Summary of Issues and Challenges for Active Transport in WA

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Active transport (AT) is defined as modes of transport that rely entirely on human power or combine human effort with other forms of assistance. The most popular forms are walking and cycling, but recently, e-mobility options such as e-bikes and e-scooters have also gained popularity.

AT is essential for fostering healthier, more sustainable, and connected communities. It reduces traffic congestion, lowers greenhouse gas emissions, and improves air quality, contributing to a more liveable urban environment. It also promotes physical and mental well-being by encouraging regular activity and increasing social interaction. Additionally, AT provides affordable and accessible mobility options, helping to create more inclusive communities and reducing dependence on private vehicles.

Provision of transport infrastructure including roads and paths is a core Local Government responsibility. As AT's significance and forms grow and evolve, it presents unique challenges for the Local Government sector. WALGA has identified a need to clarify and prioritise the issues and challenges facing the sector and develop a unified position to represent the views of Local Government.

WALGA has consulted with Local Governments (LGs), and these discussions have provided valuable insights into the unique needs and perspectives of LGs as they work to enhance AT and promote sustainable mobility within their communities. Key challenges have been identified, reflecting the barriers that LGs face in managing and enhancing AT. Among these, funding remains a critical concern, as securing adequate resources for infrastructure and programs is essential for supporting AT initiatives. Safety and perceived safety of active travellers is also a key challenge, spanning multiple aspects such as infrastructure design, road crossings, speed management and interactions with other transport modes.

This document provides a summary of the key challenges, categorising them into main themes and highlighting important points from each. The summary is provided to promote discussion and does not necessarily capture all the issues and does not imply any priority to the issues.

Infrastructure and Network

Poor AT Network Connectivity

LGs face significant challenges in seeking to rectify fragmented AT infrastructure, including filling gaps in connections to key destinations like town centres and schools. This lack of cohesion limits the effectiveness of AT as a transport alternative and raised safety concerns for users navigating incomplete or poorly connected routes. Additionally, coordination issues between land managers can create physical barriers where preferred routes are through spaces such as cemeteries and some parks that are not publicly open at all times.

At the strategic level, to date the Perth Transport Model has not provided outputs to support Local Governments' AT planning at a regional and sub-regional level.

Operationally, innovative solutions to signal control systems can enhance AT flow, improve safety, and reduce delays making AT an even more attractive option.

Key Points

- Poor connectivity between AT infrastructure
- Lack of provision for AT around key destinations
- Lack of coordination around AT infrastructure between land managers
- Barriers hindering access to AT routes
- Explicit consideration of AT in transport models

Urban Design

Urban sprawl presents a challenge for AT by increasing the distance between residential areas and essential destinations such as schools, workplaces, healthcare facilities, shopping centres, and transport hubs. This separation, along with limited AT infrastructure, results in greater reliance on motor vehicles and contributes to congestion and emissions. To address this, LGs must focus on developing connected and safe AT networks within neighbourhoods and ensuring better integration with public transport.

Key Points

- More priority on AT infrastructure connectivity
- Need to address gap in AT networks within neighbourhoods

Temporary Works

LGs raised concerns about how temporary infrastructure works, such as construction or street redesigns, disrupt AT access. Inadequate or poorly marked detours and misaligned bus stops compromise safety and convenience. Additionally, high traffic management costs strain AT project budgets, particularly for pathways and bike lanes. LGs also highlighted the need for stronger enforcement of travel and access plans during construction to ensure they support AT access and sustainability.

Key Points

- Lack of planning for AT users during construction
- Need to place temporary bus stops to support AT users
- High traffic management costs
- Need for stronger regulations and enforcement to support AT during construction

Shade and Environment

LGs highlighted the need to consider the benefits of preserving shade over and around AT facilities. The priority for cost effective construction using large equipment and minimising risk of tree root damage to paths may lead to damage to or removal of vegetation without adequate consideration of the ecological impact and comfort of path users.

Key Points

- Address environmental impact of AT infrastructure construction

Funding

Significant transport infrastructure projects delivered by Local Governments are typically co-funded with the Federal or State governments, reflecting the revenue raising capacity of governments and the beneficiaries of that investment. The Western Australian Bicycle Network (WABN) Grants Program is the primary funding source for local governments to support AT infrastructure. Despite investment through the WABN program, the allocated funds are limited and do not fully address the scale of investment needed to develop safe, accessible, and well-connected AT networks across the state. Additionally, the competitive nature of funding applications, combined with the significant time and resources required to complete applications, makes it even more difficult for LGs to secure necessary funding for AT.

The $100 million National Active Transport Fund commenced in July 2025 but has not made any investments in WA to date.

Without sustainable and adequate investment, LGs face difficulties in delivering the necessary infrastructure to support AT and enhance connectivity within their communities.

There is no dedicated, consistent funding stream for maintenance of AT facilities at the LGs level, and the lack of sufficient funding remains a major challenge to ensure an appropriate level of service is provided for AT users.

Key Points

- Insufficient funding for active transport projects and maintenance of existing

Cultural and Behavioural Barriers

Mode Choice

Western Australia's strong car-dominant culture remains a major barrier to increasing AT use. AT is sometimes not fully recognised as a legitimate mode of transport in government and private systems, reinforcing car dependency. While community consultation is an essential part of LG project development, and support for investment in AT infrastructure is not assumed as assured but should be actively sought through continuous engagement. However, the inconsistent delivery of AT projects, often due to resource constraints, can hinder public support for AT initiatives. Ensuring continuous engagement throughout the project lifecycle is essential to maintaining trust, as long gaps between initial consultation and final design stages can limit opportunities for meaningful input.

Key Points

- Car-dominant culture challenging
- Lack of AT recognition in infrastructure development
- Inconsistent community involvement

Awareness of Active Transport options

LGs have identified a lack of public awareness as a major barrier to AT adoption, with many residents unaware of existing AT facilities and their benefits. Additionally, there is a growing need for educate the public on emerging AT options, such as e-bikes and e-scooters, to promote safe and responsible use. Furthermore, key stakeholders such as public service employees and transport authorities, require better training to support AT users and ensure safety.

Key Points

- Inadequate public awareness about AT options and benefits
- Insufficient education on emerging AT technologies like e-bikes and e-scooter
- Need for better stakeholder training to improve support AT users

Policy and Regulation

Policy

LGs face constraints in implementing AT initiatives due to existing State policies, funding limitations, and coordination challenges. Funding structures restrict LGs from allocating resources for essential AT maintenance, impacting long-term infrastructure quality. Greater flexibility in funding allocation and improved collaboration between State and LGs would enhance the effectiveness of AT projects.

Connected AT routes often need to cross major roads, and appropriate facilities are required to ensure safe passage. However, the current approach to road crossing design, such as the preference for roundabouts over signalised crossings, creates challenges for making these crossings safe for AT users.

Key Points

- Need for flexible policies to empower LGs in addressing local challenges and priorities
- Lack of adequate coordination between projects
- Appropriate facilities are needed to ensure safe crossings

Regulatory Oversight and Compliance

Limited regulatory enforcement creates safety and usability challenges for AT users, with inadequate monitoring of cyclist and e-rideable equipment, speed limits, and right-of-way rules contributing to unsafe conditions.

Additionally, inconsistent enforcement of planning and design requirements for new developments leads to misalignment with local transport goals. LGs seek clear, enforceable standards to ensure consistency, accountability, and improved integration of AT infrastructure.

Parking in cycle lanes and on paths disrupts AT networks, increasing safety risks for users who are forced into traffic.

Key Points

- Lack of regulatory enforcement in ensuring AT safety
- Need for enforceable standards to align developments with local transport goals
- Obstacles in AT spaces

Inadequate and Ambiguous Active Transport Guidance

The consultation process revealed significant gaps in cycling infrastructure planning, particularly for roads between urban and regional areas, which are vital links but experience mixed traffic and higher speeds. While Austroads recommends physical separation between motor vehicles and pedestrians, cyclists and e-rideable users on such roads, the lack of clear, locally tailored guidance results in inconsistent safety measures and potential risks. Roads with differing speed limits along their length further complicate planning and highlight the need for more flexible, context sensitive guidance that allow LGs to determine the most suitable solutions for their areas.

LGs require both support and autonomy to develop and implement AT infrastructure that aligns with their unique local conditions. Current guidance sometimes lacks the practicality and adaptability needed for effective planning, leaving LGs navigate vague information for unique local conditions. Structured and practical resources, such as comprehensive toolkits and case studies, could support more responsive and locally relevant decision making. Additionally, the absence of clear standards for pedestrian priority zones has led to inconsistent design and functionality. Well-defined guidelines for these zones could enhance safety and ensure cohesion across implementations.

Moreover, many LGs face challenges accessing grants, particularly in transitional areas, as current grant schemes tend to favour either metropolitan or regional centres, leaving some ineligible. Expanding grant eligibility and providing clearer guidance for navigating funding pathways would help ensure equitable access to funding and more successful AT implementation.

Key Points

- Need for clear guidance for peri-urban and semi-rural AT infrastructure
- Need for clear and adaptable AT guidance
- Need for greater flexibility for LGs in tailoring solutions to local conditions
- Lack of consistent standards for pedestrian priority zones
- Restrictive grant eligibility
- Unclear grant navigation framework

Planning and Resourcing

Resources

LGs across Western Australia face challenges due to a lack of resources dedicated to AT. Many LGs lack qualified staff to assess needs, develop strategies, or implement AT projects, which hinders progress. Where experts are available, AT outcomes improve significantly, underscoring the importance of specialised knowledge. Some LGs are unaware of existing AT guidelines, limiting their ability to align with best practices, while others find these guidelines insufficient for their locpal contexts. Case studies on successful and unsuccessful practices could help LGs refine their strategies. Regional LGs are particularly affected by the disparity in resources, as most AT programs and resources are concentrated in metropolitan areas, leaving regional communities underserved.

Key Points

- Shortage of personnel and expertise in AT within LGs
- Limited knowledge and use of existing AT guidelines by LGs
- Need for case studies
- Lack of resources and support for reginal LGs

Strategic and Statutory Planning

The strategic planning framework, Perth, and Peel @ 3.5 million aims to define the urban form in the region for the next 30 years. While the objective of these frameworks, including to limit unsustainable urban sprawl, implementation mechanisms are limited. Inability to deliver the intended urban form is a missed opportunity to support integration of AT.

Where provisions for AT users are included in planning approvals, LGs identified risks associated with ensuring these commitments are delivered and maintained.

> **Key Points**
> - Implementation risks in strategic and statutory planning objectives

Emerging Mobility

E-ridable

The absence of clear guidelines for public e-ridable charging infrastructure and reports of fires initiated by lithium-ion batteries on charge has led to building managers restricting on-site parking and charging. However, without designated parking facilities, e-ridable devices may be left in inappropriate places or their use discouraged or prevented.

Regulating the use of shared e-ridable in shared public spaces remains difficult due to their dockless nature and inconsistent enforcement. Managers are also concerned that existing rules may not effectively encourage appropriate parking, leading to clutter and accessibility issues. Establishing clear regulatory guidance and best practices is essential to ensure safe and effective integration into urban environments.

> **Key Points**
> - Lack of guidelines for ridable infrastructure and management
> - Difficulty in regulating e-ridable use in shared public spaces

Integration and Community Alignment

Multi-modal Trips

LGs stress the need for better integration of AT with public transport, particularly in terms of providing space for bikes and micromobility devices, ensuring safer and more accessible travel options. Seamless connections between AT infrastructure and transport hubs, along with the ability to bring bikes on trains and buses, would encourage the incorporation of AT in longer trips.

> **Key Points**
> - Provide more flexibility to allow bicycles and e-ridable on public transport

Amenity

The absence of essential AT amenities, such as end-of-trip facilities, water fountains, seating, and shading, limits accessibility and comfort for users. LGs are uncertainty about the value of investing in bicycle repair stations given the level of utilisation and maintenance costs.

Inconsistent wayfinding systems make navigation difficult for new AT users and those in unfamiliar areas. Greater integration of shade is recognised as a priority to enhance usability and appeal.

Aligning Active Transport planning with Community Facilities

The misalignment of AT infrastructure with community facilities, such as school entrances, transport hubs, and recreational areas, creates safety risks and discourages AT use. Issues include improperly positioned crossings, inadequate pedestrian clearance times, and the lack of clear separation between cyclists, e-rideable users and pedestrians in shared spaces, leading to congestion and conflicts.

Land acquisition challenges hinder infrastructure expansion, particularly in densely populated areas with complex property boundaries, delaying critical improvements. A fragmented planning approach also limits network effectiveness, as projects often focus on isolated upgrades rather than comprehensive connectivity. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated approach that prioritizes seamless integration, ensuring AT infrastructure effectively supports safe, accessible, and connected transport options for all users.

Parking

LGs are concerned about the prioritisation of car parking over bike parking, particularly in schools where space constraints have led to the removal of bike racks in favour of other uses. As student populations grow without school expansions, areas once designated for bike parking and play are being repurposed, reinforcing car dependency, and limiting AT options. Without a balanced approach that accommodates all transport modes, efforts to improve AT infrastructure will remain challenged, reducing its overall effectiveness.

Conclusion

The challenges faced by LGs in Western Australia regarding active transport (AT) are diverse and require immediate attention. As highlighted throughout this discussion, there are several critical challenges that need to be addressed to improve AT in WA. These challenges are multifaceted, inter-related and require coordinated efforts from both LGs and State agencies to overcome.

To address these challenges, it is essential to develop policies that focus on improving infrastructure connectivity, ensuring regulatory compliance, and providing clear guidelines for developers. By adopting a comprehensive, coordinated approach to policy development, WA can create a more accessible, sustainable, and integrated AT network that meets the needs of its communities and encourages wider participation in active mobility.