Mount Alexander Shire Council

Active Transport Strategy
Community Consultation Report

February 2023

Mount Alexander
Shire Council

Acknowledgement of country

Mount Alexander Shire Council acknowledges that the traditional custodians of this land, the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples, proudly survive. We acknowledge their continued practise of custom and their close cultural, spiritual, physical, social, historical and economic relationship with the land and waters that make up their country, which includes Mount Alexander Shire.

Council recognises the Victorian Government's Recognition and Settlement with both the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the Taungurung Land and Waters Council.

Contents

Overview - Data collection

In order to provide source data for evidence based decision making, the approach to seek local community feedback was paramount.
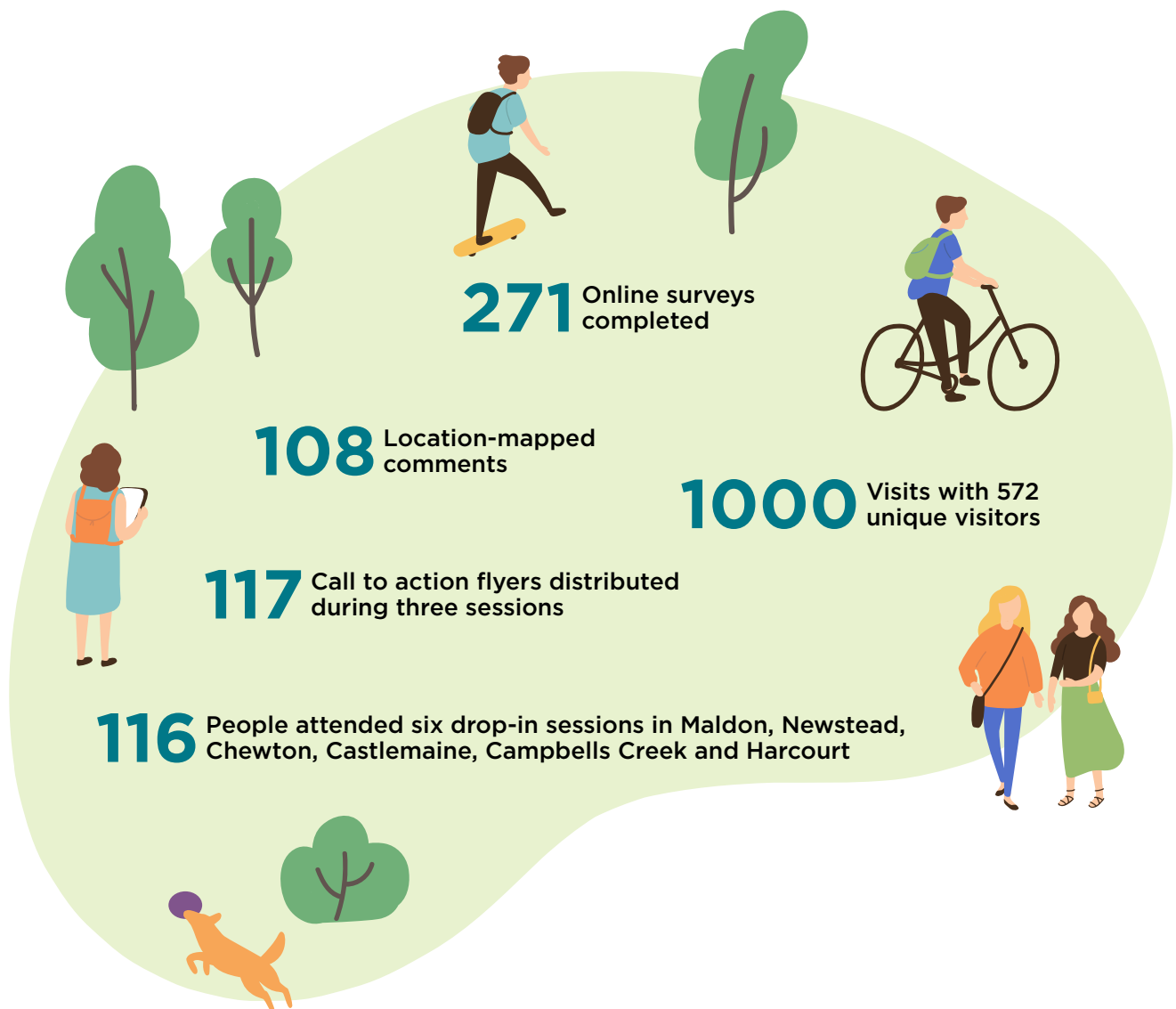
A range of engagement platforms were utilised, in particular the council shape page which included information on the strategy development, details of drop in sessions, an online survey and a social mapping tool to provide detailed location based comments.

On line
survey results

- On line survey: 271 online surveys completed.
  (Shape 214 & Menti 57*)

- Shape page mapping: 108 location-mapped comments.

- Shape page visitation: 1000 visits with 572 unique visitors.

- A number of the survey questions allowed multiple answers, leading to a higher volume of answers for these questions.

*Menti is an interactive presentation software platform, used for interactive real-time voting.

271 Online surveys completed

108 Location-mapped comments

1000 Visits with 572 unique visitors

117 Call to action flyers distributed during three sessions

116 People attended six drop-in sessions in Maldon, Newstead, Chewton, Castlemaine, Campbells Creek and Harcourt
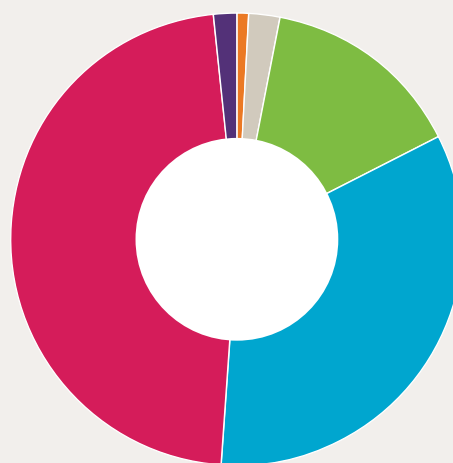
On line survey results

Where in Mount Alexander Shire do you live?

- Castlemaine residents provided the greatest number of survey results (94 or 34.7%),followed by Campbells Creek (32 or 11.8%), Maldon (27 or 10.0%) and Harcourt (15 or 5.5%) - 38 or 14.0% of survey's completed were by visitors to the Shire.
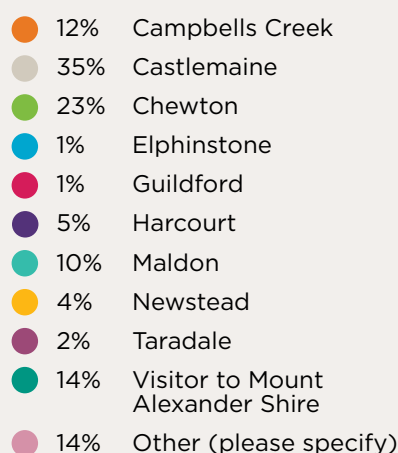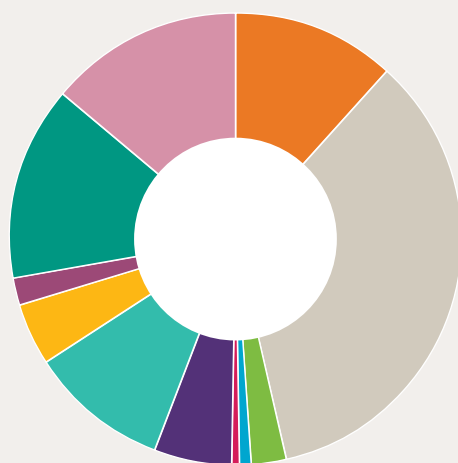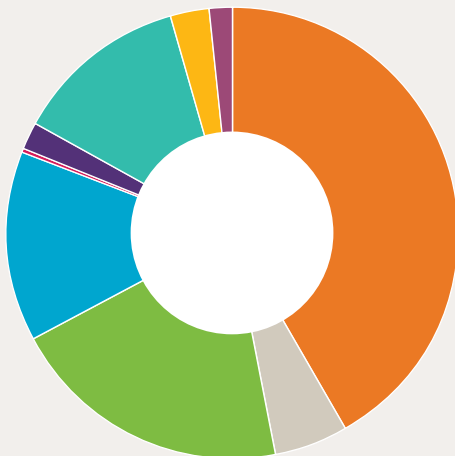
How old are you?

- The most represented age group within the survey results were those over 55 (128 or 47.9%) with 41-55 year olds providing (91 or 34.1%) of the responses. Only 9 responses (3.5%) were received from the below 15 & 15-25 year old age brackets.

12%	Campbells Creek
35%	Castlemaine
23%	Chewton
1%	Elphinstone
1%	Guildford
5%	Harcourt
10%	Maldon
4%	Newstead
2%	Taradale
14%	Visitor to Mount Alexander Shire
14%	Other (please specify)

1%	Below 15 years of age
2%	15 - 25 years
14%	26 - 40 years
34%	41 - 55 years
47%	Over 55 years of age
2%	No response

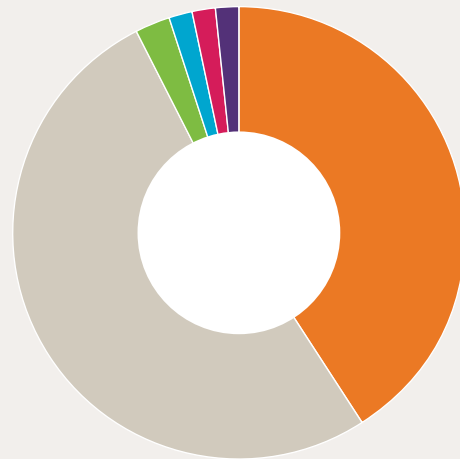## What is your main form of Active Transport Activity?

- 41.7% of respondents indicated that walking was a key active transport activity for them, along with 12.3% walking their dogs. Running made up 5.5% of responses.

- The cycling community was led by 20.0% on road cyclists, followed by 13.8% who considered mountain bike riding/off road riding as a key form of activity. Pushing prams (2.7%) and scooting (1.8%) also registered as part of the 659 responses.

How do you identify your gender?

- Females led the way with 53.4% of responses followed by males 42.5%.

- 41.7% Male
- 52.4% Female
- 2.6% Non-binary
- 1.5% Prefer not to say
- 1.8% No response

- 42% Walking
- 6% Running
- 20% On road cycling
- 14% Mountain bike or off road riding
- 0.3% Wheelchair
- 2% Scooting
- 12% Walking dogs
- 3% Pushing prams
- 1% Other

On line survey results

## Describe the benefits of active transport activities for you.

- Community feedback regarding the benefits of active transport was collated into 6 themes
- 624 comments were provided
- Wellbeing – including positive impacts on mental health made up 24.8% of responses
- Fitness recorded 20.5% of responses
- Health recorded 19.7% of responses
- Environment – Being in nature, and environmental sustainability made up 17.3% of responses
- Connections – Getting from A to B, along with social connections - 12.5%
- Costs – financial savings 5.1%

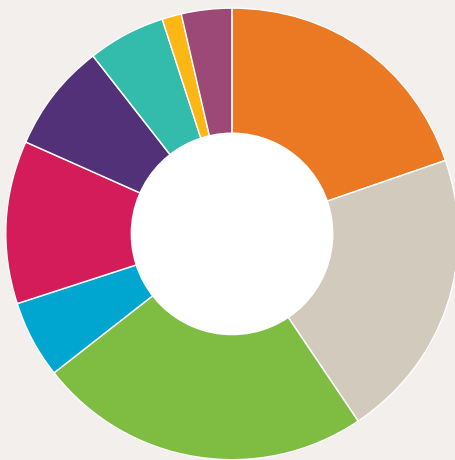## Identify the main barriers that may prevent you from participating in active transport activities.

- Of the 791 responses received, poor infrastructure (roads, paths & footpaths etc.) was the key barrier to participation - 231 or 29.2%.
- Traffic implications – speed 13.9% & too much traffic 13.5% was a major barrier to people.
- Worries about personal safety whilst participating in active transport activities made up 10.5% of responses.
- The weather also provided a barrier for 13.8% of respondents

- 12.5% Connections
- 5.1% Costs
- 17.3% Environment
- 20.5% Fitness
- 19.7% Health
- 24.8% Wellbeing
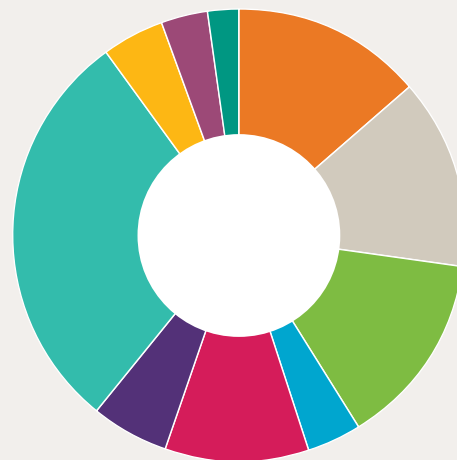
- 13.8% Weather (too hot, too cold, too wet etc.)
- 13.5% Too much traffic
- 13.9% Traffic speed
- 3.8% Poor lighting
- 10.5% Worried about personal safety
- 5.4% Takes too long
- 29.2% Poor infrastructure (roads, paths, footpaths etc.)
- 4.6% Lack of end of trip facilities
- 3.3% Personal health is not up to it/ I am injured
- 2.0% Other

## What would encourage you to participate more in active transport?

- 799 responses were received regarding participation encouragement, with the construction of paths where they are missing 23.8% the main opportunity, along with another 19.9% wanting improvements in the existing path network. 20.9% of responses desired separated paths for active transport users. 11.5% desired improved main road crossings. Better information on where to walk/ride was highlighted by 7.9%, better end of trip facilities 5.6% and improved lighting 5.6%

What is your main purpose of active transport activity?

- Recreation, Health & Wellbeing was the key reason for active transport participation with 38.1% of the 606 responses.
- 21.1% utilised active transport to get to/from shops, cafes & entertainment
- 12.9% to get to/from work or school
- 8.7% to get to/from public transport connections.
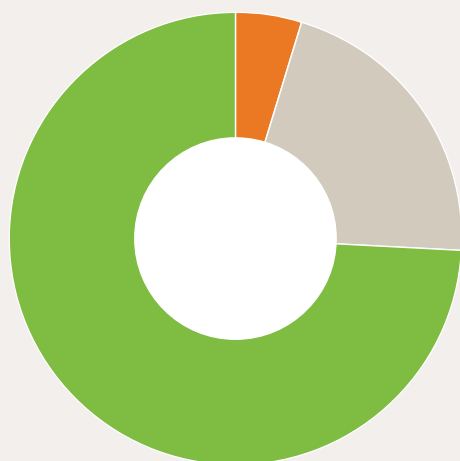- 18.8% of respondents used active transport to connect with other people and socialise.

- ● 19.9% Improve existing footpaths and paths
- ● 20.9% Provide separate paths for active transport activities
- ● 23.8% Construct paths where they are missing
- ● 5.6% Improve lighting
- ● 11.5% Improve main road crossings
- ● 7.9% Better information on where to walk/ride
- ● 5.6% More/ better end of trip facilities
- ● 1.3% None of the above
- ● 3.5% Other
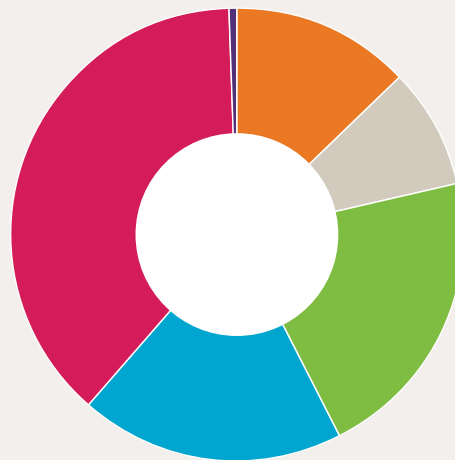
- ● 12.9% To get to/from work or school
- ● 8.7% To get to/from public transport connections
- ● 21.1% To get to/from shops, cafes and entertainment
- ● 18.8% To connect with other people and socialise
- ● 38.1% Recreation for health, wellbeing and fun
- ● 0.3% Other

On line survey results

## What would be the average distance of your average journey be?

- Only 4.9% of respondents indicated an average journey of less than 800m.
- 74.0% of activity was over 1.6km.
- The remaining 21.1% of respondents had journeys of between 800m & 1.6km

How many days a week do you particpate in active transport activities?

- Participation rates were evenly spread with 21.4% active 7 days a week, 26.0% 5-6 days per week, 35.1% 3-4 days per week and 16.4% active only 1-2 days per week.

- 🟠 4.9%   Up to 800 m
- ⚪ 21.1%   800 m - 1.6 km
- 🟢 74.0% Over 1.6 km
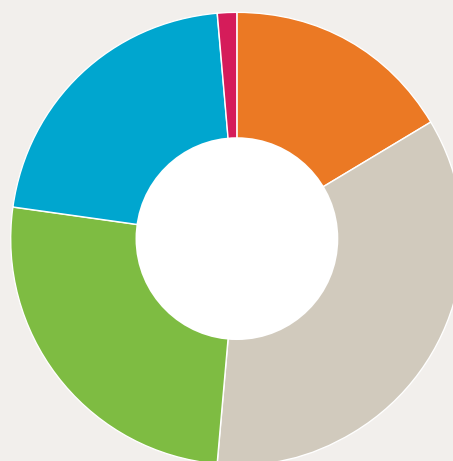
- 🟠 16.4% 1 - 2 days
- ⚪ 35.1% 3 - 4 days
- 🟢 26.0% 5 - 6 days
- 🔵 21.4% 7 days
- 🔴 1.1%   None

How long does your average active transport activity take you?

- Time spent on active transport activities showed 7.2% spent 1-15 minutes, 22.7% spent between 15 min & 30 min, 30 min to 60 min was the average journey time for 42.0% of respondents.

- 22.7% spent 1-2 hours and 2 hours+ accounted for 4.2% of the respondents
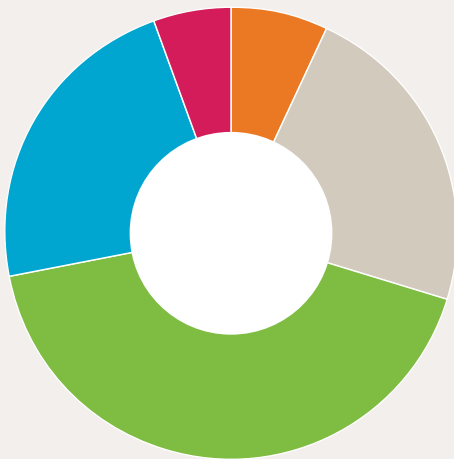
- 7.2%   1 - 15 minutes
- 22.7% 15 - 30 minutes
- 42.0% 30 minutes - 1 hour
- 22.7% 1 - 2 hours
- 5.3%   2 hours +

Drop in sessions

- Community drop in sessions were conducted in 6 locations across the shire: Maldon, Newstead, Chewton, Campbells Creek, Castlemaine (Market Building) & Harcourt.

- All sessions were conducted outdoors.

- 116 people attended these sessions.

Have
your say

SHAPE
Mount Alexander

WE WANT
TO HEAR
FROM
YOU

Let's get you moving!

HAVE
YOUR
SAY!

Let's get you moving

Intercept activities

- Initially targeted as intercept survey's (directly communicating with the public in locations within the community), with the aim of having surveys – either hard copies or online completed on the spot.

- It was identified early in these activities that there was a reluctance for people to stop and complete these surveys.

- The engagement with people was successful and provided an important means of gathering information, but the method required re-consideration.

- A5 sized flyers, including a QR code directing respondents to the active transport shape page (containing strategy development information, online survey and social mapping tool) became a successful tool, as these were distributed to community members for consideration at their convenience.

- One measure of the success was the survey analytics of shape in the 24 hours following, with approx. 25% of flyers distributed resulting in completed surveys.

- Success also translated through engagement with community members and awareness of the development of an active transport strategy.

- Activities were conducted at the Castlemaine railway station, botanical gardens & the Gyngell street walking/ cycle path.
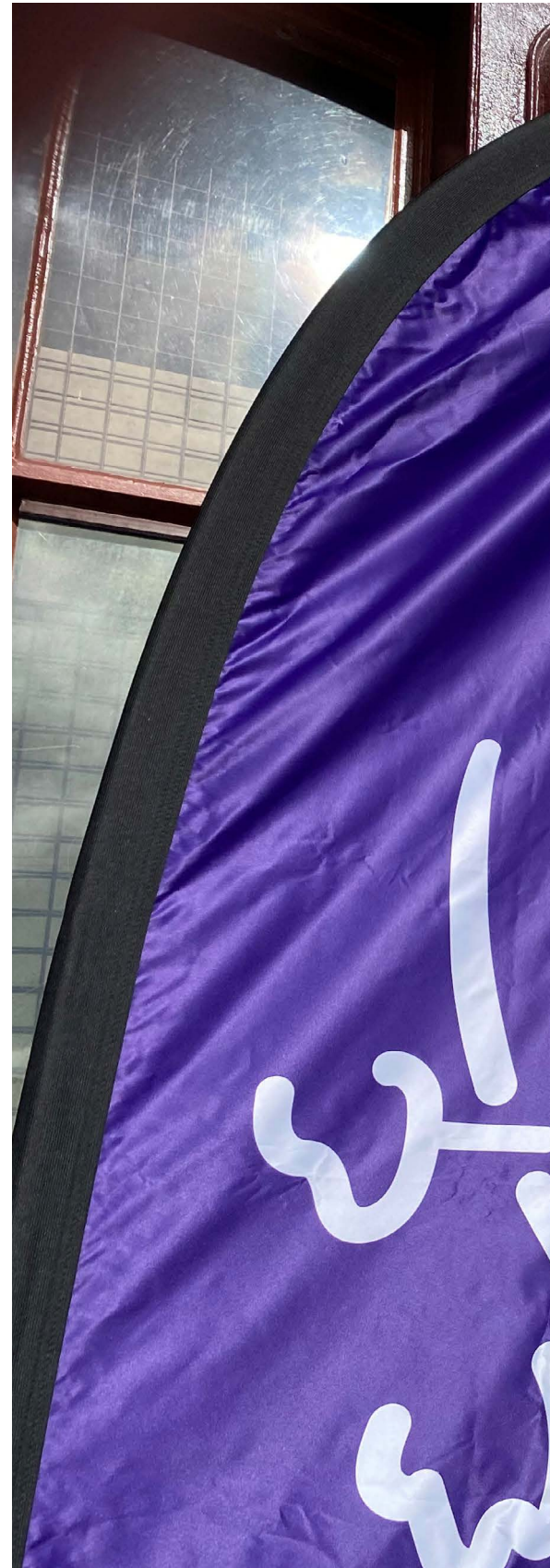
- 117 flyers were distributed.

Image: Ongoing Reference Group community member John Carruthers at the Castlemaine Railway Station

Initial working group

- The establishment of an initial working group, consisting of targeted community members with skillsets/ connections related to community based active transport, was a key objective of the strategy development. This included representatives from the mount alexander council (heritage & urban design) department of transport, healthy loddon campaspe, newstead walks & wheels, mount alexander cycling and nordic pole walkers. A number of these representatives also had background skills in consultancy work within active transport environments.

- The initial working group tested themes & concepts developed via benchmarking, literature review and review of the council's previous walking & cycling strategy 2010-2020 provided the platform for the draft strategy. Reviewing the community activity plan, revising the terms of reference for the ongoing reference group and commencing work on the evaluation and review framework for the strategy were tasks undertaken by the initial working group.

- The initial working group was chaired by Councillor Christine Henderson.

Ongoing reference group

- Sourcing of members of the public for the ongoing reference group was through an expression of interest campaign, which included direct contact to key stakeholder groups, online and media exposure and posters in prominent community locations (IGA supermarkets and Castlemaine railway station).

- A diverse range of applications were received and reviewed by the initial working group and council officers.

- Two (2) members of the initial working group continued their involvement and transition into the ongoing reference group.

- The ongoing reference group was chaired by Councillor Christine Henderson.

- Three (3) sub groups were established to provide a deeper insight into emerging themes identified through the data analysis of both online surveys and face to face community consultation results.

Sub group 1: Community Partnerships

- Establish a list of current programs and identify gaps, to support active transport participation accessibility and inclusivity.

Sub group 2: Public Transport Connections

- Determine existing public transport connectors (routes, times, frequency, locations, capacity etc) to identify gaps and advocacy opportunities.

Sub group 3: Review of Networks, Routes & Zones

- Review of the previous strategy routes & networks and provide amendment recommendations, include key destinations – education, health, business, public transport.

- Sub groups reported back to the ongoing reference group, with findings considered in the development of the draft strategy.

All staff meeting

- Presentation to the council all staff meeting on the 30th November 2022, enabled broader awareness of the active transport strategy within the shire staff.

- Staff were presented with an overview of the strategy components and how they could become involved.

- Staff members were encouraged to complete an online survey (using the menti platform) with 57 responses provided. This information has been included in the survey results. *note: Menti is an interactive presentation software platform, used for interactive real-time voting.
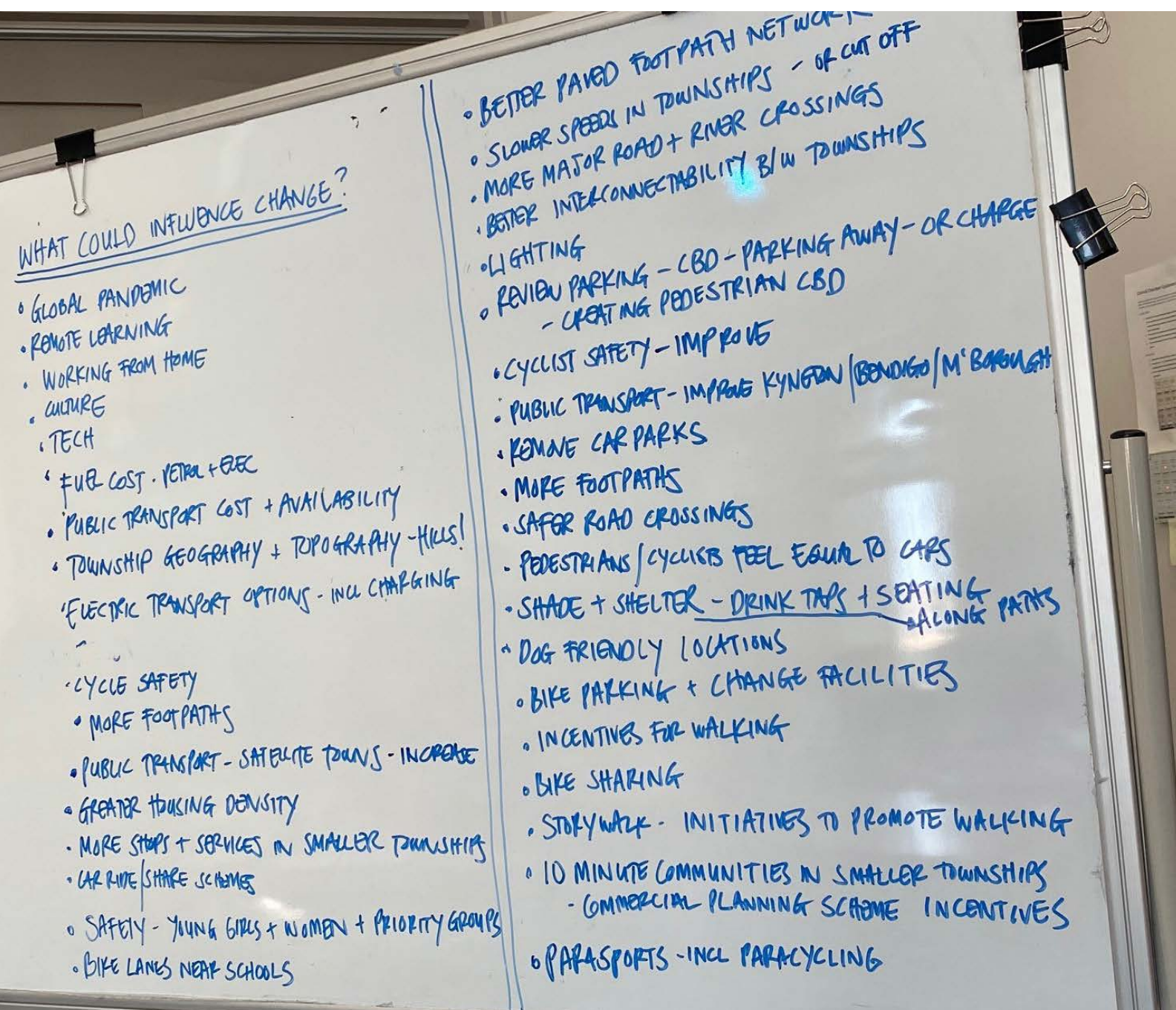
Councillor workshop

- Council officers conducted a workshop with Councillors on the 11th October 2022.

- Councillors completed a number of exercises with results guiding the strategy development.

Topics included:

- Guiding principles of the strategy

- Priorities for the strategy outcomes

- What may influence change

Community stakeholders

The active transport strategy project was communicated through the following organisations, at the expression of interest period for ongoing reference group participants.

- Mt Alexander Shire Disability Action Group
- Mt Alexander Sustainability Group
- Goldfields walking track group
- Dhelkaya Health
- U3A Castlemaine
- Positive Ageing Advocacy Group
- Mt Alexander Youth Advisory Group
- Castlemaine Support Services
- Friends of Ironbark Forest and others

A direct email campaign on the 7th December 2022 to all education and pre-school institutions was aimed at reaching a broader audience, through the school community networks.

The following organisations were contacted:

Castlemaine Secondary College

Castlemaine Primary School

Castlemaine North Primary School

Winters Flat Primary School

Campbells Creek Primary School

Olivet Christian College

Castlemaine Steiner School & Kindergarten

Chewton Primary School

Elphinstone Primary School

Harcourt Valley Primary School

Langley Primary School

Maldon Primary School

Newtsead Primary School

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Taradale Primary School

Castlemaine Kindergarten

Harcourt Preschool

Maldon Preschool

Newstead Preschool

South Castlemaine Kindergarten

Castlemaine Child Care Co-Operative

Ray Street Children's Centre

Busy Bees Castlemaine

Community engagement outcomes

Community engagement activities identified several emerging themes within the active transport space, including:

- The desire for greater coordination with providers of public transport services and infrastructure to improve accessibility.

- The emerging modes of transport, the increase in the usage of these modes and the infrastructure required to support these modes.

- The role active transport participation plays in positive wellbeing outcomes, particularly supporting mental health.

- The importance the role of community programs that support active transport participation play in reaching more vulnerable members of the community.

- Connection of population growth areas within the Shire to the active transport network is required.

Barriers & benefits

Barriers to active transport, as identified from community engagement responses, have been summarized below.

- In order to create an environment where people will participate in active transport as their chosen method of movement, elimination or reduction in the barriers is paramount.

- Growing community expectation of higher standards in infrastructure, including separation from motor vehicles, the desire for connection across the network – through and between townships, identifies that barriers to participation may continue to grow.

What did the community tell us?

- Limited infrastructure was identified as the major barrier to active transport participation. Common frustrations included ongoing maintenance, surface quality, lack of appropriate wayfinding signage and obstructions on roads, paths, trails and footpaths across the network.

- Personal safety was also cited as a major barrier. People consulted were especially concerned with traffic interactions, traffic speed and volume.

- Weather conditions also deterred active transport activities.

- Other barriers identified during engagement activities included poor lighting, personal health or injury, time taken to complete active transport activities, and a lack of end of trip facilities.

Benefits of active transport, as identified from community engagement responses, have been summarized below.

- The many health, social, environmental and economic benefits of participating in active transport are well documented.

- From improved physical fitness and mental health for individuals, to the financial advantages associated with walking, cycling and other active transport activities, to social and environmental benefits that reduced motor vehicle use achieves, all contribute positively to our broader community.

- Connection to other people, and to the natural environment are intrinsically linked to the wellbeing of individuals and the broader community. By participating in active transport our community experiences the interaction and social opportunities that build better community cohesion.

- Regardless of the motivating factor/s (lower cost, improved fitness or getting from a to b etc.) Any active transport activity will provide outcomes that deliver against council's 2021-2025 vision: working together for a healthy, connected shire.

- Many of our active transport users fall in to the mature-age category, clearly demonstrating that people understand the benefits to remaining active during middle to later life. This group are more likely to be seeking the wellbeing and social outcomes associated with active transport.

- Infrastructure that is safer, more connected and can accommodate more transport modes will make it easier for more people to connect to public transport for longer parts of their journeys.

What did the community tell us?

The community responses identified six main themes when it comes to benefits associated with active transport:

- Wellbeing: where the benefits included improved mental health, enjoyment and social connection

- Fitness: where people participated in active transport for exercise and fitness outcomes

- Health: people appreciated the improvement to their overall physical health

- Environment: community members participated in active transport for sustainability outcomes and for the time spent outdoors in nature

- Connections: people used active transport for connection to other people and places, and for movement between destinations.

Mount Alexander
Shire Council