

Connecting  
our communities

# Marong Road (Calder Highway) Improvements Planning

Engagement Report





# Introduction

## Message from the Regional Director

As part of the Calder Highway this 7.3km section of Marong Road from Ironbark in inner Bendigo to the peri-urban and semi-rural Maiden Gully serves a variety of purposes to the communities that use it.

The road is a commuter route for workers in Maiden Gully, Marong and beyond, and for the people who live in the area it is an important connector to many suburbs of Bendigo.

The road is not only important for drivers, it is used by pedestrians and cyclists. We know from research that many cyclists do not feel safe sharing the road with vehicles and this is something we are looking at improving as part of this planning study.

This section of the Calder Highway is experiencing increasing pressures from local population growth, particularly in Maiden Gully and Marong, as well as wider commuter and freight movements. Additionally the potential development of the Marong Business Park would place extra traffic demands on the highway network.

When we are planning upgrades such as this we are looking at how we can make lives better – from getting workers and tourists to their destination safely and efficiently, to helping kids get to school easier.

An important part of this process is having a conversation with the communities that use the road. We asked them how they use the road, and how they would like to use it, what could make their journeys easier whether in a vehicle, on a bike or on foot. We know that involving the people who use the road will achieve a much better outcome.

Now that we have conducted our initial round of engagement we better understand the experiences of our communities. We will now develop concept plans that aim to benefit all users at making this road safer and easier to use well into the future. We will endeavour to keep the impacts of the upgrade to a minimum, however, these improvements will require changes to what currently exists.

I look forward to visiting the community mid year with concept plans that show where their feedback has been considered.

**Brian Westley**  
Regional Director Bendigo

## Engagement principles and document purpose

*"We engage with Victorians early and often to achieve outcomes that are community driven and make our cities and regions work better."*

At VicRoads, we recognise that early and appropriate public participation ensures that we develop and construct infrastructure that best meets the needs of our communities now and into the future.

It was important that our planners commenced the conversation with stakeholders and the community at the pre-concept stage of the project. This early engagement means that we could hear firsthand how people use the road, better understand their experiences and clearly define any problems they face.

This Engagement Report focuses on the initial phase of engagement, detailing the general themes from comments made online and in person at two drop-in sessions held at Maiden Gully and West Bendigo. The information gathered will be used to develop concept plans that address safety, capacity and active transport issues. It is anticipated that the plans will be released for consultation mid this year.

## Project background

In September 2017 the Victorian Government announced \$3.5 million in funding to explore ways to improve traffic flow and safety on Marong Road between Eaglehawk Road, Ironbark and Monsants Road, Maiden Gully.

The planning study aims to ensure that residents and road users have access to a safer and more efficient road including:

- increased capacity to accommodate extra vehicles projected to use the road in the future
- increased safety including at intersections and private access points
- active transport options for walkers and cyclists
- improved freight efficiency.

To complement ongoing technical investigations, we sought input from communities, groups and individuals to ensure that our plans address a mix of issues and patterns of use.



## How did we communicate?

We wanted to hear from as many road users as possible and deliberately used more than one tool to reach a variety of different people. We used the following communication tools to target the right audiences and raise awareness about the project:

- A project page was created on the VicRoads website. This provided an overview of the project as well as time specific information such as our engagement sessions and links to other relevant information.
- An online engagement hub, engageVicRoads, provided further information about the project, and a social pin-point map where people could give specific feedback.
- Direct mail to Golden Square, Ironbark, West Bendigo and Maiden Gully. People in these areas who are directly impacted by the planning study were invited to attend our engagement session so they had the opportunity to meet us and provide their feedback in person.
- We ran three Facebook campaigns so that a mix of residents, visitors and road users were aware of the study and had the opportunity to be involved in the drop-in sessions and online engagement hub.
- Print advertisements appeared in the Bendigo Advertiser and Bendigo Weekly in advance of the two engagement sessions.
- Posters promoting the engagement sessions were displayed at various locations along Marong Road, Maiden Gully and West Bendigo.
- Media releases were provided to local media outlets highlighting the commencement of the study and details of the engagement sessions.

 **22,626**  
people reached



 **192 likes**  
comments  
and shares

 **707**  
post clicks

## Engagement approach

We adopted a "blank page" approach to this initial phase of the planning study to reach as many relevant community segments as possible. Our aim is to understand how individuals use the road, what habits are formed due to issues people face and safety concerns.

To do this, specific communities and users were targeted:

- local communities (urban, semi urban and rural)
- local businesses
- road user groups
- special interest groups
- local government, state government departments and agencies
- tourists
- freight.

Feedback was sought through our online hub, engageVicRoads, and via our community engagement sessions. Social media and email submissions were also considered throughout this phase of engagement.

Respondents were asked to tell us what their issues and experiences were when driving, walking and riding along this section of road, and the location of the feedback.

 **18,563**  
people reached



**130 likes**  
comments  
and shares 

 **473**  
post clicks



 **18,909**  
people reached

**41 likes**  
comments  
and shares 

 **248**  
post clicks

# Engagement summaries

## Community engagement sessions' summary

We held two engagement sessions so that we could hear in person people's experiences when driving, walking and riding:

- Wednesday 6 December 2017  
4pm to 7pm  
Maiden Gully Primary School
- Thursday 1 February 2018  
4pm to 6pm  
Bendigo Stadium

Both sessions were designed for people to 'drop in' and tell us their experiences and issues, and place stickers on a map that pin pointed the location of their feedback.

55 residents and business owners attended the session on 6 December with 263 comments, while the session on 1 February had 30 people providing 92 comments.

Attendees were asked to use general themes for their feedback, which could then be categorised into issue and location. The provided categories were:

- pedestrian/cyclist
- motorists
- freight
- farming
- environmental
- general comment.

We analysed the feedback provided at these sessions and the general themes and categories are listed in the following table.

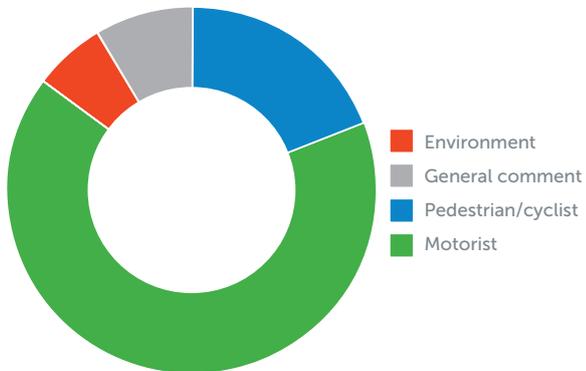
### Themes and categories

Pedestrian/cyclist 	Motorist 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• footpaths</li> <li>• dedicated cycling facilities</li> <li>• shared use paths</li> <li>• on-road cycling facilities</li> <li>• public transport integration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intersection issues and improvements</li> <li>• turning issues and solutions</li> <li>• signals</li> <li>• street/intersection lighting</li> <li>• roundabouts</li> <li>• speed limits</li> <li>• heavy traffic</li> <li>• visibility</li> <li>• duplication/extra lanes</li> <li>• overtaking provisions</li> <li>• parking</li> <li>• condition of road</li> </ul>
Environmental 	General comments 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tree retention</li> <li>• vegetation removal</li> <li>• water over road/drainage issues</li> <li>• wildlife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• heritage issues</li> <li>• driver behaviour</li> <li>• population growth</li> <li>• general land acquisition queries</li> </ul>

### Bendigo Stadium engagement session



### Comment category engagement sessions



*"We engage with Victorians early and often to achieve outcomes that are community driven and make our cities and regions work better."*

### Comments by location



### Comments from public sessions

*"I'd like to see Olympic Parade tied in with Edwards Road."*

*"Lack of vision when turning left into Olympic Parade due to foliage."*

*"There's water over the road near Olympic Parade with mild to heavy rain."*

*"Very little bike lane infrastructure but a growing need to provide safe lanes for cyclists."*

*"Badly positioned bus stop, no access for passengers except to cross highway or walk up shoulder of road."*

*"Street lighting needed."*

*"Turning on to Calder Highway is difficult."*

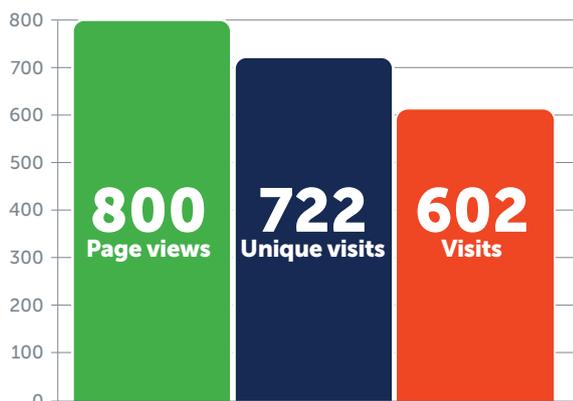
There were also a small number of email submissions from residents and businesses. These covered the same general themes about road use, intersection issues, speed limits, car parking and road condition.

*"A lot of accidents happen at the Booth Street intersection."*

## engageVicRoads summary

We launched the online hub, engageVicRoads, on 4 December 2017 asking people to tell us their experiences when driving, walking and riding along Marong Road.

Between 4 December 2017 and 4 February 2018 there were 800 page views from 602 visitors. We had 173 pins and comments placed on the interactive map, and 198 likes or dislikes to comments all from a total of 75 contributors.



The general themes of feedback were:

- footpaths
- shared use pedestrian and cycling paths, separated from vehicles
- dedicated cycling facilities separated from vehicles
- motorised scooter provision
- road duplication
- intersection improvements including
  - street lighting
  - turning lanes
  - traffic signals
  - roundabouts
  - closing or reconfiguring intersections
- heavy traffic
- public transport integration
- driver behaviour
- population growth
- environmental issues including
  - water over road/drainage issues
  - tree retention or removal
  - dust.

## Online feedback

*"I ride a mobility scooter and most days I am crossing over this road to access either footpath, but there isn't a consistent footpath on either side."*

*"A separate and sealed shared bike path should be constructed all the way from Maiden Gully to link into pathways etc at Specimen Hill leading in the Bendigo CBD."*

*"People turning over double lines frequently to turn into service station. People turning out of service station disrupts the flow of traffic."*

*"I travel along this road daily. I find that the t-intersection of Maiden Gully Rd and Marong road is very congested around school times."*

*"Maybe extend Eastern Rd to Marong Rd and put in traffic lights and closing Wicks Rd at Marong Rd."*

*"Sometimes at peak times, you can get stuck at the Marong Rd lights for a couple of cycles."*

*"Very difficult to find intersections at night. Needs more lighting."*

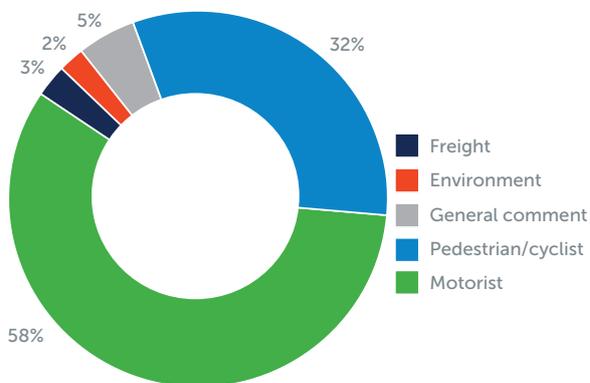
*"The new lights at this intersection have made an amazing difference to the safety of motorists. Traffic flows so much more smoothly. Thank you."*

*"Living in Wicks Road this intersection is extremely difficult to exit, at times waiting there for 10 minutes."*



Number of comments in each area

### Type of comment

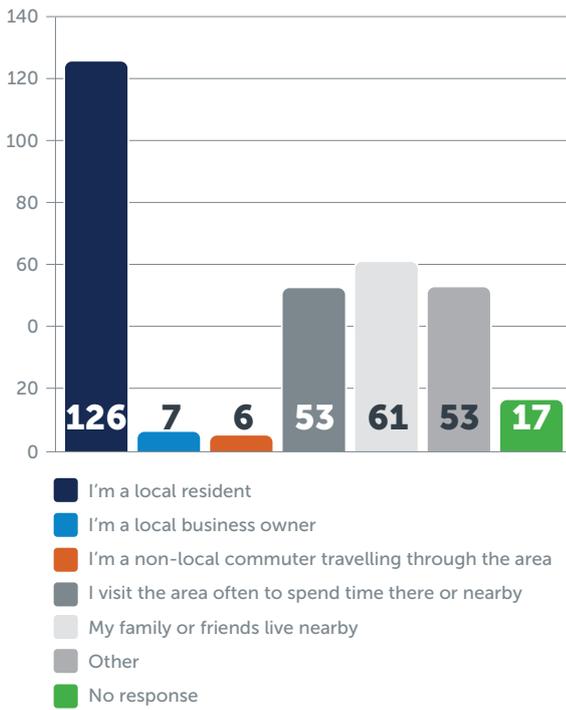


## Participant overview

There was a variety of participants over the course of this engagement process. Most people who gave feedback were local residents or visitors to the area.

The breakdown of participants that left comments on engageVicRoads were:

### Participant overview



## What we're doing now

Thank you to everyone who participated in the initial engagement sessions and those who provided feedback. Your comments are being used in the development of plans to address capacity and safety issues, in conjunction with our technical investigations.

We expect initial concepts to be ready mid-year and intend presenting the plans through further consultation at the next stage of our engagement process. Keep checking the website for updates, and you can also register on our website for our email updates. Go to [vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://vicroads.vic.gov.au) and search Marong Road Improvements Planning.

