

May 1, 2015

Motorcycles in, cars out, in bold parking plan for Melbourne's CBD

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Age Article

Motorcycles and scooters will be given preferential treatment over cars and trucks in Melbourne's inner city, as part of a bold plan to reduce traffic and parking congestion by getting more commuters to take up motorcycling.

Melbourne City Council is set to expand motorcycle parking across the municipality, at the same time as competition for these spaces, and the city's footpaths, heats up.

Paid car parking could be replaced with free scooter spaces, while the council will also try to force developers of new apartment and office towers to create more motorcycle parking and supply lockers for protective clothing.

Category: Media Release

Posted by: admin

The 2015-2018 Motorcycle Plan will be voted on by councillors next week. In the document, council staff argue that more motorcyclists on the roads would result in faster travel times for all, while decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.

They point to a [European study](#) that showed that if 10 per cent of private cars were replaced by motorcycles, commuting times could decrease by 40 per cent.

It is understood Melbourne is the only Australian capital city where it is legal to park a motorcycle on the footpath, with the exception of sections of Collins Street, Flinders Lane and Exhibition Street.

The council said that a "shift from cars to motorcycles" would free up parking space, as up to six motorcycles or 10 scooters can be parked in the space required for a single car.

And while they concede cars can carry more passengers, the reality is the average vehicle occupancy in Australian cities is 1.1 to 1.2 people per vehicle, meaning most people drive alone.

Cr Stephen Mayne said council should "potentially" replace some existing paid car parking with more allocations for motorcycle parking.

Meanwhile, Cathy Oke, council's transport chair, said the council was lobbying Planning Minister Richard Wynne to introduce new laws that would increase requirements for motorcycle and bicycle parking in new building developments.

The plan has the strong support of the Victorian Motorcycle Council (VMC) and the Independent Riders' Group whose spokesman Steve Bardsley said while he believed there was a place for all types of transport, "it has to be acknowledged that cars are the main cause of congestion".

The VMC's John Eacott said "it was good to see motorcycles really recognised as a solution to the transport problem", while peak motoring lobby group the RACV was not available for comment.

With the current motorcycling rates at less than three per cent of vehicle traffic in the inner city, the council said a significant investment in time and resources would be required to encourage more to use motorcycles.

Safety still remains a concern for some. Motorcyclists and their passengers represented 20 per cent of serious road injuries in the Melbourne City Council area in 2012-2013. Though it should also be noted that riding has become significantly safer in recent years, with fatalities and serious injuries decreasing by almost 20 per cent in the five years to 2013.

The council has vowed to work with the state government and other authorities to remove a number of road hazards for motorcyclists, including requiring sharp steel barriers used around construction sites to be replaced with plastic bollards with a flexible base.

It will also investigate dangers posed by posts on the outside of kerbs, large vegetation, slippery and difficult to see tram separators, road paint and metal plates without skid-resistant covers.

Special mention of the tireless efforts of John Eacott, BMWMC President and VMC representative for his outstanding efforts with the CoM.