

31 January 2013

Director
Major Cities Unit
Department of Infrastructure and Transport
PO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Via email: activetransport@infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Ms Ekelund,

RE: WALKING, RIDING AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Department of Infrastructure and Transport's discussion paper, Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport. The Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) believes that a focus on making active and alternative modes of transport more accessible is vital if we are to create healthier, more liveable and more productive cities and communities. The GBCA commends the Australian Government on its ongoing commitment to creating better cities and communities.

The GBCA has valued the opportunity to work closely with the Major Cities Unit as well as a wide range of stakeholders from industry, the community and all levels of government to bring together policies and tools such as the *Our Cities Our Future: National Urban Policy* (National Urban Policy), the *Creating Places for People: An urban design protocol for Australian Cities* (Urban Design Protocol) and Green Star – Communities that set a direction for our cities and communities and the means to measure our progress.

Infrastructure that encourages and supports walking and riding and provides greater access to public transport are important elements of a liveable, productive and sustainable city or community. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' set of policies that state, territory or local governments can use to guarantee good outcomes, though there are many great examples across Australia and around the world that can be chosen from and adapted to meet the needs of different cities and communities.

The GBCA believes that it is critical for governments to have access to a clear and consistent set of overarching principles and objectives that can guide them in making decisions about which policies and programs will work best for them to achieve the outcomes they want for walking, riding and access to public transport as well as the liveability of their community overall. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Reform Council's nine criteria for cities, the National Urban Policy and the Urban Design Protocol all have a significant role to play in setting that direction. These policies identify high-level objectives and principles against which governments can consider their policy options to ensure that they are taking a coordinated approach.

As well as a high-level policy direction, governments must also have access to useful indicators and benchmarks to assist them in setting goals and objectives. A set of nationally consistent indicators, such as the indicators being developed by the Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, and a range of best practice benchmarks agreed by industry and government, provide options from which local governments can choose the most relevant to their cities and their own particular objectives. Not only will indicators and benchmarks help governments in setting the right targets, they can also assist governments to be more accountable for their progress against them.

In order to demonstrate progress against indicators and objectives, a robust method of measurement will play a vital role, whether for specific aspects such as walking, riding and access to public transport or more holistically. The 'Transport' category of the GBCA's Green Star rating tools for buildings has long recognised and rewarded developments which encourage alternative methods of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport, and which decrease the amount of car parking available.

In consultation with industry and all levels of government, including the valuable support of the Major Cities Unit, the GBCA has also developed a rating tool for sustainable development projects on a community scale. The first step in developing the Green Star – Communities rating tool was to develop a national framework consisting of five best practice principles:

1. Enhance liveability
2. Create opportunities for economic prosperity
3. Foster environmental responsibility
4. Embrace design excellence
5. Demonstrate visionary leadership and strong governance.

The second stage of the Green Star – Communities project was to establish best practice benchmarks and a set of 38 credits to complement the five principles (which also align closely with the principles of the Urban Design Protocol). The Green Star – Communities rating tool, which was released as a pilot in June 2012, provides benchmarks and an independent method of measurement that cities and communities can use to ensure they are meeting their overall goals and objectives. Credits within the Green Star – Communities rating tool, such as *Liv-3 Health and Active Living*, *Liv-5 Safe Places*, *Des-3 Site Planning and Layout*, *Des-4 Urban Design* and *Env-11 Transport* contain guidance and benchmarks to enhance walking, riding and access to public transport within a community. Further information about the Green Star – Communities rating tool can be found through the GBCA website (www.gbca.org.au) or at www.greenstarcommunities.org.au.

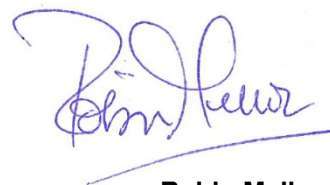
The GBCA believes that a coordinated approach by every level of government is critical to creating better cities and communities. With an overarching set of principles and objectives, supported by useful indicators and a robust method of measurement such as Green Star – Communities, governments can assess the policy options available to them (as well as those already in place) and determine the best policy settings and programs to help them achieve the best outcomes for our cities and communities.

The GBCA welcomes the opportunity to continue to work closely with the Australian Government and a range of other stakeholders to ensure that the right policies, indicators and methods of measurement are in place to enable all levels of government to implement policies that are complementary and assist them in achieving their goals and objectives. Please do not hesitate to contact either of us should you wish to discuss further any of the issues raised above.

Yours sincerely,



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