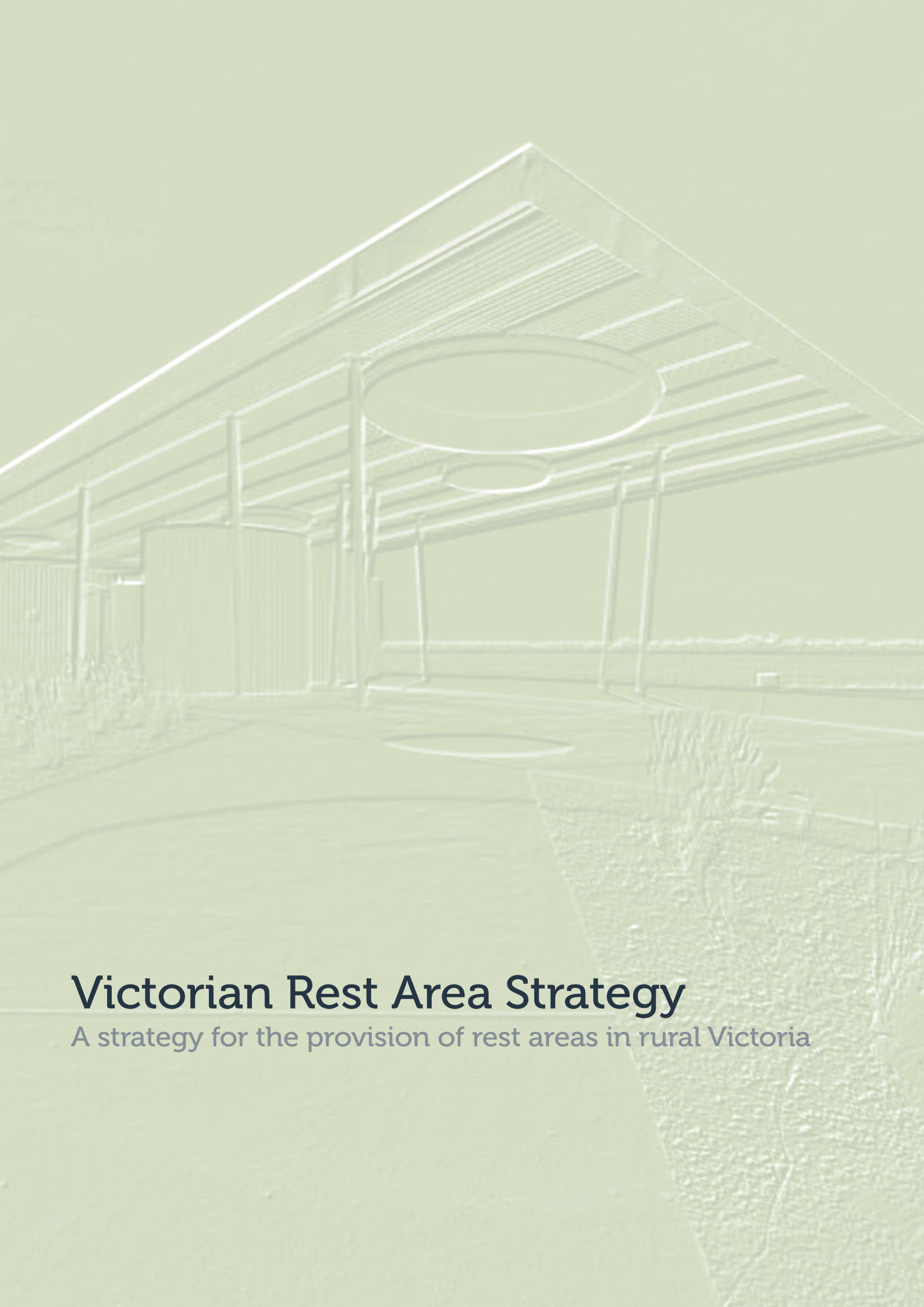


Victorian Rest Area Strategy

A strategy for the provision of rest areas in rural Victoria





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Chief Executive's note



Driver fatigue is, and continues to be, a major issue on Victorian roads.

VicRoads' Victorian Rest Area Strategy aims to reduce fatigue-related incidents by taking a holistic, strategic approach to rest stop areas across Victoria.

The provision of appropriate infrastructure goes hand-in-hand with behavioural education. The strategy doesn't solely rely on creating new rest stops, but looks strategically at improving existing rest stops, promoting in-town facilities, addressing drivers' needs, and encouraging drivers to plan their rest stops before setting out.

A key part of the strategy involves consulting with the freight industry, local councils and other stakeholders to develop clear action plans. This integrated approach will be an important part of developing better rest facilities across the state.

At the end of the day, it's about VicRoads and its partners providing practical, safe and convenient rest stops that encourage safer driver behaviour.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Liddle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Gary Liddle
Chief Executive
August 2010

Introduction

Rest areas in Victoria provide the opportunity for all road users to take a break, and most importantly to sleep before their driving is affected by fatigue. Driver fatigue is a significant cause of crashes and sleep is the only effective cure. Driver rest facilities are provided in the context of the overall road safety objective of managing driver fatigue.

Fatigue related crashes and the need for sleep

It is estimated that driver fatigue is a factor in 20 per cent of deaths on Victoria's roads each year¹. Driver fatigue related crashes are also significantly more common on country roads than roads in metropolitan Melbourne. Fatigue can be caused by:

- sleep deprivation
- lack of quality sleep
- driving at times when you would normally be asleep (e.g. 1am to 6am) or in the afternoon lull (1pm to 5pm) when your biological time clock can make you feel sleepy
- having a sleep disorder, such as sleep apnoea.

Research has shown that going without sleep for 17 hours has the same effect on driving performance as a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of 0.05. Going without sleep for 24 hours has the same effect as a BAC of 0.1, which is double the legal BAC limit².

Drivers need to be encouraged to avoid fatigue. Rest areas on country roads are important as they provide safe places to sleep. Ideally drivers will sleep for an extended period as this is the best way to combat fatigue, however, a 'powernap' of about 15 to 20 minutes has also been shown to improve driver performance.

Heavy vehicle drivers also have regulatory obligations to take rest breaks and need to be able to check their vehicles and loads.

Rest areas can also provide a range of amenities such as toilets, food and driver information.

Therefore rest areas need to:

- be well placed on key freight routes and other major arterial roads across regional Victoria so that drivers have sufficient opportunities to safely rest before their driving is affected by fatigue
- provide opportunities for sleep, not just a break from driving
- have sufficient parking spaces to meet demand now and able to provide for future demand
- meet the different needs of light and heavy vehicle drivers
- be attractive to drivers to encourage drivers to stop for a break to rest and sleep.

Rest areas can include:

- facilities provided by townships and local Government, and those supported by community groups
- Freeway Service Centres and other commercial facilities
- rest areas provided by VicRoads.

There is an extensive network of rest areas and freeway service centres on the Victorian road network, with approximately 120 of these suitable for heavy vehicles. A range of local facilities also exist, providing further opportunities for all drivers to rest. Local councils and the private sector have a key role in the provision of these facilities, which offer an opportunity to support regional growth through the promotion of local attractions and services.

Policy context

Links with other key Government strategies and plans

The Victorian Government, through Victoria's road safety strategy *arrive alive 2008-2017*, is committed to improving existing and providing additional rest area facilities as one of a range of initiatives to reduce fatigue related crashes. The Victorian Rest Area Strategy fits within the framework of *arrive alive 2008-2017* and provides strategic direction for the provision of driver rest facilities across the state. It also recognises the need for road users to be aware of the risks of driving when fatigued and how essential it is that they take a break and sleep before their driving is affected by fatigue.

There is a particular need for rest areas to allow heavy vehicle drivers to meet their statutory requirements for taking rest breaks under fatigue management regulations, and also to carry out necessary tasks, such as checking loads or completing logbooks. The Victorian Rest Area Strategy also aligns with the *Victorian Transport Plan* that is driving the development of the state's transport network into the future. It also supports the Victorian Freight Network Strategy: *Freight Futures*, which has been developed to drive the development of an efficient, sustainable freight network for the future in this state.

A key priority for the Victorian Government is to support regional Victoria. *Ready for Tomorrow — A Blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria* explains the Government's vision for a prosperous, sustainable and liveable regional Victoria. The promotion of in-town driver rest facilities supports this vision through the growth of new business opportunities in regional centres and towns.

The blueprint also recognises that continued improvement in road network connections between Melbourne and Victorian regional centres, and between regional centres is critical in supporting growth in regional Victoria. Driver rest facilities, including in-town facilities, are an integral element in the provision of road network connections.

¹ Victoria's Road Safety Strategy: *arrive alive! 2008-2017*

² VicRoads website: www.VicRoads.vic.gov.au

Background

The key to reducing fatigue related crashes is encouraging drivers to stop and sleep when they feel drowsy. For drivers of heavy vehicles, rest breaks are regulated, whereas for light vehicle drivers there is no such regulation. However, all drivers have a legal obligation to drive in a safe manner having regard to their mental and physical condition. It is critical that all drivers plan their trips and take rest breaks and sleep before their driving is affected by fatigue.

Light vehicle drivers

Recent survey research on rest areas conducted by VicRoads with light vehicle drivers³ showed that of the respondents:

- 91.9% took a long trip (driving more than two hours) one or more times a year, and 36.5% were doing so very often, with long trips from almost every day to every three to four weeks
- the main reason given for taking a long trip was for a holiday (69.7%), followed by day trips for recreation (26.5%) and for work (25.8%)
- the majority travelled with passengers in the car (81.0%) and a significant proportion travelled with children (34.1%).

Seventy-nine per cent of respondents reported that they took a break from driving on a long trip (more than two hours). This was consistent with survey results from research carried out by the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV)⁴ in 2003 that reported that 76% of respondents claimed that they were likely to stop at a rest area during a long distance trip. The RACV also found that people were generally pleased with the quality and quantity of rest areas available in Victoria.

When asked to rate the most important features at a rest area, respondents to the recent VicRoads survey believed a toilet (81.5%), safety (64.0%), access to water (56.0%), a rubbish bin (50.0%), access to food (42.6%), lighting (41.5%) and shade (37.5%) were most important (in order of priority).

The survey also revealed that 81.6% of respondents reported using Freeway Service Centres or other commercial centres on long trips—40.8% did this sometimes, 32.8% often and 8% always. This was consistent with findings of the earlier RACV survey that reported that 86% of respondents claimed to have used a service centre at some time.

When asked about where they most preferred to stop on a rural freeway (such as the Hume Freeway), 60.9% preferred a Freeway Service Centre, compared with 23.2% at a rest area (with no fuel or food) and 15.9% preferring to stop in a town. However, 72.5% would be prepared to turn off the freeway and stop in a town if no other option was available.

Generally, respondents expressed a slightly greater preference for stopping in a town, at a Freeway Service Centre or other commercial service centre, or at a place associated with a park or natural feature, over other types of rest areas.

Heavy vehicle drivers

The national heavy vehicle driver fatigue management laws set work and rest limits for heavy vehicle drivers and require the management of driver fatigue. The laws make all parties in the supply chain legally responsible for preventing driver fatigue. The standard hours option suits most transport operators and sets out minimum rest and maximum work hours, and contains basic record keeping requirements. There are also opportunities for more flexible hours under the Basic Fatigue Management (BFM) or Advanced Fatigue Management (AFM) options⁵.

These requirements provide opportunities for rest break planning. However, they do not circumvent the advice that if a driver feels drowsy they must stop and sleep regardless of whether it is time for a regulated rest break or not.

A survey conducted by the Victorian Transport Association (VTA) in 2007 with heavy vehicle drivers⁶ indicated where heavy vehicle drivers most preferred to stop when travelling on long distance trips. There was strong support for truck stops (35.7%) and rest areas (25%), followed by service centres (14.2%), facilities provided by companies (13%) and in-town facilities (8%).

This survey also revealed that, similar to the findings of market research with light vehicle drivers, the most important features heavy vehicle drivers look for when stopping are access to a toilet and water (45.2%) and shade (22.6%). However, a good area where they can sleep (15.4%), an all weather surface (9.5%) and separate area for livestock and refrigerated trucks (5.9%) are also considerations.



³ VicRoads, 2010, *Understanding Why Drivers Stop at Rest Areas - Survey Report*.

⁴ RACV, June 2003, *Public Perceptions of Rest Areas in Victoria*.

⁵ National Transport Commission, July 2008, *Heavy Vehicle Driver Fatigue Reform Information Bulletin - Standard Hours Explained*.

⁶ VTA, February 2007, *A Reivew of Victorian Rest Areas*.

Aim of this strategy

The aim of this strategy is to establish objectives for guiding the provision of facilities on key routes in Victoria to enable drivers to manage fatigue, check their vehicles and loads, and have reasonable access to amenities such as toilets, food and driver information.

The following map identifies the major routes covered by this strategy.

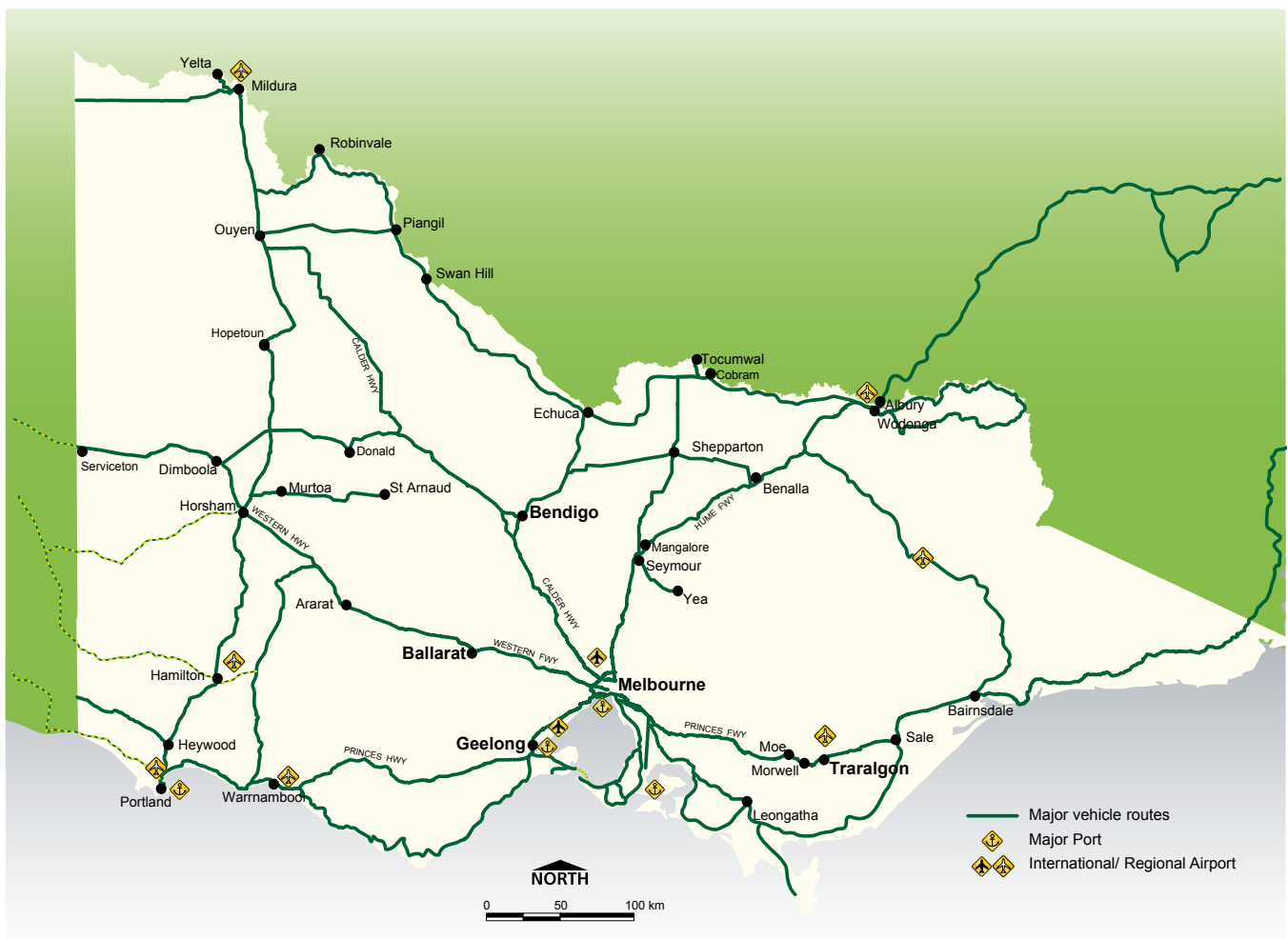
Objectives of this strategy

The objectives of this strategy are to:

- ensure access for road users to appropriate rest facilities
- encourage the use of in-town facilities in regional Victoria
- encourage the development of Freeway Service Centres at strategic intervals along the freeway network
- ensure driver rest facilities reflect Rest Area Route Plans
- ensure the needs of heavy vehicle drivers are met by providing access to suitable facilities
- promote the importance of planning for rest breaks in advance of the onset of the signs of fatigue.

Figure 1: Major vehicle routes

(Source: Regional Principal Freight Network (Road) as identified in Freight Futures and Tourism Victoria May 2010)



Categories of rest areas

Rest areas include:

- in-town facilities provided by local Government, local businesses and those supported by community groups
- Freeway Service Centres and other commercial facilities, such as roadhouses
- different categories of rest areas provided by VicRoads.

In-town facilities

Towns provide access to a range of commercial facilities providing fuel, food and drink. Towns also often provide public toilets and places like parks, where drivers may be able to rest and sleep. As a general rule, road users will be encouraged to use in-town facilities as a way of taking a rest break. However, these commercial and even public facilities may not be available on a 24-hour basis.

VicRoads will assist local Government and communities to develop plans to promote use of in-town facilities. Community groups are ideally placed to be involved in the promotion of local interests (economic, natural or cultural) and to utilise rest areas to provide information on local attractions and services.



Freeway Service Centres and other commercial facilities

Freeway Service Centres

Freeway Service Centres are commercial ventures operating along freeways under an access agreement with VicRoads and a council planning permit. Freeway Service Centres provide fuel, food and other facilities to road users on a 24-hour basis, as required under the relevant municipal planning scheme provisions and associated guidelines. The planning schemes also require the provision of adequate rest area facilities, including sufficient parking areas for heavy and light vehicles where drivers can sleep away from noise and other disturbances.

The strategic location of Freeway Service Centres recognises the important role these facilities play both in providing essential services to motorists and in managing road safety and driver fatigue. Strategic zones suitable for the development of Freeway Service Centres will be identified along Victoria's freeway network. The development of Freeway Service Centres will be encouraged within these strategic zones. A key consideration will be the fatigue management objective of providing places for drivers of all types of vehicles to sleep. In identifying these strategic zones, consideration will be given to:

- planning scheme and land use compatibility
- repeated fatigue related crash locations
- the relationship with existing facilities, including towns, both on the route in question and on interconnecting routes
- the location of interconnecting routes and their interchanges
- the distance from ports and intermodal facilities and other major freight hubs both within Victoria and neighbouring States
- future major road projects which are likely to have an impact on present or future facilities
- the projected growth of metropolitan residential and industrial areas.

Principles for the development of Freeway Service Centres are provided in Appendix 1 of this strategy.

Other commercial facilities

Roadhouses and similar facilities are commercial ventures located on roads other than freeways. They provide fuel, food and other facilities to road users, but not necessarily on a 24-hour basis.

VicRoads rest areas

VicRoads rest areas comprise four categories:

- major rest areas
- minor rest areas
- truck parking bays
- Truck Informal Rest Areas.

Principles for developing new and upgrading existing rest areas are provided in Appendix 2 of this strategy.

Major rest areas

These areas are designed to cater for longer breaks and provide a range of facilities and sufficient number of parking areas for heavy and light vehicles. They are designed to allow all drivers to take breaks for sleep and for heavy vehicle drivers to take breaks to meet their statutory requirements under fatigue management regulations.

Facilities at major rest areas may include:

- separate all-weather parking areas for heavy vehicles, including separate areas for livestock and refrigerated vehicles, and for light vehicles, including those towing caravans and trailers
- toilets
- drinking water
- sheltered seating areas
- tables and seating
- rubbish bins
- landscaping to provide shaded parking areas
- lighting.

Depending on traffic mix and volume, major rest areas may also include:

- playgrounds
- tourist information
- commercial food and drink vans
- barbeques.

Minor rest areas

These areas are designed for shorter rest breaks, such as to take a power nap, and may include parking space for light vehicles only.

Facilities at minor rest areas will be dependent on usage, but as a minimum should provide:

- parking areas for light vehicles
- tables and seating
- rubbish bins.

Minor rest areas may also include drinking water and landscaping to provide shaded parking areas (where these can be justified based on expected usage).

Truck parking bays

These areas are designed to allow drivers of heavy vehicles to have short, purpose-based stops such as load checks, completing work diaries, and addressing associated operational needs. They can also be used for a short rest break to take a power nap. At a minimum truck parking bays should include:

- all-weather parking areas for heavy vehicles
- rubbish bins.

Truck Informal Rest Areas (TIRA)

Over the years, heavy vehicle drivers have found places where they can pull off the road for a rest break or to check their load. Where appropriate, these sites will be designated as Truck Informal Rest Areas (TIRA), for use by truck drivers only. They will have a unique nationally consistent identification system.

Before a location is identified as an appropriate TIRA, a road safety and physical infrastructure audit will be undertaken. The inclusion of TIRAs provides supplementary opportunities for truck drivers to rest on freight routes.

Principles for the provision of Truck Informal Rest Areas are provided in Appendix 3 of this strategy.

Commercial trading at rest areas

Commercial traders such as food and drink vans, have operated at selected rest areas for many years across Victoria. Commercial trading can occur where operators are licensed by VicRoads and have a local Government permit. Commercial trading provides another attraction for road users to stop for a rest. However, their operation must not adversely impact the needs of drivers taking rest breaks for sleep.

The way forward

VicRoads Provision and Management of Rest Areas on Rural Arterial Roads - Guidelines 2010 provides detailed guidance on developing Rest Area Route Plans and developing and maintaining rest areas.

Implementation

1 Ensure access to appropriate facilities

Rest Area Route Plans will be developed for all key freight and tourist routes in regional Victoria. Plans will include the provision of facilities on the outskirts of metropolitan Melbourne and Geelong, having regard to planning provisions and projected expansion of urban growth areas. Development of these plans will include an audit of existing rest area facilities, location, access and signage and will ensure that appropriate rest areas are strategically located along key routes.

There are a number of unique requirements for heavy vehicle drivers when considering the provision of driver rest facilities. Heavy vehicle drivers are required to fulfil regulatory obligations to rest. They also need to be able to check their vehicles and loads. Consultation with industry is a key step in identifying appropriate sites.

Principles for the development of Rest Area Route Plans are provided in Appendix 4 of this strategy.

Strategic Action 1 :

Develop Rest Area Route Plans for all key corridors taking into account major arterial roads and freeways that are significant freight and/or tourist routes in Victoria.

2 Encourage the use of in-town facilities in regional Victoria

In consultation with key stakeholders, assist local Government and communities to develop action plans to encourage drivers to use in-town facilities in regional Victoria to take a break and rest. This will include promotion of attractions and services of individual towns, including signage in accordance with *VicRoads Traffic Engineering Manual Volume 2*, roadside signing guidelines.

Strategic Action 2 :

Assist local Government and communities to develop town specific action plans to encourage drivers to use in-town facilities.

3 Identify strategic zones suitable for the development of Freeway Service Centres

Strategic zones along freeways are areas where proposals for the development of Freeway Service Centres will be encouraged. A key consideration will be the fatigue management objective of providing places for drivers of all types of vehicles to sleep.

Strategic Action 3 :

Identify strategic zones suitable for the development of Freeway Service Centres.



4 Ensure driver rest facilities reflect Rest Area Route Plans

The provision of rest areas will be prioritised in accordance with Rest Area Route Plans, having regard to other driver rest facilities, including commercial service centres and in-town facilities.

Strategic Action 4:

Develop a program for the provision of rest areas.

5 Encouraging drivers to plan for rest breaks

All drivers should plan their trips to include rest breaks and sleep before their driving is affected by fatigue. VicRoads and the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV) already provide online maps for key routes showing rest areas. The use of these as a planning tool for taking rest breaks will be better promoted. There will also be an investigation of ways to provide rest area information on maps for GPS navigational devices that are increasingly being used by drivers for route planning.

A recent survey on rest areas conducted by VicRoads with light vehicle drivers found that the majority of respondents (88.9%) felt that road signs were the best way to provide information about rest areas. The majority also believed that existing signs gave drivers enough information about what is available at a rest area

Signs will be located before each rest area, and advance signs will be used to communicate details and distances of other rest areas ahead. Signs for rest areas will also indicate the category of rest area and facilities available.

Rest areas will be individually identified to assist drivers and the freight industry in planning rest breaks and record keeping, such as making work diary entries.

Rest areas along roadsides should integrate with the adjacent landscape and provide opportunities for users to have access or views to surrounding landscape features. This could include walking tracks to adjacent state parks or access to vantage points for views to landscape features. Users of rest areas should be actively encouraged to stop, rest and walk where possible.

Strategic Action 5:

Implement effective rest area information systems and leading design practices.



Appendix 1

Principles for the development of Freeway Service Centres

The following key principles underpin the development of Freeway Service Centres:

- Strategic zones suitable for the development of Freeway Service Centres will be identified along Victoria's freeway network. The location of strategic zones will be integrated within the overall Victorian Rest Area Strategy and identified in a Rest Area Route Plan. The location of freeway strategic zones will have regard to the overall road safety objective of managing fatigue and an identified need for the provision of essential road user services and facilities not otherwise available along Victoria's freeway network. Relevant planning schemes, including land zoning compatibility will also be considered.
- In considering Freeway Service Centre proposals, VicRoads primary focus is on freeway operational safety and efficiency. Freeway Service Centre proposals must be able to demonstrate compliance with operational safety requirements, including minimum spacing requirements to other freeway access ramps (eg. at interchanges and other Freeway Service Centres), advanced freeway signing arrangements and access ramp design standards. Consideration must also be given to the impact on the operational performance of the freeway.
- Freeway Service Centres must provide essential services and facilities 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, which encourages drivers to stop and take an effective break in the interests of road safety. These essential services include:
 - designated parking areas
 - undercover fuel sales area
 - the sale of food, drinks and other convenience goods
 - an indoor sit-down eating area
 - an outdoor picnic area with shade/shelter
 - a safe play area for children
 - public toilets and a public telephone
 - local and regional tourist information for a Freeway Service Centre with access to a rural freeway.



Appendix 2

Principles for developing new and upgrading existing rest areas

The following key principles underpin the design of new rest areas or the upgrade of existing sites:

- the layout and design should promote effective and safe rest and sleep opportunities depending on the category of rest area
- the type and level of facilities at rest area sites, including the number of parking spaces provided for heavy and light vehicles, will be designed to meet expected demand (based on current and future traffic volume and mix)
- where appropriate, rest areas should provide separate all-weather parking for heavy vehicles, including separate areas for livestock and refrigerated vehicles (where needed and where possible), and for light vehicles, including those towing caravans (not for camping purposes) and trailers
- where practical, security lighting will be provided for night time rest area users
- the design and speed limits for vehicles in rest areas will take into account the safety of pedestrians using facilities and moving around the rest area, as well as the safe movement of different types of vehicles
- access to and from rest areas will be safe and rest areas will be clearly identifiable
- rest areas should be attractive and inviting to road users and encourage them to stop. Structures, such as shelters and toilets, should be visually appealing
- adequate shade should be provided at rest areas
- toilet facilities, where provided, should be environmentally friendly.



Appendix 3

Principles for the provision of Truck Informal Rest Areas

The following key principles underpin the location and identification of a Truck Informal Rest Area (TIRA):

- TIRA's will be uniquely identified to provide commercial vehicle drivers with advanced warning that they are approaching a TIRA so they have time to slow and safely enter the TIRA. A simple and cost-effective signage system of a series of reflectors on posts will mark the distances to TIRAs beginning at about half a kilometre to the TIRA
- sites will be located in the direction of travel to avoid heavy vehicle traffic crossing over the centre line. It will also limit confusion by having reflectors on the 'wrong' side of the road
- sites will be easy to access, with good shoulder condition, no significant drop-off and a relatively smooth transition between the highway and the site. Safe sight distances are to be observed to reduce the risk of collision with heavy vehicles entering or exiting a TIRA
- a site's 'hard stand' area will be of a standard to accommodate the largest of heavy vehicles without the risk of bogging in normal conditions
- TIRA's will be located with consideration to proximity to residential and business areas. A site should not cause adverse impacts on local amenity from emissions, headlight glare or noise.



Appendix 4

Principles for the development of Rest Area Route Plans

Rest Area Route Plans will be developed for key corridors taking into account rural freeways and arterial roads that are significant freight and/or tourist routes. Planning for the location of any new rest areas, including when developing major projects, should be considered in the context of a review of existing facilities undertaken as part of the development of or update of a Rest Area Route Plan. There should be consultation with local Government and communities and the road freight industry along corridors about the potential for:

- use of facilities in towns and other commercial facilities
- developing Freeway Service Centre's in strategic zones on freeways
- the sighting of new or upgrading of existing rest areas.

Steps for the development of a Rest Area Route Plan

1. **Audit and map the existing rest areas and facilities** currently available for heavy and light vehicles. This should include facilities in towns, other commercial facilities, Freeway Service Centres and VicRoads rest areas. An assessment should be made of:
 - the suitability of the facility for drivers of both heavy and light vehicles and level of demand by each road user group
 - the location of each facility in terms of topography and whether it is at a safe and practical location
 - the amenity of each rest area and any nearby features that will be of interest to drivers and encourage them to stop and take a rest break.
2. **Consider the existing and predicted volume and mix of traffic** along the entire corridor and associated areas. In doing so, consider factors that may have an effect on traffic volume and/or mix, including:
 - the location of interconnecting routes and their interchanges, intermodal facilities and the distance from ports both within Victoria and neighbouring states for the corridor
 - the projected growth of metropolitan residential and industrial areas
 - future major road projects along the corridor or on nearby routes.
3. **Mapping of repeat fatigue related crash locations** and identify any clusters of crash locations and consider their relationship to rest area facilities.
4. **Develop the Rest Area Route Plan** based on an assessment of existing and predicted demand along the corridor and fatigue related crash locations and determine:
 - whether there are sufficient rest facilities to meet existing and future demand by different road users and whether these are appropriately spaced
 - whether existing rest facilities require upgrading to better meet demand now and in the future
 - where action is required in the form of either the promotion of in-town facilities, the identification of strategic zones for Freeway Service Centres or the development of new or upgrading existing rest areas.



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