

Active Travel Office
Transport Canberra
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2 June 2023

Dear Active Travel Office

RE: DRAFT DESIGN GUIDE AND ACT ACTIVE TRAVEL PLAN

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Design Guide for the draft ACT Active Travel Plan. ACTCOSS supports the implementation of the Active Travel Plan and Design Guide. Full and proper implementation of active travel infrastructure could be a key mechanism for reducing the cost of living in Canberra and improving transport equity. However, there are some accessibility concerns that must be considered.

In our recent [submission](#) to the Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Cost of Living pressures in the ACT, we highlighted a range of pressures on Canberrans' cost of living and ways the ACT Government can alleviate these. The costs of commuting, ferrying children to school and activities, and generally getting around also place significant financial pressure on people with low incomes.

The burden of ACT transport costs have been growing. Over the past five years (2017 – 2022), Canberra has experienced significant price increases for automotive fuel (37%) and transport (23%).¹ However, your mode of transport can have very different effects on your living costs. It is estimated that owning, running and maintaining one car in Canberra could cost between \$15,000 – \$20,000 a year.² For a family with two working parents and two children, catching public transport is likely to cost them around \$4,000 a year (if they don't go anywhere except work and school).³ In contrast, a second-hand bike can be as low as \$100, a new cheap commuter bike could be around \$500 and it costs around \$100 to get a bike serviced. A new electric bike could cost around \$4,000. Clearly, riding a bike is the cheapest mode of transport in Canberra.

However, our infrastructure does not enable everyone to cycle. Research shows that many people want to cycle, but do not feel like our paths and roads are safe enough to do so.⁴ This is particularly the case for women, children and other marginalised groups such as recent migrants. Investing in infrastructure that allows for safe active travel,

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Table 11. CPI: Group, Sub-group and Expenditure Class, Percentage change from previous quarter by Capital City](#), ABS website, reference period December Quarter 2022.

² Budget Direct, [Car Running Costs in Australia 2022](#), Budget Direct website, 2022; K Starmer, ['Is it worth owning a car in Canberra?'](#), *Riotact*, 12 April 2021.

³ Transport Canberra, [Fares](#), Transport Canberra website, n.d.

⁴ Pedal Power ACT, [Making Canberra a cycle friendly city](#), Pedal Power ACT website, 2023.

would enable more people to realistically choose this mode of transport and could significantly lower people's transport costs. To do so the ACT Government must invest in infrastructure that makes it easy and safe for people to cycle.

While ACTCOSS is supportive of the draft Active Travel Plan and Design Guide, we have heard from our members that there are some accessibility concerns that must also be addressed. Design planning for car-free or limited car access areas must take into consideration the needs of people with disabilities and/or mobility support requirements who are more likely to require car transport. Public transport, walking, bicycling and scooters may not be accessible to people who use wheelchairs, walking frames or other mobility equipment to get around. Public transport should be more accessible, and plans should be made to ensure that people with all levels of mobility have safe and easy access to facilities in areas that are car-free or have limited access for vehicles.

The integration of features such as kerb ramps, tactile paving and widened footpaths are positive for disability access. However, the designation of local streets as "low activity" meaning that paths are too narrow for two people to pass is likely to cause issues for people with mobility support needs. Many local streets in Canberra, particularly in older suburbs, have no footpaths, poorly maintained footpaths or footpaths that are frequently blocked or covered by branches, wheelie bins and electric scooters. For Canberra to become an accessible, walkable and cycle friendly city, it is essential that planning involves broad improvements to footpath access, design and maintenance that is inclusive of people with all levels of mobility and support requirements. Regarding accessibility and design planning standards for inclusion and safety for all Canberrans, ACTCOSS supports and endorses the submission made by Advocacy for Inclusion.

Overall, we agree with and echo calls for the ACT Government to commit to and plan for full implementation of the Design Guide and Active Travel Plan. Both these documents need to be fully funded and have timelines and targets. The ACT Government should also consider investing in and providing support for people on low incomes to access electric bikes. More information on this can be found in our [submission](#) and [testimony](#) at the Inquiry into electric vehicle (EV) adoption in the ACT. If we want to alleviate the cost of living, address climate change, improve our health and strive for transport equity, ensuring we build and maintain an accessible and cycle friendly city is essential.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Devin Bowles'.

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