

NEWSLETTER no 07

Early delivery of equitable and healthy transport options in new suburbs: Critical reforms and tools



Source: Google Maps and PSP Casey Fields

Welcome

Welcome to the seventh newsletter of the “Early delivery of equitable and healthy transport options in new suburbs: Critical reforms and tools” project. This internal newsletter is to update RMIT’s project partners on activities both undertaken and planned, and to report preliminary insights. This project is funded by RMIT’s Urban Futures Enabling Capabilities Platform, the Victorian Planning Authority, the City of Casey, the City of Wyndham and Stockland Corporation.

Activities this quarter

In the last few months the project team has focused on the modelling work and the analysis of the resident interviews. Like others, we have moved to working from home since mid-March, but are cooperating through online meetings, emails and via mobile phone. Work across the three work streams “Policy and process analysis”, “Funding approaches and modelling” and “Resident Research” has included:

- Resident Research: analysis of interviews; further analysis of the survey
- Modelling stream: further detailing work for a public and active transport model of low, medium and high quality, in relation to different stages in development for the active transport network
- Work on the ‘Funding Working Paper’
- Starting to prepare the project workshops and seminars in November.
- Participation in ‘Engaging for Impact’ at RMIT University in February, including the launch of the Australian Urban Observatory; as well as seminars and workshops on ‘Tackling Melbourne’s congestion’, ‘Lessons from Vancouver: Transport success and a new mobility agenda’, ‘Metro-bound Commuters and Regional Development’ and ‘Community Transport’.

Some preliminary insights from the resident interviews

Active Transport

Analysis of the interviews with 30 residents in Allura and Selandra Rise has shown that there is a difference in the perception and acceptance of infrastructure for walking/cycling for transport or for leisure which is connected strongly to walking and cycling within and outside the estate. Arguably connected to that is a difference in actual walking and cycling for transport and leisure, which can also be seen in the survey results. For example, the average time spent walking for transport in a week was 20 minutes in comparison to 115 minutes for walking for leisure.

Generally, foot and cycle paths within the estate are appreciated and seen as well used, whereas connections to outside the estate are seen as more critical.

“We used to cycle before the kids, and that was just around the area. (...) And I felt really safe doing that, considering I’m not a good bike rider. I felt safe that there were cycle lanes in our estate, so that was really good.” TD – Selandra Rise

“Footpaths are great, I would say. Everywhere there’s nice footpaths for people to walk on and I see people doing running on them as well.” CM – Selandra Rise

“There are lots of walking paths but because there’s so many new areas there’s a heap of areas that are just not connected yet, so you’ve got a footpath and then it just ends.” OZ – Selandra Rise

OZ – Selandra Rise

“So, I don’t do the footpaths or the connecting for parts over the road. It’s just too dangerous. There’s nothing there. It’s not safe enough to go across, so I don’t do it.” SB – Allura

"I try (...) to go by bike to work in Carrum Downs. In certain areas you have to fight with the cars; very scary with the trucks and everything, so I decided not to do that. I would not mind. I would go for it if there's a safe lane for bicycles."
US -Selandra Rise

Partly related to that are comments that there are no destinations to walk or cycle to.

"They're useful. I just... where I used to live in Ashburton, those cycle paths, they will connect you to places. (...) The paths here, yeah, they're great paths, but they don't lead anywhere. (...) So they advertise five kilometres of cycle paths, but where do they go?" KM – Selandra Rise

"I'm lucky I can walk to the commercial [area] here, it's only 250 meters. There's a gym, there's a couple of shops and a lot of food shops that opened up now. But then again, I don't really walk much there, because there's this Palmers Road that I have to cross, and there's no level crossing. (...) So where do I walk to? That's the question. What do I walk for? The nearest Woolies is 3.5 kilometres away." KS – Allura

However, other people also see good walking and cycling connections to shops. This is to some extent a difference between Selandra Rise and Allura, due to the difference in actual shops in proximity, but also a difference in perceptions and attitudes of people.

"I think they're pretty well connected to the shops. Depends what side you're on. If you're closer to the Woolies side, then I guess you go to the Woolies. (...) I think they're all pretty well connected, and it's safe to cross the roads." TD– Selandra Rise

One interviewee added that they think that the low uptake of cycling is also a cultural issue.

"I don't see a lot (of cyclists), because a lot of migrant communities are here, including myself. We're not much into cycling, going 15 kilometres to the city on a bicycle with gears, which we usually are not used to." KS – Allura

Some preliminary insights from the resident interviews - Travel to work

The impact of travel to work on the quality of life depends to some extent on the length of the commute, but also on other factors, such as the need to arrive on time (e.g. to work, or to pick up your child) or the attitude towards the mode of travel.

"For me it's good. I don't find it stressful. It's more like I feel like a time to myself to unwind. So, I just listen to music or watch something on the mobile." BK – Selandra Rise

"I'd rather be stuck in traffic than be on the train. (...) I don't really stress. (...) And it's not really a factor anymore because I get into work when I can. It's not like I have to be at work at 8:00. I clock in whenever. I'm unscheduled." KA – Allura

"It's probably the time consume because, well, we have kid now so then, it's not just the two of us, so we really need time to get to work on time and to leave work on time, and to get to pick up my kid on time as well, so... , it's all about the time." QK – Allura

A few interviewees reported being tired or exhausted from the commute and missing time for leisure.

"I am more tired when I get home, just from the drive home and traffic." CM – Selandra Rise

"I wish I had ... the travel was less, so that we could spend more time at home and with family." DE – Allura

"I used to (go for a walk) at the start, I don't any more, I just come home and collapse. I get too tired. I do enough, I'm on my feet enough during the day so I don't come home and start doing it as well." HH – Selandra Rise

One interviewee mentioned that they feel that socialising after work is more difficult.

"If we have some social functions after work, like Friday drinks or farewell drinks, I can't stay that long because I always, in my mind, I know the train service frequency is not that frequent at night time, I can't stay too long, I can't relax myself (...) I think it not only impacts my commute to work or from work back to the home, but also my social activities as well. I feel more isolated living this way." MG – Allura

Part of the difficulty of (longer) commutes is the unreliability and high difference in travel times. People needing to arrive at a certain time need to plan for longer travel times and might thus 'waste' time at their destinations or be stressed about arriving on time.

"Every day is completely different. (...) You never know how long it's going to take. (...) I allow a lot more time to travel, so at least an hour everywhere, anywhere and everywhere." BM – Allura

"I go by car now. (...) I used to take the bus, the train and then a bus to get to work. (...) They changed the (work) times (to 7am) (...) I had to get the early bus. If I missed that I'd be screwed,

so I ended up having to drive. (...) Yeah, well, I actually enjoyed catching bus and the train, because you could relax and not stress out with everyone else in the cars. (...) But it's just that you just couldn't rely on it." HH – Selandra Rise

Some also leave at different times to avoid congestion.

"I now go early morning and come back early afternoon. (...) and I'm on the freeways by 3:45, 3:50 in the morning. And then I just cruise control, can of coffee. 35, 40 minutes, 45 and I'm at work. (...) That was a deliberate adjustment." EW – Selandra Rise

"So, in order to avoid the traffic, I used to get out of home at around six o'clock to be at 8:30 at work. But still with the traffic, I'd still manage to get it right on time." VP – Selandra Rise

A few interviewees have changed their job after moving in order to avoid long commutes. Others would like to change their job but don't see the opportunity.

"Luckily, I've been able to change my work territory. I look after Geelong now, (...) so that's a lot easier. So, I had to change my job because of living here." BM – Allura

"So initially after moving here, I still worked at Mulgrave for the first three months. It was the hardest thing. I used to spend like four hours in the car, so that's the main push for me to change my job." DE – Allura

"But the sort of work that I do compared to what's available, it's mainly factory type work around here, or warehouse type work." HM – Allura

"A few years ago that job was made redundant so that's why I had to look for other jobs in the city because definitely a city has got more job opportunities compared with local areas, especially western suburbs." MG – Allura

International example – Auckland Transport Alignment Project

The Auckland Transport Alignment Project (ATAP) is an example of a joint strategy that aligns the transport priorities of central government and the regional council. Auckland has been rapidly growing in the last years and is forecasted to keep growing. Currently at about 1.7 million inhabitants it is projected to grow to about 2.3 million in 2043 (Stats NZ 2017). It also the fastest growing region in New Zealand. ATAP has the objective to address the transport challenges posed by the expected growth. ATAP is a joint transport project between the Auckland Council and the national government, defining their joint strategic approach to developing Auckland's transport system. The Auckland Council is a regional council comprised of formerly eight councils in the urban area. It is responsible for strategic, spatial and infrastructure planning and service delivery in the region to address the challenges of growth. It is New Zealand's first large urban unitary council (Cheyne 2018).

ATAP spells out specific transport priorities and projects from 2018 to 2028, with forecasted costs of about NZD 28 billion. These include projects for rapid transit; strategic roads; greenfield transport infrastructure; safety programmes; and, walking, cycling, bus and ferry improvements. The project reflects that transport choice is needed. Funding for ATAP comes from the National Land Transport Fund, Crown funding, rates and the Auckland Regional Fuel Tax. It is also acknowledged that traditional funding tools are not sufficient to meet transport needs and that innovative ways to secure additional investment need to be identified. This search is one of the next



ATAP - Proposed Rapid Transit Improvements

Source: ATAP: <https://www.transport.govt.nz/land/auckland/atap/>

steps for transport planning in the region. While ATAP focuses on capital investment, it acknowledges that it is also necessary to: use existing infrastructure more productively; to develop supportive regulatory, land-use and operational policies; and to explore the use of new technologies and investigate further policy options, such as road pricing.

The ATAP Package guides statutory planning processes, such as the Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) and the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP). The RLTP sets out the optimal timing and sequencing of projects given available funding and is developed by Auckland Transport (AT) together with the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) and KiwiRail.

A previous version of ATAP from 2016 has been updated in 2018 to take into account new population forecasts, and to also place a greater weight on public transport, walking and cycling, improving safety, and realising environmental, health and growth outcomes.

Overall, the ATAP is a good example of developing a comprehensive transport plan for a whole city region in collaboration across two government levels. Although New Zealand is not a federation, it is still a relevant example for Melbourne, because it shows that direct cooperation with the central government is necessary.

It is not entirely clear to what extent or whether there will be early provision of transport options in Auckland's growth areas, nonetheless there is a specific section in the project report for greenfield transport infrastructure with its own specific funding. While currently the larger projects mentioned in this section mainly refer to roads, in order to open the areas up to development, the awareness that public and active transport is crucial exists. The overall strategy emphasises that transport choice is necessary for Auckland's residents.

The funding for all projects specified in the ATAP has been committed and/or is planned for. While it is acknowledged that more investment would be better and there is the need to think about innovative ways of funding, the existing commitment is an important step and provides security that enables planning to go ahead for those projects.

As mentioned, part of the funding comes from a regional fuel tax. This fuel tax was introduced in July 2018, with a duration until June 2028. The tax is 10 cents (NZD) per litre on petrol and diesel and is paid by fuel distributors upon

delivery to service stations and commercial users. However, it is highly likely that at least part of this will be added to the price for consumers. The law allows the introduction of a regional fuel tax to raise additional funds for transport projects that would otherwise not be funded or would've been delayed. The revenue can only be used for transport projects that have been specified when introducing the tax.

Sources:

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- Auckland Council (2019) Our development strategy; available under <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/auckland-plan/development-strategy>
- NZTA (2020) Supporting Growth Programme; available under <https://nzta.govt.nz/projects/supporting-growth-programme/>
- NZTA (2020) National Land Transport Programme 2018-2021 – Regional Summaries – Auckland; available under <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/planning-and-investment/national-land-transport-programme/2018-21-nltp/regional-summaries/auckland/>

Miscellaneous

Australian Urban Observatory

The Australian Urban Observatory was successfully launched on 5 February 2020. It is a digital platform that shows liveability maps across Australia's 21 largest cities. It draws on over 8 years of policy-relevant research by the Healthy Liveable Cities Group, within the Centre for Urban Research at RMIT University. The Observatory maps key liveability indicators found to be associated with health and wellbeing. <https://auo.org.au>

This film provides a brief overview of the Observatory:

https://auo.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/What-is-AUO_Feb-20.mp4

For further questions please contact Melanie Davern, melanie.davern@rmit.edu.au

Liveability Report Scorecards

Team members Melanie Davern and Lucy Gunn have, together with their colleagues Alan Both and Carl Higgs, published an article in The Conversation on access to community services in Australia's regional cities. The article can be accessed here: <https://theconversation.com/the-average-regional-city-resident-lacks-good-access-to-two-thirds-of-community-services-and-liveability-suffers-131910>

This article is based on Liveability Report scorecards, which are available on the Australian Urban Observatory: <https://auo.org.au/measure/scorecards/>

Liveability and the COVID-19 pandemic

In another Conversation article Melanie Davern, Lucy Gunn and their colleagues Billie Giles-Corti and Hannah Badland discuss the how the COVID-19 pandemic and social isolation measures have highlighted the importance of neighbourhood liveability. The article refers to several indicators from the Australian Urban Observatory, such as local public open spaces. The article can be accessed here: <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-reminds-us-how-liveable-neighbourhoods-matter-for-our-well-being-135806>

Planned activities

- Work on modelling and funding approaches
- Further analysis of resident interviews in Selandra Rise and Allura
- Project Advisory Group: 20th May 2020 9.30-11.30 am. This will probably be held as an online meeting; details to come.
- Planned workshops and seminars (save the date):
 - * Wed 18 November: Project Partner Workshop 1 (at RMIT)
 - * Tue 24 November: Local Government Activity 1 (Casey)
 - * Thurs 26 November: Local Government Activity 2 (Wyndham)
 - * Wed 2 December: Project Partner Workshop 2 (at RMIT)

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