

18 April 2023

Central Hobart Precinct Plan consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Central Hobart Precinct Plan. These comments will deal with the sections of the plan focused on cycling infrastructure and the issues that are not covered by the plan but should be.

Cycling Goals

Goal 4 is “integrated and accessible movement networks” and captures the improvements that are needed if more people are going to choose to move around by bicycle.

- **A.56:** *Complete and connect the bicycle and micromobility facilities on the key corridors of Argyle Street, Campbell Street and Collins Street.*
- **A.58:** *Identify further micromobility, pedestrian links and improvements that will improve connectivity and attractiveness in Central Hobart.*
- **A.59:** *Continue to investigate micromobility options beyond the e-scooter trial.*
- **A.60:** *Continue to support the provision of improved walking, cycling and micromobility facilities that will support more people to move around Central Hobart, catering for residential and employment growth mobility demands in the area.*
- **A.65:** *Complete a first generation Hobart Transport Networks Operations Plan (HTNOP) in partnership with the State Government.*
- **A.66:** *Develop detailed movement and place mapping for Central Hobart, taking into consideration key pedestrian streets identified by the Central Hobart Urban Design Framework and other key future land use changes.*

All of these are good directions but don't actually give any assurances for outcomes other than for cycleways on Argyle and Campbell streets, which have been due for several years, and Collins Street.

A goal specifically addressing the standard of infrastructure to be built would be useful. For example, in A.60 add “... cycling and micromobility facilities that **are built to an All Ages and Abilities standard (AAA) and** will support

The City of Hobart and Tasmanian Government have committed to a AAA standard in the Greater Hobart Cycling Plan, and the same commitment should be made here in A.60.

A AAA standard is essential if we are going to encourage as many people as possible to switch out of cars and onto bikes, e-bikes and e-scooters. We know the majority of the population will consider cycling but only if they feel protected from traffic conflict which means physically separated cycleways off-road or on-road, or very low-speed, very low-traffic volume streets.

This is important as some existing cycling routes need infrastructure upgrades if they are going to meet the AAA standard and be utilised by a wide cross section of the community. For example, there is no mention in the plan of any upgrading of existing cycling treatments, such as transforming the painted lane on upper Campbell and Argyle streets to kerbside lanes with parked cars providing the barrier to traffic.

Not having a network operating plan finished means it's difficult to comment completely on the suggested streets for cycle routes. Hobart's one-way street system is a real disincentive for cycling as it creates longer, roundabout ways of getting around instead of direct, quicker pathways.

Cities that have succeeded in getting more people riding do so by making bike travel the easiest and quickest option. The Central Hobart Precinct plan should be focussed on getting cycling routes into place that make riding people's first choice to get around because they are direct and obvious.

It would be useful to make a commitment to explore prioritising two-way cycling on some one-way streets and shortcuts for cyclists to make this happen. For example, Argyle and Campbell streets are seen as a couplet for vehicle traffic, but Argyle is not a comfortable street to ride on because of conflicting land uses like car park and hospital entrances and steep gradients in some places. So planning for two-way cycling on Campbell and Elizabeth may be more practical in terms of people using the infrastructure.

Cycleways plan

The lines on the map for future cycle routes look promising but it's difficult to know how useful they will be without knowing what they will look like. The same routes were nominated in the Greater Hobart Cycling Plan as AAA routes, however, there are some indications in the Central Hobart Plan that the council may be stepping back from that commitment for Elizabeth and Collins streets.

As mentioned under Cycling Goals, this needs to be addressed so the Urban Design Framework has clear direction as to what sort of cycling facility should be in place in the context of traffic volumes, speeds, gradients and parked cars.

It is interesting to see Davey Street identified as a cycling route in this plan. It was also identified in the Greater Hobart Cycling Plan even though the Tasmanian Government's recently released bus stop-bus lane plans for the street didn't provide for AAA cycling, offering just one block of painted lane alongside thousands of daily vehicle movements. Davey Street would be a welcome addition to a cycling plan as it can connect the Intercity Cycleway through the edge of the city centre and waterfront, but the volume of cars means it must be separated from traffic and continuous.

Central Hobart zone

The plan proposes to create a shared zone in the Central Precinct, which is bordered by Collins, Bathurst, Harrington and Argyle streets.

These can be a good option for cycling providing they are designed well. Low-speed zones elsewhere in the world set very low speeds of 20 km or less to discourage through car use and protect people walking, riding and scooting. Some also ban vehicles other than delivery vehicles and public transport, such as sections of Swanston Street in Melbourne.

Shared spaces also need clear direction for where bikes will go and space for them, otherwise we could end up with a poor outcome like the Liverpool Street block outside Myers. This is an example of what not to do in a low-speed zone, with no space allocated for people riding, the constant risk of car dooring and bikes ending up stuck in long lines of traffic with no way out. It's also an example of how setting a low speed is not enough in itself – other elements need to be enacted to reduce traffic volumes and make the space feel more comfortable for cycling.

The City of Melbourne recently commissioned a report into its 20 km, pedestrian priority shared zones in Little Bourke, Little Collins, Little Lonsdale and Flinders Lane which found drivers were exceeding the speed limits and were not giving way to pedestrians as there was no change to the streetscape other than the shared zone signage.ⁱ

If the shared zone is going to work there needs to be traffic-calming measures, clear direction for drivers to avoid the zone and little to no on-street car parking, except for disability access and loading zones, so drivers are not attracted there. This means there needs to be adjustments on surrounding streets that may have to absorb more traffic that is avoiding the shared zone.

Collins and Elizabeth streets

Collins and Elizabeth streets are two of the most popular routes for people riding as they are relatively low traffic compared to nearby streets, have lower gradients and in the case of Elizabeth Street the convenience of two-way direction. And both are important continuous connectors to the southern and northern suburbs, in the case of Collins Street in conjunction with the Rivulet path.

Both streets have been identified as cycling routes in the plan and both streets were also nominated in the Greater Hobart Cycling Plan as having AAA cycleways. These are undoubtedly preferred routes for many people riding and there should be safe and convenient access and priority along both for bike riders. The “vision plans” for the streets that are mentioned in the Central Plan should start with cycling being given AAA treatment.

One of the key blockages for riding along Elizabeth Street is the pedestrian mall between Collins and Liverpool streets. During the day the council requires bike riders to dismount and walk their bikes. Implementing a shared zone through here so people don't have to dismount but ride at walking pace would be preferable. Any vision plan for the street should look at streamlining the design of the mall and designating a marked shared travel zone through it.

Marking space for cycling and walking is an important element to improve flow and reduce confusion. The waterfront shared path is an example of no obvious delineation which is frustrating

to ride on as people walking spread across the entire width and don't allow space for people riding and scooting. Likewise, the Rose Garden bridge across the Brooker has no signage or marking telling people to keep left so people walk across the path, including such simple direction as a centre line and arrows with bike and pedestrian symbols improves the infrastructure for everyone.

The Collins Street route also has the blockage of sections of the rivulet path that are unsealed and become so muddy in wet weather they are unsuitable for people riding for transport as mud splatters onto their clothes and bags. A commitment to sealing some of this route for cycling and scooting should be incorporated into the plan to ensure people have the genuine option of year-round access.

Bike parking

The plan outlines the needs for end-of-trip facilities and bike parking at ferry terminals and bus terminals, which is important seeing nothing has been done to allow bikes to be carried on buses despite the fleet now being comprised of accessible, low-floor models.

However, it doesn't mention the need for bike parking throughout the central precinct. If people are going to be encouraged to swap car trips for electric bicycles they need secure places to lock their bikes.

Hoops are suitable for short-stay parking, however, there have been instances of locks being cut with bolt cutters or angle grinders and the higher value of electric bikes creates more incentive for theft.

We should have the choice of cages or lockers or electronic docks, or a mixture of all these, operated by secure phone apps/cards that ensure a high level of security on top of personal locks to deter theft. These can be undercover, such as in car parks and council/government buildings, or utilising car parking bays on street or other areas of public space such as either end of the mall.

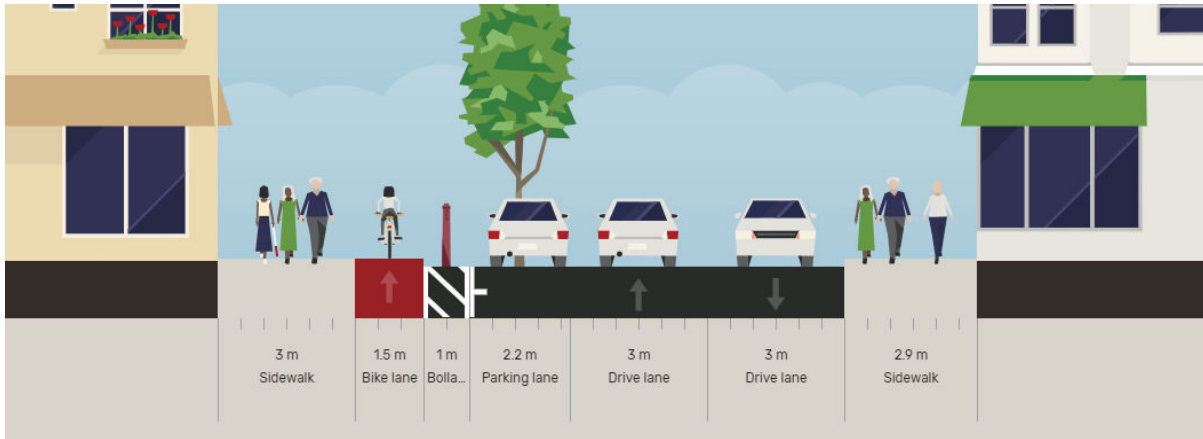
Business owners should be encouraged to provide secure parking for employees and customers to complement the public parking. They could also receive a fee to use their land for public bike and scooter parking.

Street design

Street designs should have some general rules to ensure cycling feels more comfortable and is actually safer, this should not be left to individual street vision plans but incorporated into the Urban Design Framework for a consistent approach across the city.

- Physical separation of people riding should be via bollards, kerbing separators, new paths with kerbs or parked cars with a physical or painted buffer to stop opening doors injuring riders.
- Kerb-side car parking should be limited to loading zones and disability parking in shared zones to discourage circulating traffic and reduce the risk to vulnerable road users.
- Designated parking areas for hire scooters and e-bikes should be designed into streetscapes, utilising areas currently set aside for cars.

- Cyclists should not be placed in the dooring zone of parked cars. This means that the cross section provided for Elizabeth St on page 126, for example, should be flipped so that parked cars are next to the uphill separated lane buffer and the people riding downhill in the traffic lane don't also have to contend with parked cars on their left. So a better cross section for the Elizabeth St example would be:



- Low-speed shared zones that don't have low traffic volumes should be avoided so we don't have the situation where people riding are stuck in long lines of traffic with no way out. It's also an intimidating environment for the majority of people who want to ride if there are a lot of vehicles, even if speeds are low. These sorts of treatments work better if the traffic volumes are very low or limited to public transport and delivery vehicles.
- Cycling should be a quick, direct way of moving through the city to encourage people to choose it as a travel option. Shared zones should still allocate space for people riding and scooting to give greater certainty for all users, whether that's through use of signage, surface treatments or colour. An example of this is in Lennox Street in Richmond in Victoria a 10 km speed limit and contraflow lane for bicycles:



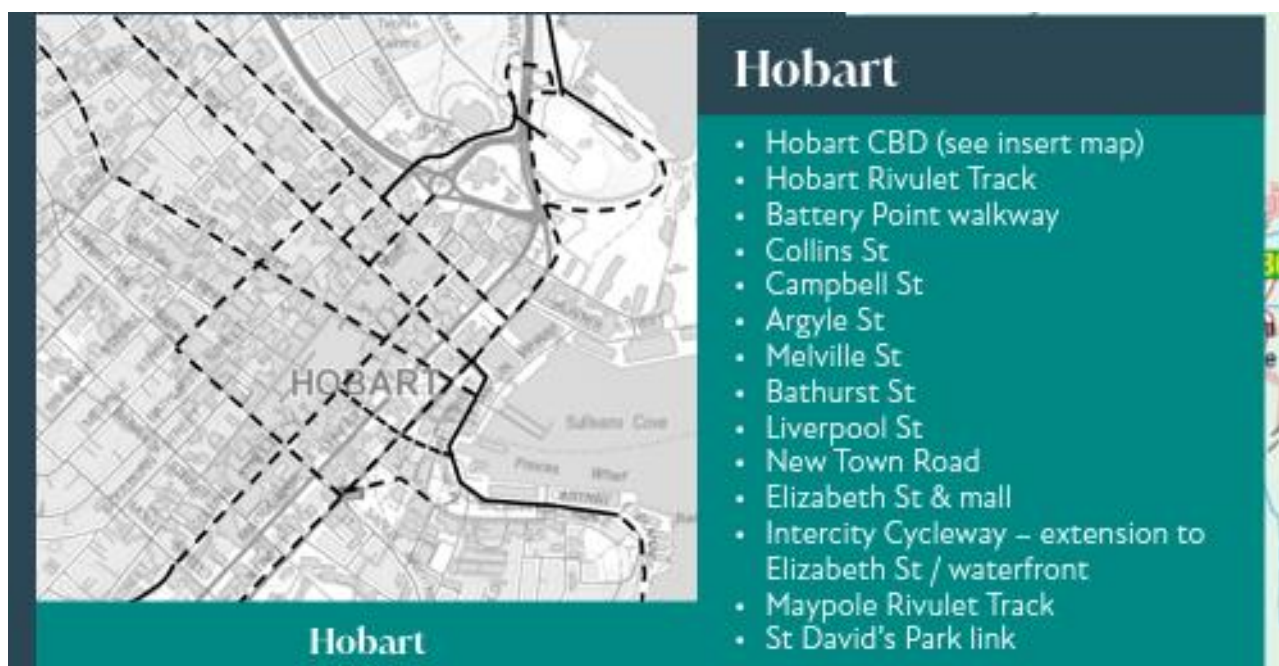
Another example is the Dutch “car as guest” streets where it’s clear through colour and line marking that people riding have priority.



Central Hobart Cycling Plan

The draft Central Hobart Plan does not discuss the recently approved Greater Hobart Cycling Plan.

The Greater Hobart Plan commits to AAA cycleways on the nominated routes. The types of infrastructure which can be classified as AAA are clearly outlined in that plan. The central Hobart routes in that plan are as pictured:



The Central Hobart plan follows the Greater Hobart network map except that it designates parts of Elizabeth Street that have been nominated for AAA facilities as within a shared zone.

Does this mean the shared zone would adhere to the AAA principles listed in the local street bikeway definition of fewer than 500 vehicles per day?

“Local Street Bikeway – Vehicle speeds should not exceed 30km p/h and traffic volumes should be below 500 vehicles per day. Traffic speeds over 30km p/h significantly increase the probability of fatal injury in the event of a crash (see table) so on higher speed roads separation from motor vehicles is desired.”

If not, the Central Plan should be amended to make it clear there will be AAA facilities for people riding regardless of whether it’s a shared zone as per the other definitions in the Greater Hobart plan:

“Protected bike lane – Provides physical barrier separation from motor vehicles on higher speeds and traffic volume roads, as well as separation from pedestrians particularly in locations where foot traffic is high. The facility should provide adequate width for comfortable passing and accommodate all types of wheeled active transportation such as e-scooters and cargo bikes.”

“Off-road cycleway – This is shared with pedestrians and needs to be a minimum of 3.0m wide. Road crossings need careful consideration and grades should be minimised as much as possible.”

ⁱ <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/melbourne-s-little-streets-were-meant-to-be-a-pedestrian-paradise-but-drivers-aren-t-sharing-20230328-p5cqv3.html>