RACECOURSE ROAD STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENTS

DISCUSSION PAPER

JUNE 2024

Prepared by

Stantec

for

CITY OF MELBOURNE

City of Moonee Valley

Image: Stantec Reconciliation Action Plan artwork. Artist: Cherrie Sutton

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Melbourne, the City of Moonee Valley and Stantec respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the project area, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung of the Kulin, their spirits, ancestors, elders and community members past and present.

Racecourse Road. Photo by Christian Capurro

CONTENTS

Introduction	06
Strategic policy context	10
Racecourse Road streetscape principles	14
Potential streetscape design opportunities	15
Summary / next steps	30

Final Issue

June 2024

Cover Image: Racecourse Road. Photo by Christian Capurro

Disclaimer

This report is provided for information and it does not purport to be complete. While care has been taken to ensure the content in the report is accurate, we cannot guarantee it is without flaw of any kind. There may be errors and omissions or it may not be wholly appropriate for your particular purposes. In addition, the publication is a snapshot in time based on historic information which is liable to change. The City of Melbourne accepts no responsibility and disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information contained in this report.

To find out how you can participate in the decision-making process for City of Melbourne's & City of Moonee Valley's current and future initiatives, visit melbourne.vic.gov.au/participate and yoursay.mvcc.vic.gov.au/

INTRODUCTION

Background

The City of Melbourne and City of Moonee Valley are jointly developing a Strategic Improvements Plan (SIP) for Racecourse Road, which aims to be a shared vision for the future of this key arterial which runs through the neighbourhoods of Kensington and Flemington.

Racecourse Road is important both as a place and as a transport corridor for people moving by various modes of transport. It is identified as an activity centre targeted for growth in the Victorian Government's planning strategy Plan Melbourne. It is also an important tram corridor as well as being on the Victorian Government's Strategic Cycling Corridor network. However, the current conditions do not reflect local and state planning frameworks and will need to change to meet the needs of current and future communities.

The SIP will be an important tool to assist both councils alongside the community to advocate to the Victorian Government, who manage the road, for streetscape improvements that could be delivered when accessible tram stops are constructed in the future.

Racecourse Road is an arterial road that is managed by the Victorian Government through the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP). In general, Racecourse Road forms the boundary between the City of Melbourne (to the south) and the City of Moonee Valley (to the north). However, both sides of the road are within the City of Moonee Valley in the shopping area between Eastwood Street and Rankins Road.

The retail precinct is supported by the Flemington Traders Association (Flemington Chamber of Commerce). Some City of Melbourne based traders are supported by the Kensington Business Association.

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this Racecourse Road Strategic Improvements Discussion Paper, hereon Discussion Paper, is to support a conversation with the community about their priorities for Racecourse Road as a place and destination, as well as a route for people travelling by foot, wheelchair, bicycle, scooter, public transport and motor vehicle.

This Discussion Paper identifies Streetscape Principles and Design Opportunities for community feedback:

- Streetscape Principles provide a strategic direction for the various outcomes we would like to see for Racecourse Road as a place and transport corridor
- Design Opportunities are types of changes that could occur on Racecourse Road to help achieve the Streetscape Principles.

Community feedback received on this Discussion Paper will help inform the Racecourse Road SIP, to be developed later this year.

Legend:

Racecourse Road.

Local Government municipality boundary.

Location aerial with Racecourse Road alignment

Racecourse Road Location Plan - Stantec

What is the problem we are trying to solve?

Racecourse Road is a State Government managed road, with Yarra Trams managing the tram tracks and the Department of Transport and Planning managing the corridor as a whole. Racecourse Road also forms much of the boundary between the Cities of Moonee Valley and Melbourne. Without coordination, these four public land managers risk adopting competing strategies, or no strategy at all, failing to live up to community expectations.

This is particularly urgent given the changing communities that live along the length of Racecourse Road. From the emerging Macaulay Precinct, the transforming public housing estates, through to the recent high rise developments at the racecourse itself, the population of this corridor is rapidly growing and it is important to plan for the needs of new and existing residents.

Racecourse Road is the high street for the Flemington Kensington community, supporting the livelihoods of a diverse mix of traders and providing a focus for public activity and connection. We want the 'shopping strip' to continue to thrive as the community grows, and for spaces like Pridham Plaza, Flemington Library and Pin Oak Crescent to fulfill their potential to support the local economy. Racecourse Road is also a significant urban heat island, without the street tree planting found on other major boulevards. Improvements in the public realm would also increase the capacity for traders to offer outdoor dining.

As currently configured, Racecourse Road is not as safe as it should be. Most of the local area is not accessible by public transport due to the trams and tram stops not complying with Commonwealth Disability Discrimination law, making it harder for older people, people with prams or mobility aids and people with disability to visit their local shops and move around. This is particularly the case with the two tram stops in the central shopping strip where passengers are forced to step into traffic when alighting from the trams. The existing painted bike lanes pose significant conflict risks especially near intersections, and the number of serious road accidents is intolerably high.

Whenever individual tram stops are made accessible, this will necessarily cause the redesign of the road corridor. With a plan, the Councils and the State Government together can ensure that redesigned road configurations work to benefit everyone, including local traders.

As Flemington and Kensington grow, we want all of Racecourse Road to be as safe, welcoming and accessible as possible.

OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

While this is the first time the City of Melbourne or City of Moonee Valley have consulted specifically on the future of Racecourse Road as a whole, there have been many previous projects where community input has been sought on issues such as walking, cycling, greening and parking in the Kensington and Flemington areas.

This Discussion Paper has been informed by this previous input from the community, to ensure that current community consultation can continue the conversation, rather than repeat previous ones.

Key themes that have emerged from previous consultations include:

- People would like to see more greening, including tree canopy to increase shade.
- Pedestrian safety needs to be improved.
- Some people are concerned about personal safety, in particular where there is poor lighting.
- Safe access to tram stops is a barrier for some people to use trams.
- There is a need for more cycling infrastructure, including on Racecourse Road.
- Traffic congestion in the area is an issue and is increasing with population growth.
- Parking needs to be managed to ensure people can access parking within a reasonable walk.
- High traffic volumes and dangerous driving can impact local streets.

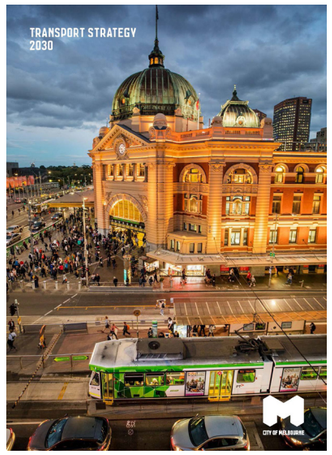
While a lot of people want wider footpaths, safer bike lanes and greener streets, others are unhappy with existing traffic delays and parking issues so balancing the needs of all in the community is a key focus of developing the Strategic Improvements Plan.

Image: PowerPoint Stock

STRATEGIC POLICY CONTEXT

In addition to feedback we receive from the community, this Discussion Paper is informed by relevant strategies and policies belonging to the City of Melbourne, City of Moonee Valley and Victorian Government, including:

City of Melbourne



Transport Strategy 2030

- The strategy sets out a plan to achieve outcomes of safe streets for bike riding, safe streets for people, and tram stops that a well-integrated into streets.
- This strategy sets a walking, cycling and public transport mode share target of 75% across the municipality.

Parking and Kerbside Management Plan

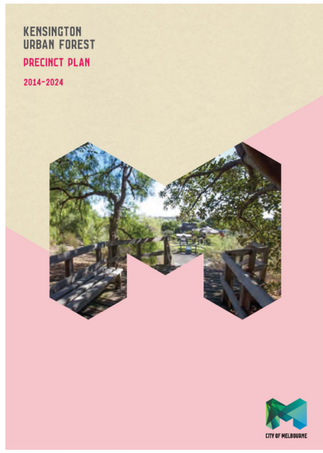
- Council's plan to optimise the use of parking and kerbside space.
- How parking is managed is just as important for meeting demand as is the number of parking spaces.

Macaulay Structure Plan 2021

- The Macaulay urban renewal area spans 90 hectares, with Racecourse Road forming its northern border.
- Growth in Macaulay will place additional pressure on Racecourse Road.
- Walking, cycling and public transport are priorities for the Macaulay precincts.

Urban Forest Strategy

- City of Melbourne has a canopy target of 40% by 2040.
- To achieve this target, we will need to plant more trees along our streets, which has the added benefit of reducing the urban heat island effect that asphalt contributes to.



Kensington Urban Forest Precinct Plan

- This strategy prioritises planting trees in streets.
- Racecourse Road was identified as a community priority for greening.
- Racecourse Road currently has less than 20% canopy cover and is categorised as a hot or very hot street.

Nature in the City Strategy

- This is the City of Melbourne's first strategy to create and maintain healthy ecosystems and thriving biodiversity within the city.
- This strategy contains goals to create a more diverse, connected and resilient natural environment, and to connect people to nature.

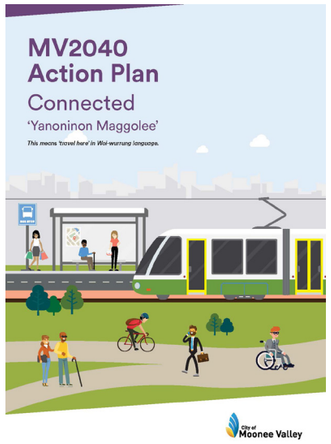
City of Moonee Valley

MV2040 Strategy

- A strategy for a healthy city that is to be achieved through a framework of objectives, actions and implementation initiatives across five themes: Fair, Thriving, Connected, Green and Beautiful.

MV2040 Action Plan - Green 2020

- A high-level implementation plan of all the 'Green' theme actions in MV2040, to achieve a green city that is ecologically healthy and environmentally responsible.
- MVCC has a target of 30% canopy cover by 2040 through enhancing our urban forest.



MV2040 Action Plan – Connected 2020

- An action Plan that aims to meet the MV2040 strategic directions of a city where sustainable transport is the easy option, and a city with streets and spaces for people.

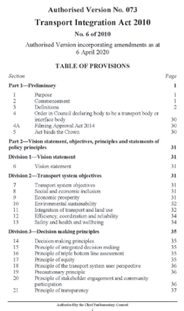
Victorian Government

Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28

- Victorian Government's strategy to invest in a safer, lower-stress, better-connected cycling network, and make cycling a more inclusive experience.

Plan Melbourne 2017-2050

- Victorian Government's strategy that sets out a long-term vision for Melbourne to be a competitive, liveable and sustainable city.
- This strategy includes policies such as 20-minute neighbourhoods, where people can access most of their everyday needs within a 20-minute walk, cycle or public transport trip.

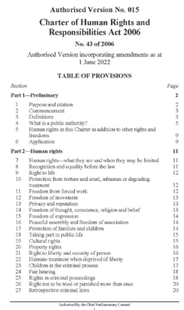


Transport Integration Act 2010

- Victorian Government's legislation to bring together the whole transport portfolio under one statute.
- This act informs the vision for an integrated and sustainable transport system that contributes to an inclusive, prosperous and environmentally responsible state.

Gender Equality Act 2020

- This Act aims to promote, encourage and facilitate the achievement of gender equality and improvement in the status of women.
- Women are less likely to ride a bike, due in part to more concern about safety. Creating safe routes for bike riding enables women to access this sustainable mode of transport.



Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

- The Charter enshrines civil, political and cultural rights into Victorian law. Public authorities must observe those rights.

RACECOURSE ROAD STREETSCAPE PRINCIPLES

The following seven Streetscape Principles are proposed for Racecourse Road, based on feedback from previous City of Melbourne and City of Moonee Valley consultations, as well as strategic policy directions from both councils and the Victorian Government. The current community consultation welcomes feedback on these Principles.

1. Prioritise People

- Make the street safe and more inclusive to meet the needs of people of all genders, abilities and backgrounds.
- Make the street more comfortable for people visiting, shopping, working or passing through.
- Improve safety for all users including people walking, riding, driving and using public transport.

2. Green the street

- Introduce trees and other planting to improve health and amenity.
- Incorporate planting that cools the street to improve comfort and helps adapt to climate change.
- Provide a habitat corridor for birds and animals between Flemington Racecourse and Royal Park.
- Implement water sensitive urban design features to assist with flood mitigation.

3. Create a vibrant street identity

- Increase visibility of Aboriginal history and culture in the street.
- Celebrate the rich culture and diversity of the communities of Kensington and Flemington.
- Create a local street identity that provides a safe and positive environment day and night.

4. Support active transport

- Provide quality, accessible paths and crossings for pedestrians (including users of wheelchairs and other mobility aids).
- Make riding safe and attractive for a diverse range of people including through adequate and well-located parking.
- Provide amenities such as seating, water fountains and bicycle parking to serve community needs and support active travel use.

5. Encourage public transport

- Advocate to the Victorian Government for tram stop upgrades that provide safe and accessible boarding.
- Advocate for frequent and reliable tram and train services that are attractive transport options.
- Support quality interchanges between transport modes and the shopping area.

6. Increase street activation

- Support local businesses by providing additional space for outdoor dining and trading.
- Make the street a more attractive local centre that brings in locals as well as other visitors.
- Establish Racecourse Road as an iconic neighbourhood destination with a positive vibe.

7. Minimise unnecessary impacts to driving and parking

- Consider likely impacts to private vehicle travel times when making changes.
- Manage parking to minimise the impact of any reduction in parking spaces.
- Give priority to people with disabilities and other priority users.

POTENTIAL STREETSCAPE DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

The following seven Streetscape Design Opportunities have been proposed to illustrate the potential key moves that can be achieved in Racecourse Road, based on the strategic direction of the Streetscape Principles. Detail on each Design Opportunity is provided on the following pages. The current community consultation welcomes feedback on these Design Opportunities.

1. Make more space for walking and trading activities.
2. Make it easier for people to cross Racecourse Road.
3. Make side streets safer and more accessible.
4. Provide safe and separate bike lanes for people of all ages and abilities.
5. Create a comfortable place for people to spend time through increased tree canopy, understorey and raingardens.
6. Ensure safe and accessible access to future tram stops.
7. Improve traffic flow and safety by limiting some turning movements.

Design Opportunity One

Make more space for walking and trading activities

What are the possibilities?

Footpaths could be widened to create space for more people to walk and socialise in the activity centre. The additional footpath space could be used for outdoor dining or other trade activities such as busking and pop-up events.

What are the potential benefits?

These types of changes would make Racecourse Road a more comfortable and attractive place to walk, socialise, and linger.

Widened footpaths would provide increased trading space on the street for local businesses such as retail displays and alfresco dining, supporting the local economy.

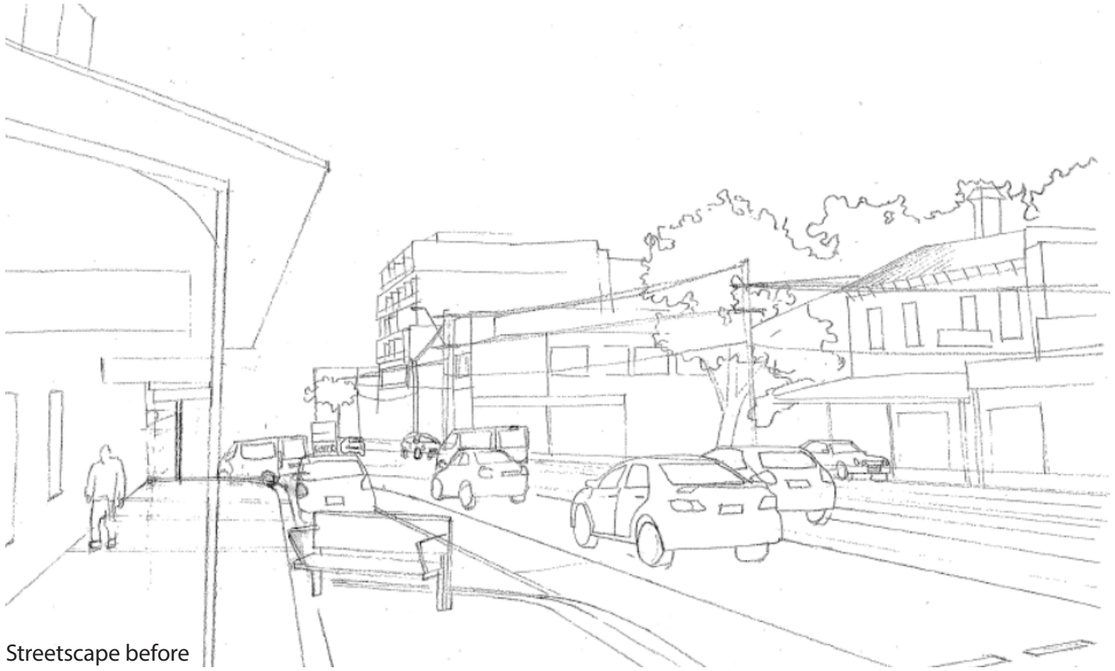
The additional space could also create room for new street trees and other plantings. It would also be an opportunity to improve amenities on the street with more seating, shade, and water bubblers complementing spaces where people can pause, rest and connect with friends, families and colleagues.

What are the potential impacts?

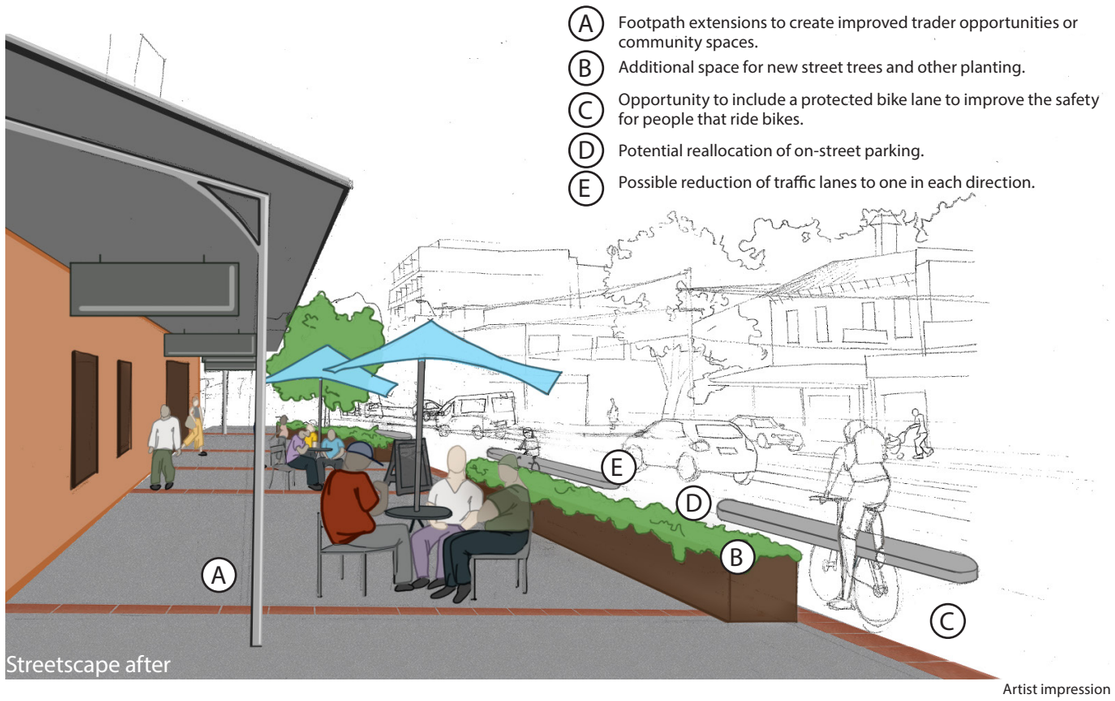
This change would require reducing the number of traffic lanes (from two in each direction to one), reducing the number of parking spaces, or both.

This would mean people who currently use parking on Racecourse Road would need to park in other places, although changes to parking management could also be used to ensure priority access to people with disabilities, people making deliveries, and so forth.

Some existing canopy trees may need to be removed in the short term, but wider footpaths also create space for new, more appropriate trees to be planted.



Streetscape before



A Footpath extensions to create improved trader opportunities or community spaces.

B Additional space for new street trees and other planting.

C Opportunity to include a protected bike lane to improve the safety for people that ride bikes.

D Potential reallocation of on-street parking.

E Possible reduction of traffic lanes to one in each direction.

Artist impression

Design Opportunity Two

Make it safer and easier for people to cross Racecourse Road

What are the possibilities:

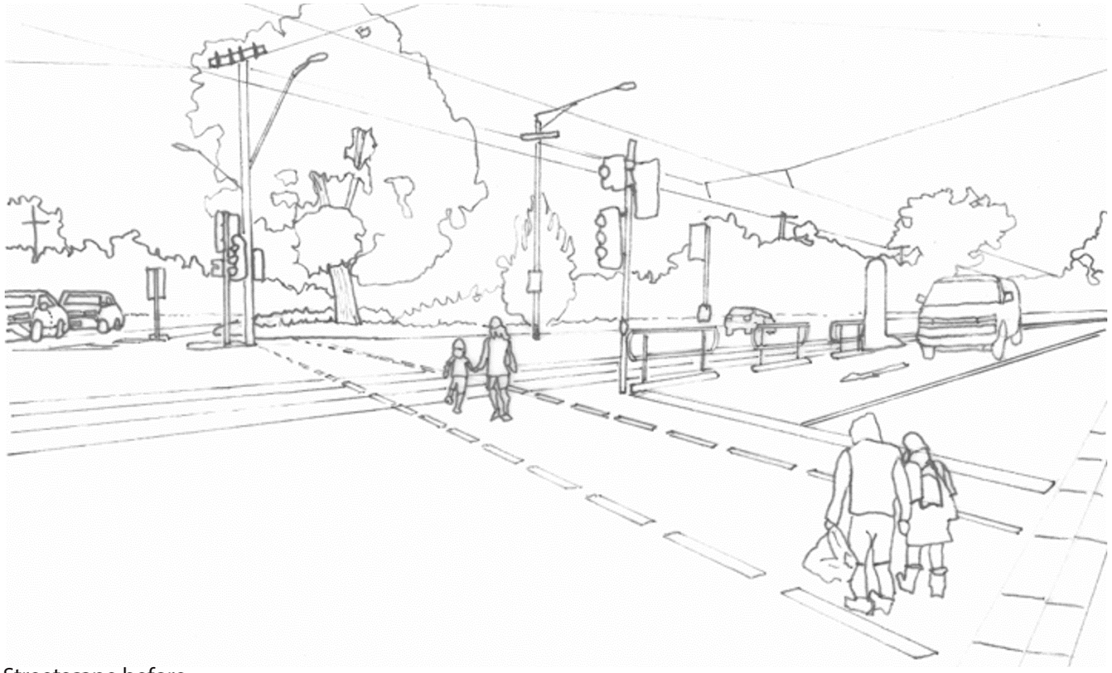
This could include making crossings wider and changing the way traffic signals operate to give people more time to cross the road. There may be opportunities to install new crossing points to help people walk and cycle to popular local destinations. Speed limits could also be reviewed to ensure that vehicles are travelling at a speed that is appropriate for the environment and reduces the chance of conflict.

What are the potential benefits?

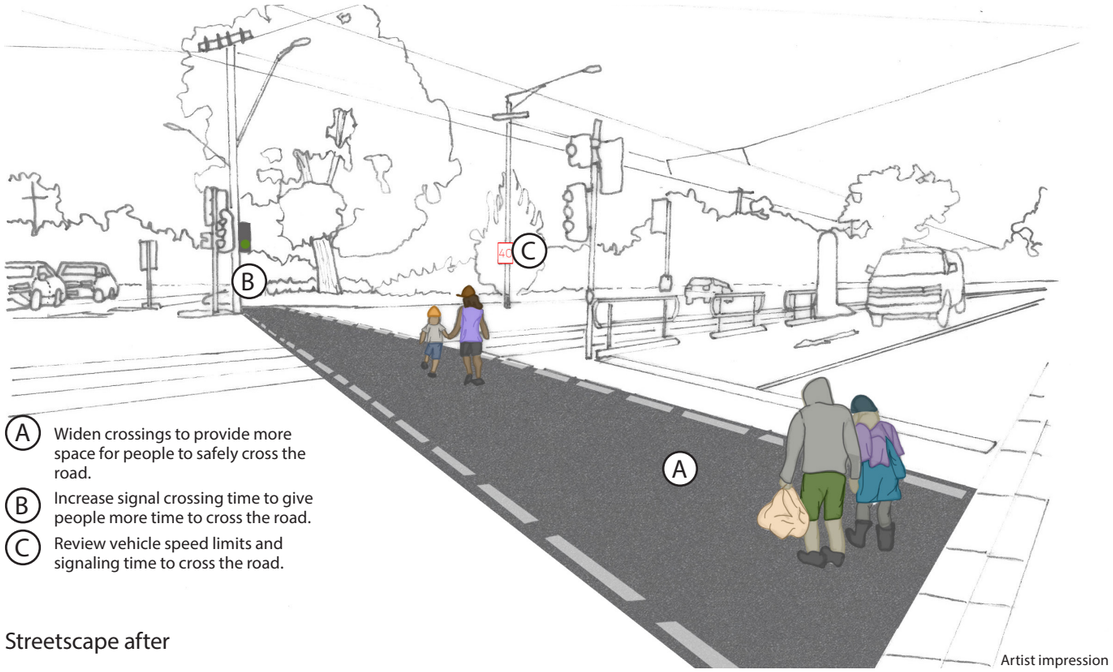
These types of changes would make it safer and more comfortable for people to cross the street, including people who need more time to cross such as elderly people or those with reduced mobility. Parents and children would benefit, especially around schools and activity centres. People driving would also be safer and less likely to be involved in road incidents.

What are the potential impacts?

Reduced speed limits have very little impact on overall travel times, as most delay is caused by congestion and intersections. Changing traffic signal timings to allow more time for people to cross may have an impact on travel times.



Streetscape before



Streetscape after

Artist impression

Design Opportunity Three

Make side streets safer and more accessible

What are the possibilities?

Side streets along Racecourse Road could be redesigned to make them safer and more accessible for people walking. This could be done by raising the crossing to footpath level and narrowing the street to shorten the crossing distance. These types of treatments also create landscaping opportunities at each street corner to improve the look and feel of the street.

What are the potential benefits?

Raising and narrowing side street entrances makes crossing the street safer, easier and more accessible for people walking. Drivers turning in or out of the side street slow down more, making the street safer for everyone.

The additional space reclaimed by narrowing the street could create space for rain gardens, which reduce stormwater runoff and make the street a more attractive environment. On some corners, this additional space could be used for outdoor dining, trading activities or community spaces.

What are the potential impacts?

There may be some restrictions on large vehicles entering the side streets. The locations of these treatments would be selected based on conversations with traders to understand loading and delivery needs.

Streetscape after

Artist impression

- (A) Narrow side roads to slow cars on the approach to crossing points and shortens crossing distance.
- (B) Raised zebra crossings would give priority to people crossing and improve safety.
- (C) Landscaping opportunities to green the street and provide passive stormwater collection areas such as raingardens.
- (D) Potential footpath extensions to create improved trader opportunities or community spaces on corners of side streets.

Design Opportunity Four

Provide safe and separate bike lanes for people of all ages and abilities

What are the possibilities?

Protected bike lanes would make Racecourse Road safer and more accessible for the many people who travel to destinations along the street by bike.

Racecourse Road is designated as a Strategic Cycling Corridor by the Victorian Government, which means the state government would be expected to deliver these types of lanes in the future to make it a route that caters to all riders.

What are the potential benefits?

Protected bike lanes improve safety for all road users and increase the number of people who ride bicycles and scooters. This is particularly important for people who are less confident riders, and is key to increasing riding among under-represented groups such as women.

People driving also benefit from these types of bike lanes as they provide separation from people riding which creates a less stressful driving experience.

Where safe bike lanes enable some people to ride instead of driving, this reduces the amount of car traffic which can be a benefit to those who need to drive.

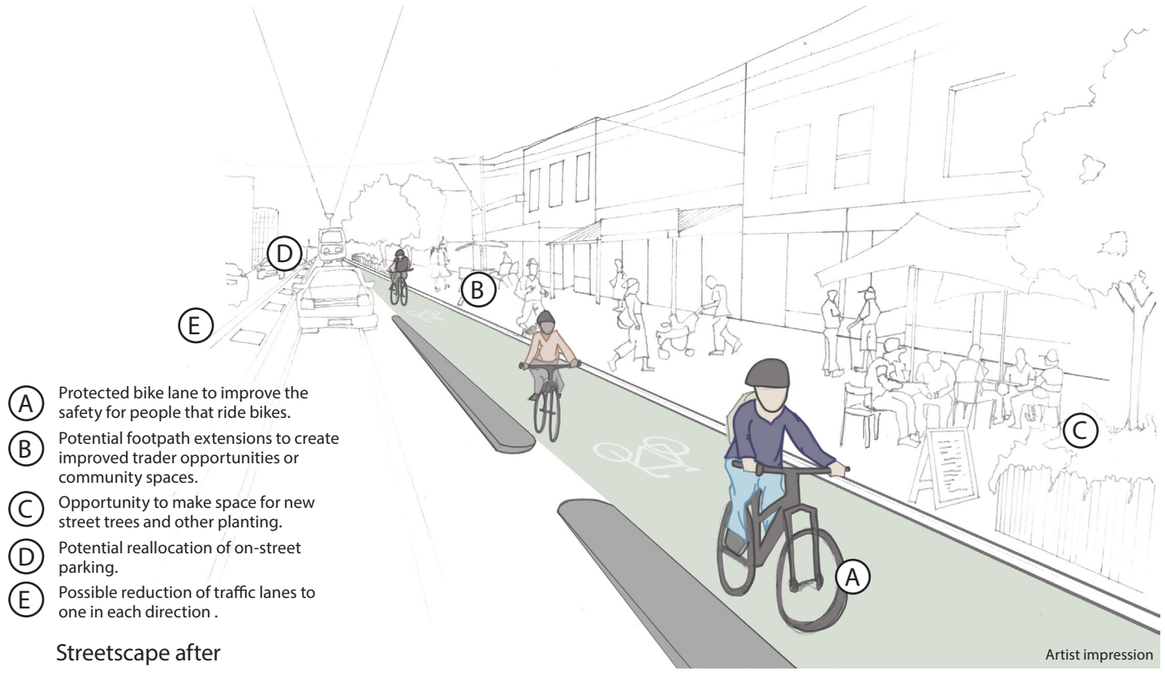
What are the potential impacts?

The number of traffic lanes on Racecourse Road would be reduced from two in each direction to one in each direction. This may result in an increase in journey time in the short term, as people driving review and adapt to how and when they travel on Racecourse Road.

Where vehicles share space with trams there may be an increase in public transport journey times for short sections of the corridor.

This would also mean people who currently use parking on Racecourse Road would need to park in adjacent streets, although changes to parking management could also be used to ensure priority access to people with disabilities, people making deliveries, and so forth.

Streetscape before



A Protected bike lane to improve the safety for people that ride bikes.

B Potential footpath extensions to create improved trader opportunities or community spaces.

C Opportunity to make space for new street trees and other planting.

D Potential reallocation of on-street parking.

E Possible reduction of traffic lanes to one in each direction .

Streetscape after

Artist impression

Design Opportunity Five

Create a comfortable place for people to spend time through increased tree canopy, garden beds and raingardens

What are the possibilities?

There is an opportunity to add more trees and general landscaping along Racecourse Road. Raingardens can also be added, especially at side streets.

What are the potential benefits?

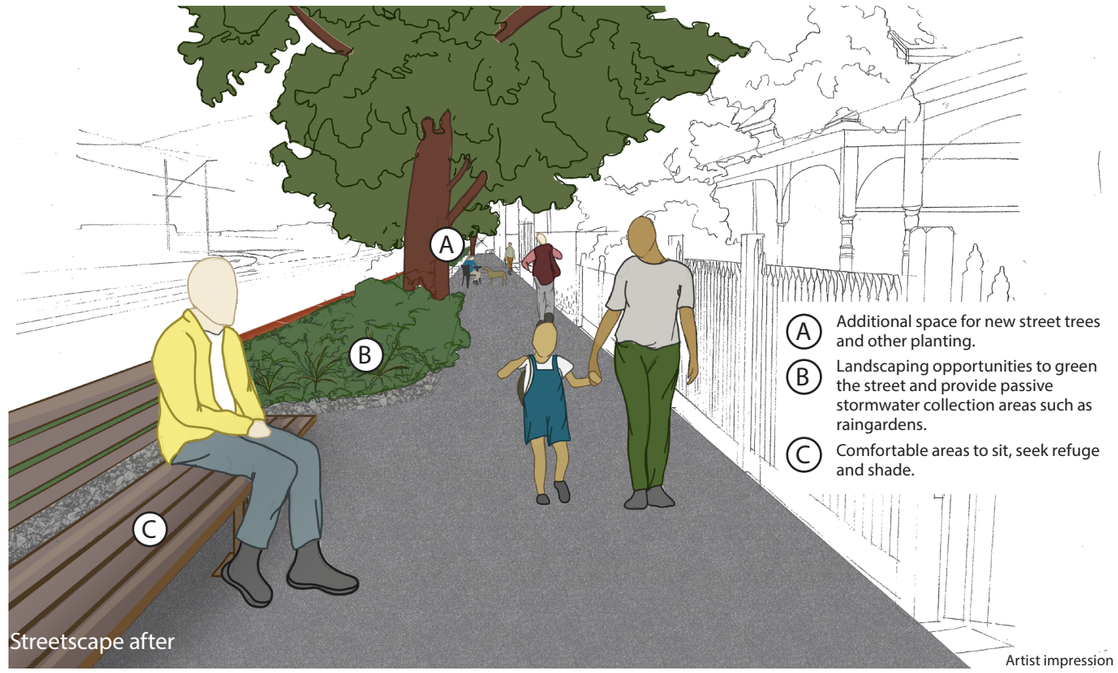
Increased tree canopy cover and raingardens create a cooler and more attractive environment. Trees absorb pollutants from traffic and ensure that the air is cleaner to breathe for people travelling along Racecourse Road. The shade provided by trees reduces the urban heat island effect and provides shelter from adverse weather.

Raingardens help manage stormwater flow and reduce the stress on our current drainage systems. Additional planting and greenery also create habitats for wildlife, improving the biodiversity of the neighbourhood and our connection to nature.

What are the potential impacts?

Increasing the number of trees on Racecourse Road may be achievable in places with little impact to the adjacent streets. If the community supports more significant upgrades to greening, this may require use of space that is currently used for car parking.

Streetscape before



Streetscape after

Artist impression

Design Opportunity Six

Ensure safe and accessible access to future tram stops

What are the possibilities?

Tram stops can be redesigned and upgraded to be safer and more accessible to all users of public transport.

What are the potential benefits?

Accessible trams stops enable people with disabilities or limited mobility to use our public transport system. A fully accessible public transport system benefits everyone: people using mobility devices such as wheelchairs or crutches, people pushing prams, and people wheeling shopping carts.

Raised tram platforms have also increased safety of people getting on or off tram stops. Dedicated tram stops also create room for people to wait for the tram, increasing the comfort and attractiveness of public transport.

What are the potential impacts?

To accommodate accessible tram stops, there will need to be a change to the road layout at the stop location. This could mean reducing the number of travel lanes or reducing the number of car parking spaces on Racecourse Road.

Streetscape before

A Protected bike lane to improve the safety for people that ride bikes.

B Raised tram platform to provide safe and accessible access to trams.

C Potential reallocation of on-street parking.

D Possible reduction of traffic lanes to one in each direction. .

Streetscape after

Design Opportunity Seven

Improve traffic flow and safety by limiting some turning movements

What are the possibilities?

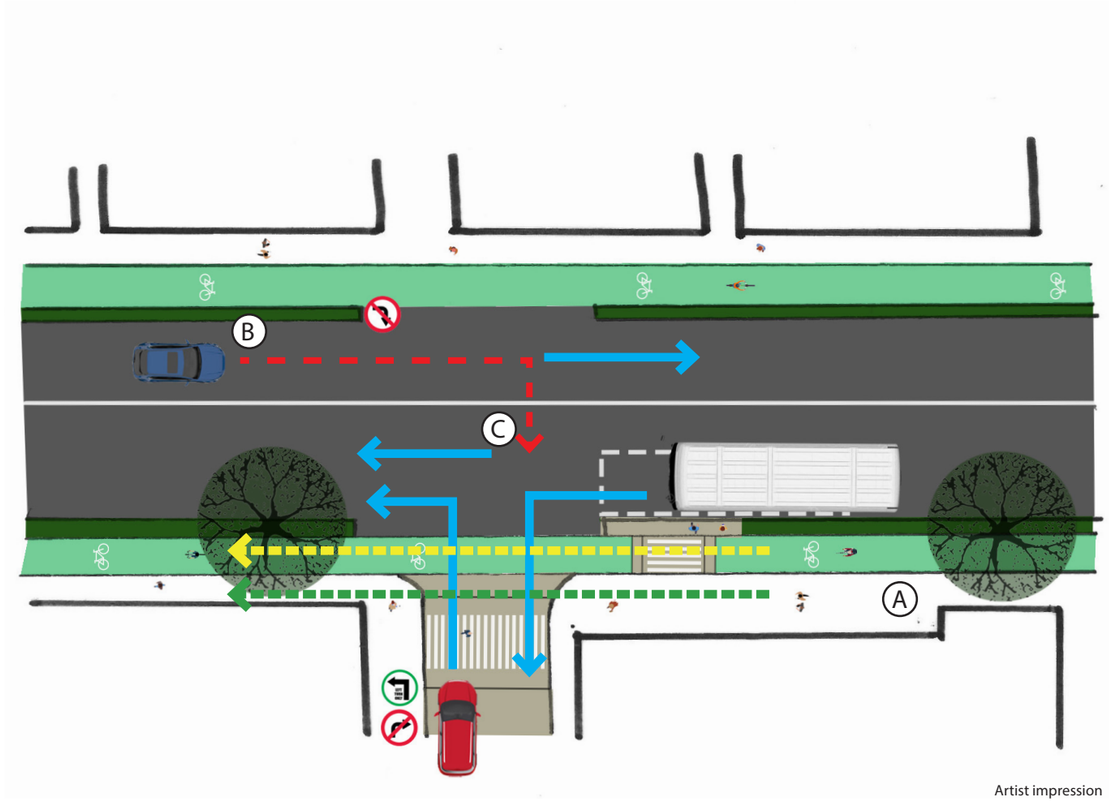
Restricting car movements to some side streets creates a safer walking, riding, wheeling and driving corridor. Limiting some turning movements creates space for landscaping opportunities for narrower side streets as well as enhancing other treatments that are being proposed.

What are the potential benefits?

Fewer turning movements create a safer environment for everyone. Simplifying movements makes traffic move more efficiently and reduces conflict between people turning and other road users continuing straight ahead. Limiting turns also creates space where communities can meet and connect, or traders can expand their trading space. Shorter crossings can also be installed making it safer for people walking.

What are the potential impacts?

Some people driving may have slightly longer journeys when driving to or from their destination. Limiting turning movements will also require engagement with waste collection teams.



Artist impression

Ⓐ People walking and riding bikes safer without cars turning in front of them.

Ⓑ People driving on Racecourse Road not held up by people waiting to turn in front of them.

Ⓒ Right turn movement no longer allowed.

Legend:

- No right hand turn.
- Car movements.
- People riding.
- People walking.

NEXT STEPS

Feedback received on this Discussion Paper as part of community consultation will help the City of Melbourne and City of Moonee Valley develop a Strategic Improvements Plan (SIP) for Racecourse Road.

The SIP will be a high level, shared vision for Racecourse Road and provide strategic direction for both councils in directly delivering improvements where possible, as well as advocating to the Victorian Government to deliver improvements including future accessible tram stops.

Developing the SIP is not the end of the conversation. The SIP will include important strategic directions, but it won't have specific actions or designs for the area.

The City of Melbourne and City of Moonee Valley will continue to work with the community and with the Victorian Government to investigate, design and seek feedback from the community before implementing the types of changes outlined in this Discussion Paper.

Prepared by Stantec for CITY OF MELBOURNE City of Moonee Valley