

Management report to Council

Agenda item 6.8

COVID-19 Recovery – Improving Transport Opportunities

Council

Presenter: Alison Leighton, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

24 November 2020

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval on parking changes to aid the economic recovery of the central city.
2. At the 17 November 2020 Future Melbourne (Transport) Committee meeting (Item 6.5), it was resolved that the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 2.1. *Strongly endorses management to work closely with the Department of Transport to continue promoting the safe use of the public transport network as per the City of Melbourne Transport Strategy.*
 - 2.2. *Notes that management has commissioned research around public perceptions for the return to the city including as it relates to transport.*
 - 2.3. *Endorses the Chief Executive Officer to write to the Victorian Government seeking an extension of the State Government decision to waive a minimum 25 per cent of the congestion levy or more by a further six months subject to this reduction being directly passed through to the customer.*
 - 2.4. *Requests management to review and bring back to Council options available to temporarily amend on street parking time limits and fee arrangements to incentivise visitors to return to the city of Melbourne in time for the Christmas and New Year campaigns.*
 - 2.5. *Endorses management to begin discussions with car park operators around reduced fees with input from retail and hospitality industry groups.*

Key issues

3. The City of Melbourne receives weekly transport data from the Department of Transport. The data indicates that public transport use, walking and bike riding in the central city are climbing from lockdown lows. Daily central city pedestrian volumes on 18 November were at 49 per cent of the February 2020 baseline (up 34 per cent in a week) while peak hour public transport usage was at 32 per cent of the baseline (up ten per cent in a week). Weekday bicycle numbers on routes serving commuter riders during the week of 9 November 2020 were at 61% of the November 2019 baseline with weekday recreational routes at 125 per cent of the baseline. Across Metropolitan Melbourne, arterial traffic volumes are at about 90 per cent of the February 2020 baseline, up five per cent on the previous week. Officers will continue to work with the department and also the Functionality of the City subcommittee (reports to the City Economic Advisory Board) on public transport initiatives.
4. Management has commissioned Roy Morgon to research public perceptions for the return to the city including how it relates to transport. The findings will be reported to Council following completion of the research and associated analysis.
5. Correspondence is currently being prepared from the Chief Executive Officer to the Victorian Government seeking an extension of the State Government decision to waive a minimum 25 per cent of the congestion levy or more by a further six months subject to this reduction being directly passed through to the customer. This letter will be sent in the week commencing 23rd November 2020.
6. The following parking options for the period from 1 December 2020 to 3 January 2021 inclusive to incentivise visitors to return to the City of Melbourne in time for the Christmas and New Year campaigns have been developed for consideration:
 - 6.1. **Option 1** - Maintain the current on-street parking restrictions and parking fees. Motorists will be required to pay for parking and park in accordance with the time period indicated on the signs.
 - 6.2. **Option 2** - Implement a parking voucher system across the municipality to allow parking fees to be waived for vehicles displaying the parking voucher. Parking vouchers will be available from selected newspapers or the City of Melbourne website. Motorists would be required to place a copy of the parking voucher on their dashboard in order to receive a waiver for the parking fees. Parking time limits would still apply to stimulate turnover of visitors to the city. Potential loss of parking revenue is estimated at a total \$1.6M for the period assuming 50 per cent take up of the voucher option.

- 6.3. **Option 3** - As well as the parking voucher system detailed in paragraph 6.2 above, allow all vehicles whether they have a voucher or not to park for double the signed parking time limit. Changes to signs will not be made and the message about doubling the parking time will be conveyed as part of a marketing and communication strategy. This option will impact on parking turnover in the CBD and parking availability for residents in areas with three and four hour (3P/4P) resident parking restrictions as vehicles will be able to park for up to six and eight hours respectively. This option may also potentially create some confusion for motorists.
7. The agreed parking option will be promoted through City of Melbourne's owned channels, including social media, street assets and our website. Further promotion in major metropolitan and regional publications and on city billboards will also be considered.
8. Discussions with car park operators around reduced fees and parking options have commenced. Parking prices are already relatively low as operators have responded to low demand. Evening and weekend parking prices are as low as \$5 in the central city. Early bird prices can be as low as \$16 (visitors generally need to be in by around 10am and out after 3pm). Booking online in advance can also reduce costs significantly.

Recommendation from management

9. That Council:
 - 9.1. Notes the actions underway from its resolution on item 6.5 at the 17 November 2020 Future Melbourne Committee meeting.
 - 9.2. Endorses Option 2 to implement a voucher system that would allow motorists to park in paid parking bays without payment for the time period indicated on the existing regulatory signs from 1 December 2020 to 3 January 2021.
 - 9.3. Endorses Management to continue to work closely with the Department of Transport to determine the additional actions that can be taken to further increase public transport (train, tram and bus) patronage and active transport (walking and cycling) participation.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 3)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. Legal advice will be provided on the implementation of the recommended option.

Finance

1. Potential loss of parking revenue if is estimated at \$1.6M assuming 50 percent take up of the newspaper voucher option.

Conflict of interest

1. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a direct or indirect interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

2. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

Stakeholder Consultation

3. The City Economy Advisory Board and its seven subcommittees were established in September 2020 to support the recovery of the city. The Board is chaired by the CEO and includes representation from external stakeholders across various industries and government. Through the Board, the City of Melbourne is able to engage directly with industry and partner on key initiatives to support recovery. This includes the Functionality of the City subcommittee which considers matters relating to the safe travel of people in the city.
4. Extensive consultation was undertaken with stakeholders and the broader community during preparation of the draft Transport Strategy. In 2018, eight discussion papers were released to the public to generate debate and discussion. This prompted 19,053 visits to the Participate Melbourne webpage, 1325 submissions and 1500 social media comments. This is the largest response to a City of Melbourne request for community input. Following endorsement of the draft Transport Strategy, an engagement process spanning six weeks was undertaken. Engagement took place both online and face-to-face at a number of locations across the municipality. This process generated 9228 visits to the Participate Melbourne webpage and 475 unique survey responses and submissions, which included almost 1300 comments on 90 different topics. Eighty-nine per cent of the 382 respondents to the survey on Participate Melbourne gave support or strong support for the outcomes in the Strategy. Of the 45 written submissions, which included 1288 individual comments on more than 90 topics, 60.5 per cent of comments were in direct support of the Strategy and a further 28.5 per cent of comments provided constructive feedback.

Relation to Council policy

5. This report is connected to the work done for the Transport Strategy 2030. It aligns with the Council Plan Goals for 'A Connected City' and 'A Prosperous City'. The community engagement work on the Strategy aligns with the 'A Deliberative City' goal. Policies in the Transport Strategy 2030 support other City of Melbourne strategies including Climate Change Mitigation Strategy, Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, Urban Forest Strategy, Total Watermark – City as a Catchment 2014, Startup Action Plan, structure plans and council-endorsed submissions on growth areas including Arden and Fishermans Bend.

Environmental sustainability

6. This report is connected to the work done for the Transport Strategy 2030. Environmental sustainability issues were a key consideration in the development of the strategy. It aligns with the City of Melbourne 2018 Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and supports sustainable transport as priority modes in Melbourne. The Transport Strategy 2030 includes a range of policies which align with environmental sustainability.