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## Submission to Draft City of Yarra Budget 2019–20

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

YCAN has previously lobbied for an Active Transport Strategy to be funded. The Yarra Draft 2019/20 Budget includes funding to “develop an Integrated Transport and Parking Management Plan”. Active transport is key to 4 out of 7 of the Budget Strategic Objectives:

- For Strategic Objective 1. A healthy Yarra, a reduction in toxic local pollution from vehicles and an increase in exercise would be important outcomes.
- Strategic Objective 3. A sustainable Yarra would require a reduction in vehicle emissions that result in greenhouse gas emissions.
- Strategic Objectives 4 and 6, a liveable Yarra and a connected Yarra both require a reduction in number of cars on Yarra’s roads.

Therefore, we hope that the Integrated Transport and Parking Management Plan will contain a strong Active Transport component.

Australia has always been a country in love with cars, and funding for roads has long been a priority for all levels of government. Cars have been privileged when it comes to space allocated for transport and the proportion of space given over to motor vehicles is very high. Motorists have come to expect that their needs come first. These perceptions must change.

As well as road space, cars also take up a disproportional amount of space for parking. There is no detail in the budget about the strategies in the Parking Management section of Council’s Integrated Transport Plan. Our communication with Council officers has suggested that there will be a commitment to reducing the space allocated for parked cars, which YCAN strongly supports.

As the City of Yarra’s population continues its rapid growth, it will be essential to develop new strategies to increase the percentage of public transport, walking and cycling trips as a proportion of all transport trips within and through Yarra. If population growth is allowed to outstrip development of the necessary active transport options, there will be a decrease in amenity for residents, shoppers etc and an increase in negative impacts.

The Melbourne City Council has calculated that pedestrians make up 90% of traffic in the CBD, but they are allocated only a quarter of street space. While we have no

figures for the proportion of Yarra that is allocated to cars, on average 30% of space in cities is dedicated to cars. Cyclists and walkers are often made to take circuitous routes in order to ensure that cars have the most direct routes. Melbourne City Council has proposed making the “little” streets pedestrian priority zones. MCC has also proposed far-reaching changes like removing traffic and parking from previously regarded “major” roads such as Elizabeth St. We would like to see areas in Yarra allocated as pedestrian priority zones.

Giving more thought (and space) to cycling and walking, including easy access routes to public transport, encouragement for residents to walk (to work, to shopping areas and to fitness and entertainment venues etc) should be a priority in Council’s Integrated Transport and Parking Management Plan. Pedestrians and cyclists experience the high temperatures of our hotter summers more acutely than motorists sitting in air-conditioned cars. Under an integrated plan, the reduction of parking space should lead to a concomitant increase in green space and tree-canopy cover to mitigate the urban heat island effect.

YCAN also believes that the Plan should include an audit of existing bicycle routes, to discover what alterations might improve the bicycle routes, provide interconnectivity, and improve safety for cyclists. An audit of the ‘walkability’ of walking routes within particular local areas should also be considered, perhaps with the assistance of volunteer walkers from particular areas. This local knowledge would help encourage walking, both within Yarra, to destinations in other municipalities, as well as just walking for pleasure.

We would like to remind Council of the array of benefits from increased active transport and decreased vehicle usage:

- Reduction in greenhouse gas production, key to holding global warming below 1.5 degrees.
- Reduction in local pollution in the form of vehicle emissions which contain toxic nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and particulate matter. Continued breathing in of vehicle emissions can cause serious health issues such as respiratory diseases and bronchitis, and in Australia is responsible for 900–2000 early deaths **each year**. Children, babies in prams and the elderly are particularly at risk.
- Using active transport has beneficial health outcomes, including a reduction in obesity, lung disease, heart disease and depression.
- Health and well-being can also be enhanced by a reduction in social isolation and improved community connectivity.
- Households can reduce their transport costs.

In other sections of the Budget, we support Strategic Objective 6 funding for bicycle infrastructure, as well as Objective 3 funding for a response to the Climate Emergency, urban agriculture, tree planting and the North Carlton Railway House Community Garden. We also support ongoing funding for the food waste trial.

In addition, we also believe that the current Bicycle Advisory Committee should be expanded to become an Active Transport Advisory Committee, which considers all aspects of active transport.

Finally, we stress again that, as Council has declared, there is a climate emergency. Action to reduce the number of vehicles on Yarra’s roads and increase active transport use is **urgent**. We note that in places such as Barcelona whole city blocks have been speedily recovered for pedestrian and cyclist use at minimum cost by reclaiming road space and populating it with play equipment, large planters and street

furniture which is put directly on top of the road surface. This means that areas can be transformed quickly and layouts can be tried out, and then easily altered to find the best solutions. Closer to home, the adjoining cities of Moreland and Melbourne have developed far-reaching and comprehensive active/integrated transport strategies which will leave Yarra looking like reluctant participants in current policies and theories around city design without equally forward-thinking plans and policies.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.