



Submission:

South Australia's Transport Strategy

December 2024





Introduction

RAA welcomes the opportunity to contribute towards the development of South Australia's Transport Strategy, an initiative that aligns with our aim to make South Australia safer, more sustainable, and liveable.

As the state's largest member-based organisation, representing over 820,000 South Australians and reaching into more than 70 per cent of households, RAA brings a deep understanding of the community's transport needs and aspirations.

For more than a century, RAA has been at the forefront of road safety and transport advocacy in South Australia. We have collaborated with government, industry and the community to champion safer roads, improved public transport and innovative solutions to mobility challenges.

Through this submission, we aim to offer insights and highlight priorities to help shape a transport network that supports economic growth, fosters sustainability and enhances liveability while prioritising safety for all South Australians.

Response to Transport Strategy Vision and Key Focus Areas

RAA commends the SA Government for taking a proactive approach to shaping South Australia's transport future. With the population of Greater Adelaide projected to grow by 46% (an additional 670,000 people) by 2051, long-term, strategic planning is paramount to ensuring our success and standard of living.

RAA supports the draft vision in the Transport Strategy and the key focus areas of connectivity and accessibility, safety, prosperity, liveability, and sustainability and resilience.

When we think about transport in our state, RAA's most important areas are safety, sustainability and liveability.

As our state grows towards two million people over the next decade, we must ensure people can move around safely, with relative ease, and in a way sustainable way. We must also ensure there is a sustainable funding system in place to build and maintain the infrastructure we need.



**Population of Greater Adelaide
projected to grow by**

46%

**an additional 670,000 people
by 2051**

Safety

The Transport Strategy Fact Sheet emphasises that “our transport network should continue to be underpinned by holistic road safety improvements.” RAA strongly supports this focus, recognising that road safety remains a pressing concern in South Australia.

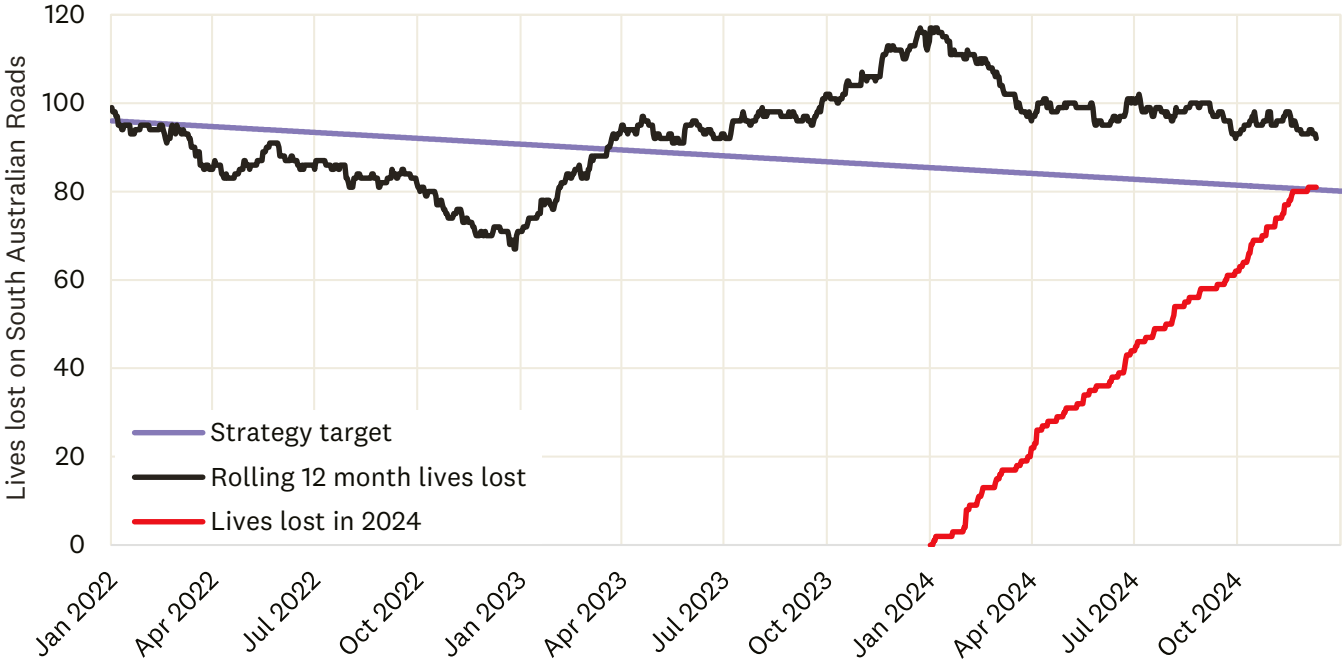
The 2024 crash data highlights trends that underscore the urgency for targeted actions to address the state’s road safety challenges and achieve the vision of ‘zero lives lost’.

South Australia is currently falling short of its road safety targets. As of December 2024, 81 lives have been lost and the number of serious injuries has risen to 705, representing a 9% increase over the same period. To be on track, SA would need to record 80 or fewer deaths and 639 or fewer serious injuries in 2024.

The number of people killed and seriously injured on SA roads this year means the state remains off track to reach the targets in its Road Safety Strategy to 2031.

The strategy, implemented in 2021, seeks to reach targets of a 50% reduction in lives lost and a 30% reduction in serious injuries by 2031. Based on the rolling 12-month totals, South Australia has not been on track to reach the lives lost target since March 2023.

Lives lost – 2024 progress against South Australia's Road Safety Strategy to 2031



Source: Data is obtained from various SA government sources including South Australia Police, the Department for Infrastructure and Transport, and THINK! Road Safety and analysed by RAA.

Safety continued

Regional roads remain the most dangerous areas of the transport network, accounting for 67% of fatalities. Fixed-object collisions (24%) and rollovers (12%) are the leading crash types, highlighting the need for targeted infrastructure improvements to reduce these types of crashes occurring.

This will require sustained investment in upgrading regional roads, including the installation of barriers, wider shoulders and the removal of hazardous roadside objects. Where this is not feasible, suitable barrier systems should be provided to protect drivers and their passengers in the event of a crash. These measures will directly tackle the types of crashes most prevalent in regional areas.

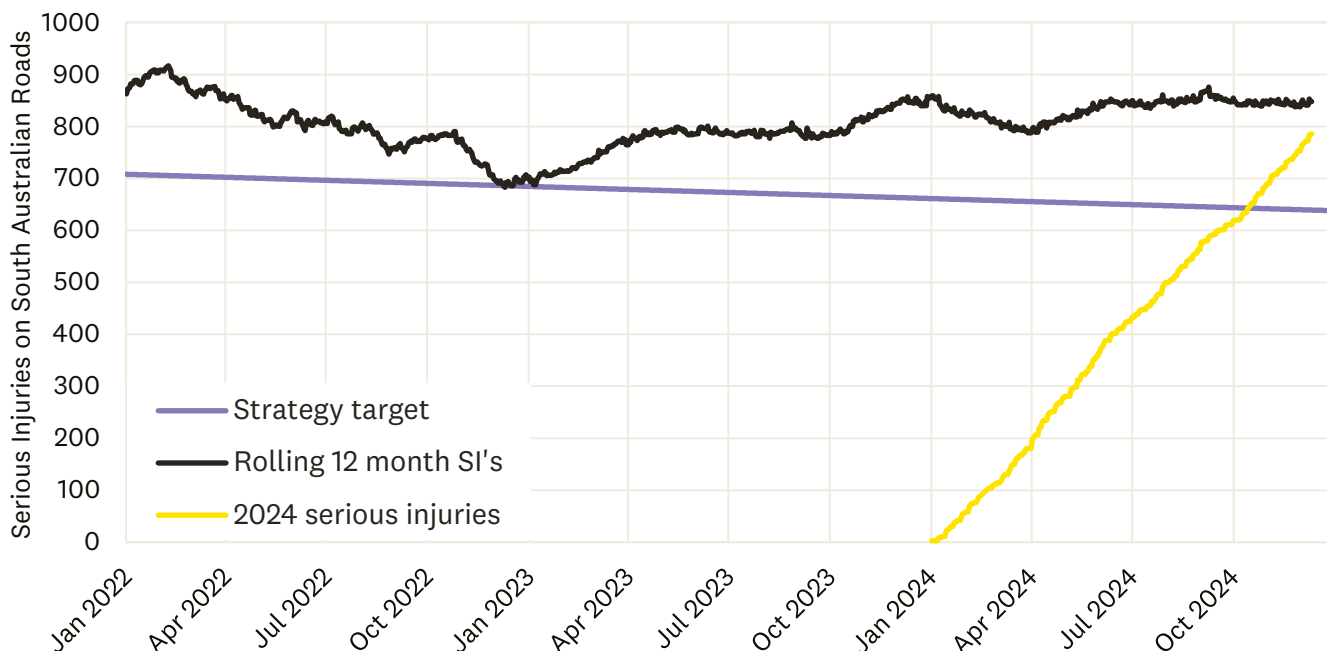
Vulnerable road users, including pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists, represent 35% of fatalities in 2024, with urban areas accounting for 52% of these deaths. This highlights the need for enhanced pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, particularly in metropolitan areas where these users face heightened risks. Dedicated cycling lanes and improved pedestrian crossings will help create safer environments for non-motorised road users.

Intersections on high-risk corridors also demand immediate attention. Twenty-five percent of fatalities occur at intersections, while major routes like the Riddoch Highway and Stuart Highway have recorded multiple fatalities this year. Upgrading intersections with roundabouts and intelligent traffic signals can significantly reduce risks in these areas.

RAA believes that achieving a safer transport network requires a combination of education, enforcement and infrastructure improvements. Holistic infrastructure planning must align safety improvements with land use strategies to ensure new growth areas are designed with safety in mind. Leveraging emerging technologies, such as smart traffic systems and data-driven interventions, will further strengthen efforts to reduce crash risks.

By prioritising safety improvements in regional areas, protecting vulnerable road users, addressing behavioural risks and integrating advanced technologies, South Australia can take meaningful steps towards achieving its 'zero lives lost' vision.

Serious injuries – 2024 progress against South Australia's Road Safety Strategy to 2031



Source: Data is obtained from various SA government sources including South Australia Police, the Department for Infrastructure and Transport, and THINK! Road Safety and analysed by RAA.



Sustainability

RAA supports the decarbonisation of our transport and the transition to a net zero economy.

Australia's transport sector is the third largest source of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, amounting to 21% of national emissions in 2023. Annual emissions from the transport sector, including light vehicles, grew from 82 million tonnes in 2005 to 91 million tonnes in 2022. The reasons include population growth, larger vehicles, increased freight movements, and more flights.

The Transport Strategy Fact Sheet rightly states that the transport sector will need to undergo a significant transformation to achieve our net zero targets. The fuels and technologies driving the global car fleet are changing rapidly. Securing the benefits of these changes will require concerted action across government and industry to secure long lasting benefits, while managing and minimising the impacts of the transition.

As a priority, RAA supports continued investment in EV charging infrastructure to ensure all EV owners have access to low-cost charging options regardless of the type of home they live in or their location. In fact, RAA believes SA should strive to be ahead of the demand curve for EV charging infrastructure, which sends a positive message to the market and community about the future of EVs.

Furthermore, 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.

RAA supports the SA Government's announcement to develop a strategy to decarbonise the public transport system in South Australia. RAA would like to see the strategy completed, released and funding allocated to start the transition of entire public transport fleet to zero emissions.



Liveable

RAA strongly agrees with the statement in the Transport Strategy Fact Sheet that our public transport network can do more. For SA to maintain its status as one of the most liveable cities in the world, we need significant uplift in our public transport system.

South Australia consistently has low public transport usage compared to other states. For example, a 2021 ABS survey found that, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, South Australia had the highest proportion of residents that report “Never or almost never” using public transport (43.9%)¹.

Furthermore, statistics produced by the Federal Government show that the amount of public transport trips in Adelaide in 2022-23 was around the same as 20 years ago, sitting at an estimated 60.1 million each year.² While boardings were higher pre-COVID, it's concerning that public transport patronage is stuck at the same level as 20 years ago, considering Adelaide's population has increased by 25% since 2002.³

RAA has conducted member research on this issue and has found that there are major structural issues that make public transport unviable for many. Some findings of our 2022 research include:

- Poor service coverage for destinations outside of Adelaide CBD
- Lack of public transport options in new housing developments and some areas of the Adelaide Hills
- Frustration at a lack of service frequency for all modes of public transport

- Slow travel time of buses compared to private car use
- Lack of reliability, frequent service interruptions
- Perceptions of public transport as unclean and unsafe
- Ticket prices too expensive for short trips

RAA recommends that the SA Government consider adopting a set of public transport objectives in the Transport Strategy, that should include increasing patronage to record levels. This will ultimately contribute to goals for reducing traffic congestion, improving road safety and decarbonisation of transport.

To achieve this objective, RAA supports three key focus areas:

- New passenger rail connections to population growth areas to the north and south of Adelaide
- Further investigations of passenger rail to the Adelaide Hills, Mt Barker and beyond
- A faster, more frequent and reliable bus service throughout the Greater Adelaide region.

¹ [Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey, March 2021 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](#)

² [Passengers | Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics, 60.1 million trips estimated in 2002-2003 and 2022-2023.](#)

³ [ABS Population Estimates for Local Areas, 2002 compared to 2023 for Greater Adelaide](#)



SA population demographics and the need for active transport infrastructure

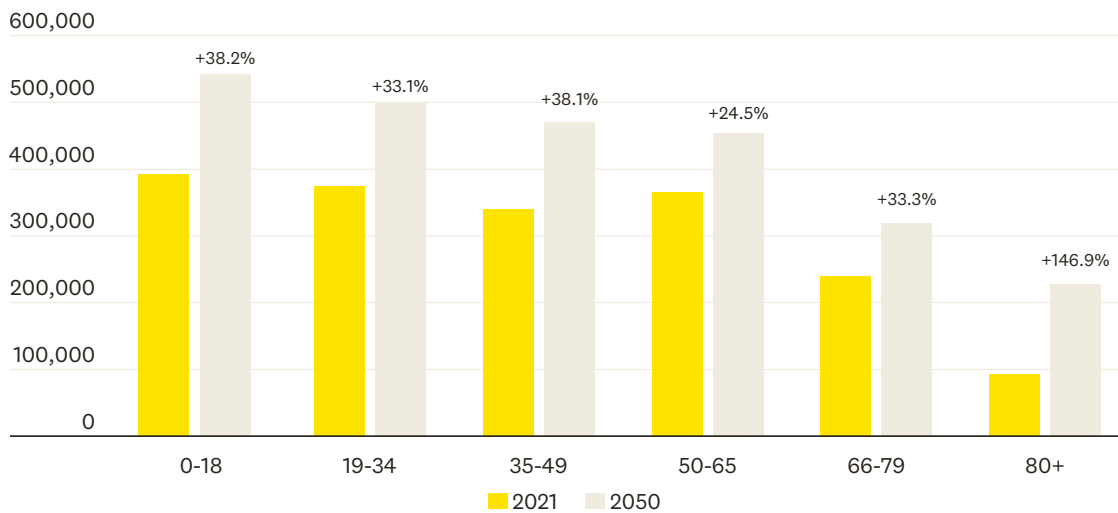
The Transport Strategy fact sheet outlines how South Australia's population is growing and ageing. We encourage the Government to also consider shifting demographics and what this means for transport.

For example, the cohort of South Australians aged 80+ will experience the highest growth to 2050; however, this demographic is currently, and will remain, the smallest in South Australia in absolute terms (see chart below).

South Australia will also experience strong growth of those aged 0-49. We urge government to consider the different transport needs of different demographics, with consideration for the locations that future South Australians will live, work and recreate.

For example, we see in the below chart that young people aged 0-18 will be the largest age group in South Australia in 2050. Those aged 0-17 years consistently have the highest cycling participation rate of any age group.⁴ Therefore, it's clear that to serve our future population, active transport, such as cycling and walking, must be a priority in the Transport Strategy.

Population by Age Group, 2021 to 2050



Source: Plan SA population projections, high scenario

⁴ National Walking and Cycling Participation Survey, South Australia, 2023

Transport funding reform

The Transport Strategy Fact Sheet rightly states that “our assets need to be resilient and appropriately maintained”. RAA considers this a fundamental strategic issue in South Australia and one that cannot be addressed without reform to how our transport system is funded.

The current system is not sustainable. This is exemplified by the ongoing challenges in funding road maintenance. Successive governments have been alerted to the issue of a growing backlog across the network that make our roads less safe.

The 2023 Report of the Auditor General highlighted the magnitude of this issue and the need for an increased road maintenance budget. The report stated that “the current rate of deterioration of the sealed road network is outpacing the rate of renewal”, resulting in 20 per cent of the state’s sealed road network forecast to be in maintenance backlog.

The Report further stated that the annual depreciation of the road network is approximately \$405 million per year, and that ideally this annual depreciation should be matched with maintenance expenditure (i.e. an asset sustainability ratio of 1).

However, the average asset sustainability ratio of the last 5 years was just 0.15. In other words, successive governments have only been investing 15 per cent of what is needed to maintain our roads.

The SA Government raises revenue from motorists through various fees and charges; however, the largest single revenue stream is raised through the federal excise on fuel.

Every litre of fuel bought at the pump includes a tax of 49.6 cents to help fund transport infrastructure and road safety upgrades. In 2023-24, the Australian Government collected \$15.71 billion in fuel excise from motorists.

Fuel excise revenue is shrinking as vehicles become more efficient. RAA strongly supports the uptake of EVs and low emission vehicles, but it poses a challenge to generate sufficient revenue to build and maintain the infrastructure needed to realise the Transport Strategy.

According to projections in the 2023 Intergenerational Report, fuel excise receipts are expected to decline from the current 0.98 per cent of GDP to 0.88 per cent of GDP by 2033-34, before falling to 0.25 per cent by 2062-63. The Higher scenario results in projected fuel excise receipts of 0.79 per cent of GDP by 2033-34 and 0.01 per cent by 2062-63.

RAA supports replacing fuel excise with a nationally consistent distance-based charge on all light vehicles, to ensure there is a sustainable revenue model to fund transport infrastructure and maintain safe roads into the future. This would ensure that:

- Transport infrastructure funding is not reliant on fuel excise revenue which is declining with the adoption of low emission and electric vehicles (EVs).
- There is a fairer, equitable, and transparent funding system.
- All motorists, regardless of their vehicle, contribute towards the cost of building and maintaining a safe and efficient transport network.

The application of a distance-based pricing should be introduced in way that does not disincentivise adoption of EVs and other zero emission vehicles, such as through a lower rate and/or incentives to compensate for the charge. All revenue from the charge should be directed exclusively to land transport infrastructure.



Conclusion

RAA commends the SA Government for taking a proactive approach to shaping South Australia’s transport future. The Transport Strategy represents a significant opportunity to create a safer, more connected and more sustainable transport system for generations to come.

Through this submission, we have outlined practical, evidence-based recommendations across funding reforms, road safety, public transport improvements and promotion of active transport infrastructure.

We look forward to collaborating with the South Australian Government and other stakeholders to bring these recommendations to life, helping create a transport system that enhances quality of life and helps South Australia achieve its vision for a sustainable, liveable and connected future.



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