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New Transport Plan for Brisbane  
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Dear Project Team

## **Heart Foundation response to the New Transport Plan for Brisbane**

The Heart Foundation regularly provides feedback to Brisbane City Council and projects within the Council area and now welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the New Transport Plan for Brisbane. We acknowledge a lot of good work and consultation has gone into this New Transport Plan for Brisbane. The Heart Foundation's key responses for the Plan are to:

- Support health and wellbeing as a key consideration across the Plan; and
- Acknowledge the priority now given to active transport, walking, cycling and public transport use, so that active journeys are easy and safe choices through connected infrastructure planning, for the thousands of residents, workers and visitors expected to live, learn, work and recreate in Brisbane.

Further details about these points are provided below.

### **Health and wellbeing as a key consideration across the Plan**

After reviewing the New Transport Plan for Brisbane, it is positive to see pedestrian priority, active transport and improved liveability as key elements in the vision for the Plan. Transport planning has significant impacts on health and wellbeing and a person's health behaviour is influenced by the physical and social environments in which they live, learn, work and play.

Planning and transport policy historically has overlooked health and wellbeing as significant outcomes and yet these decisions significantly impact the health and wellbeing of our communities over the short, medium and longer term. The impact of less active transport is generally not considered as a health problem by planners<sup>1</sup> and yet the impact on our society is clear with sedentary lifestyles and the consequent obesity epidemic which impact negatively on many chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and mental health.

Health and wellbeing must be an integral consideration in all transport projects in order to counter the mega trends of increasing levels of physical inactivity and obesity in our population and the resultant poor health outcomes, including increased disability, hospitalisations, costs to our community (through direct health care costs and lost productivity) and premature death. The number of overweight or obese adults has increased by about 55,000 each year on average in Queensland since 1993<sup>2</sup>, in part due to poor land use and transport planning of the past.

Car dependent and sedentary behaviours are significant contributing factors to the prevalence of preventable chronic disease. The built environments in which we live, learn, work and play need to be conducive to healthy active living<sup>3</sup>. We wish to congratulate

Council on the Plan taking a bold strategic forward planning approach. We acknowledge this is a significant change in vision from Council's current car centric prioritisation, ahead of people who move about actively, by walking, cycling or using public transport.

The Heart Foundation is particularly interested in ensuring the following considerations for the New Transport Plan for Brisbane are seamlessly integrated to become a reality:

- **Local access** - to support residential density, intensity of land-use and active transport networks to support local businesses, employment, education, cultural and recreational opportunities and frequent accessible, affordable public transport, including the Metro network, a Cross River Rail solution and CityCycle.
- **Co-location** - to encourage groupings of key destination points within close proximity of each other to improve accessibility, integrated facilities and multiple uses of space and supportive travel networks.
- **Traffic management** - to manage vehicle traffic to provide safe environments for people who are walking, cycling or catching public transport (e.g. reduced speed limits 30kph or significantly less if parts of the movement network are public shared zones with significant pedestrian or cyclist focus).
- **Welcoming paths** - to provide an accessible, attractive and welcoming street scape, with well maintained, connected, wide, shaded footpaths and cycling paths for all users.
- **Connected streets and linked communities** - to create connected street networks that allow pedestrians or cyclists to take more direct routes to and from destinations.
- **Community safety** - to create streetscape where people feel safe to take active journeys to their local destinations without fear of criminal activity.
- **Parking** – providing a balanced approach to parking across Council. Prioritising active transport will eventually mean less demand for parking. Using a 'carrot and stick' approach means that disincentives need to be developed for car use and parking across the Council area.

### **Active transport as a priority**

The Heart Foundation strongly promotes the evidence that increasing participation in active travel not only improves population health (especially physical activity), it also has the potential to demonstrate cross sector benefits through impacts on relieving traffic congestion, reducing pollution and carbon emissions, improving road and pedestrian safety and upgrading urban amenities. As such, it is important that this Transport Plan follows through on making active journeys the easy and safe choice through connected infrastructure planning, for the thousands of residents, workers, students, shoppers and visitors expected to live, learn, work and recreate in Brisbane.

Physical inactivity is a major health problem, independent of whether someone is a healthy weight, overweight or obese. Disturbingly, Queensland adults are 5-10% less active than other Australians, with 39% not achieving sufficient physical activity to gain health benefits. Physical inactivity:

- costs the health budget an estimated \$1.5bn a year<sup>2</sup>;
- causes 16,000 premature deaths a year<sup>4</sup>;
- increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, colon and breast cancer; and
- is a critical factor in Queensland's obesity epidemic, with 2 in 3 Queensland adults measured as being overweight or obese<sup>2</sup>.

Active transport helps build physical activity into everyday lives. Active travel can be stimulated by creating and retrofitting urban areas through<sup>5</sup>:

- planning and designing healthy, active communities;
- investing in active travel infrastructure including safe connected street networks;
- connecting local destinations, educational institutions and public transport facilities;
- footpaths with seating, lighting and shade;
- separated connected cycle paths and lanes; and
- through better prioritisation and integration of these strategies.

Public transport is important to active lifestyles. People who use public transport spend significantly more time walking than those who drive cars to work. One Melbourne study found those who used public transport on average spent 41 minutes walking and/or cycling as part of their journey compared with an average of just 8 minutes for those who used private transport<sup>6</sup>. With our City Centre expecting 80% increase in public transport journeys over the next 20 years, it will be increasingly important that the Transport Plan interfaces with current and future public transport modes that are affordable and time efficient.

Now that the Cross River Rail Project is in the pipeline, it will be important the Transport Plan is able to consider the thousands of disembarking passengers from the future stations. We know from being involved in the previous Cross River Rail stakeholder groups there will be the need for dispersion strategies and infrastructure to accommodate the increased pedestrian flow. The Albert Street Vision, proposed key mid-block pedestrian connections and shared zones within the Queen's Wharf Precinct and other Precincts, will be vital for this increased flow, as will the improved public realm and key locations highlighted throughout the City Centre Neighbourhood Plan.

With the City Centre expecting a doubling of pedestrian trips over the next 20 years, as stated in the Plan, the proposed amendments to support streetscape improvements in conjunction with the City Centre Neighbourhood Plan seem like a good step forward to establish a consistent, legitimate space in the CBD for pedestrians. We were particularly pleased to see the verge width updated to five meters, in most cases and the commitment to create vibrant, high quality, and pedestrian-scale streetscapes to encourage physical activity.

We commend the team on the alignment of the Plan with the Brisbane Vision 2031, where pedestrian permeability is a high priority to include safe, comfort pathways, friendly retail frontages, the inclusion of scatter crossings, easy connected navigation, lighting and active spaces. An extensive international review of evaluations of walking environments in 2011 by the University of the West of England showed positive cost benefit ratios of up to 37.6.<sup>7</sup> Compared with other transport projects, investments in walking were found to be excellent value for money. The highest value for money transport projects were smarter choices, cycle and pedestrian schemes, local safety schemes and some bus schemes. This suggests investing in walking environments and walkability is likely to be at least, if not better, value for money than other transport projects.

It is increasingly the case that not only are modern cities around the world embracing changes to favour active transport, but these changes also result in more economically competitive, productive and liveable environments<sup>8</sup>. With a looming crisis in (physical inactivity-related) chronic disease being compounded by a massive demographic shift to an ageing population, achieving healthy communities that are inclusive and encourage healthy ageing must be a primary concern for any government project that is serious about laying a sensible framework for the future of Queensland. We commend the team in incorporating these considerations in the Transport Plan and look forward to their implementation.

In summary, the Heart Foundation has identified some promising elements in the proposed Transport Plan. However, we find it concerning that there is little detail regarding the measurement of progress towards the outcomes for the Plan. It is our recommendation that this is rectified now before the Plan is initiated by establishing Action Plans that are adequately resourced and funded, with measurable quantitative outcomes. With the data then comes the ability to align transport policies with comprehensive assessments of the benefits and costs of active transport.

We understand this Transport Plan will feed into an Active Travel Network Plan and we are available to be part of the consultation for this plan.

We urge the team to continue to collaborate with other Government agencies and leading organisations so planning and approval mechanisms enhance active, healthy environments and do not diminish health and wellbeing in any way in the pursuit of efficiencies to streamline processes or produce extravagant infrastructure.

Yours sincerely



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## References

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<sup>2</sup> Queensland Health. *The health of Queenslanders 2016. Sixth report of the Chief Health Officer Queensland*. Queensland Government. Brisbane 2016

<sup>3</sup> National Heart Foundation (2014) *Does Density matter? The role of density in creating walkable neighbourhoods. Discussion Paper*

<sup>4</sup> Medibank Private, Econtech and KPMG (2008) *Cost of Physical Inactivity, 2<sup>nd</sup> Report*

<sup>5</sup> National Heart Foundation of Australia (2014). *Blueprint for an active Australia. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn*. Melbourne: National Heart Foundation of Australia.

<sup>6</sup> Bus Association of Victoria (2010). *Briefing paper: Public Transport Use – A Ticket to Health*

<sup>7</sup> *Making the Case for Walking: A Review of the Evidence* (2011). University of the West of England (Bristol) and Cavill Associates for Living Streets.

<sup>8</sup> Tolley, R. (2011). Good for Busine\$\$\$. The benefits of making streets more walking and cycling friendly. Heart Foundation. [www.heartfoundation.org.au/active-living/Documents/Good-for-business.pdf](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/active-living/Documents/Good-for-business.pdf) Accessed 17 March 2018