

Whitehorse Transport Background Study

Discussion Paper

September 2025

Institute for Sensible Transport

The Institute for Sensible Transport acknowledges the people of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung language group of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we work.

We respectfully acknowledge their Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

We also acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

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Whitehorse Transport Background Study

Transport and Demographics

Median age of **39 years** slightly higher than the average for Greater Melbourne (37 years)

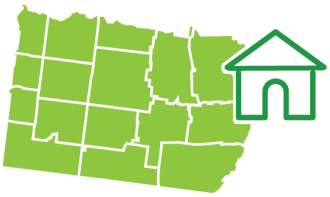
Now 2046

55,638

The population of Whitehorse is expected to see **31%** in growth by **2046**

Source: VIF Forecasts

Where residents work

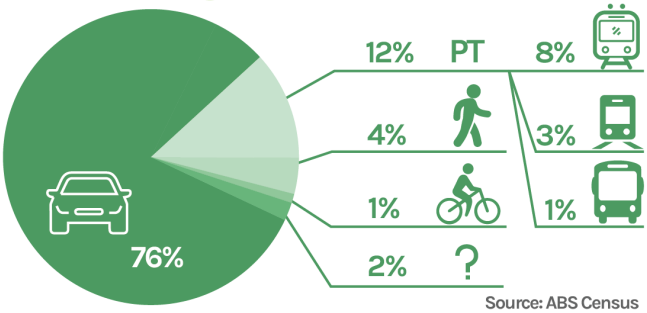


73% live in Whitehorse but work outside

27% live and work in the City of Whitehorse

Source: ABC Census

Travel in general



Source: ABS Census

Extensive footpaths but **poor cycling** infrastructure, only 0.9% of all trips are by bike

Source: VISTA Travel Survey

Residents are **10 times** more likely walk than ride a bike.

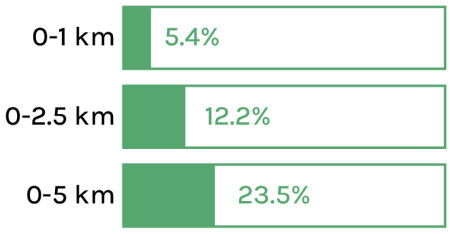
Source: VISTA Travel Survey

Females make shorter trips and are more likely to walk or take public transport compared to males

Travelling to work

82% of residents travel to work **by car**

Source: ABS Census



23.5% are **5km or less**

Source: ABS Census

1 in 8 trips to work are less than **2.5km**

Whitehorse is well serviced by public transport routes, however they are **INEFFICIENT** and **INFREQUENT**

Road safety

56% of crashes occurred on roads with speed limits of 60 - 70km/h

Nearly half of all crashes involving pedestrians or cyclists resulted in a fatality or serious injury.

Source: VicRoads

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Figure 1 Transport and demographics in Whitehorse

Whitehorse City Council is undertaking the development of a new Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) to replace the 2011 version. Since 2011, significant demographic, technological, and transport infrastructure initiatives have occurred. The new ITS is required to ensure Council is able to meet transport challenges associated with managing the population growth locally and across the region, and the associated transport movements through Whitehorse.

This strategy will develop priorities and actions for Public Transport, Road Safety, Walking, Cycling throughout Whitehorse, helping to ensure the city remains a liveable and enjoyable place for the decades to come.

Emerging transport challenges

Whitehorse faces several transport challenges over the coming decades, including:

- **Rising population growth and increased travel demand.** Whitehorse is projected to grow significantly over the coming decades. Housing targets and activity centre development will significantly increase the strain on the existing transport network.
- **High car dependency and parking pressures.** More than two-thirds of trips in Whitehorse are made by car, creating high demand for parking. Reducing trips by car will help to ease demand and create a safer road for everyone.
- **Parking and traffic congestion and road safety concerns.** Congestion is growing around activity centres, schools, and train stations, where more cars can create conflicts for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **The need to reduce transport emissions.** Transport emissions are the largest contributor to climate change after electricity generation, reducing these is essential to meeting national net-zero targets.

Over 80% of Whitehorse residents rely on the car as their main mode of transport to work. This has remained at the same level since 2011.

Promoting sustainable transport choices will help address these challenges and improve liveability.

Policy review and Council Plan integration

A review of Council and State government policies highlights a strong emphasis on:

- the need to grow sustainable transport use and reduce car dependency
- liveable, accessible neighbourhoods
- integrated land use and transport planning
- climate action and emissions reduction.

Why develop a new Integrated Transport Strategy?

The new ITS is an opportunity to create:

- a strong vision, that aligns with key themes included in the Council Plan
- an ambitious walking and cycling network that provides a compelling set of options for short to medium distance trips
- better integration between the active and public transport network
- a stronger connection between land use planning and transport, to lower trip distance and diversify transport options
- a powerful set of advocacy actions for improved public transport services
- measurable, outcome-driven targets to increase accountability
- opportunities for new transport technologies that were not available when the last ITS was written
- Improvement in road safety and a clear process for allocating road and kerbside space.

Existing transport network

Key observations about the current transport network include:

- acceptable walking coverage, but gaps in accessibility around major centres
- cycling infrastructure is limited due to various constraints
- public transport mode share is below Greater Melbourne averages
- Electric vehicle (EV) ownership is growing but remains in the early stages.

The Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) will significantly improve regional access, but local connections will require additional considerations and investment.

Community feedback

Previous community surveys have emphasised the need for:

- more transport options, especially for active and public transport.
- safer streets for walking and cycling.
- improved public spaces and low-traffic neighbourhoods.

Feedback suggests strong support for a more sustainable and accessible transport system.

Opportunities for transformation

Analysis identifies key opportunities for Whitehorse, including:

- delivering integrated SRL precincts with strong active transport links.
- expanding safe bike networks across the municipality.
- Designing for people-focused streets.
- enhancing bus services and integrating with cycling and walking routes.
- planning for increased EV charging infrastructure.

Scenarios for future transport

Three transport futures were explored as part of the background report:

- **business as usual**: continued car dominance, worsening congestion and more rat-running in local streets.
- **moderate change**: some improvements, but car reliance remains high.
- **sustainable change**: bold shift to active and public transport, delivering the best community, economic, and environmental outcomes.

Next steps

The development of the future Whitehorse ITS provides an opportunity to create a strategic blueprint to guide transport investment and policy decisions that work to enhance transport choice, sustainability and safety.

Like other LGAs, there has not been a significant shift towards sustainable forms of transport in Whitehorse over the last 15 years. This serves to highlight that more ambitious interventions are required to enable Council to achieve its goal for a safer, more sustainable transport system.

The existing policy context offers clear guidance regarding the need to achieve a mode shift in favour of sustainable transport options and enhancing the safety of the transport system.

The future ITS should be seen as an opportunity for achieving a safer, healthier, and more integrated set of transport options for Whitehorse.

Key issues and opportunities

Through the in-depth analysis of transport data, existing infrastructure and strategic documents, key issues and opportunities have been identified from the Background Report. Figure 2 provides a summary of the key issues/barriers as well as some key opportunities that have been identified as important to consider in the Whitehorse Integrated Transport Strategy. This is not exhaustive, nor conclusive.

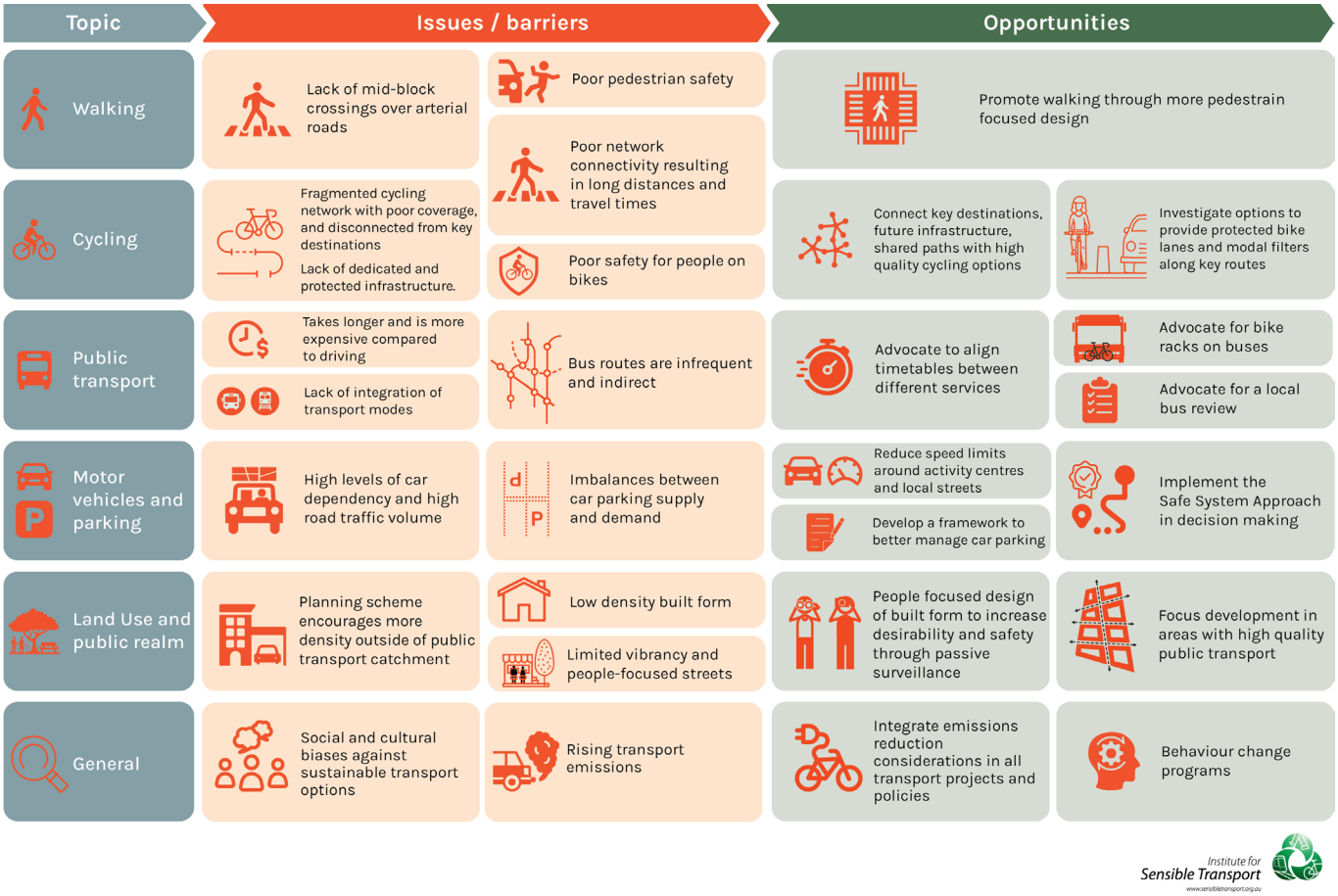

Figure 2 Key Issues and Opportunities

Source: Institute for Sensible Transport