The City of Greater Bendigo has recently completed the Bendigo Freight Study: “How Goods Are Moved Around Greater Bendigo” and is seeking public comment on the Final Draft Report. The Study is a key recommendation of the Integrated Transport & Land Use Strategy (ITLUS).

The aim of the Bendigo Freight Study is to gain a better understanding of freight issues to help make the freight network more productive, robust and responsive to innovation and change.

The Study also aims to provide guidance on how to improve the sustainability of the freight sector now and into the future and make the city safer, cleaner and more efficient.

Study Methodology

The ‘freight issue’ is widely recognised as extremely complex and is plagued by a chronic lack of data. Detailed qualitative and quantitative research was undertaken as part of the Study to gain a better picture of who moves what where and why in Greater Bendigo.

**Driver interviews**  **Site visits**

**Heavy vehicle counts**  **Truck tours**

**Online surveys**  **Roundtable sessions**  **1 on 1 interviews**

The Study was developed in consultation with prominent academics, industry experts and local businesses. As a result, it provides a fine grain analysis of the freight system at a local level, with the capacity to inform regional policy responses. It also provides evidence for targeted investment.

This is largely due to direct engagement with the key ‘players’ - that is businesses that generate freight (Freight Generators) and businesses that provide freight services (Freight Operators). In all, 252 companies took part in the Study.

The responses provide a unique insight into the freight task of Greater Bendigo companies across all sectors including: processing and manufacturing, hospitality, agricultural sector, education, professional services, health, mining, warehousing, wholesale and retail; and explore various types of freight carried in Greater Bendigo, from ‘sensitive freight’ through to livestock, general freight, waste etc.
The ‘freight issue’ cannot be separated from the city’s liveability, the local economy and environmental sustainability.

In simple terms, it comes down to people of Greater Bendigo wanting to buy and produce goods; goods which need to be transported on the city’s roads and, potentially, the railway network and by air. Everyone, in some way, contributes towards the fast growing freight task, which in Australia, has quadrupled in the last four decades.

**Freight vehicle volumes**

Greater Bendigo is the hub of central Victoria’s economic activity. The city boasts approximately 7,500 registered businesses. Nearly all of them receive or distribute goods of some type. Freight is also carried to individual households. The 208 surveyed Freight Generators alone account for an average of 156,000 freight vehicle movements per month to and from Greater Bendigo. This means that the scale of the city’s freight task is significant, as is its contribution to the local economy and our daily lives.

**Types of freight carried**

Surveyed Freight Generators dispatch and receive freight to and from locations across Australia and overseas. However, majority of freight is dispatched to and originates in locations within Victoria.

**Freight aggregation & on-forwarding**

There are two groupings or ‘clusters’ of Freight Operators within urban Bendigo who aggregate/disaggregate and on-forward freight. In fact, 54 percent of surveyed Freight Operators on-forward freight. This indicates that a substantial percentage of freight, which originates and is destined for locations outside of the municipality, is being moved through Bendigo.

**Freight vehicle types and movements**

The Study provides a ‘real life’ insight into which routes are being used to carry what types of vehicles and why these routes are chosen by the Freight Operators.

Factors, such as the time taken to carry freight along a particular route, at a particular time of day, affect a freight trip’s efficiency and therefore are a basis for choosing a route. Interestingly, the surveyed Freight Operators are prepared to travel more kilometres if this involves travelling along a route that offers a shorter travel time.
Key Issues

The Study offers an insight into issues that inhibit the movement of freight, impact on safety, amenity and have environmental and economic implications. They are captured as last kilometre, site specific and city wide issue maps within the Draft Report. They include:

- Poor flow of movement along designated freight routes, particularly those connecting Epsom and Marong
- Poor intersection design
- Inadequate loading zones, particularly in the CBD
- Overhanging tree branches causing damage to loads and obscuring views
- Poor freight route signage, particularly for B-doubles
- Lack of a designated truck wash
- Lack of a strategically located Fatigue Management facility
- Narrow roads with unsealed shoulders
- Lack of designated facilities for trailer exchange and heavy vehicle parking/storage
- Gaps in the designated B-double route network

Key Opportunities

Having undertaken the Freight Study, Greater Bendigo is well-positioned to tackle the issues at hand and approach them as opportunities rather than liabilities. When asked “What are the improvements that would make your freight operations more productive and/or efficient?” the survey respondents chose the following:

WHAT ARE THE TOP 3 IMPROVEMENTS THAT THE FREIGHT GENERATORS WOULD LIKE TO SEE?

1. ACCESS FOR LARGER VEHICLES
2. FREIGHT ROUTES PROTECTED FROM DEVELOPMENT
3. MORE/IMPROVED LOADING ZONES
4. IMPROVED WASTE REMOVAL
5. FREIGHT TERMINAL/HUB

WHAT ARE THE TOP 3 IMPROVEMENTS THAT THE FREIGHT OPERATORS WOULD LIKE TO SEE?

1. ROAD SAFETY
2. ACCESS FOR LARGER VEHICLES
3. MORE/IMPROVED LOADING ZONES
4. FREIGHT ROUTES PROTECTED FROM DEVELOPMENT
5. FREIGHT ROUTE TRAVEL OPTIONS MOBILE APP
Study Recommendations

1. EVIDENCE

1.1 Secure an ‘infrastructure improvement pipeline’:
Seek funding to tackle identified site specific issues in a timely manner.
Sailors Gully/Bendigo-Pyramid Rd intersection, Eaglehawk North; Howard St/Midland Hwy intersection, Epsom; and Hattam/Allingham St intersection, Golden Square to be treated as highest priority.

1.2 Improve north-west connections:
Investigate options for a protected freight corridor between Marong and Epsom, including alternative connections to the Bendigo Livestock Exchange, to improve freight efficiency and enhance the safety and amenity of residential areas.

1.3 Improve freight route signage:
Work with VicRoads to review the signage design and placement policy.

1.4 Provide secure heavy vehicle parking and trailer exchange/storage facilities:
Provide secure heavy vehicle parking and trailer exchange/storage facilities: identify best locations, including urban Bendigo, and undertake a progressive roll-out of these facilities.

1.5 Address gaps in the B-double accessible network:
Examine options for improving network continuity for B-doubles. Consider inclusion of Strickland Road (between Nolan St and Murphy St) as a priority.

2. INTEGRATED PLANNING

2.1 Implement ITLUS:
Continue progressive implementation of recommendations relating to the freight task.

2.2 Protect freight routes from encroaching development:
Develop a city wide freight corridor and precinct plan to take Greater Bendigo and its growing freight task into the future.

2.3 Consider a ‘freight terminal’, ‘freight hub’ or ‘freight cluster/consolidation centre’ solution:
Investigate the costs, benefits and potential locations of ‘fit for purpose’ solutions for Greater Bendigo that address industry needs and the needs of the City’s growing population over time.

3. COLLABORATION

3.1 Build on expressed interest in joining a collaborative group:
Discuss details of such group’s purpose and make up in consultation with the business sector and other relevant stakeholders.

3.2 Lift industry profile:
Work with the industry to shift public perception of the freight sector towards one which is seen as serving the local community, making a significant contribution to the economy and which seeks to minimise negative impacts.

3.3 Address road safety issues through education:
Explore collaborative solutions for an education campaign with freight industry, the government and responsible authorities.

3.4 Plan for growing demand for HML vehicles:
Work with industry when considering HML vehicle access in a timely and balanced manner.

4. INNOVATION

4.1 Trial the use of new technology to provide flexibility and improved usage of loading zones:
Pilot the use of, for example, ‘smart sensors’ and mobile based devices to ensure more efficient and safe delivery of goods to the city’s CBD.

4.2 Explore opportunities to develop a ‘travel options app’ for Freight Operators:
This refers to a mobile phone application, that combines available ‘real time’, road conditions and emergency information, with location and availability of facilities, such toilets and heavy vehicle parking.

4.3 Take action on commercial and industrial waste:
Explore innovative solutions to reduce the amount of organic and recyclable waste going to landfill, reduce vehicle volumes and emissions associated with waste removal.

Your Feedback

The Bendigo Freight Study Final Draft Report is out for public comment until Friday 13 October, 2017.
Follow this link to view full Draft Report:
https://arcg.is/nuHWm

We look to the Study participants and the general public to help refine its content and in particular the recommendations.

Please email submissions to:
k.wrzesinski@bendigo.vic.gov.au,
or call Regional Sustainable Development on 5434 6148 for any enquiries.