

KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2023-24 STATE BUDGET

1. Make roads safer by addressing the road maintenance backlog

Recommendations:

- Commit \$750 million over four years to address the state's significant road maintenance backlog and make our roads safer.
- Commit to publishing actual spending on road maintenance each year and report on the star rating improvements made across the regional road network.
- Ensure funding to rebuild the road network damaged in the Murray River flood event is provided 'over and above' existing resource allocation.
- Develop a resilient improvement plan to ensure key sections of the road network along the Murray River are more resilient to future disaster events.

Road maintenance and safety upgrades

In 2020, Infrastructure SA's '20-Year State Infrastructure Strategy'¹ noted that 75% of South Australia's roads were in poor condition as a result of sustained underinvestment.

PRIORITY 23: IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF THE ROAD NETWORK

A significant proportion of the State's road network is in poor condition that compromises safety and does not have appropriate treatments to improve safety. Road maintenance programs need to be more fully funded and should incorporate safe-system principles to fund treatments that will improve road safety and contribute to lowering the road toll.

Above: Priority 23 of Infrastructure SA's 20-year State Infrastructure Strategy (2020)

Following this report, various federal programs and economic stimulus measures initiated in response to COVID-19 increased the level of investment in road maintenance and safety upgrades. RAA welcomed these much-needed investments; however, it is clear more investment is required to reduce the backlog of maintenance and improve the safety of the network.

¹ <https://www.infrastructure.sa.gov.au/our-work/20-year-strategy>, page 126

In November 2022, an Auditor General's report² showed that at least \$520 million over four years is required to be spent on road maintenance just to keep the network in its current condition.

The same report stated that road maintenance backlog would blow out to \$1.5 billion by 2025 if only minimum safety works – such as filling potholes – is performed. The \$1.5 billion figure means that of South Australia's 13,000km of sealed roads, 2,330km of regional roads and 100km of metropolitan roads would be in maintenance backlog by 2025.

River Murray flood event

The damage to roads resulting from Murray River flooding will further add to the state's road maintenance task. The South Australian State Emergency Service estimates almost 1,200 kilometres of road may have been impacted by flood waters.

RAA welcomed the State Government's recent announcement of a \$60m funding package to assist with repair and remediation of the road network. It is not clear at this time how much additional funding will be required to repair the network, as the full extent of the repair task will only be known once more of the impacted network is assessed.

However, RAA believes all funding required to repair the network should be in addition to existing resources, so other sections of the road network in SA are not stripped of much needed investment.

In addition, RAA believes the Government should use the event as an opportunity to build back better and develop an infrastructure resilient improvement plan to make key sections of the road network more resilient to future disaster events and better support community and commercial transport needs. For example, additional investment in key roads on approach to ferries would ensure ferries can stay open for longer during future flood events.

Report on road maintenance spending

It is difficult to accurately estimate the amount of funding spent on road maintenance and safety improvements each year, due to funding being accessed from multiple federal and state programs.

To improve the transparency of road maintenance spending, the Government should commit to publishing actual spending on road maintenance each year.

² [https://www.audit.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-10/Report 8 of 2022 - Annual Report - Part C - Agency audit reports.pdf](https://www.audit.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-10/Report%208%20of%202022%20-%20Annual%20Report%20-%20Part%20C%20-%20Agency%20audit%20reports.pdf), pages 302-303

Report on road safety improvements

A consideration of safe-system road design is needed as part of the road maintenance program. Rather than replacing ‘like with like’ as part of maintenance works, safety can be further improved by incorporating interventions which improve safety such as sealed shoulders, overtaking lanes, centre- and edge-line treatments, rest areas and protective barriers.

To ensure investments are making tangible road safety improvements, the Government should commit to publishing what road safety improvements have been made across the network using the AusRAP Star Rating methodology as a benchmark.

Currently, the Government uses AusRAP star ratings to regularly undertake assessments of regional roads to determine their safety. Sections of roads are given a star rating score considering speed, volume, road, and roadside attributes. While this data is collected, it is not shared.

RAA believes data sharing is critical to reducing and ultimately eliminating road trauma, and publishing star rating data is a key component to measuring our performance against the South Australia’s Road Safety Strategy to 2031 and corresponding action plan.

The strategy aims to improve the star rating of our road network, with a particular focus on high-speed, high-volume roads. One of the key Road Safety Performance Indicators in the action plan will measure “*share of travel on all national highways and on the high-speed network (≥ 80 km/h) covering 80% of travel recognised as 3-stars (or equivalent risk rating) or better.*”

In addition to reporting on star ratings, the Government needs to work with the federal government and other states and territories to ensure we have the adequate data to understand the multiple causes of crashes which is critical for identifying the best targets for interventions.

2. Progress critical road network improvements

Recommendations:

- \$800 million over four years to progress duplication of the Augusta, Sturt, and Dukes Highways by 2050.
- \$500 million to upgrade key east-west links in the northern suburbs to reduce growing congestion due to nearby housing developments.
- \$40 million to install a third safety ramp on the South Eastern Freeway.
- \$100 million to upgrade both the Mallee Highway and Victor Harbor Road to AusRAP 3-star rated corridors.
- Prioritise conducting a review of unused regional train lines.

National Highway Duplication

State and Federal Governments should allocate at least \$200 million each year to progressively duplicate the Augusta, Sturt and Dukes Highways, with the latter highways connected with an upgraded hills freight bypass to reduce heavy vehicle traffic on the South Eastern Freeway.

High priority sections for RAA include Port Pirie to Crystal Brook along the Augusta Highway, Tailem Bend to the Mallee Highway for the Dukes Highway, and Berri to Renmark and Greenock to Truro for the Sturt Highway.

The current duplication work on the Port Wakefield and Augusta Highways, together with the duplicated Joy Baluch Bridge, has been well received, highlighting the importance of completing corridor duplication to provide significant improvements to safety, productivity, and network resilience.

East-West Links in the northern suburbs

At the 2022 election, RAA called for \$500 million to address congestion in Adelaide's northern suburbs, including on Curtis Road, Waterloo Corner Road, Kings Road and Elder Smith Road, following increases in housing developments in the area.

Through the 2022-23 State Budget, funding was allocated to complete a traffic study for Curtis Road and Dalkeith Road. The 2023-24 Budget should allocate funding, through forward estimates if appropriate, to implement the solution that provides the greatest benefit to road users in the area. Further traffic studies need to be undertaken to inform and prioritise future investment on Kings Road, Elder Smith Road and Waterloo Corner Road.

Third safety ramp on the South Eastern Freeway

The Government should commit funding in forward estimates to build the new safety ramp.

The need for a third safety ramp has been long identified as a measure to reduce the likelihood of out-of-control heavy vehicle crashes at the base of the South Eastern Freeway.

This was again highlighted following the July 2022 crash that injured nine people at the base of the South Eastern Freeway. Whilst countermeasures such as speed limit reductions and signage alterations may also reduce the likelihood of a crash occurring, a third safety ramp is considered by RAA to provide the highest chance of preventing serious multi-vehicle crashes involving out of control heavy vehicles.

Victor Harbor Road

RAA continues to call on the Government to implement RAA's recommended road safety improvements along Victor Harbor Road south of Mount Compass to increase the safety level of the road to an AusRAP three-star corridor.

These improvements include a roundabout at the intersection of Goolwa Road as well as road widening, safety barriers and new overtaking lanes (one is currently under development) to ensure a three-star AusRAP rating for the corridor. Whilst a planning study has been undertaken between McLaren Vale and Willunga Hill, further planning for eventual duplication between Willunga Hill (Brookman Road) and Mount Compass is required.

Mallee Highway upgrade

RAA recently completed a regional assessment of the Murraylands. A key recommendation from this report, provided to the Government last year, is to upgrade the Mallee Highway to an AusRAP 3-star rated corridor. The Mallee Highway has not received significant investment for some time and RAA believes it should be a higher priority for the Government, given its important linkages to the Mallee agricultural region and the eastern states.

RAA's Murraylands regional road assessment identified road widening, shoulder sealing, overtaking lanes, and a new safety barriers as high priority works. Pavement maintenance is also required, particularly between Parilla and Lameroo.

Conduct a review of unused regional trainlines

The Government should review the existing disused regional rail corridors to identify and quarantine those that have potential to be reactivated. Those that are deemed no longer viable for rail operation should be re-purposed for active transport and tourist experience options. If a suitable use for the trainline cannot be identified, Government should commit to removing unused crossings from regional roads.

3. Fund measures to increase public transport patronage

Recommendations:

- Key targets for 2023-24 should include:
 - Complete and release a plan to transition the public transport network to zero emissions to meet net zero emissions by 2050.
 - Enable digital ticket purchases and validation via smart devices to complement the 'Tap and Pay' rollout.
 - Develop a long-term plan to improve public transport for Mt Barker and the Adelaide Hills following various studies and trials and commit \$1 million to upgrade and install new bus shelters in the Adelaide Hills.
 - Make On-Demand service in Mount Barker permanent and undertake trials in Victor Harbor and Goolwa.
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Zero emissions transport

A key target for the 2023-24 Budget should be to complete a strategy to decarbonise the public transport system in South Australia and commit funding to start transitioning the entire public transport fleet to zero emissions.

RAA applauds the State Government's progress to date, with the development of a business case. It is critical the momentum continues by completing the business case and then committing funds to electrifying and decarbonising the entire fleet over time.

Transport accounts for about 19 per cent of carbon emissions, and public transport is not an insignificant part of that. The electrification and decarbonisation of our entire public transport network is critical to meeting our net zero targets and will have added benefit by providing a cleaner, greener experience for commuters.

Digital ticketing

The Government should make it a priority in the 2023-24 Budget to bring forward plans to digitise the public transport ticketing experience, enabling ticket purchase and validation via smart devices.

Allowing digital ticketing would complement the roll out of Tap and Pay which allows users to use their credit card. Digital ticketing would provide choice and additional benefits currently not available for Tap and Pay, like purchasing concession fares.

Physical ticketing, like the current metroCARD system, is a pain point for users and a barrier to higher patronage. Digital ticketing removes the need to source and keep a physical card and allows for greater innovation in public transport service offerings and planning. For example, better data-driven decision making for fare structures, route design and service frequency.

Public transport solutions for the Adelaide Hills

Following several studies and investigations into public transport options for the Adelaide Hills, a key target for the Government in 2023-24 should be to implement a preferred long-term solution with funding attached to support population growth in the area.

While RAA supports the current trial of a train passenger service to Mount Barker, RAA believes the Government should consider improving the reliability and quality of the existing bus services to improve public transport usage in the short to medium term. The Government should also further consider implementing a bus rapid transit (BRT) system as recommended by Regional Development Australia Adelaide Hills Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island in their 2021 People Transport Solutions for the Adelaide Hills.

As part of investigations to improve public transport between the city and the Adelaide Hills, RAA recommends that a corridor management plan be developed for Glen Osmond Road that explores bus priority measures (such as bus jump lanes) at key intersections and also reviews the location of bus stops to assist movement through these intersections.

As an immediate measure, the Government should commit to a program of installing and upgrading bus shelters along Adelaide Hills routes to increase patronage and improve the user experience.

On-demand bus services

On demand bus services are a great option to improve mobility in non-metropolitan areas. The on-demand bus trial in Mt Barker has proven successful and should be made permanent. Further trials should be funded, with priority for the Victor Harbor – Goolwa area.

4. Improve cycle paths and on-road bike lanes to encourage cycling for commuters

Recommendation:

- Commit \$10 million per year to fund new and upgraded cycling infrastructure in metropolitan Adelaide, to provide better connectivity and safety for cyclists.
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Cycling strategy and infrastructure

In 2021, SA had the second-lowest level of cycling participation compared to other states and territories³. Low cycling participation means that SA is not realising the benefits of being a bike-friendly state. Cycling is beneficial to a person's physical and mental health, it's an affordable and sustainable means of transport, and reduces traffic congestion.

Safety concerns and a lack of connected infrastructure act as a major barrier to cycling participation in South Australia. Lack of connectivity results in more interaction between cyclists and motor vehicles, increasing the risk of cyclist injury and death. Over the past five years 24 cyclists have lost their lives and 388 cyclists have suffered serious injuries on SA roads which is unacceptable.

Top of mind for cyclists is a continuous and connected network of on-road cycle lanes in Greater Adelaide. Many cycle lanes disappear at intersections on main roads, and this is a major safety concern given that more than half of cyclist crashes occur at intersections.

The Government should be connecting on-road bike lanes on main roads, including Greenhill Road – nominated as South Australia's riskiest ride in RAA's recent survey.

Other top priority roads that require improvements include South Road, Main North Road, North East Road, ANZAC Highway, Frome Street and Payneham Road. Where physically possible, Government should seek to install on-road bike lanes separated from traffic by painted buffers or physical barriers, rather than the bare minimum strip of paint.

Other governments see the need for greater investment, and we encourage SA to follow their lead. The Queensland Government will invest \$268.8 million over four years on active transport infrastructure to provide connected cycling routes from Brisbane to the border.⁴

RAA has asked the public what they want to see for cycling infrastructure. RAA's 2022 'Risky Rides' survey resulted in over 750 nominations from nearly 400 respondents for new and improved cycling infrastructure in SA.

³ CWANZ, [National Walking and Cycling Participation Survey 2021 - Cycling and Walking Australia & New Zealand \(cwanz.com.au\)](https://www.cwanz.com.au)

⁴ [Brisbane to the Border: Connected cycling takes centre stage - Ministerial Media Statements](#)

5. Progress reforms to strengthen driver education

Recommendation:

- As a key target for 2023-24, implement reform to the driver training sector to support the safety of learner drivers and ensure the highest quality of instruction, and develop a plan to address skills shortages in the industry.

Driver training reforms

South Australia's driver training industry is currently plagued by increasing costs and long wait times due to instructor shortages and allegations of corruption, which is preventing many young drivers from accessing professional driving lessons.

The industry needs mandatory in-vehicle cameras & GPS tracking technology, and an enforceable Code of Conduct for instructors. The industry is also facing a shortage of qualified driving instructors, which could be addressed through improved pathways for instructor accreditation.

Young drivers are overrepresented in fatal crashes: 16-24-year-olds make up 13% of the population but account for 21% of all fatalities in South Australia in the past two years. Improvements to driver education are essential to improve safety outcomes for these drivers.

While industry reform has been on the Government's radar for several years, legislation has not progressed. In 2021, the Government introduced a bill which sought to address many industry issues but lapsed as a result of the 2022 election.

Since then, ICAC released a report on corruption in the driving instruction industry. Many of the recommendations of the report focused on improving internal processes and practices for the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. These recommendations should be progressed to enable better regulation of the industry.