

Media Release

27 January 2010

Council to consider final plan for Swanston Street

A \$25.6 million plan to revitalise the city's 'spine', Swanston Street, by banning private cars and taxis, installing dedicated bike lanes and creating four new 'civic squares' at platform tram stops, will be considered by Melbourne City Council next week.

The final plan for Swanston Street will go before Melbourne City Councillors for endorsement next Tuesday 2 February.

A report on the Swanston Street redevelopment released today recommends a \$25.6 million plan to create a world-class promenade. By 2012, private cars and taxis would be banned and a seamless civic space created with dedicated bike lanes and the construction of four new public spaces incorporating tram stops, new street furniture including public seating, ceremonial lighting, additional trees and planter boxes and public artworks. Service delivery vehicles would continue to have restricted access, with a further review in 2012.

Lord Mayor Robert Doyle said the redevelopment plan would achieve the community's preferred outcome for Swanston Street to prioritise trams, bikes and pedestrians over cars. If approved by Council, the plan would be rolled out in stages over the next three years.

"As promised when this Council came to office a year ago, we now have a solution to showcase Swanston Street, our civic spine," the Lord Mayor said.

"This is the beginning of the renaissance of central Melbourne. The redevelopment of Swanston Street has seen us to re-think the street's entire civic environment to create a coherent, consistent plan that ties the whole street together.

"By 2012, this plan would see the street transformed into a world-class promenade - car-free, with more quality public spaces, encouraging an enhanced retail and outdoor dining offering.

"The plan centres around four new public spaces accommodating disability-compliant tram stops at key blocks along the street.

"The four new public spaces will transform the entire streetscape and see the tram tracks lowered so that the footpath, bicycle lane and tram platform are all accessible on one consistent level.

"We have been fiddling with Swanston Street for 20 years now but one success story has been the increase in pedestrian numbers. In 1992 it attracted 12,500 pedestrians between 10am and 6pm daily. Today this has risen to more than 60,000.

"This Council has put an enormous amount of work, consultation and research into this redevelopment. We want to get Swanston Street right, and creating a world-class promenade involves more than just removing cars, but adding improved amenities like trees and street furniture, lighting and bike lanes.

"When you consider that 80 per cent of the CBD's public space is streets, transforming a whole kilometre of our busiest street space is a major undertaking," the Lord Mayor said.

"Swanston Street is currently closed to private vehicles between 7am and 7pm and we are going through the legislative process to close the road to private vehicles 24 hours a day. We hope to have this road closure in place later this year," the Lord Mayor said.

By 2012 (at the completion of stage two) the new look Swanston Street will see:

- A 24-hour ban on all cars (excluding taxis and authorised vehicles) to be implemented during 2010;
- Taxis to be banned from mid-2012;
- Four new public spaces with disability-compliant tram stops;
- Tram tracks lowered and the bluestone and granite paving extended to the platform edge;
- Two metre wide bike lanes – road rules will apply, cyclists must give way to tram passengers;
- Service and delivery vehicles at restricted times in limited sections of the street;
- New and consistent lighting, additional trees, florals, artworks and public seating installed along the street;
- Additional pavement-based activity including outdoor cafes and innovative retail encouraged;
- It remain Melbourne's premier civic parade street.

"As the redevelopment work progresses, we will continue to trial and assess different alternatives for delivery vehicles.

"Until the stage two works are completed in 2012, delivery vehicles will continue to have access at restricted times and to limited parts of the street. Vehicles may then only access the blocks where tram platforms are not located and will not be permitted during peak commuter and lunch periods. Delivery times will be restricted to 9.30am–12 noon, 2pm-4pm, and 7pm-7am.

"The estimated project cost of \$25.6 million takes the project through the completion of stages one and two. Further costing analysis will be undertaken once the requirements for stage three are established.

"Pending Council endorsement and the outcomes of the road closure process, works in Swanston Street could commence later this year," the Lord Mayor said.

Overview: Swanston Street redevelopment staged rollout plan and timing:

Stage One - State Library forecourt new tram platform

Work expected to commence in late 2010 and to be completed early in 2011. New platform tram stop to be installed between La Trobe and Little Lonsdale Streets in front of State Library, tram tracks lowered and granite and bluestone pavement extended to the platform edge. Service delivery vehicle access allowed in rest of street at current restricted times.

Stage Two - Tram platforms installed at RMIT, corner of Bourke Street and City Square

Work to commence in July 2011 and expected to be completed by mid 2012. Tram tracks lowered and granite and bluestone pavement extended to the platform edges. Service delivery vehicles access further restricted to only the blocks without tram stops and delivery times will be restricted to 9.30am–12 noon, 2pm-4pm and 7pm-7am. New lighting, additional trees, floral planter boxes and additional public seating installed. Taxis are banned after stage two completion.

Proposed Stage Three - Enhancing the blocks between the tram stops

Stage three could address the six remaining blocks of the street where platform tram stops are not located. Following the completion of stage two, there will be an assessment of the further enhancements required. The stage three work schedule to be determined in 2012.

Background:

Following extensive public consultation in 2009, Council endorsed the community's preferred option for Swanston Street, which was to see fewer cars and a greater emphasis on public transport, bikes and people.

A Steering Committee was established to drive the project with all relevant agencies. The Inter-Agency Steering Committee comprises of key representatives from each; Department of Transport, Bicycle Victoria, VicRoads, Australian Retail Association Victoria, Yarra Trams, Transport Workers Union, Victoria Police, General Property Trust and the City of Melbourne.

- ENDS -

Media contact: Ebony Beaton, City of Melbourne Media Adviser (03) 9658 9475 / 0438 724 048