



Engagement Report Mildura CBD **Access and Mobility Strategy**

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1. Introduction

Mildura Rural City Council has commissioned the development of a *Mildura CBD Access and Mobility Strategy*. An important first step in the development of this Strategy is engaging with the Mildura community. A set of engagement activities have been undertaken in order to gauge the views of both professional and community stakeholders regarding transport issues.

This is the first round of engagement built into the development of the *Mildura CBD Access and Mobility Strategy*. Once a draft Strategy has been developed, another round of engagement will occur. The second round of engagement will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to offer feedback, ask questions and help ensure the Strategy is capable of meeting Mildura's aspirations to become a more sustainable, healthier township.

An earlier *Policy Review and Data Analysis Report* provided an overview of the policy context and an examination of the existing travel data relevant to the Mildura CBD.

This consultation process occurred during the Council caretaker period. Consultation with Councillors will occur once Councillors have completed their induction.

1.1 What was involved?

Two types of engagement have been conducted as part of this first round of consultation:

1. Professional stakeholder engagement, with those working within Council, State Government, as well as business and non government organisations based in Mildura.
2. Community engagement, via an online survey distributed via social networks, local media and professional networks.

Our approach to the project due to COVID-19

The COVID-19 Pandemic had an impact on the engagement activities carried out as part of this project. When this project was conceived, prior to Victoria's second wave, it was anticipated that face to face engagement would be possible. This changed once it became clear that the scale of COVID-19 required greater physical distancing to limit the spread of the virus.

Face to face engagement was replaced with workshops held via video conference and intercept surveys replaced with online surveys.

Box 1 Our approach due to COVID-19

2. Professional Stakeholder Engagement

Several steering committee workshops were held as part of this first round of engagement. These workshops were facilitated by the Institute for Sensible Transport and run using a video conference platform, due to COVID-19.

Workshops were held with the groups identified in Figure 1.

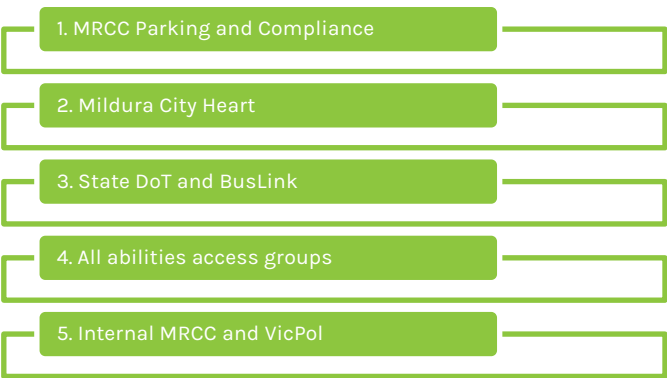


Figure 1 Workshop groups

2.1 Objectives of workshops

The workshops had two key objectives:

- 1. For participants to be informed of the *Mildura CBD Access and Mobility Strategy* project, and its overarching purpose.
- 2. For the Institute for Sensible Transport to gain insight into the issues, challenges and opportunities participants see in helping Mildura transition towards a more sustainable, liveable and healthy CBD and a more diversified transport system.

The balance of time was heavily weighted towards the second objective.

2.2 Key themes

The key themes to emerge from the facilitated discussion, across the groups listed in Figure 1 have been distilled below. It should be noted that at this stage of project it is not necessary or useful to

reach a determination of the ‘right’ course of action on any of the issues raised, but rather to identify and briefly discuss the issue. All issues raised will be carefully considered by the team developing the Strategy as the project moves towards draft Strategy status.

2.2.1 Car dependence

Participants understood that Mildura is a car dependent community with a strong cultural attachment to the motor vehicle as the dominant mode of transport. It was acknowledged that more needed to be done to encourage a diversification of the transport system, in which conditions for walking, cycling and public transport are enhanced, in order to create a more compelling option for these modes.

2.2.2 Vehicle speed

The different speed limits in the CBD was highlighted as an issue for some participants. In particular, the change between 40km/h, 50km/h and 60km/h was considered to occur without sufficient predictability and harmonising speed limits to a lower speed within the CBD was a relatively consistent theme in the discussions. It was mentioned that Council had applied for the CBD to be one 30km/h zone, but that this was rejected by VicRoads at the time.

2.2.3 Barriers to active transport

A common topic of discussion was the existing barriers to walking and cycling. This included limited bicycle infrastructure, poor crossing environment for pedestrians, a lack of shade and pedestrian priority. Bike lanes ending abruptly was frequently mentioned. Overall, the current environment within and leading to the CBD was considered a deterrent for people who might otherwise be interested in cycling.

The crossing opportunities across Deakin Avenue was consistently identified as a barrier to the walkability of the CBD. Many participants mentioned that it was not possible to cross safely in one light sequence and pedestrians were forced

to either wait for extended periods in the centre median (without shade) or cross against the lights. Additionally, the high number of trucks using Deakin Avenue was identified as detracting from its urban amenity potential.

Enhanced wayfinding possibilities were identified, included an overall wayfinding system that provided directional, distance and time guidance for those on foot or cycle.

2.2.4 Barriers to public transport

Several issues were identified that currently limit the attractiveness of bus usage, including:

- No central bus interchange in which passengers are able to connect to all other bus services. The KMART car parking was identified as a potential central bus interchange.
- A lack of frequency and coverage which limits the useability of the bus network and many new developments have no bus service.
- The last bus review was conducted more than 20 years ago.
- Young people report that bus services at night are poor and that services to LaTrobe University and the TAFE are very limited.
- No MYKI facilities on buses, which are currently not taking fares, due to COVID-19 concerns regarding cash.
- Tour bus companies would like better options for pick up and drop offs.
- Enhanced DDA compliance for bus stop design and the ability of buses to accommodate those with different mobility needs.
- An on-demand bus service was identified as something that may provide better mobility options for those unable to walk longer distances.
- Bus signage was considered to not be sufficiently differentiated from other town signage which may reduce people's awareness of bus services.

2.2.5 Enhanced connection between the CBD and the River

Many participants mentioned that the CBD and the River do not function as a connected space and this was an issue that detracts from the quality of space within the CBD and parkland around the River. Activating the train station area was also considered a potentially useful project to encourage a stronger connection with the CBD.

2.2.6 Urban design

Many participants mentioned features of the urban realm that could be improved to enhance the vibrancy and all age accessibility of the CBD. This included enhancement to the following:

- Shade. A greater use of trees to provide shade to pedestrians, given Mildura's warm weather.
- Street furniture, such as seating and water fountains, to make walking more comfortable, especially for Mildura's ageing population. Seating that is age friendly was specifically identified as being more popular, by all users, not just older residents.
- Smoothness of footpaths, to enable those with reduced mobility to be able to walk and use mobility aids safely.
- Integrating water into urban design will help to reduce the impact of Mildura's summer weather.

2.2.7 Motorised scooters

An unexpected item of discussion was the prevalence of motorised scooters and in particular, the at times fast pace and potential danger posed to pedestrians. Instances in which pedestrians had been hit by a motorised scooter were cited. In addition to riding on the footpath, some participants noted that motorised scooters use the bicycle lanes. The 45 degree angle parking that is prevalent within the CBD was noted as a particular danger for those using motorised scooters.

2.2.8 The Mall

Many participants highlighted the ongoing debate surrounding the future of the Mall. It was generally agreed that more could be done to activate the Mall and help increase its vibrancy. The potential for the Mall to be a hospitality venue for alfresco dining was discussed. It was noted there is an ongoing debate as to whether the Mall should be removed and replaced with a standard street for vehicle traffic and car parking. Options will be assessed, and recommendations made as part of the draft Strategy.

2.2.9 Parking

Parking consistently emerged as a frustrating issue for participants. Within this important subtopic included a variety of issues, including:

- Unrealistic expectations: A number of participants, across several of the workshops reported that there is an expectation that people should be able to find a park directly outside their intended destination. It was acknowledged that this may be an unrealistic expectation but one that is firmly held.
- All day parking for workers within the CBD. Many participants said it was difficult to reliably access all day parking in the CBD within a very short walk to their workplace. Some participants mentioned that parking is beginning to ‘overflow’ into residential streets within and bordering on the CBD. It was widely suspected that staff often park outside their shop, which has the effect of limiting customer parking opportunities. It was considered commonplace for workers to move their vehicles every two hours.
- The issue of paid parking was discussed but no clear consensus emerged in terms of the merits of introducing fees for parking. It was noted that previously commissioned parking investigations had recommended paid parking, and other towns in the region had paid parking (e.g. Swan Hill).
- New developments not installing sufficient car parking. As Mildura continues to undergo urban intensification within the CBD, it was widely

anticipated that there will be growing competition for on street parking. Many participants, especially those from MRCC noted that developers are not providing what they see as ‘enough’ parking to accommodate the demand generated by the development. There was a view that a *cash in lieu* scheme may help resolve this, whereby a developer not providing the parking stipulated by the Planning Scheme pay the council a fee. This is currently not possible and would require changes to the Developer Contributions Plan.

- Time limits. There was a tension between time limited parking based on the needs of specific businesses versus the needs of the area in general. For instance, a dry cleaner may wish to have a set of 15 minute bays outside their premises, whereas a restaurant may wish to have 2 hour parking.

Additionally, the introduction of time limits has made it more difficult for residents to park outside their home in some instances. Mildura has no permit system for parking.

- Participants were asked about disabled access car parking and it was considered that the supply of this parking is appropriate to demand. The ratio of one in 51 car parks is currently being met. While the supply of disabled parking is generally considered to be sufficient, the quality can sometimes be insufficient. Specifically, the kerb ramp is sometimes missing and where two spots are located together, the gap between them is insufficient, as doors need to be opened wide for occupants to enter and exit their vehicle.

2.2.10 Visitors and RV friendly facilities

Encouraging visitors to Mildura and the need to provide convenient facilities was a consistent issue to emerge from the workshop discussions. This included a need to provide parking for longer vehicles and the need for Recreational Vehicle (RV) facilities within a convenient location.

3. Community engagement: Online surveys

Understanding community views on transport is a crucial step in the development of the *Mildura CBD Access and Mobility Strategy*.

3.1 What we did

An online survey was developed using Survey Monkey and via an iterative process with Council, the survey was refined, and a final version developed and tested. The survey was promoted using a variety of Council’s social media channels, as well as local press.

The survey included a range of questions regarding people’s relationship to the CBD, their travel mode/s, preference and barriers to travelling by active or public transport. In addition, a range of demographic information was collected.

The survey was open for the month of October.

3.2 Results

A total of 67 responses were received. The following provides an overview of pertinent results.

3.2.1 Respondents’ relationship to the CBD

Participants were asked to identify what best describes their relationship with the CBD. The results are shown below, where just under two thirds identify as a local resident who worked outside the CBD.

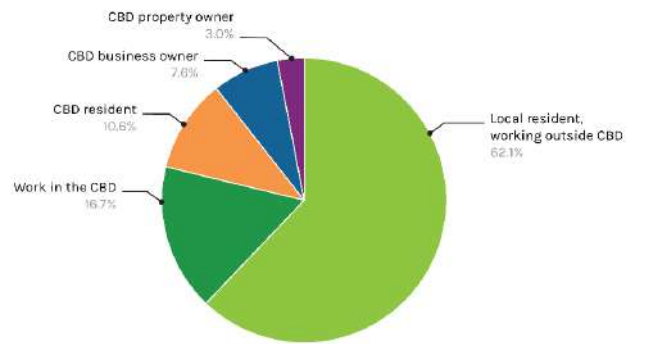


Figure 2 Relationship with the CBD

When asked why people visit the CBD, shopping was the most common response, with just over one third indicating it as their main reason for visiting, as shown in Figure 3. This was followed by leisure and social, with around one quarter of respondents selecting this option.

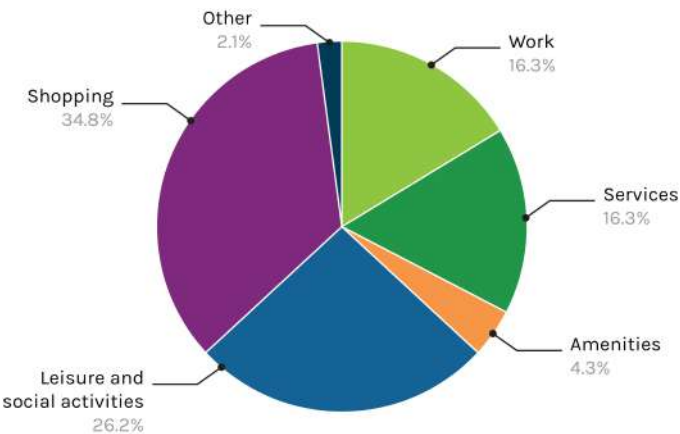


Figure 3 Why people visit the CBD

In terms of respondents’ frequency of visiting the CBD, just under half (44%) say they visit daily, and the second most common category being ‘multiple times a week’, at 30%, as shown in Figure 4. It is possible that those who visit the CBD the most frequently are more likely to choose to respond to a survey about transport in the CBD, so it should not be assumed that these results are necessarily representative of CBD users more generally.

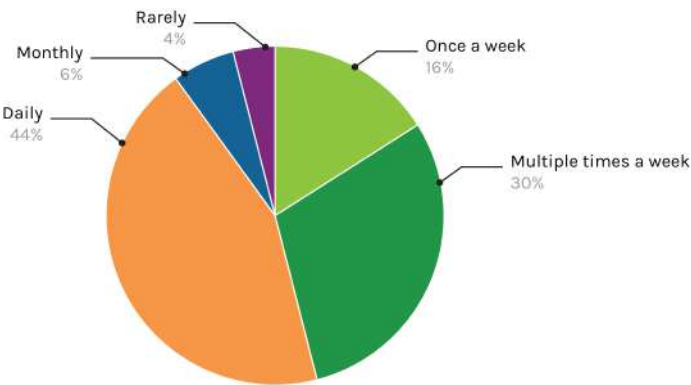


Figure 4 Frequency of visiting the CBD

3.2.2 How do people travel to the CBD?

Participants were asked how they typically travel to the CBD, with the results shown in Figure 5. It broadly aligns with ABS Census data, showing that

around 85% of all those visiting the CBD travel by car. Walking is shown to be a significant mode of transport, accounting for 12% of trips.

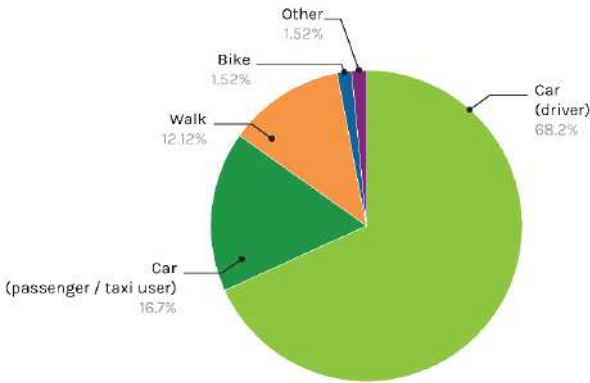


Figure 5 How people typically travel to the CBD

The mode share for journeys to the CBD have also been analysed in terms of the category of CBD user (those that work in the CBD, CBD residents and local resident working outside the CBD). The results, shown in Figure 6, highlight significant differences in mode choice based on their category. Those working in the CBD travel by car far more than the other categories. For those residing in the CBD, walking is just as common as driving, at 43%.

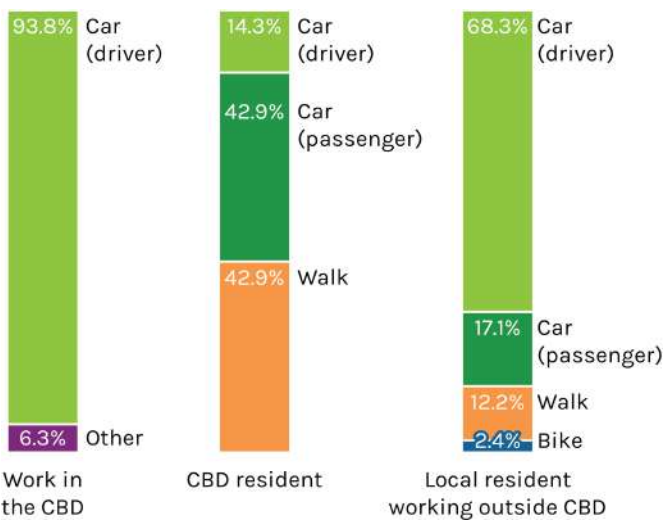


Figure 6 Travel mode based on their relationship with the CBD

3.2.3 Understanding why people drive

One of the overarching objectives of the *Mildura CBD Access and Mobility Strategy* is to make it easier for people to choose sustainable modes of transport. It is therefore necessary to understand why people say they drive. The results to this question are shown in Figure 7 and indicate that ‘convenience/quickest’ is the most common reason people say they drive. ‘Just like to drive’ was the second most common response. In combination, these two options accounted for around 61% of responses.

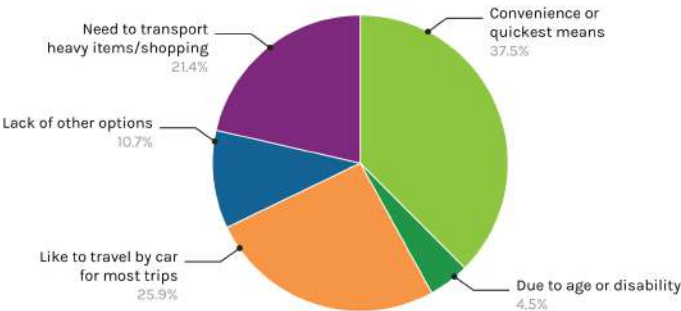


Figure 7 Why people drive

3.2.4 Parking

Preliminary material reviewed at an early stage of this project revealed that car parking is a major issue in the Mildura CBD, as it is in all major townships in which almost all trips are by car. A series of questions were asked of those who indicate that they use the car to access the CBD.

Participants were asked how difficult they find it to locate a car park when in the CBD, on a scale of one to 10, with the results presented in Figure 8. The results show that only a minority of people consider this task to be very difficult, with 60% of respondents rating the difficulty as no more than 6/10, and more than a fifth saying the difficulty is a 1 or 2 out of ten.

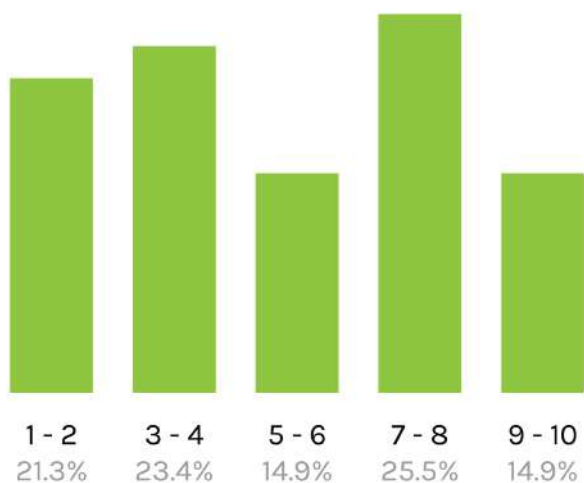


Figure 8 How difficult is it to find a parking spots in the CBD?

Participants were asked whether they prefer on or off street parking, with a clear majority saying their preference was for *on-street parking*, as shown in Figure 9. In essence, three quarters of respondents said they preferred on-street parking.

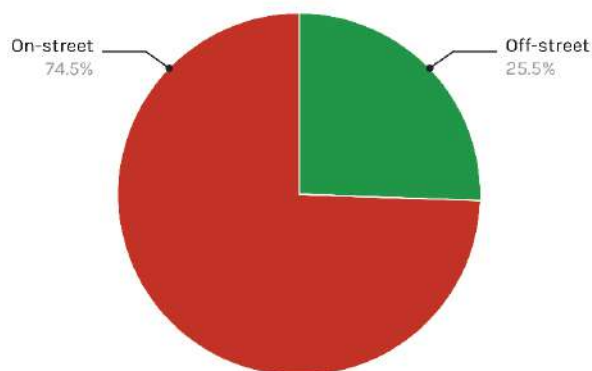


Figure 9 What type of parking do you prefer?

The survey sought to identify why people preferred on-street parking, with results shown in Figure 10. Respondents were able to select any of the options that apply, the most popular being that they would be closest to their desired destination (34.7%). Most convenient (26.4%) was the second most popular answer.

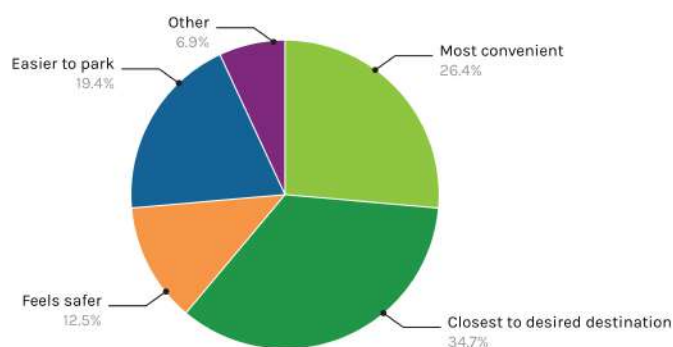


Figure 10 Why do you prefer on-street parking?

Respondents were also asked whether they vary the time of day they drive into the CBD in order to avoid parking difficulty. Figure 11 shows the results to this question, which indicate that just under 13% say they 'always' vary the time they visit the CBD due to parking difficulties. More commonly, people do not vary the time they travel to the CBD in order to avoid parking issues. It appears more common (a third of all respondents) for people to drive to the CBD at their preferred time, without being concerned with finding a park.

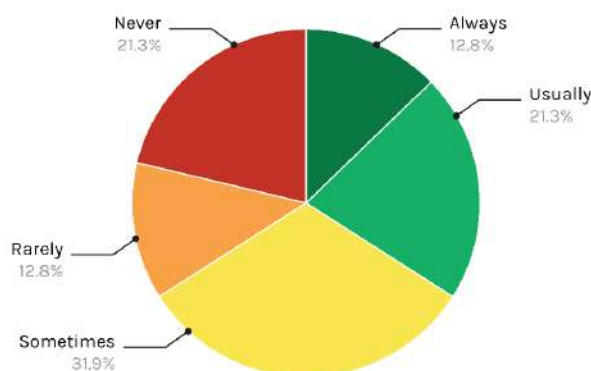


Figure 11 Do you vary when you drive to the CBD due to parking issues?

Participants in the survey were also asked about their views on paid parking. Before presenting the results, it is important to identify that the author is not aware of any study in which the public were in favour of introducing paid parking. It is universally unpopular and is considered a '*grudge purchase*' (i.e. it brings no satisfaction and is only paid in order to be compliant). As expected, respondents said they were overwhelmingly unwilling to begin paying for parking, even if it made it easier to find a spot. Figure 12 provides the results, showing that over

two thirds of respondents would *definitely not* be willing to pay for parking, and a further 21.3% *probably not* willing. Indeed only 4.3% said *definitely* yes, and a similar proportion *unsure*. Again, these results are likely to be similar to what other towns might find prior to the introduction of paid parking. When people have been receiving something for ‘free’, it is typically difficult for them to agree that it would be beneficial to pay for the same product or service, and parking would appear no different in this regard.

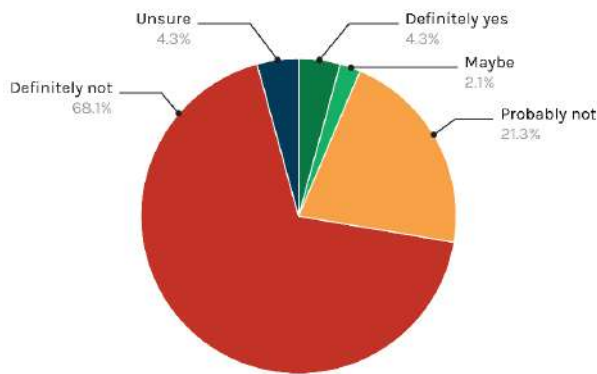


Figure 12 Would you be willing to pay for car parking?

3.2.5 Barriers to sustainable transport

Respondents who indicated that they typically travel to the CBD by car (most respondents) were asked what barriers prevent them from using other modes of transport. The following subsections provide the results to this series of questions.

3.2.5.1 Barriers to walking

Respondents were provided with eight potential barriers to walking, and the results are shown in Figure 13. The following three barriers received the strongest response:

1. Would take too long/too far
2. Need to transport heavy items/shopping
3. Too hot in summer.

Taking *too long/too far* was a significantly more common barrier than the others, which is perhaps unsurprising given that walking is the lowest mode

of transport, and relative to the motor vehicle, is likely to take longer than using a motor vehicle.



Figure 13 Barriers to walking

3.2.5.2 Barriers to cycling

Barriers to cycling were identified from a selection of options, as identified in Figure 14. These results show that three categories of responses all bunched together as the most common. These common barriers were:

1. Too hot in summer
2. Would take too long/too far
3. Need to transport heavy items/shopping.



Figure 14 Barriers to cycling

The weakest barriers, according to the results of this sample were:

1. Lack of end-of-trip facilities
2. Lack of on-road protected cycling infrastructure
3. Too cold in winter.

Whilst not intending to dismiss the responses received, it is important to identify the inherent limitations of asking a car dependent community

about barriers to cycling. The results conflict with the known barriers to cycling from larger studies (CDM Research & ASDF Research, 2017; Heinen, Maat, & van Wee, 2011a, 2011b), which have found that safety concerns, and the need for protected bike lanes are the major issue reducing people’s willingness to cycle. Similarly, given that many of the respondents travelled to the CBD each day, it would seem unlikely that they consistently carry such large items that cannot be carried on a bicycle. Finally, while it is certainly true that there are some trips that are beyond a comfortable cycling distance, the data reviewed in the earlier *Policy and Data Analysis Report* found that a majority of trips are under 5km, which is generally considered achievable by bike for able bodied individuals.

3.2.5.3 Barriers to public transport

Barriers to using public transport are shown in Figure 15. The most common barriers include:

- 1. Need to transport heavy items/shopping
- 2. Bus routes are indirect
- 3. Bus stops are too far from home.

There were not substantial differences among the barriers identified, as shown in Figure 15.

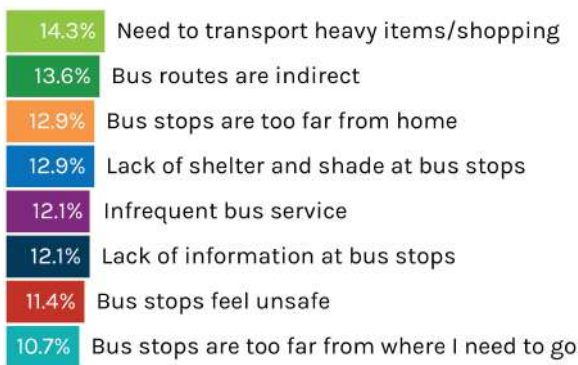


Figure 15 Barriers to public transport

Results indicate that Mildura’s public transport has limited network coverage which makes carrying heavy items/shopping more difficult for some trips.

3.2.6 Facilitating greater use of sustainable transport

As highlighted earlier, one of the central objectives for the development of the *Mildura CBD Access and Mobility Strategy* is to achieve higher levels of walking, cycling and public transport. With this in mind, respondents were asked what would need to change in order to consider using these modes of transport in order to travel to/within the Mildura CBD.

For each of the following three graphs, the responses are categorised into one of five possible options:

- Red: ‘Not at all’
- Orange: ‘Not really’
- Yellow: ‘Unsure’
- Light blue: ‘Likely’
- Dark blue: ‘Very likely’.

Figure 16 provides the results to the question of what factors would encourage more walking. The results are surprising, as they do not accord with the main barriers to walking established in the literature. For instance, *better street lighting* was the equal highest response, in the ‘very likely’ category, even though the majority of transport trips occur during daylight hours. Safer crossing points and more direct routes usually score higher than they did in this survey. Nevertheless, the results provide useful guidance as this project moves towards the development of recommendations.

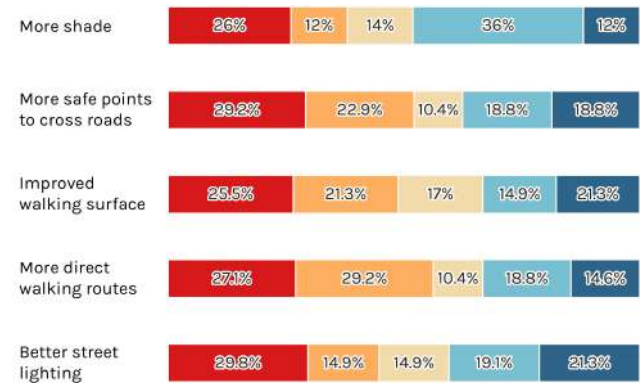


Figure 16 Facilitators to walking

Respondents were also asked about what they see as helping to support their decision to cycle more for trips to the CBD. Figure 17 shows that the most popular options were more bike parking and more off-road paths. Few people thought more traffic calmed, slow speed streets would encourage them to cycle. Again, many of these results do not align with the established literature of barriers and facilitators to cycling. One possible interpretation of these results is that they have been analysed by the respondents with a 'motorists viewpoint'. Rather than seeing cycling as a realistic option for themselves, the respondent has provided their answers in terms of what would impact them the least, as *motorists*. This might help explain why the two top responses were parking and off-road paths, which are both options that present negligible to no impact on motoring. Supporting this interpretation is the fact that the site assessment revealed there is an abundance of bike parking relative to demand.

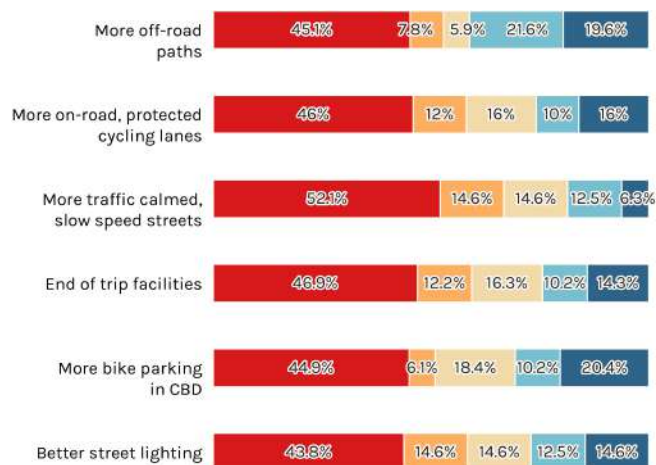


Figure 17 Facilitators for cycling

Figure 18 provides the results to the question to what degree the factors listed in the graph would encourage people to use buses more. There were no clear standouts, but a number of options received relatively strong support, including:

- Live updates of arrival times
- MYKI ticketing.

In a similar manner to some of the other questions, it would appear that the results shown in Figure 18 conflict with known barriers and facilitators to bus

usage. The literature has found that more frequent, direct routes are two of the most effective mechanisms to increase ridership. Yet in this survey, both these responses had the lowest percentage of people saying these options would be *very likely* to encourage them to use the bus service in Mildura.

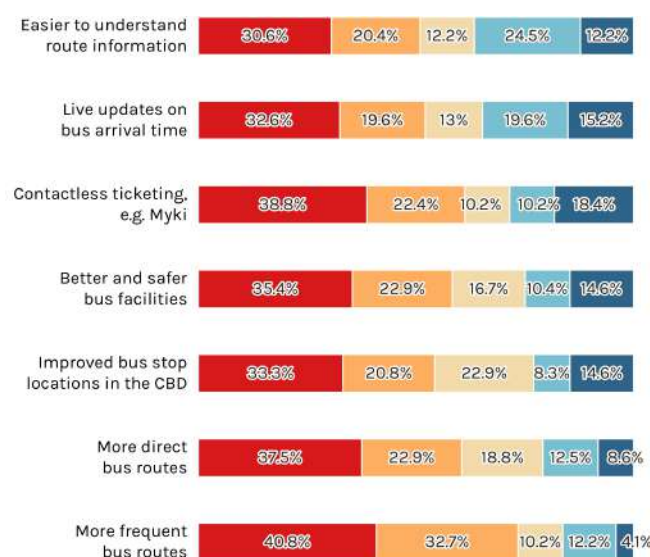


Figure 18 Facilitators to public transport

4. Implications

The results of this first round of engagement have a number of implications for the development of the Mildura CBD Access and Mobility Strategy. These are summarised below.

4.1 Car parking

People have strongly held views about car parking and the issues related to supply and demand. It is likely that any recommendation associated with paid parking will be met with strong opposition. Indeed, it is likely that any change to parking, other than the increase in supply of parking at no cost to the user will be met with opposition.

4.2 Understanding perceptions of barriers to sustainable mobility

It is clear, especially from the community survey, that there are strongly held beliefs regarding barriers to walking and cycling. Issues associated with distance, heat and carrying heavy/large items are front of mind when people are asked to consider more sustainable modes of travel. The implication of these results for the development of the Strategy is that there will need to be a focus on converting short trips to walking and cycling.

The engagement process has also identified a number of facilitators to more sustainable mobility, which will be investigated in more detail as the project progresses.

For public transport, making it as convenient as possible will need to be central to service improvements. The possibility of consolidating bus stops so that transferring between modes is as easy as possible may be an important step in this direction. Recommendations focused on better coverage and more direct routes are also likely to enhance the value proposition for bus use.

5. References

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