share their environments (particularly cycling) must be perceived by the community to be safe and desirable to use. Also currently bike paths in the north and east can be viewed as difficult to access.

Figure 4 shows that there is opportunity to increase walking mode share by improving infrastructure. Cycling is influenced by more factors, however is dominated by the lack of infrastructure and safety concerns.

Figure 4 - Comparison of major prohibitive reasons behind the low mode share of walking and cycling



2.2 Theme 2: Sustainable Local Connections

The bulk of community sentiment towards achieving sustainable local connections is centred around addressing transport disadvantage and connectivity within Greater Shepparton (refer to Figure 3 – the 1st and 3rd biggest issues). Suggestions to improve connectivity within Greater Shepparton via bus services were high on the agenda.

- According to respondents the most popular transport projects for Council to prioritise are:
 - Providing more active transport infrastructure
 - Developing a needs assessment approach (prioritise projects wanted by the community)
 - Increasing public transport routes.

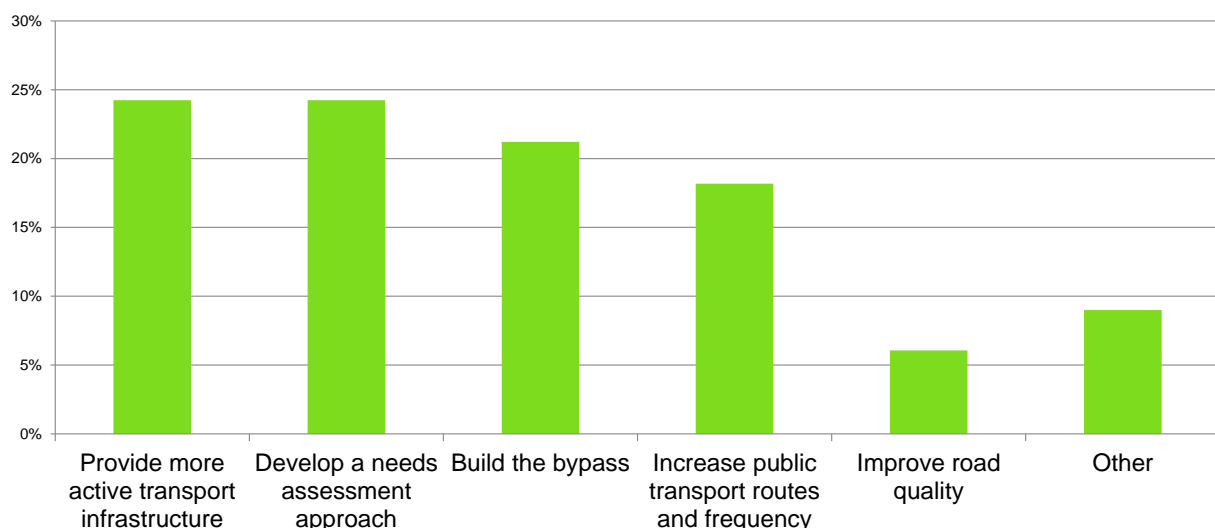
- It is also believed increasing the number and frequency of bus services between towns within Greater Shepparton will help improve safety, local amenity and inclusiveness. Three major factors were identified to be preventing residents using public transport more often:
 - Lack of convenience
 - Lack of service (availability)
 - Lack of frequency.
- Other commonly suggested actions to ensure sustainable connections include reducing the impact of road freight movements through:
 - Review of speed limits
 - Prohibition of large trucks through CBD where other options are available
 - Utilising rail and air freight to reduce road based freight (see also Theme 3).

Currently only 15% of survey respondents think it is convenient to take public transport to destinations in Greater Shepparton, and only 2% believe the network is adequate for the anticipated growth and needs of future residents. This illustrates there is significant need to improve public transport services.

Concerning cycling, only 11% of those surveyed said they ride as a mode of transport, and it is likely that the number that ride between towns is significantly lower. This shows that more funding needs to be allocated to improving cycling conditions. The community feels that cycling connections should be accessible from multiple points, and bike routes need to connect to major destinations with end-of-trip facilities.

Figure 5 illustrates the views of those surveyed in the community on how transport projects should be prioritised by Greater Shepparton City Council. It applies to both Theme 2 and Theme 3.

Figure 5 - How respondents think Council should prioritise transport projects



2.3 Theme 3: Effective broader connections

During the stakeholder workshop, the need to secure a multi-modal provision of freight and transport services was identified. Maintaining the aspiration for GV Link, delivering the Goulburn Valley Highway Shepparton Bypass, and improving freight rail to connect interstate and to the Port of Melbourne were on the agenda. Securing better air connections (particularly air freight) including a local/regional airport was also discussed. Improvements to V/Line services were also touched on.

Public transport improvements namely bus services featured heavily in respondents' suggestions for overcoming the identified challenges. The community identified better access to Melbourne as a priority, but also expressed interest in better connections to regional centres like Bendigo by bus and/or increased rail services. The following points were commonly raised during consultations:

- Efficient freight transport links should be developed.
- The reach and efficiency of the transport network within region should be expanded, including more east-west road links.
- Connectivity with PT services would help reduce congestion and therefore should be improved.
- The Goulburn Valley Highway Shepparton Bypass should be implemented.

To ensure Greater Shepparton has effective connections with the broader Victorian and NSW populations, the community believes that:

- Transport links need to be attractive.
- More rail and bus services are needed – this will help attract students and retain youth.

21% of respondents would like to prioritise building the Goulburn Valley Highway Shepparton Bypass as per Figure 5.

3.0 Conclusion

The stakeholder workshop, public drop-in session and survey identified issues perceived to be facing the Greater Shepparton community. Their sentiments have been gauged and responses analysed to assist in shaping the vision and objectives of the MAPS. The community has identified the following as priorities (organised by guiding principles):

Theme 1: Vibrant centres and liveable neighbourhoods

- Encourage walkability through urban design.
- Increase and improve provision of safe cycling routes with end-of-trip facilities.
- Improve availability and frequency of public transport by bus.
- Review parking strategy to increase safety and encourage off-street parking.
- Remove freight where possible from CBD.

Theme 2: Sustainable local connections

- Improve public transport within Greater Shepparton to address transport disadvantage and reduce car travel to Greater Shepparton.
- Increase number and quality of cycling routes (and where possible walking routes) between towns.

Theme 3: Effective broader connections

- Improve external freight links and inter-modal exchange.
- Increase number of V/Line services and review timetabling.
- Build the bypass.