



# THREE POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 'BIKE-FRIENDLY' CANDIDATES

VICTORIAN ELECTION POLICY PAPER



# Executive summary

Despite our pledges to increase active travel and the slow rollout of active transport infrastructure, our progress in making Victoria a 'bike-friendly' state remains hampered by three challenges.



**Poor funding**



**Community hesitation**



**Lack of political will**

This election, we want candidates to change these challenges into three priorities.

**1**

**Commit to fairer spending**

**2**

**Encourage and support the community**

**3**

**Lead the charge**

Bike policy should not be hard or complicated. International experience tells us governments of all political ideologies can do great things for bikes. So let's hop on the seat and start riding.



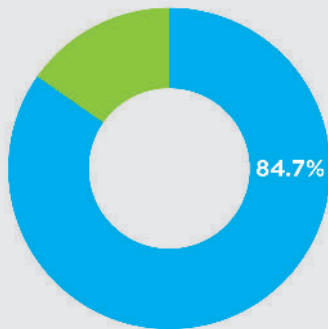
Bicycle Network acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we work and live and pay our respects to the first peoples of this country, their culture and elders, past, present and emerging.



# Some hard truths

## Physical activity

A staggering **84.7 per cent** of Victorians do not meet the physical activity guidelines set by the Australian Government.



Data source: National Health Survey: First Results, 2017-2018

## Melbourne's hesitation to ride bikes

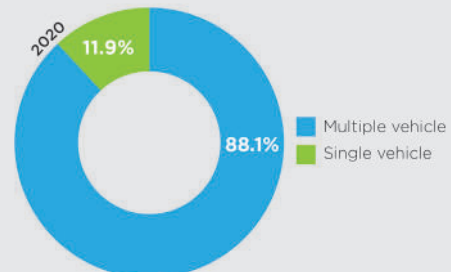
Over **75 per cent** of Melburnians are interested in riding bikes, but concerned about safety.



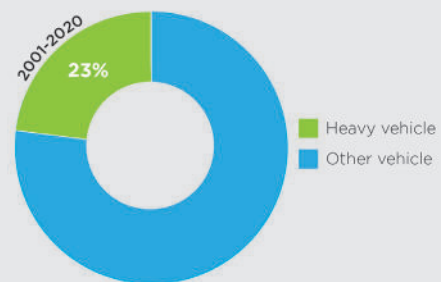
Data source: Pearson et al, Monash University

## Rider safety

About **88 per cent** of bike fatalities involve a collision with another vehicle.



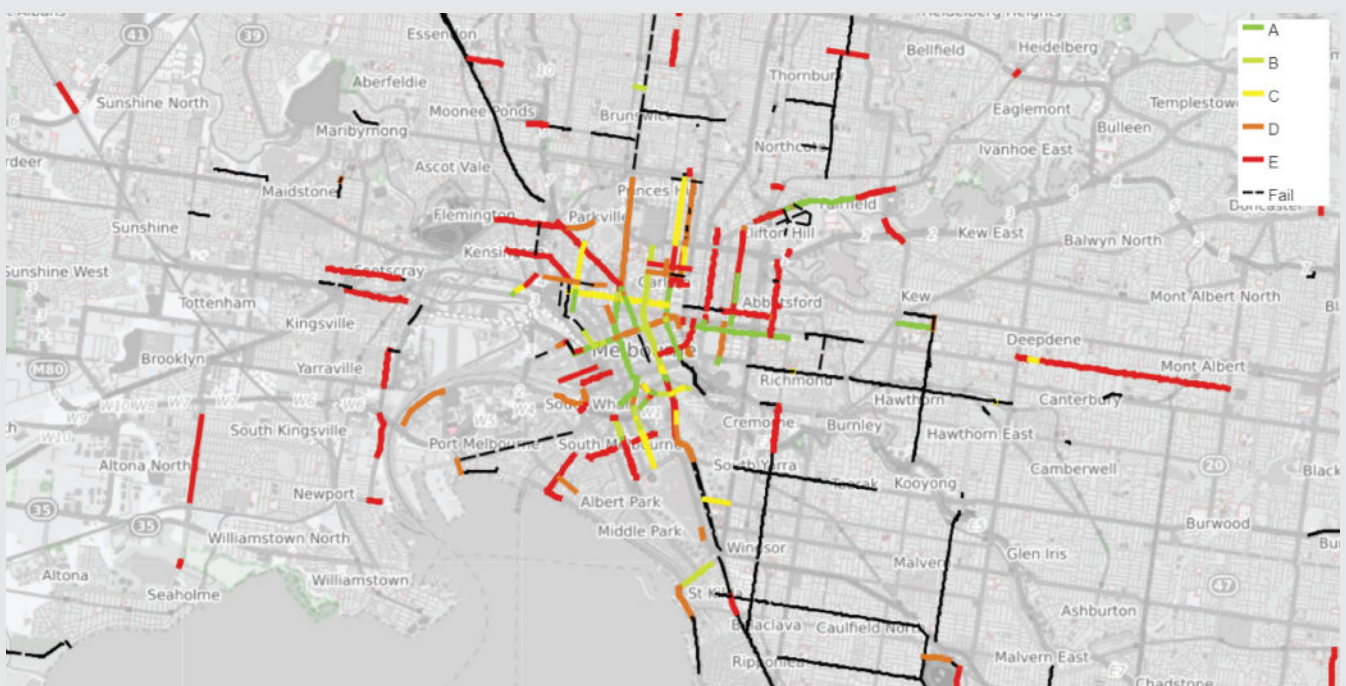
And on average, **1 in 5 fatal bike crashes** each year involves a heavy vehicle (e.g. bus, truck), a statistic that has barely changed over the last 20 years.



Data source: Bicycle Network Fatality Report 2020

## Existing bike infrastructure

Over **70 per cent** of Victorian bike lanes assessed by Bicycle Network have been rated as 'E' or 'Fail'.



Data source: Bicycle Network's 'Bike Lane Report Card', 2022



## A lot of sentiment but not enough action

Victoria's Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030 pledges to make 25 per cent of all trips by foot or bike by 2025<sup>1</sup>. In other words, we have three years to increase active travel from its current mode share of 18 per cent<sup>2</sup>.

How Victoria plans to deliver on this commitment is unclear. The Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-2028<sup>3</sup> provides high-level guidance for improving bike conditions across the state. However, given that the transport environment has changed dramatically in the last few years, this may not be the right direction anymore.

It is clear why the Victorian Government wants to increase foot and bike trips, and why we continually turn to active transport in our environmental and sustainability policymaking. We know bikes are good not only for the environment<sup>4,5</sup>, but also for health<sup>6-11</sup>, road decongestion<sup>12</sup>, and the economy<sup>13-16</sup>. We know that there is likely to be massive benefits for society if we take action.

A pledge to increase active travel is a great start, but it isn't firm policy. There are active transport projects being rolled out, but it is slow and nowhere near sufficient for the societal benefits to take shape. There is a lot of sentiment, but not enough action.

What we need is a great plan, great policies, and great leaders to help us move forward.

### Where do we need extra wheels?

The lack of momentum for advancing bikes in Victoria comes down to three key challenges:



#### Poor funding

Each year, active transport is short-changed in state budgets.



#### Community hesitation

Most Victorians are interested in riding bikes but concerned about their safety.



#### Lack of political will

Politicians tend to like the 'idea' of bikes but are not good at putting their foot down.

The upcoming state election is an opportunity for candidates to show the community how they can overcome the roadblocks. If candidates want to win the support of future and existing bike riders at this election, we recommended turning these three challenges into **three policy priorities**.



# 1. Commit to fairer spending

## Our reasons

State government spending on bikes has never been sufficient to ensure a safe journey for people riding bikes. Less than 2 per cent is currently being allocated for bikes<sup>17</sup>.

Moreover, it has never been transparent. Funding for bikes is often bundled up in other road projects, which makes it hard to track our progress.

It's time to support fairer spending. The Victorian Government should **set an active transport budget**<sup>18</sup>.

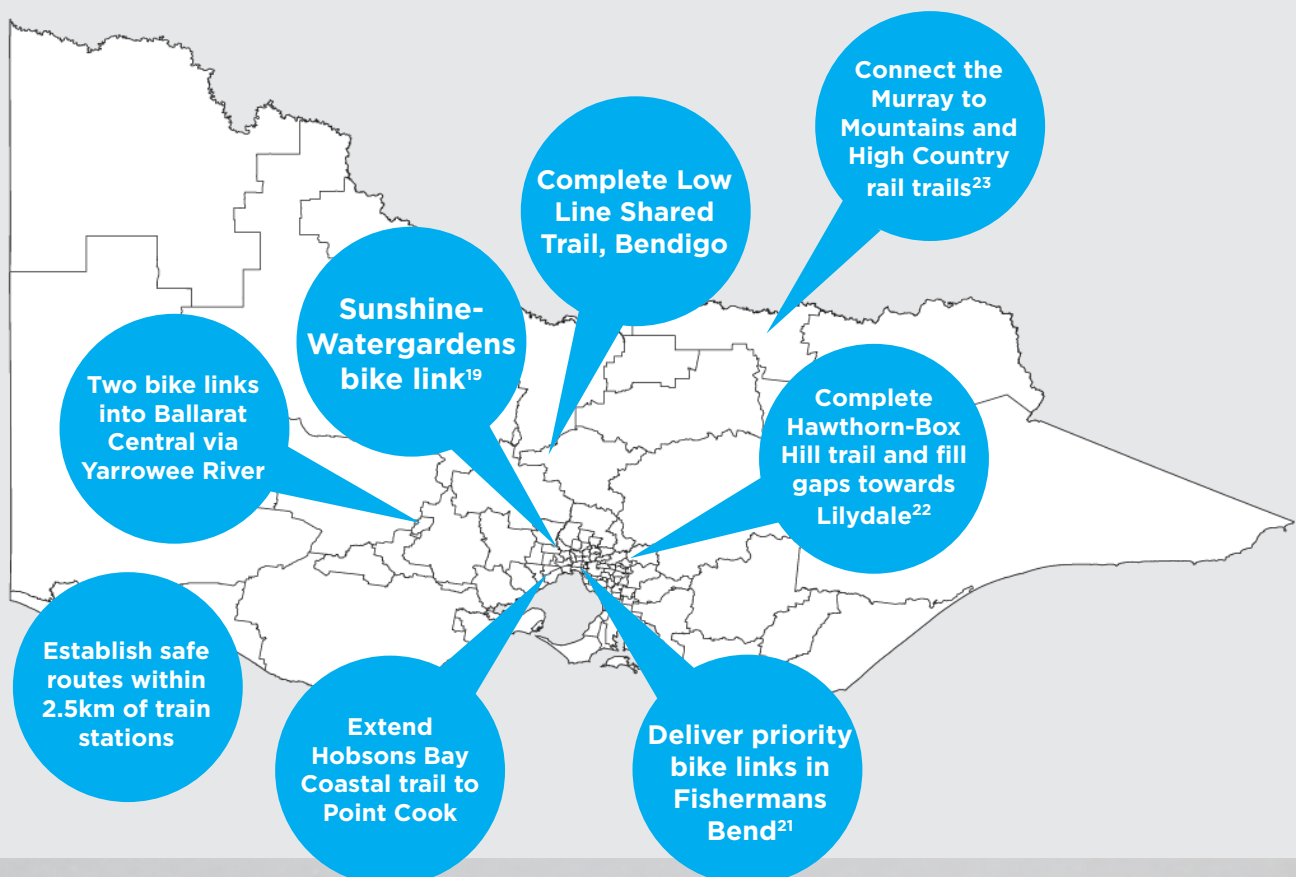
This is not just ensuring appropriate funding is available, it is about setting a benchmark for keeping our funding on track, ensuring accountability, and advancing more sustainable transport into the future.

## Our recommendations

- Allocate **10 per cent** of the state's transport budget for active transport projects, and commit to **increasing this amount** each year.



## Examples of bike projects that need funding



## 2. Encourage and support the community

### Our reasons

We know that roughly **75 per cent** of Victorians are interested in riding, we just need to take action on their concerns<sup>24</sup>.

Let's provide them with some encouragement. The Victorian Government has led a successful electric vehicle subsidy scheme, which was granted further funding in 2022. It is time to consider an equivalent **e-bike incentive scheme**.

As well as being an even more sustainable transport option than electric cars, e-bikes can increase physical health and occupy much less road space than private vehicles.

E-bike incentives have good precedent in other city and countries<sup>25</sup>. In Australia, Canberra's 'try-before-you-buy' e-bike library has proven successful<sup>26</sup>, and an e-bike leasing program has recently launched in Hobart<sup>27</sup>. It's time to give e-bikes a go in Victoria.

Let's also address the community's concerns by making the roads safer so that people have the confidence and security to give bikes a go. A great way to start this is with a **liveable neighbourhoods fund** that allows local government to target unsafe shared roads with traffic-calming measures to make communities safer and more liveable.

Finally, providing **bike education** at a young age will help us foster a generation of Australians that understand the diverse benefits of active travel, and are motivated to enjoy an active travel lifestyle as they approach adulthood.

### Our recommendations

- Introduce a **no-interest e-bike loan scheme** that assists Victorians in purchasing e-bikes.
- Introduce a **liveable neighbourhoods fund** that communities can access for local traffic calming and placemaking projects.
- Refund **Ride2School**, Bicycle Network's flagship behaviour change program, until 2027





### 3. Lead the charge

#### Our reasons

Achieving a truly liveable city with sustainable transport requires strong governance and strategic direction. Otherwise it is nothing more than an unfocussed aspiration.

Victoria's Cycling Strategy<sup>3</sup> was published five years ago, but the landscape has changed in ways that were unforeseeable. We endured a pandemic, which shifted our transport behaviours. The 'work from home' paradigm means more people will be travelling locally, rather than into the city. The gig economy has risen to unprecedented heights. Bike and e-scooter share systems have re-emerged in Melbourne, and patronage is higher than ever before.

It's time to re-examine our vision for active transport and make sure it is still the right way forward. It is also an opportunity to develop action plans so we can hit the ground running.

#### Our recommendations

- Prepare a **five-year update** of the Victorian Cycling Strategy, with clear and focussed **action plans** for rolling out critical bike projects.



# Who we are

Bicycle Network is one of the leading member-based bike riding organisations in the world. We are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all Australians by making it easier for people to ride a bike.

Operating nationally, we have a measurable, successful and large-scale impact in community participation and the promotion of healthy lifestyles through bike riding.

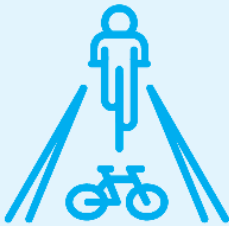
We achieve this through:

- improving the bike riding environment by working with government at all levels to provide better infrastructure, legislation, data, policies and regulations
- delivering successful, large-scale behaviour change programs such as Ride2School and Ride2Work
- providing services and insurance that support bike riders through nationwide membership
- running mass participation bike riding events such as the Great Vic Bike Ride
- being a key national spokesperson on issues related to cycling and physical activity

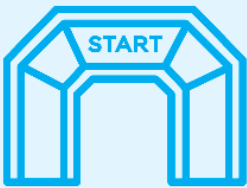
Bicycle Network is ready to assist the Victorian Government in scoping and targeting achievable outcomes for bike riding and other forms of active travel. If you need our help to build bike rider patronage in Victoria, please contact us.

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Nearly 50,000 members



150,000 event participants since 2012



Providing bike services to 125 councils and shires



Providing parking for over 2250 bike riders each day



Promoting active travel at over 1800 schools since 2007



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