The Local Area Access Program: Demonstration projects in the making

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1   Introduction

The Victorian Government has recently commenced a new program called the Local Area Access Program (LAAP) through which it provides funding to local governments to help them develop and deliver a range of "demonstration projects". These projects are intended to improve access to activity centres, schools, community services, public transport stops and stations, and other significant destinations within local areas. Typically they involve small-scale infrastructure works to overcome local barriers to walking and cycling or to enable people to reach public transport services.

LAAP was announced in 2006 as part of the Victorian Government's transport and liveability statement, *Meeting Our Transport Challenges* (MOTC), with an unprecedented commitment of $10.5 billion over ten years for transport improvements in both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria (DPC and DOI, 2006). MOTC is underpinned by an integrated strategy for the metropolitan area (DOI, 2004), and the majority of MOTC funds are directed towards the expansion of public transport services and associated infrastructure investment, with a smaller but important investment in roads. MOTC also features the promotion of "smarter, healthier travel choices" as one of its key themes, with funding commitments for the following four programs:

- Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure programs: the on-going development of principal bicycle routes and the installation of pedestrian crossings and other facilities on major roads
- TravelSmart: a travel behaviour change program which has been operating in Victorian schools, universities, workplaces and communities for several years, with demonstrable success
- Local Area Access Program (LAAP): a new program of demonstration projects to improve access within local areas, as described in this paper
- Transport Connections Program: a range of flexible transport services tailored to meets the needs of local communities, particularly in remote or socially disadvantaged areas

This set of programs indicates a strong interest in providing more options to meet the growing demands for local travel and, in particular, in developing and promoting viable alternatives to car travel. TravelSmart and LAAP are complementary programs and are being managed concurrently by the Walking & Cycling Branch within the Department of Infrastructure (DOI).

This paper describes the background to the Local Area Access Program, its objectives, the options considered in its design, the process of selecting projects for funding grants, the type of projects that are coming forward, and the significance of project evaluation. As the program is in its early stages, it is too early to report results of the demonstration projects; however, some general observations are offered.

2   Reasons for the program

As cities grow, as congestion on roads and public transport increases, and as mobility over longer distances becomes impaired, people will look increasingly to local destinations to satisfy trip needs. The alternative, of increasing the capacity of metropolitan networks to support travel over longer distances, will involve costly construction, and in many places the ability to do this is limited. As Hillman (2001) has noted, people do not always need to travel 'further and faster". In anticipation of this emerging requirement, *Melbourne 2030*, the Victorian Government's plan for sustainable growth (DOI, 2002), envisages the development of suburban activity centres, with higher densities and mixed land uses, to enable services, employment and other activities to be provided where they can be accessed locally. There is a corresponding need to ensure that the local infrastructure is improved to provide effective and efficient access to these centres and other significant destinations, with an emphasis on more sustainable modes of travel.

For short trips in local areas, there appears to be potential for greater use of walking and cycling. Over 40% of the trips that people make within the Melbourne metropolitan area are less than 2 km long, and almost two-thirds of trips are less than 5 km long. Many of these trips are for school, shopping and social purposes. As Figure 1 shows, car is currently the dominant mode for these short trips[1]. A shift in modes (for example, with more children walking instead of being driven to school) could contribute significantly to the management of localised road traffic congestion.

For trips longer than walking or cycling distance, and for which public transport may potentially be an option, local access considerations (such as people's perceptions of risks to personal safety when walking to or waiting for public transport, or various other impediments to walking or cycling) are likely to be critical to their assessments of the options available, and hence to mode choice. These local influences are not well understood and warrant investigation and analysis.

Increasing the incidence of walking and cycling is important to the Victorian Government for a range of reasons in addition to transport considerations. These include health and well-being, the environment, community building, recreation and tourism (DOI and DVC, 2006). However, even if these benefits did not exist, we would be pursuing improvements for walking and cycling (and local access generally) in view of the desired transport outcomes.

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[1] Compare this with the UK, where some 80% of journeys under one mile in length are made on foot (DETR, 2000).

Mode of Travel

Number of trips (millions)

6.00
5.00
4.00
3.00
2.00
1.00
0.00

Car
Public Transport
Cycling
Walking

0-2 km   2-5 km   >5 km
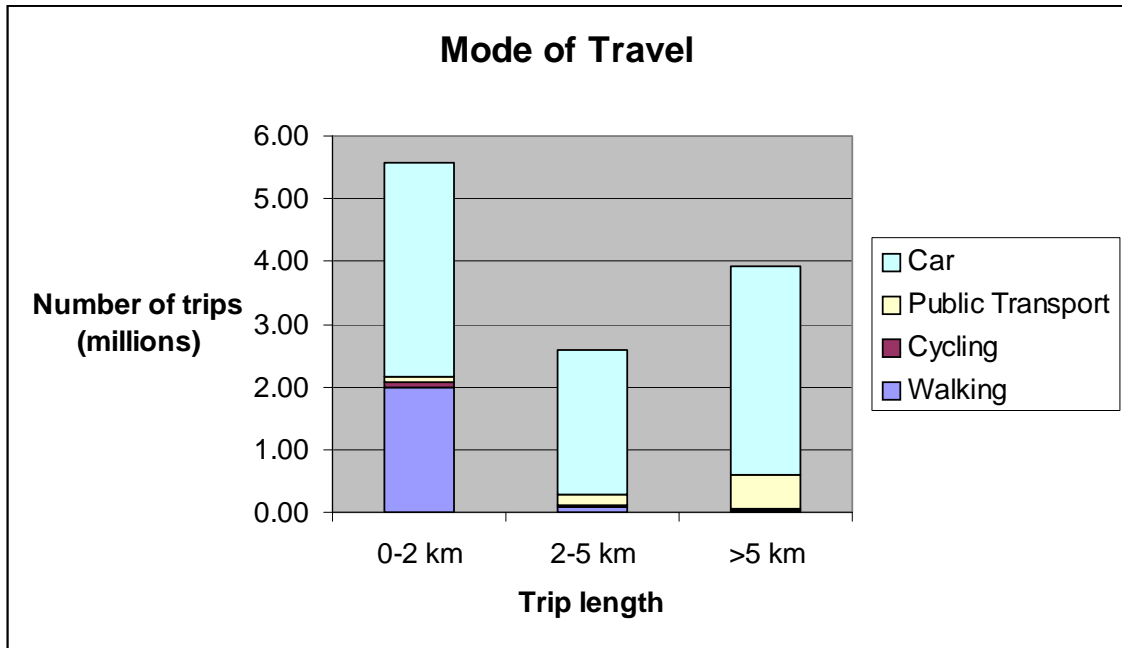
Trip length

Figure 1: Relation between mode of travel and trip length[2]

Victoria is not unique in recognising the importance of walking and cycling. Strategies and implementation plans are being produced in various countries at the national, state and local levels, with the aim of creating environments that encourage these modes (e.g. DfT, 2004; Walk WA, 2007; TfL, 2004; SADTEI, 2006). In some cases, national or state authorities have taken a leadership role in developing guidelines for use by local governments to produce their own pedestrian and/or cycle access plans (e.g. DETR, 2000; RTA, 2002). Case studies are being showcased and evaluated. The UK Department for Transport, for example, has presented fifty case studies of local projects judged to be successful in (i) improving the walking and cycling environment, (ii) providing better facilities for walking and cycling, and (iii) influencing travel behaviour (DfT, 2005). Benchmarking studies and reviews of organisational effectiveness are evident (e.g. NCBW, 2003a and 2003b) as are guides to best practice (e.g. IHT, 2005; VTPI, 2007) and appraisal guidelines specifically tailored to walking and cycling schemes (e.g. DfT, 2007).

Coinciding with this strong interest is a recognition that our understanding of local access is not as well developed as that of other, more traditional areas of transport. There may be a number of reasons for this. Firstly, many local access issues are at the interface of state and local government responsibilities, and neither party has had clear responsibility for ensuring that these issues are addressed in a comprehensive manner to achieve good outcomes. There is now, however, a greater tendency for different levels of government to work in partnership (e.g. DETR, 2000; DfT, 2005; RTA, 2002). Secondly, projects involving local access tend to be small in scale and geographically diffuse, so that the impacts of individual initiatives are often difficult to measure. In this respect,

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[2] Based on analysis of data from the Victorian Activity and Travel Survey (VATS) for the period 1994-99.

the UK Department for Transport's case studies are timely (DfT, 2005). The comparative shortage of evidence about the effectiveness of local access improvements in contributing to transport outcomes may have fostered a tendency towards building large schemes with measured positive value rather than small-scale schemes, because their value is not as easily measured[3].

A further reason is that, as the benefits of local access improvements will be spread between local and longer-distance trip-makers, each level of government may be reluctant to initiate or develop projects owing to the risks of cost shifting.

3   Objectives

Given this gap in knowledge at the interface of state and local government activities, the Local Area Access Program has been created.

The aim of LAAP is to provide a better understanding of the impacts that initiatives at the local level can have on people's access and mobility. It seeks to achieve this by developing and delivering projects that will have practical benefits on the ground, and that will support and promote good practice; i.e. demonstration projects that will show a way forward in addressing the physical, attitudinal and institutional barriers to walking and cycling.

Building strong and effective relationships between the state government and local governments and community organisations is also an integral objective of the program.

4   Options considered

The Department of Infrastructure has a rigorous three-stage process for assessing whether any proposed new program or major project should proceed:

- Strategic fit – to determine whether the proposal is consistent with the policies and strategic directions of government and, where possible, whether it satisfies a preliminary cost-benefit analysis;
- Options analysis – to consider alternative ways in which the program or project may be approached and delivered, and to help determine the appropriate scope (i.e. which features should be included, and which excluded), and
- Business case – to present a complete justification for the proposed project, together with all the practical requirements including an implementation plan, work schedule, risk management plan, stakeholder management plan and so forth.

This process is overseen by DOI's Project Review Committee (PRC), comprising senior management, which aims to ensure that proposals for new initiatives are robust before they are submitted to Treasury for budget funding. PRC members

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[3] Tolley (2001) criticises the UK Minister for Transport for a statement which appeared to imply support for this tendency. Ker (2001) recognises that the judicious use of small-scale pilot projects, with evaluation, can demonstrate the real value of alternative approaches to transport issues.

were naturally keen to understand the extent of the program: how many and what types of projects would be supported, the likely costs and so forth. However, this raised a key strategic issue about the nature of the partnership with local government: how should projects be selected and developed, and who should do this?

In developing the proposal for the Local Area Access Program as it negotiated the PRC process, consideration was given to three broad options (apart from the "do nothing" or base case).

Option 1: Conduct a comprehensive survey of local access needs before committing funds.

This option would have required a small team to review practices and assess needs across councils, to identify and prioritise a range of potentially worthwhile projects, and to examine funding options. The team would have been expected to report back to the PRC on the nature and extent of the projects required, with a detailed funding submission.

The main advantage of this option is that the Department would have maintained strong control over the program. However, it is likely that local governments would have seen this as a slow, bureaucratic process with little commitment from the state government to practical outcomes on the ground. Although the merits of conducting a broad survey of needs were clear, it was judged that councils would have been unlikely to participate enthusiastically in a program with this as its focus, and this option was rejected.

Option 2: Seek "expressions of interest" from councils, and provide them with funding grants to develop demonstration projects.

Under this option, councils would be invited to identify needs for local access improvements within their areas, and to prepare and submit proposals to DOI for project funding. The guidelines and criteria for demonstration projects would be developed by DOI in the first instance (as described in section 5.1 below) and refined in subsequent iterations of the program in view of feedback from local governments and other sources. A survey of local access needs would still be conducted (as per Option 1) but this would not form the focus of the program.

Advantages of this option, with funding immediately available, were that outcomes could be expedited and a commitment to delivery could be demonstrated. Given that many councils are required to develop structure plans for their designated activity centres within the framework of *Melbourne 2030*, this approach would provide an opportunity to "field test" elements of those plans relating to local access. It would also complement the Victorian Government's *Creating Better Places* initiative, which is a grants program with an emphasis on urban design (DSE, 2007). It was envisaged that successful projects would be showcased, as has been done in the UK (DfT, 2005).

The program budget would have to be large enough to attract sufficient interest and participation from councils, recognising that there would be

considerable variety in the type and scale of projects selected through this approach, and individual project costs ranging from tens of thousands to perhaps a million dollars. It was also recognised that project funding would need to be staged, starting at a low level and increasing in the later years of the program as more projects came on stream.

Option 3: Establish a continuing program of local access improvement projects.

This option contemplated an enduring program in which councils would be funded on a more substantial scale than that envisaged under Option 2. This would have had the advantages of maximising the participation of local governments and demonstrating the state government's commitment to improving local access, particularly around activity centres and public transport. For this type of program to be effective, there would need to be a strong body of evidence in place, to enable key projects to be identified and targeted. Given that the benefits of local access improvements have yet to be demonstrated and the distribution of those benefits properly understood, there would have been significant risks in proceeding with this option. However, it remains as a possible option for the medium-to-long term.

The Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales manages an on-going program for the preparation and implementation of Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plans (PAMPs) by local governments, with the aim of coordinating investment in infrastructure on key pedestrian routes. The process is established and well documented (RTA, 2002). While each project is monitored locally in order to refresh the plan, an evaluation of the overall program is not available.

The second option was endorsed as the preferred option. The program received funding of $16 million over four years in the Victorian Budget 2006-07. This comprises $12 million for project funding grants (phased over the four years as $1m + $3m + $4m + $4m) and the remainder to support a team to work with councils to identify and develop worthwhile projects, to administer the grants, to manage project evaluation, and to conduct other related analyses and investigations.

5   Project development processes

5.1   Open and competitive grants process

The principal activity to date within LAAP has been setting up the grants process, through which demonstration projects are selected for funding.

The first round of the program (for projects commencing in 2006-07) was launched in August 2006, when letters were sent to all councils in Victoria, advising them of the availability of funding grants and inviting them to participate by developing and submitting proposals for demonstration projects. Guidelines and criteria for projects were prepared and distributed, and an information session conducted.

The grants process is open to all councils (and certain other organisations) in Victoria; it operates on a competitive basis, as the total funding available in each round is limited. Applicants are required to demonstrate that their proposals satisfy the following five key selection criteria:

- The project is an appropriate response to an identified need.
- The project is likely to generate significant identifiable benefits relating to local access.
- The project is aligned with the policies and strategic directions of both state and local governments and, where applicable, to community priorities.
- The applicant has the capacity and commitment required to deliver the project.
- The project is likely to contribute to learning and innovation.

The last criterion relates to the "demonstration" value of projects; i.e. to the recognition and promulgation of best practice.

Examples of projects that have met these criteria are provided in Table 1.

The application process involves two stages. The first stage (Part A) seeks sufficient information about the objectives and nature of each project to enable assessments to be made against the above criteria. The result is a short list of projects to be progressed to the second stage, Part B, in which more detailed information is sought, particularly about the practical aspects of the project implementation. There are two main advantages of this two-stage process: firstly, for those applicants whose projects are not short-listed, unnecessary work is avoided; and secondly, for those that are short-listed, there is an opportunity for feedback and discussion about the direction and scope of the project, before it is developed in detail in Part B.

The program is now into its second round, with projects under development to commence in 2007-08.

5.2   Survey of local access needs

In setting up and operating a grants program, there is a possible risk that the program may become too narrowly focused on the selection and development of particular projects and fail to develop a wider perspective on local access needs and barriers. In order to build up this more comprehensive picture, interview surveys and discussions are being conducted with a number of local government authorities across Victoria, in parallel with the grant application process but as a separate exercise. This is essentially the work described within Option 1 in section 4 above.

The local government authorities (LGAs) included in this analysis have been selected using a random, unbiased process. However, anticipating that the needs are likely to be different in different localities, the councils have been classified

Table 1: Examples of LAAP projects

Example 1:	
Greenlight Project **Inner Melbourne Action Plan – Cities of Melbourne, Port Phillip, Yarra and Stonnington**	The level of priority given to pedestrians seeking to cross busy roads is an issue that affects many communities. In Melbourne's inner suburbs, long waits at traffic signals can be an impediment to walking. In this project, changes to pedestrian-operated traffic signals at selected sites on busy roads are expected to result in less waiting times for pedestrians and to provide an increase in the amount of time a green walk signal is active, making it easier to cross the road. It is envisaged that the Greenlight Project will be rolled out at high-usage pedestrian crossings across the four municipalities, and help to make walking a more convenient and attractive mode of travel for all residents.
Example 2:	
Doncaster Hill Boulevard Pedestrian Underpass – Improving Pedestrian Connectivity and Safety **City of Manningham**	Lucy Orlowsky of the LAAP team describes this project: "Imagine an underpass. Chances are you picture a 1970's gloomy, grey, downward corridor, complete with graffiti. While the function of an underpass is to aid pedestrians and cyclists across busy roads, the typical amenity is not conducive to pleasant journeys. "Manningham City Council aims to encourage greater pedestrian use by radically changing this stereotype. The Doncaster Hill underpass will become publicly visible, warmly lit, and feature public art, clear sight-lines and entrance protection from inclement weather. "The lighting within the underpass is one of the outstanding features of the planned refurbishment. Created as an art-work by Warren Langley, the lighting not only increases visibility, but showers the surrounds in a dappled rainbow of colours. This is literally 'a painting in light'. Langley is also the artist behind the Doncaster Hill Art Fence, and similar figures of moving pedestrians will feature on the underpass walls to create a feeling of accompaniment. "Combined with an attractive steel and glass canopy over the northern entrance and directional way-finding signage, the underpass project will create the feeling of a brighter, safer and more attractive passage across Doncaster Road."

Table 1: Examples of LAAP projects (cont)

Example 3:	
Echuca Pedestrian / Cycle Travel Links **Shire of Campaspe**	This project is concerned with the development of key pedestrian and cycling links across Echuca. It is being conducted in conjunction with a TravelSmart project in selected schools, to increase the number of children walking and cycling. The first stage of the project involves investigations, planning and design work to overcome the major barriers to pedestrian and cycle travel within Echuca. In particular, the feasibility of critical travel links such as a new pedestrian bridge across the Campaspe River is being investigated. Together with improvements to existing paths, these new facilities will increase access and connectivity.
Example 4:	
Sciencewalk to Scienceworks **City of Hobson's Bay**	Scienceworks Museum is the largest attraction in Melbourne's western suburbs. Currently only a small proportion of its visitors travel there by public transport. However, given that Scienceworks is less than 700 m from Spotswood railway station, that the visitors include many young people, and that most of the travel occurs in off-peak periods, this attraction presents a significant opportunity for promoting public transport use. The project seeks to make public transport a more effective and attractive option by overcoming some of the existing impediments. Provision of signage will help people to make the mental connection between the railway station and the museum, and improving the quality of pathways will make the short walk easier and more pleasant. These improvements will also benefit local residents as they travel to shopping centres, schools and so forth.
Example 5:	
Coordination of Projects in Inner Metro	An inner metropolitan council, a tertiary institution and a community sporting organisation have separately submitted proposals for potential LAAP projects in the same geographic area. Elements of these different projects include: • redesign of streets and provision of new pathways to emphasise pedestrian and cycle use • provision of trip-end facilities (e.g. bicycle storage, lockers and showers) • walk and cycle links to major activity centres and public transport • integration of sustainable travel concepts into urban redevelopment A challenge for LAAP is to ensure coordination of these projects so that the outcomes from the group as a whole are superior to those that would be achieved if the projects were implemented individually.

into five categories (inner metropolitan, middle-to-outer metropolitan, growth and interface areas, regional cities and towns, and rural areas) and sufficient LGAs have been chosen to ensure adequate representation in each category. The interviews are currently in progress, with a report expected in late 2007.

The survey and analysis of needs will help to inform the future direction of LAAP and, in particular, to identify any significant issues that may not have been identified or addressed through the demonstration projects. Such gaps will then be addressed in later rounds of the program. The findings will also contribute to the development of policy on walking and cycling more generally.

5.3   Complex projects

Even though the projects undertaken in LAAP are typically small in scale, some may require a project design or a test environment that extends beyond the realm of an individual council, and some may require the support and coordination of multiple stakeholders. In these more complex cases, the team within DOI will play a stronger role in project development and management. Several projects requiring this increased level of attention have already been identified (e.g. Example 5 in Table 1).

As the program proceeds, it is likely that projects will be increasingly determined or designed to address the emerging strategic priorities of the State Government, and critical needs or issues that may be identified from the survey and analysis of local access needs, or from the findings of previous projects. In short, project selection in the future may become more closely targeted to address key issues.

6   Typical projects

Table 1 provides an idea of the variety of projects emerging through this program. Some themes that appear to be popular among councils are discussed in the following paragraphs.

By far the most common type of project submission to date is the construction of pathways, including shared pathways and footpaths. Due to LAAP being a demonstration program, there is limited scope to fund the majority of these projects, particularly as they are quite similar in context and in their potential to demonstrate an outcome. However, there are a number of areas within pathway projects that have been of interest including:
  • determining the requirements for pathways that may be undergoing a change in focus from recreational to commuter purpose;
  • pathways that test the impact of walking and cycling access to particular types of major destinations including educational institutions;
  • more cost-effective and lower maintenance treatments for pathways, and
  • pathways that cross multiple land holdings or jurisdictions and that may demonstrate the benefits of a partnership approach.

Another strong theme in the first round of projects submissions (2006-07) is that of signage for wayfinding. As a result, DOI has convened a wayfinding group to

share good practice in the design and implementation of wayfinding signage across projects. Alongside the working group, DOI is also working with the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) to develop standard specifications for wayfinding signage structure designs for use across Victoria. The working group is also collaborating with Metlink, the face of Melbourne's public transport services in relation to wayfinding signage iconography, to ensure that, where appropriate, similar iconography is used to facilitate users' understanding of signs.

Many of the projects funded through the first round of LAAP focus on retro-fitting existing environments to overcome existing access barriers. Apart from obvious physical barriers (such as creeks or railway lines), there can be psychological barriers as people perceive certain places to be unsafe or undesirable. The pedestrian underpass described in Table 1 (Example 2) is a case in point. Such underpasses are generally considered to be unsuitable as urban design elements, particularly in relation to personal safety requirements, and initial feedback about this project suggested that the underpass should be filled in. Instead the project is seeking to use art to create an environment that enhances the accessibility of the underpass and improves pedestrians' perceptions of safety. This will test whether underpasses can be successfully treated, and whether the notion of underpasses as poor urban design elements may be subject to revision.

In the second round of the LAAP grants program (2007-08), a greater connection between LAAP and TravelSmart is being fostered. Applicants are now able to submit proposals that combine local access infrastructure improvements with travel behaviour change projects, with the aim of generating a stronger outcome. Within TravelSmart, participating communities are required to develop a travel behaviour change plan, and this travel planning activity is likely to identify a number of barriers to sustainable travel. In some cases, an infrastructure solution may be an appropriate response. This can be delivered as a LAAP project, and the travel planning activity will help to promote the new or improved infrastructure.

The evidence from the applications received so far in the second round (2007-08) suggests a growing emphasis on making areas more people-friendly that were previously car-oriented. Such projects include the conversion of road space to pedestrian space, the development of car-free areas or shared areas, removing car parks and adding walking and cycling facilities, making streets more attractive areas to walk and cycle through, and creating better links to public transport services.

7   Evaluation

The term "demonstration projects" implies that the projects being developed and implemented through LAAP will be models for use in numerous other locations. LAAP seeks to build a good understanding of what actually works, what results are achieved, and why. In short, evaluation is of paramount importance.

Guidelines and processes for evaluation have therefore been developed and are incorporated into every project. The evaluation system is designed to assess

both the outcomes (what results have been achieved) and the processes (whether the project has been delivered in an effective and efficient manner).

The outcomes from LAAP projects can be direct (such as changes in people's travel behaviour) or indirect (such as associated improvements in people's health, or reductions in greenhouse gas emissions).

The preferred method for measuring the direct outcomes is to conduct surveys of the travel activity of the target group, both before and after project delivery, and also assessments of the perceived and actual changes in access post implementation. Secondary data sources (such as traffic counts, pedestrian counts, public transport ticket sales or patronage data) may also be used as a means of verifying whether travel behaviour or access may have changed. However, with data from these sources, it is more difficult to establish a causal link between the project or intervention and any changes that may have been observed.

Measuring the indirect outcomes can be quite problematic, as normal fluctuations and variations (e.g. in air quality) are likely to be larger than the changes relating to a specific project, which are typically of small scale. The preferred approach is to estimate these effects by inference; i.e. to concentrate on measuring the direct outcomes, and to formulate models to project the indirect outcomes, using relationships established from other studies.

Process evaluations require the collection of qualitative data from the target group, as well as from the range of stakeholders relevant to the project or program (through focus groups, interview surveys and so forth).

In summary, projects in both TravelSmart and LAAP are to be evaluated through the following activities:
- measuring travel behaviour directly by asking people what they do (through surveys);
- measuring travel behaviour indirectly by observing and/or counting what people do (using before and after observations or counts);
- measuring accessibility and connectivity by asking people (using surveys) and measuring the network (such as before and after measures of connectivity), and
- modelling the impacts of any changes in travel behaviour to asses the impacts on social, environmental and economic outcomes.

For example, in the case of the Doncaster underpass mentioned earlier (Example 2 in Table 1), 'before' observations / counts are undertaken to measure the number of people using the underpass, and those who instead cross the road 'unsafely' at ground level. There are also 'before' surveys of people's attitudes and perceptions regarding personal safety. Similar 'after' counts and surveys will be conducted when the works are completed.

Consistency and quality control are key issues in the design and conduct of project evaluations. It is also important that councils and others involved in the development and implementation of LAAP projects have the opportunity to share

their experiences, and to provide feedback about the program. Forums will be arranged for this purpose.

8   Concluding discussion

LAAP involves state and local governments working together through a three-stage process in which projects are developed, tested in the field, and evaluated.

As indicated earlier, a primary objective of LAAP is to provide a better understanding of the impacts of local projects on people's access and mobility. Outputs expected from the program will include not only the projects in the field, but also reports and assessments for various classes of projects, guidelines relating to best practice, processes for working together, and the evidence of needs for future programs. The findings from the LAAP and TravelSmart programs will also contribute to the development of policy in relation to walking and cycling, and sustainable transport generally.

As projects have not yet been completed, it is not possible at this stage to report on the success or otherwise of the program. However, the following paragraphs indicate some of the issues and challenges we are facing.

In Round 2 of the program (2007-08), we expect to fund a substantial number of projects that combine LAAP and TravelSmart, as well as LAAP-only and TravelSmart-only projects. In this way, the synergies between these two types of interventions will be better understood.

An important observation to date is that, although a project may be small in scale, this does not mean it is simple. A number of the problems identified are complex and require an integrated solution involving multiple property owners and managers – and often this is the very basis of the problem. Local access issues tend to affect many people directly, and the level of stakeholder management can be more intensive than that for a much larger infrastructure project. Through LAAP, we are seeking to support councils in resolving these issues and, where needed, to offer leadership and coordination across agencies.

In compiling a program of demonstration projects, resources could be directed towards, on the one hand, retro-fitting established areas to overcome identified access problems or, on the other hand, developing and testing policy principles and guidelines for new developments to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not replicated. Clearly, efforts are needed on both fronts, and we will be seeking to ensure that significant initiatives in both categories feature in future rounds of the program.

Another of the challenges for LAAP is the fostering of innovation in a four-year program. Anecdotal accounts of experiences in related grants programs indicate that innovation is difficult to achieve in a relatively short time-frame and also through an open and competitive grants process. It may take longer for the program to mature and for truly innovative approaches to local access issues to take root. While a longer term funding program would appear to be desirable, to

be effective it would need to be targeted – and to be justified, in part, from the findings of the current program.

As the program proceeds, project evaluations will be expected to provide insights into the distribution of benefits, recognising that some user groups will benefit more than others.   This kind of information may be useful at a later stage in developing funding models; that is, in determining how the costs of projects (or of on-going programs) should be shared among the participating agencies and stakeholders.

A second objective of LAAP is to strengthen the working relationships with local governments and communities.   The level of interest in LAAP from local governments and other stakeholders has been very high, and it is evident from their submissions that most councils recognise the aims and objectives of the program.   However, in some cases it has been regarded simply as a potential funding source for routine works, and this may have lead to some level of disappointment.   Communication and continuing engagement with councils are therefore vital to the success of the program.

We anticipate that one of the likely success factors for a local access project is for local communities to be involved in its development, including the identification of the need, the consideration of various alternative strategies to address that need, and the detailing of the project design.   This is a proposition that is likely to be explored in future rounds of the LAAP and TravelSmart programs.

In conclusion, we see the Local Area Access Program (in conjunction with TravelSmart) as a flexible program in which a wide range of supply-side and demand-side initiatives or schemes, aimed at achieving better local transport outcomes, can be tested in the field.   Through the visible promotion of demonstration projects and their subsequent evaluation, LAAP will play an important role in the development of policy for walking and cycling, and the adoption of sustainable transport solutions.

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