



Climate Action Merribek
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20 May 2023

To: Merri-bek Council
Care of Allan Cochrane
Management Accounting Coordinator
Email: budget@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Submission on Draft Budget 2023-2027/28

We appreciate this opportunity to make a submission on Merri-bek's draft budget for 2023/24 to 2027/28.

We are concerned that the forward budget to 2027/28 massively fails to further transport mode shift to walking and cycling to reduce transport emissions, in the lack of cycling transport projects.

"I still believe the real danger is not inaction. The real danger is when politicians and CEOs are making it look like real action is happening when in fact almost nothing is being done but clever accounting and creative PR." - Greta Thunberg at COP25 Madrid in 2019.ⁱ

Transport emissions make up 16 per cent of total Merribek community emissions according to Snapshot Climate.ⁱⁱ Of these emissions 95 per cent are on-road emissions. These emission sources are widely distributed (no big emitters), so requires action by Council encouraging EV adoption and transport mode shift to increasing walking, cycling and public transport.

About 55 per cent of the car fleet for 2030 is already in existence. Transition to Electric Vehicles won't solve the transport emissions problem sufficiently.ⁱⁱⁱ

Council's adopted goal for Merri-bek is to achieve 75 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 (against 2011/12 baseline), net zero by 2035 and drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040.^{iv}

Without encouraging mobility modal shift behaviours, Council is unlikely to achieve the community climate targets it set for 2030 or 2035, especially in transport emissions.

The IPCC 6th assessment reports have highlighted that encouraging shift in transport behaviours with greater adoption of walking and cycling is one of the largest actions to reduce personal carbon footprint that can be achieved.^v

The Victorian State Government in a Climate Transport Pledge (2021) has set an active transport 2030 pledge target of 25 per cent share of all trips in Melbourne.^{vi}

A large part of the State government response for active transport has been in developing shared use paths as part of major transport projects, not protected or separated cycling paths as called for by the DoT Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28.

The separated Upfield Bike path under Coburg skyrail is an exception. Most LXP cycling paths constructed have been shared use which is problematic if the path is more than low use. As we know from our time under pandemic lockdowns, shared use paths are frustrating and pose safety risks when there are even moderate numbers of people using them by walking, cycling and scooting at the same time.

The Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28 (December 2017) says “initiatives that will result in more direct, **separated cycle paths** to important destinations, like workplaces, schools and public transport stops, and make it easier for cyclists to park their bikes at stations or take them on a train or bus.”^{vii}

We note the City of Melbourne has stepped up and created some 19 kilometres of protected cycling lanes, and in May this year fast tracked further construction to try to meet its 44 kilometres target by 2024.

By comparison some 5.1km of dedicated path or protected cycling lane has been built in Merri-bek, including the 1.8km created under the Coburg Skyrail. This really is an underwhelming figure given the pandemic we have gone through that should have provided an opportunity for many temporary bike lanes. Merri-bek needs to step up.

According to the draft budget report only 300m of protected cycling lane is being planned in the next five years (for O’hea street extension to Derby street).

Further, there appears to be little in the planning and design stage of pipeline projects that can be constructed when capital works funding or grants allow.

This appears to be either poor management or a planning disaster. And it comes as Council continues funding major sports facilities in the \$millions, while active transport planning, design, construction and delivery to address the climate emergency goes backwards. What does this say about Council Priorities?

We note that there are no proposals for several identified routes to include dedicated cycling lanes or paths, even in starting the planning and design process:

- Victoria St, Brunswick
- Blyth St, Brunswick
- Murray Rd, Coburg
- Coonans Road, Pascoe Vale South
- Coburg East-West Route on Munro and Harding streets
- Lygon St Brunswick Rd to CCT, Brunswick
- Hilton St East St to May St, Glenroy
- Blyth St Sydney Rd to Merri Creek, Brunswick
- Widford St (Glenroy Rd to Western Ring Rd Trail) Glenroy
- Hilton St (May St to Widford St) Glenroy
- West St, Hadfield
- Reynolds Parade, Pascoe Vale South

We know everyone is suffering cost pressures. Cycling allows many people a cheap way to get around. For people under 18 unable to drive it is the easiest way to get around an urbanised municipality like Merri-bek. But even many older people trying to save on petrol or public transport can ride a bike to reduce transport costs. Families under the pressure that might have had two cars, can save by having one car and a cargo bike to ferry the kids to school and do other short trips.

We need the safe active transport infrastructure to encourage more people to cycle and overcome the safety risks of cycling on the road with cars and trucks, of being able to cycle to shops, schools, workplaces safely.^{viii}

Monash University Researchers have highlighted that about 83 per cent of people in Merribek are in the cycling category of ‘interested but concerned’.^{ix} This should provide impetus for Council to design and build the dedicated cycling infrastructure needed.

There is also a strong gender^x and newbie dimension hindering more cycling. Unless there is safe separated paths or lanes many women and children and new people interested but concerned on safety, will not feel safe and get on their bikes.

Provision of protected cycling infrastructure has the potential to substantially increase cycling participation

In 2020, VicHealth and Monash University surveyed over 4000 people across 37 local government areas in Greater Melbourne and regional Victoria. Respondents were categorised using the Geller Typology¹ to establish how confident they are with or without cycling infrastructure and questioned on bike usage. The Geller Typology classifies people as either *Strong and Fearless*, *Enthusied and Confident*, *Interested but Concerned* or *No Way No How* in relation to cycling.

1 in 2 people own a bike



but only

1 in 5 people ride at least once per week



Figure 1: Distribution of Geller Typology groups for Greater Melbourne



Figure 2: Distribution of Geller Typology groups by gender

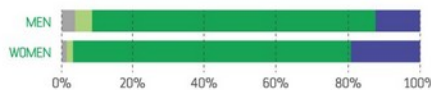


Figure 3: Distribution of Geller Typology groups by age



83% of people living in **Moreland City Council** were classified as **Interested but Concerned**

■ People who are interested but concerned would ride a bike if physically separated bike lanes were provided.

■ Heat map of Greater Melbourne showing the proportion of those categorised as interested but concerned.

- 65 - 69%
- 70 - 74%
- 75 - 79%
- 80 - 84%
- 85 - 89%
- 90 - 94%
- 95 - 100%

More Information

Information source: Pearson L.K., Beck B., Dignall J., Gabbe B.J., Braaf S., White S. & Backhouse M. (2020) Cycling Typologies in Victoria, Monash University. For more information specific to your LGA, refer to the report or contact: lauren.pearson@monash.edu or ben.beck@monash.edu, Sustainable Mobility and Safety Research, School of Public Health & Preventive Medicine, Monash University.

References

1. Dill, J., & McNiel, N. (2013) Four types of cyclists? Examination of typology for better understanding of bicycling behavior and potential. *Transportation Research Record*, 2387(1), 129-138.

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Data Image from 2021 by VicHealth and Monash University

Merri-bek Council declared a climate Emergency in 2018. It was done unanimously.

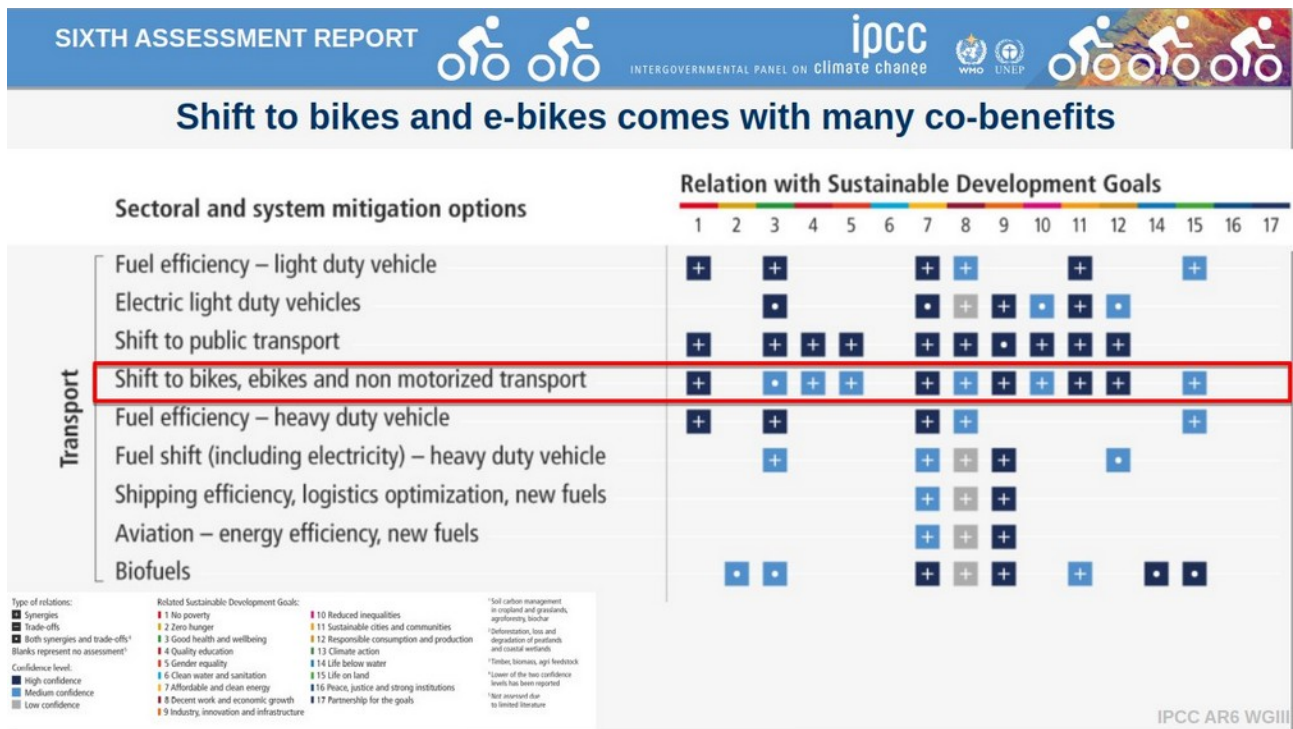
At the moment we are seeing record rain events and floods in northern Italy. Sea Surface Temperatures are at record setting levels for the past 2 months. We will likely see El Nino conditions developing later this year that may bring longer and hotter heatwaves, droughts and intense bushfires to Australia. We are likely to pass the 1.5C global average temperature temporarily in the next five years, advises the World Meteorological Organisation.^{xi}

Council need to focus on reducing community emissions to meet its climate targets, especially in the difficult area of transport emissions.

Building more separated cycling infrastructure encourages more people to cycle, a transport mode shift reducing emissions. It results in a more climate resilient population.

Increase in cycling also contributes to many co-benefits including improving population health. The United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals lists cycling under many of the goals. It delivers many co-benefits for a more sustainable society. More cycling contributes to meeting these goals:^{xii}

- Goal 1: Reducing poverty
- Goal 3: Good health and well-being
- Goal 5: Gender equality
- Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy
- Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth
- Goal 9: Industry innovation and infrastructure
- Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities
- Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production
- Goal 13: Climate action
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals



Conclusion:

We know these are difficult times, with spiralling costs, and cost of living pressures, including within Council programs. Priorities are important and Council has committed to the Climate Emergency.

It seems that not even having any long term planning and design for a pipeline of separated cycling projects makes a mockery of Council's own climate targets and its climate emergency declaration, and the Zero Carbon Merri-bek Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25.

Our question to Council directors, staff and Councillors about this draft budget: Will you preside over a budget that pays homage to the rhetoric of the Council Strategic Directives and ambitious climate targets, while containing none of the essential funding actions to meet those targets, in the transport space?

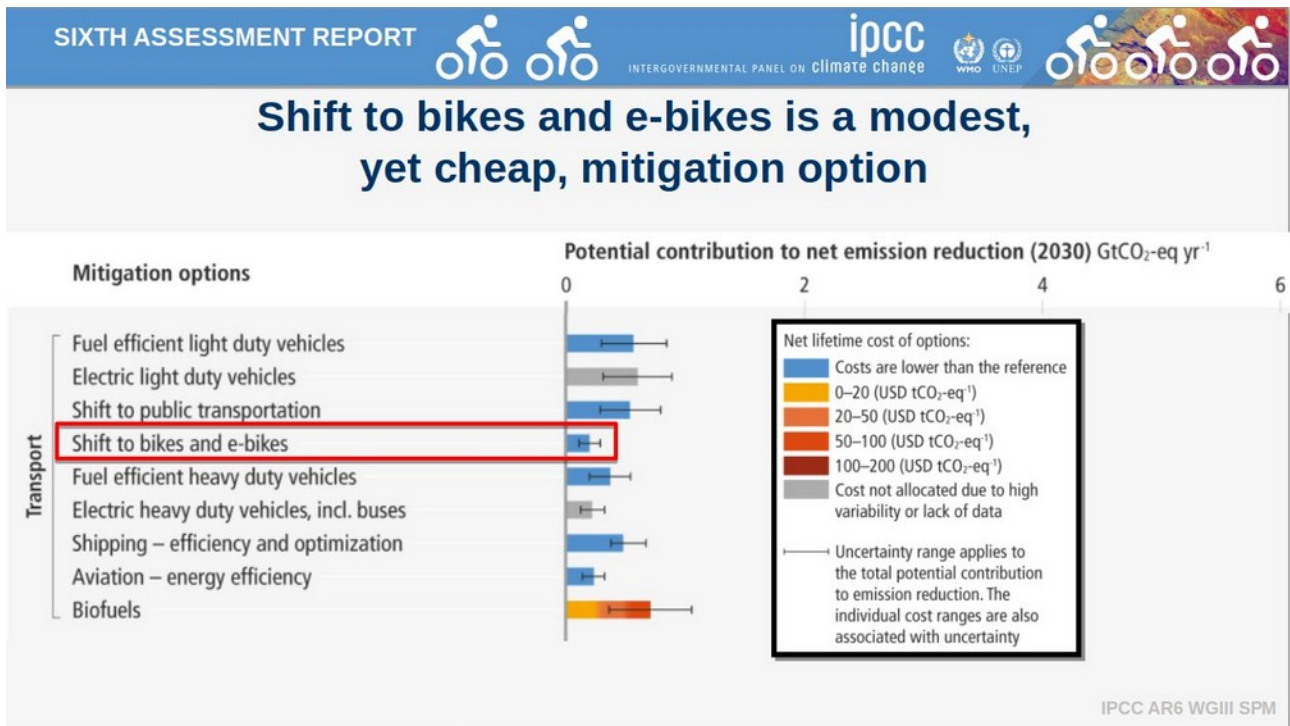
Like what Greta Thunberg said at the start of this submission. Is this budget, “in fact almost nothing is being done but clever accounting and creative PR.”

Yours Sincerely

John Englart, Convenor

on behalf of

Climate Action Merribek <https://climateactionmoreland.org/>



- i Greta Thunberg as quoted in Yakima Herald-Republic, Dec 22, 2019, 2019 in Review: It was the time for the "Time" teen.
https://www.yakimaherald.com/unleashed/columnists/2019-in-review-it-was-the-time-for-the-time-teen/article_597f1eb3-3f2d-5536-be74-bfd9ecb76860.html
- ii Snapshot Climate Merri-bek profile
<https://snapshotclimate.com.au/locality/municipality/australia/victoria/merri-bek/>
- iii Institute for Sensible Transport April 2023 Webinar: Transport Emissions in Australia: The challenges and opportunities in meeting our targets.
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/821555289>
- iv Zero Carbon Merri-bek Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25, Revised February 2022 (to reflect 2035 target adopted by Council on 8 December 2021) and October 2022 (to reflect municipality re-naming to Merri-bek).
<https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/globalassets/key-docs/policy-strategy-plan/zero-carbon-merri-bek---climate-emergency-action-plan-2020-21---2024-25---updated-october-2022.pdf>
- v Dr Valérie Masson-Delmotte, as quoted by Extend the Upfield Bike Path Blog, (4 June, 2022) *What does the IPCC 6th assessment climate report say on cycling, and addressing local Melbourne transport mode shift*,
<https://upfieldbikepath.wordpress.com/2022/06/04/what-does-the-ipcc-6th-assessment-climate-report-say-on-cycling-and-addressing-local-melbourne-transport-mode-shift/>
- vi Cutting Victoria's emissions 2021–2025 Transport sector emissions reduction pledge, May 2021. <https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/victorian-government-action-on-climate-change/Transport-sector-pledge-accessible.pdf>
- vii Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28 (December 2017)
<https://dtp.vic.gov.au/-/media/tfv-documents/walking-and-cycling/victorian-cycling-strategy-2018-28.pdf>
- viii Pearson et al (2023) Barriers and enablers of bike riding for transport and recreational purposes in Australia
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140522002109>
- ix Pearson et al (March 2022), *The potential for bike riding across entire cities: Quantifying spatial variation in interest in bike riding*, Journal of Transport & Health, Volume 24, March 2022, 101290,
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140521003200>
- x Bicycle Network, 12 April, 2023, New research shines a light on gendered barriers to bike riding <https://bicyclenetwork.com.au/newsroom/2023/04/12/new-research-shines-a-light-on-gendered-barriers-to-bike-riding/>
- xi WMO, 17 May 2023, Global temperatures set to reach new records in next five years <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/global-temperatures-set-reach-new-records-next-five-years>
- xii See United Nations, Cycling and Sustainable Development Goals
<https://unric.org/en/sustainable-development-goals-cycling/>