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forward

or



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## Cycling and a successful Swanston Street

All around the world friendly, bustling streets like Swanston are successful because they attract more people, who stay longer and spend more.

Trams, pedestrians and cyclists help make Swanston a successful street with a unique Melbourne flavour.

We can make this important Melbourne Street friendlier and more successful. But the return of private motor vehicle traffic would be like going back to the 1980s when everyone found it ugly and unattractive.

Let's go forward not back.



## Swanston Street – a successful cycle route

Swanston St cycle route is a key route in the metropolitan network of arterial on-road bicycle routes – the Principal Bicycle Network. It is fed by local routes such as Cardigan in the north and by arterial routes such as St Kilda Road and the Yarra path in the south.

The Swanston St cycle route plays an important role in the City of Melbourne metropolitan bicycle network:

- It links the north and south sides of the Yarra. Riders from the south use the street to access the Universities and Hospitals for example. Riders from the north use the street to enter St Kilda Road and then destinations to the east in South Yarra and to the south west in South Melbourne. 80% of the riders entering the CBD from the south come over Princes Bridge and up Swanston Street.<sup>1</sup>
- It is also a critical route for cycle access to the City. It carries over 25% of all cycle traffic in the CBD. The number of riders using the street in the two-hour am peak has risen from 200 in 1992 to 714 in 2002 – a more than three fold increase.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bicycle Victoria study:

<sup>2</sup> 7.15 – 9.15 am Flinders Street in March 1992 and February 2002

## Why the street is attracting more cycling

Swanston St cycle route has become more successful for the following combination of interrelated reasons.

### Physical Attributes

1. Swanston Street has a gentle gradient for a north-south CBD street: significantly better than Spring, Exhibition, Russell, Queen and William and somewhat better than King and Spencer.
2. It has a direct bridge crossing of the Yarra. This is a further disadvantage for Russel and William.
3. Is centrally placed and allows direct access. This is a key criterion of successful cycle routes. Motor vehicles on the other hand can successfully use longer bypasses<sup>3</sup>.

### Traffic Regime

4. Considerable investment has been made in cycle lanes and facilities leading to Swanston especially along St Kilda Road – a key route on Melbourne’s Principal Bicycle Network. The State Government has invested more than \$2m over the last three years upgrading the cycle facilities on St Kilda and Brighton Roads. The facilities now run with gaps of less than 100m from the CBD to Glenhuntly Road.
5. The street has a 30kph limit. This makes it attractive to cyclists as the speed differential is minimised between riders and other traffic.
6. The volume of through traffic has been limited.

### Policy Support

The policy stance of the City of Melbourne supports cycling:

7. Annual report 2000 – 2001 ‘Plans to make Melbourne a first class cycling city are outlined in our Bike Plan, which was prepared as part of the Transport Strategy. The Plan promotes cycling as a healthy exercise that is a low-cost, and environmentally friendly. Our Bike Plan identifies improvements to the bike network to ensure routes are safe and accessible and linked to key activities The City Bike plan which aims to establish City of Melbourne as a first class cycling city.’
8. The Greenhouse Action plan which ‘encourages a shift to more sustainable modes of transport’
9. The Corporate Plan 2001/2004: ‘Ensure a sustainable and highly integrated transport system services City needs and links key assets.’

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<sup>3</sup> City Bypass routes installed by VicRoads when changes were first made to Swanston were studied intensively in 1993 VicRoads. The assessment showed that although the bypass routes were longer that access and travel times remained the same.

## A unique Melbourne flavour

For Swanston Street to succeed as a public transport and pedestrian filled central activity spine for Melbourne's CBD an appropriate traffic management regime is required. Bicycles are compatible with this goal but free access to private motor vehicles is not. The current uses of the street relate to its cycling use as follows:

### Pedestrians

- The improved pedestrian environment of Swanston Street is consistent with a successful Swanston St cycle route. This view is supported by CrashStats, which shows that cycle pedestrian injuries have been much less common than motor vehicle pedestrian crashes in the street<sup>4</sup>. This suggests that today, despite the substantial increase in cycle and pedestrian use and the substantial reduction in motor vehicle use, pedestrians are at significantly higher risk from motor vehicles than from cyclists.

### Trams

- Although the narrow travel lane alongside the Superstops in Collins Street have made it more difficult for cyclists. DDA compliant platform stops and Superstops can be constructed in a way that maintains a successful Swanston St cycle route.
- Loading and unloading trams. Bicycle Victoria supports traffic regulations that require all vehicles including cyclists to stop when a tram is stopped while loading and unloading. We support enforcement of this regulation on cyclists who do not follow the regulation. Vertical displacement features such as the mini-speed humps should be removed. Riders have been injured after slipping on the raised pavement markers on the tram fairways and they should be removed.

### Taxis

- The use of the street by taxis in the current 30-kph-speed regime is consistent with a successful Swanston St cycle route. Indented taxi ranks are better for taxis and would reduce crashes from opening doors and exiting or entering taxis.

### Delivery vehicles

- Delivery vehicles need to supply the uses along the street. Generally these vehicles do not fully occupy the kerb-to-fairway lane and in the current 30-kph-speed regime are consistent with a successful Swanston St cycle route. A peak period ban on loading would improve the street for cycling and trams.

### Recreational hire vehicles

- Horse drawn carriages do not fully occupy the kerb-to-fairway lane or conflict with cyclists.

### Emergency vehicles

- Emergency vehicles need free access to the street.

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<sup>4</sup> Some cycle pedestrian crashes have occurred at intersections such as Lonsdale and Swanston. This is the only intersection with cycle pedestrian crashes in the last few years.

#### Private motor vehicles

- Private motor vehicle access to the street is not consistent with its future success. There are a considerable number of alternatives for through routes and parking. The low volume of motor vehicles during the night suggests that the alternative routes are more attractive even during off peak hours. The City should enforce the private motor vehicle ban during the day.

#### Long distance Coaches, Local tourism buses

- There are better locations for parking long distance coaches and London style double-decker buses. In Swanston Street the vehicles fully occupy the kerb-to-fairway lane and force cyclists and other road users in the tram way.

The current mix of functions is mostly compatible. The result is a street with high pavement amenity characterised by low noise and pollution. In addition the street has a higher people-per-hour capacity than it would have if the private motor vehicle ban were lifted.

## Lifting the private motor vehicles ban will reduce the number of people going into the city

Trams carry many more people into and through Swanston Street than could be done by private motor vehicles. Introducing private motor vehicles will reduce the number of tram passengers for an overall loss of access.

Swanston has ten tram routes; Collins has three routes, Elizabeth two routes and LaTrobe Street one route<sup>5</sup>. Currently Swanston Street carries around 1000 tram trips per day on the ten routes. Of those, around 200 services are outside the ban, before 7am and after 7pm. Therefore around 125 trams travel up and down Swanston Street each hour during the private motor vehicles ban. In one hour Swanston Street carries a similar number of trams as a shopping strip outside the CBD would see in a 12-hour period. Lygon Street for example has 120 bus trips from 7am to 7pm<sup>6</sup>.

This means 60 000 people<sup>7</sup> are moving up and down Swanston Street in trams alone.

Private motor vehicle capacity is limited to one travel lane in each direction that is currently shared among the modes described above. Theoretically the two travel lanes could carry 23 000 people each day<sup>8</sup> But loading trams would cut by half the green time available to private motor vehicles - reducing the private motor vehicles people capacity to 12 000 a day.

But the private motor vehicles movements would cut the tram capacity by 30% reducing the throughput on the street by 20 000 passengers. A net loss of 8 000 people travelling the street.

Thus lifting the private motor vehicles ban would produce a net loss of capacity. In addition the other modes such as taxis and cyclists that are benefit from the current function priorities would suffer.

(There is an opportunity for the City to increase the people-per-hour on Swanston Street as the existing tram service could carry another 60 000 people at least in the empty seats and standing room

Improving tram priority at signals especially on the 'little' streets would provide a more time-competitive service. This would help fill empty seats.)

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<sup>5</sup> 10 routes run along Swanston: 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 16, 22, 64, 67, 72. Flinders and Collins three routes; Elizabeth and Bourke two routes; Latrobe and William one route;

<sup>6</sup> Nearby strip shopping: Lygon St 4 bus routes: 200, 201, 203, 207; Brunswick St 1 route: 11; Victoria 4 routes: 23, 24, 42, 109; Chapel 2 routes: 78, 79; Acland 2 routes: 16, 96

<sup>7</sup> This assumes 40 people per tram. On average trams seat 50 people.

<sup>8</sup> People per hour in private motor vehicles calculation

Assume the green time is shared 50/50 with intersections which allows 40secs for each Swanston phase. With a 2 second headway then 20 cars would get through each phase.

At 40 cycles an hour then 800 vehicles would travel in each direction.

Assuming access for the 12 hours that are currently banned then 9 600 movements

Assume 1.2 people in each car. Total is 11 520 people per hour in one direction.

23 040 people in 12 hours or 11 520 allowing for tram loading.

## Private motor vehicles in the street will hurt traders

Some individuals have a deeply held belief that their success in business is directly related to the availability of on street parking near their shop. This is not proving to be true in the CBD<sup>9</sup>.

The substantial long-term effort to improve the retail mix is showing signs of success in a number of ways:

- rising rents
- falling vacancies
- the considerable investment made by companies such as Nike and Levis
- the new retail businesses based on the student market
- sophisticated shop fit outs
- higher value shops

This traders are voting for the current approach with their investment dollars. Maintaining a consistent approach to the function of Swanston Street will accelerate this trend and these investments.

On the other hand lifting the ban on private motor vehicles will bring uncertainty back to the street, compromising this developing confidence in the street.

Lifting the ban will bring a number of other problems for traders. As there is no parking in the street, most of the private motor vehicle traffic will be through traffic and that will not help traders. It is likely that the new tram stops, whether DDA or Superstops will further reduce the kerbside capacity. On-street parking capacity would be further compromised by turn bans and clearways which would be likely to be reinstated.

If parking were provided, other current uses such as delivery and other service vehicles, would be displaced. Thus an effort to help traders would also hurt them.

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<sup>9</sup> There might be places where this is true such as car based suburbs in the outer fringe.

## Swanston Street is developing and changing

Projects that will affect all modes in the CBD including cycling are:

A new concept for the Bourke and Swanston intersection.

- We support this in principle and believe that it can be achieved without compromising the successful Swanston St cycle route.

Federation Square

- This new use is likely to further increase cycle traffic along Swanston Street. Federation Square is planning to provide cycle parking.

Queen Victoria Village

- Based on our experience in demand for bicycle parking in new developments and offices this development will generate additional cycle use.

CUB Swanston Street site

- It is unclear what development is intended for this site.

Arts Centre

- The new Arts Centre will increase cycle traffic along the Street.

Docklands

- The cycle network in Docklands will link to the CBD and generate additional cycle traffic to and from the west.<sup>10</sup>

MCG

- The Sports and Entertainment Precinct Charette identified a number of cycle/pedestrian links that will make cycle trips more attractive especially between Richmond and the CBD.

The Northbank Trail

- 'Parks Victoria commissioned the City of Melbourne to design a new pedestrian and cycle trail along the north bank of the Yarra River between Princes Bridge and the Charles Grimes Bridge. This project is an important part of revitalising the Yarra River and city environs and will be a key attractor and recreation area during the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.' City of Melbourne. This initiative will increase cycle traffic on Swanston Street.

We believe the Council would be unwise to lift the private motor vehicles ban just before these new uses open. The new uses and new destinations will produce new travel patterns. If the ban were lifted before the new patterns are established, an expectation would be raised that Swanston Street could be used by private motor vehicles to access these new destinations. The limited capacity of Swanston Street means that these expectations would not be met. Furthermore, the change of function would compromise the ability of other more space efficient modes such as walking, cycling and mass transit to meet the new demand.

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<sup>10</sup> For example Lend Lease is planning secure bike parking for 200 bikes in the new HQ for the National Bank.

## **Bicycle Victoria's view**

Swanston Street is functioning well as a pedestrian route and destination and a transit and taxi mall. It is Melbourne's most successful cycle route. Bicycle Victoria does not support a change in function.

The introduction of private motor vehicles would compromise the other currently successful functions – including the successful cycle route. This cost would have to be weighed against the benefit of increased capacity for private motor vehicles. Given the limited capacity of Swanston Street for private motor vehicles it is unlikely that this benefit would outweigh the cost.

We do support strengthening the existing successful functions including cycling and propose the following low cost measures to reinforce the positive trend of cycle use.

The street can be improved for cycling in the following ways:

### Facilities

1. A smooth, marked, coloured cycle lane.
  - Paint cycle logos
  - Remove vertical displacement features such as the mini-speed humps
  - Remove raised pavement markers on fairways
  - Relocate the parking for wide vehicles such as coaches that fully occupy the kerb-to-fairway lane.
2. Strengthen connections to the surrounding cycle network including:
  - The link to Melbourne University and Hospital
  - A cycle lane or path across Princes Bridge
  - Cycle trail on the Northbank

### Improve the traffic regime

1. Enforcing 30 kph limit
2. Enforcing the ban on private motor vehicles
3. Supply more on-street short term bicycle parking
4. Supply more off street long term bicycle parking