16 October 2023

Draft Future Streets Framework 2030 and beyond

Committee for Melbourne (the Committee) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation by the City of Melbourne (CoM) on its *draft Future Streets Framework 2030 and beyond* (draft framework). The draft framework implements Action 1 of the CoM's Transport Strategy 2030, to "develop a Future Streets Framework to design and deliver streets in the Hoddle Grid based on the 2030 Proposed Integrated Network".

The Committee is an apolitical, not-for-profit, member-based organisation that brings together over 140 organisations from Melbourne's business, academic and civic sectors whose common purpose is to shape a better future for Melbourne. As an independent organisation, the Committee represents no single interest group or political position but seeks to develop innovative ideas to continue to enhance Melbourne's position as an economically prosperous and highly liveable global city.

The Committee was pleased to arrange for its members to be briefed by CoM on the draft framework, at various forums. This included a meeting at Melbourne Town Hall in August 2023, with around 30 members, who provided detailed feedback. In general, the Committee's members are supportive of proposals that would green the city, make it more walkable and accessible, and resilient to climate change. The Committee is supportive of new ideas and proposals that would ensure greater accessibility of the activities in the city centre for *all* Melburnians, and that would democratise the activities and attributes of the central city.

The Committee is pleased to be able to provide written feedback on the draft framework, reflecting the views of members. Overall, the draft framework is a high-level conceptual document that contains many positive proposals and ideas. There are also opportunities for more detail to be provided, with robust data and clearer timelines. The Committee provides the following recommendations on behalf of its members, in response to the draft framework.

Recommendations:

1. **Further consultation on the framework:** A second draft of the framework should be released for consultation, to allow for comment on more detailed outcomes from the consultation process.

2. **State government investment programs:** Implementation triggers of the draft framework should be clearly aligned to related state government funded projects and investments.

3. **Place character:** Identify the strengths of Melbourne's character such as experience economy attributes like restaurants and theatres, office precincts, green spaces and retail, that should be incorporated throughout the Central Melbourne area. These attributes should represent the baseline character that should underpin all of the Hoddle Grid/Central Melbourne. Any additional character elements could then evolve to represent unique place characters over time.

4. **Planning:** Provide clarity around how the draft framework proposals work within the planning and development rules.

5. **Transport and business economic modelling:** Provide clear modelling around the aims and economic impacts of the draft framework (e.g. traffic flows, bicycle usage, business operations etc).

6. **Greater Melbourne:** Provide clear data around the economic impacts of the draft framework for Greater Melbourne to ensure no unintended consequences are experienced across the whole metropolis.

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The Committee's detailed recommendations are as follows:

1.   Further consultation on the framework

The Committee considers that the first draft framework document is very high-level and conceptual. It would be beneficial for the community to be able to have input into a second draft that has more detail for analysis.

Accordingly, the Committee considers that an additional step should be added to the CoM's consultation process-highlighted in blue below:

- Review the feedback
- Update the draft Framework and prepare a draft Community Engagement report
- Release the second draft framework for community consultation early 2024
- Present the updated Framework and community engagement report to Future Melbourne Committee for endorsement. This is planned for early 2024 (perhaps move to later 2024).
- Update community on the outcomes.

> **Recommendation 1: A second draft of the framework should be released for consultation, to allow for comment on more detailed outcomes from the consultation process.**

2.   State government investment programs

The draft framework has a stated aim of increasing public transport, walking and cycling mode share to 70 per cent of all trips. Whilst the draft framework intends to encourage people to use public transport, the issue of public transport patronage and convenience is a broader Greater Melbourne problem.

The Committee's *Benchmarking Melbourne 2023* report provides data-based insights into various aspects of Melbourne's liveability, connectivity and the economy. This report has revealed a 'tale of two cities,' highlighting the high-performing city centre's superior public transport compared to the wider metropolis. There are many areas in Melbourne where it is difficult to access public transport, and where commute times are prohibitive. Implementing changes to Central Melbourne/Hoddle Grid in the absence of broader infrastructure investments by the state government across Greater Melbourne, does not solve the broader public transport patronage issues.

For example, the Committee's recent report, *Course Correction: Transforming Melbourne's buses,* highlights that less than 1.6% of trips annually are made by bus across Greater Melbourne. The Course Correction report proposes a range of policy reforms that might increase bus patronage – and those reforms need to be implemented across the whole of Greater Melbourne to make it easier and attractive for people to catch the bus. Until those reforms are implemented by the state government in a broader context, then proposed reforms in the draft framework (eg priority bus lanes in Central Melbourne) would be unlikely to change rates of bus patronage overall. The final framework should therefore highlight the need for bus reform and its link to any actions in the framework.

Investments in transport, by the state government, may be needed to compliment proposed changes in the draft framework. For example, if through-traffic is diverted along King Street and onto surrounding streets like Hoddle and Victoria Streets, then there may need to be investment to increase the capacity/operational efficiency of those roads as well as corresponding investments in public transport. Transport analytics is needed to understand how much more traffic will be diverted into surrounding roads, and what investments by the state government is needed to accommodate it.

The draft framework should be coordinated with wider transport network planning. It should be clear as to what state government investment is relied upon to realise this vision including traffic improvements and major public transport investment. This could be linked with the CoM transport strategy and wider state level planning (e.g. Plan Victoria).

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The *timing* of implementation of the draft framework, should then be aligned to any investment/plans of the Victorian Government. The framework should highlight key catalytic projects (e.g. opening of the Metro Tunnel) to provide a sense on the timing for change that the community can expect.

Recommendation 2: Implementation timeframes/triggers of the draft framework should be clearly aligned to related state government funded projects and investments.

3. Place character

Committee members provided feedback on the place characters described in the draft framework (Image 1 below).
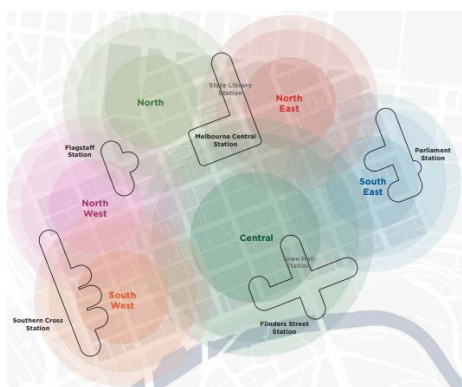

Image 1: Place Character from the draft framework

Interesting pockets of Central Melbourne have developed organically over time, such as the restaurant character of Flinders Lane. Committee members believe that the organic way in which different place characters have evolved, should be supported into the future, to allow for innovation and creativity to flourish.

However, members consider that there is a baseline of attributes (such as offices, experience economy, sports, arts, greenspaces) that should be supported and accessible throughout Central Melbourne. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that an assessment is made of the baseline requirements that should exist in all areas in Central Melbourne (e.g. retail, experience economy, office, residential and green spaces etc). The draft framework should at a minimum allow for the development of all of those baseline aspects across the Hoddle Grid and then provide support for any additional place character elements to organically evolve over time.

Recommendation 3: Identify the strengths of Melbourne's character such as experience economy attributes like restaurants and theatres, office precincts, green spaces and retail, that should be incorporated throughout the Central Melbourne area. These attributes should represent the baseline character that should underpin all of the Hoddle Grid/Central Melbourne. Any additional character elements could then evolve to represent unique place characters over time.

4. Planning

The draft framework provides high-level conceptual ideas, for example, different street types (e.g. Melbourne Squares, City Streets with trams, City Streets with buses, City streets with bikes, Little Streets, Laneways).

To encourage continued investment and certainty for developers, ensuring that there is clarity around these conceptual ideas and how they are to be used in planning applications and development proposals is essential. There is already a plethora of planning rules and requirements for developments. It is important to ensure that confusion and red-tape can be avoided, by clarifying the role that the draft framework plays in the planning rules.

Recommendation 4: Provide clarity around how the draft framework proposals work within the planning and development rules.

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5. Transport and business economic modelling

The draft framework aims to *"by 2030 put in place plans to reduce through traffic in the busiest parts of the city, convert our 'Little Streets' into pedestrian priority shared zones, and transform Melbourne into the country's leading bicycle city by creating more than 50km of protected bicycle lanes."*

Melbourne is one of the fastest growing cities in the developed world. Its population recently surpassed 5 million and is on track to surpass 6 million by 2031 and 9 million by mid-century. This only puts more pressure on our roads and transport system and puts more demand on the existing roads. The draft framework aims to reduce the use of the roads through the Hoddle Grid, even at a time when demand for vehicle trips on those roads is increasing. Clearer modelling around how this demand will adequately be accommodated, is required in order to avoid the creation of streets which need to accommodate very high levels of traffic demand which in turn create a barrier for accessing Central Melbourne.

A substantiation of the economic impacts and level of transport demand to be re-distributed (e.g. to other parts of the network or to other modes) would be helpful to understand the economic benefits, the impacts of the change and to recognise that there will remain a role for vehicle access for some trips (albeit with a desire to have a significant reduction in unnecessary vehicle trips).

For example, the draft framework has a stated aim of decreasing through traffic in Central Melbourne, from 43% to 10%. Clear modelling to understand the economic impact of through-vehicle traffic and its importance would be helpful. More modelling is required to assess the economic cost/transfer of cost. For example:
- If through traffic reduces to 10% what is the increased congestion costs across the rest of the suburbs of the city?
- How many businesses/places of work that depend on the through traffic will be impacted (e.g. workers trying to access the Parkville precinct)?

It is also particularly important to recognise the Hoddle Grid in the context of the interfacing areas of Melbourne (Docklands, Southbank, Parkville, East Melbourne, Fitzroy) and therefore ensure that the impacts particularly on those areas are recognised in any final framework.

Whilst there is a worthy aim of increasing bicycle usage into Central Melbourne, there is not a clear economic analysis which directly compares bicycles uptake to the number of car drivers that would be impacted. Not every driver will want to, or be able to, take an option of riding a bicycle. A clearer analysis of how many people wish to continue driving is needed to determine whether there is an economic benefit to focusing on cycling.

As previously stated in section 4 above, there are some conceptual ideas for street design outlined in the draft framework (eg Little Streets, Laneways etc). Modelling and clarity around how businesses will continue to operate within those new frameworks, would be desirable.

Recommendation 5: Provide clear modelling around the aims and economic impacts of the draft framework (e.g. traffic flows, bicycle usage, business operations etc).

6. Greater Melbourne

It is essential to ensure that there are no unintended consequences across Greater Melbourne from the draft framework. The draft framework should ensure that the central city continues to operate for the benefit of *all* Melburnians.

The Committee's *Benchmarking Melbourne 2023* report highlights a 'tale of two cities,' with residents living in the outer suburbs facing higher private transport costs and unequal access to amenities, education and health services, work and job opportunities, as well as social experiences. Melbourne's growth model has meant that the suburbs have spread further from the central city. Melbourne is therefore a low-density city, with residential development characterised by spacious land plots comprising a relatively low number of housing units. The Committee's *Benchmarking Melbourne 2023* report ranks Melbourne 16 of 19 peer cities for population density as a metropolis.

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It is essential therefore that the draft framework, does not exacerbate this 'tale of two cities' further by making it more difficult for those living in outer suburbs to access the amenities, job opportunities and experience economy of Central Melbourne. For example, the addition of more bike lanes in the CBD will most likely benefit those who are able to ride to Central Melbourne (eg those who live in the inner suburbs) and may make it more difficult to access, or drive through, Central Melbourne by car. Additionally, the transition of streets may make it more difficult to reach Central Melbourne by car for those living within parts of Melbourne that have limited viable transport alternatives.

Recommendation 6: Provide clear data around the economic impacts of the draft framework for Greater Melbourne to ensure no unintended consequences are experienced across the whole metropolis.

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The Committee thanks CoM for providing the opportunity to offer feedback on its draft framework.

For further information, contact Director Policy and Advocacy, Leanne Edwards ledwards@melbourne.org.au

Yours sincerely,

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