



Item 7.1 Joint Letter Response - Request for attention and improvements for a more sustainable streetscape on Alma Road, St Kilda

A Joint Letter containing 8 signatures was received from local residents.

The Joint Letter states the following: -

Alma Road has been in a state of shock, under siege for the better part of the last 3-4 years during the progressive demolition, and subsequent overdevelopment on the south side, from 25-39 Alma Road, St Kilda.

The following joint letter has been signed off by several residents, for presentation at the next City of Port Phillip (COPP) Ordinary Council meeting.

Concerns and Requests.

COPP's statutory strategies, including polices and plans, refer to streets designed for people, investment in walking and bike riding infrastructure, implementation of Slow Speed Local Area (SSLA), and finally, sustainability with the implementation of street tree planting and ongoing investment in street scape improvement.

We live in Alma Road west, between St Kilda Road and Chapel Street. This portion of Alma Road, once a plethora of Victorian buildings, has for a long time been exposed to excessive demolitions, high density developments and large volumes of vehicular traffic. We are currently emerging from a recent chapter of this nature. Residents have tolerated a sustained period of 3-4 years, enduring significant disruption and development.

On the south side of Alma Road, we now have two large, almost completed developments, which straddle 25-39 Alma Road. This envelope of land abuts Alma Road, which has up to four lanes of vehicular traffic, with its incumbent noise, exhaust fumes, speeding, u-turning, with particularly excessive car/truck movements, as well as Uber vehicles too.

As a small group of representative residents, on behalf of many others in the street, we would like to press for more local attention and action in support of reclaiming and enhancing Alma Road West, with appropriate action planning in accordance with addressing COPP's strategies, policies, and plans, which are highlighted above and below in bold.

1} Health, wellbeing and safety:

Streets designed for people, investment in walking and bike riding Infrastructure, implementation of Slow Speeds Local Area (SSLA) and traffic calming treatments to reduce exposure to traffic injury, vehicle emissions and noise.

- We would like to re-in state and enhance the centre median plantings, like those that can be seen in neighbouring Wellington, Inkerman and Mitford streets, St Kilda. Median plantings were included in an Alma Road improvement several years ago, however some were removed prior to the development period, and these should now be replaced with consideration to include more as traffic calming strategies.*
- We ask the COPP to consider further implementation of SSLA strategies to reduce exposure to excessive traffic injury, emissions, and noise. The large junction of Alma Road and St Kilda Road provides poor conditions for pedestrians and cyclists who are forced to negotiate multi lane vehicular traffic, which includes Yarra Trams, with poorly*



coordinated and inadequately timed pedestrian lights. Our own attempts to liaise with stakeholders at COPP, VICROADS and YARRA TRAMS have been unsuccessful to date.

2) Sustainability:

Implementing the street tree planting program and ongoing investment in park tress and street scape improvements.

- We have lost many street trees, planted as part of the COPP implementation plan, several years ago. This is due to the combination of inadequate maintenance of many trees, and the removal of some trees to accommodate the rigors of the development over the past 3-4 years.*
- We request the reinstatement of street tree planting, including more planting and an improved commitment to maintaining and protecting this over time. We also request further street planting zones on suitable corners where this possible, e.g., corner of Alma Road and Charnwood Crescent. Similar attention has been given to other such zones in the municipality contributing positively to the overall street scape.*

3) Transport and parking:

Move connect and live strategy; increase the range of healthy safe connected and convenient walking and bike riding choices.

- We ask COPP to consider further consultation with relevant stakeholders towards meeting the VicRoads Design Guidance for bike lanes with green coloured pavement/road surfaces to enhance the safety for bicycles. There is a lot of bicycle movement on Alma Road. There have been several unfortunate accidents, including 'door jamming'. Regardless of plans for the Inkerman Safe Travel Corridor, as well as the broader 'Lets Ride Melbourne' program, Alma Road west urgently needs a designated green riding zone at this busy dangerous end of the street.*

OFFICER COMMENT

Road safety and urban realm upgrades were made in Alma Road between St Kilda Road and Chapel Street in 2013. Painted pedestrian refuges and traffic islands including tree planting were installed in the centre of the road along with kerbside painted bike lanes.

The local community seek further attention and action to enhance Alma Road West in line with Council's transport and urban realm strategies and programs. Individual items within the petition and a corresponding response are provided as follows:

1) Reinstate and enhance the centre median planting:

The construction at 31 - 39 Alma Road is expected to be complete by early 2022. At this point the median island and tree that were removed to provide truck access to the site will be re-instated. Any other damage to kerbs or trees caused by the construction will also be checked and rectified at this time.

It is not possible to install any new islands with trees or pedestrian refuges in the centre median due requirements for vehicle access to cross-overs along Alma Road.

2) Request for further street tree planting zones on suitable street corners:

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Council's tree planting plan for this year is set by the 2017-2022 street tree planting guide. Alma Road is not a priority street in that guide. A review of other streets in the municipality, including Alma Road, will be undertaken following the completion of the priorities detailed in the 2017-2022 street tree planting guide.

The developer of 31-39 Alma Road will plant two replacement trees in the nature strip in the frontage of their development upon completion of construction.

- 3) Request to implement Slow Speed Local Area strategies to reduce exposure to excessive traffic, emissions and noise:

Council aims to eliminate fatalities and reduce the risk and severity of injuries on its roads, so people of all ages and abilities can use our roads safely.

A site inspection of Alma Road, between Chapel Street and St Kilda Road, revealed that all traffic signs are clearly visible and line marking is in good condition. Our most recent traffic survey of the street was undertaken between Monday, 15 July 2019 and Sunday, 21 July 2019. This survey period is still considered relevant and may best reflect the usage of the road, as it was captured prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The key findings are:

- The average vehicle speed for the road was 42.5km/h.
- 85% of vehicles travelled at or less than 51.9km/h.
- The average weekday traffic volume was 9,478 vehicles per day.

Alma Road is a major Council road and is expected to cater for between 8,000 up to 12,000 vehicles per day, as it is designed for major traffic movements across the municipality and the broader road network. A daily volume of 9,478 vehicles is in a middle of the range and therefore considered acceptable.

The current speed limit of 50km/h is considered appropriate for a street playing this role within our transport network. Traffic Engineers use the 85th percentile speed to guide decision making. Based on the survey results, the 85th percentile traffic speed recorded as 51.9km/h is within an acceptable limit for this road with a 50km/h speed limit. It shows that the majority of motorists travel at an appropriate speed and therefore no traffic management action is warranted.

- 4) Concerns for safety of cyclists and pedestrians crossing St Kilda Road at Alma Road due to poorly coordinated and inadequately timed pedestrian lights.

Similar concerns have been raised by the community on other occasions. These signal timing concerns have then been forwarded to Department of Transport (DoT) as the responsible authority for St Kilda Road and for all intersections. DoT's response is that pedestrians have sufficient time to cross St Kilda Road in stages and can wait safely in the median alongside the tram tracks for the second cycle.

Council supports signal timing lengths that enable pedestrians to cross major roads in one movement, rather than the current staged approach. As a result of this petition, the team will again forward the request for timing that allows pedestrian crossing in one movement to DoT for review.

- 5) Request to install a green surface treatment to help enhance safety for cyclists using the bike lane on Alma Road:



The Transport Safety team follows the Austroads guidelines for the use of green surface treatments. To maintain the effectiveness of the treatment, the guidelines recommend using it only at high-risk conflict points such as side streets with high volumes of traffic and/or when there is a crash history demonstrating a safety issue. A review of VicRoads crash statistics revealed that one bicycle crash occurred on Alma Road (mid-block) in the last available five-year period. The crash has been described as “out of control on carriageway” with no collision or object struck.

A site inspection and an online assessment revealed that the existing line marking is in good condition and accords with the Australian Standards. It is noted that the construction on the west end of the street is still underway and water-filled barriers are obstructing the line marking. An additional review of the line marking on the west end of the street will be conducted when the construction is complete. The existing bike lanes on either side of Alma Road have a generous width of approximately 1.65m, which exceeds the minimum (1.2m) and desirable (1.5m) requirements under the Austroads guidelines. The Transport Safety team has not identified any high-risk conflict points that would be appropriate for the installation of green surface treatment along Alma Road.

The onsite inspection found bicycle lane signage could be improved and officers have arranged for additional bike lane signs to be installed to highlight the presence of cyclists on Alma Road.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Thanks the Petition organisers for their advocacy to improve safety and amenity of Alma Road between St Kilda Road and Chapel Street, St Kilda.
2. Notes that the median island and tree that were removed to provide truck access to the site will be re-instated once the construction at 31 - 39 Alma Road is completed. The developer will also plant two new trees in the nature strip in front of the site.
3. Notes that a review of street trees in the municipality, including Alma Road, will be undertaken following the completion of the priorities detailed in the 2017-2022 street tree planting guide.
4. Notes that while the petitioners desire Slow Speed Local Area treatments to be implemented on Alma Road, Council's traffic engineers' assessment shows that the road functions safely and no traffic engineering measures are warranted.
5. Notes that the Transport Safety team will again request the Department of Transport to review the timing of the pedestrian crossings on St Kilda Road at Alma Road to provide time for pedestrians to cross in one signal phase.
6. Notes that the existing bike lane on Alma Road does not meet the Austroads guideline requirements for the use of a green surface treatment and that the Transport Safety team has organised for the installation of additional bike lane signs and will check the line marking again once the construction is complete.
7. Advises the organiser of the petition of Council's endorsed recommendation.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil