

Use of Bus Lanes by Other Modes Policy

This document was prepared by VicRoads, which now forms a part of the Department of Transport and Planning. Reference to VicRoads in this document should be read as Department of Transport and Planning.



The primary purpose of bus lanes is to assist public buses in maintaining efficient and reliable bus operations to facilitate increasing numbers of services and patronage.

The admission of other modes of transport to bus lanes must not unduly compromise bus operations.

This policy supports bicycles and coaches to travel in all bus lanes across the declared urban arterial road network in Victoria, unless signed otherwise.

Unless permitted under the Road Rules, other modes of transport may not travel in bus lanes. Taxis and private hire vehicles (VHA/B/Cs) may continue using select bus lanes provided no operational or safety issues arise.



Scope

This policy provides guidance to VicRoads officers or any other party when considering a request for a mode to be permitted to travel in a new or existing bus lane.

This policy applies to the management of new and existing bus lanes within all declared freeway and arterial road reserves for which VicRoads is the Coordinating Road Authority under the *Road Management Act 2004*.

Policy Objectives

The policy objectives are:

- Increase sustainable travel
- Meet community expectations
- Reduce the risk of death and serious injury
- Increase the efficient movement of people and goods now and into the future

Related Legislation

Key legislation related to this policy includes:

- Road Management Act 2004
- Transport Integration Act 2010
- Victoria's Road Safety Road Rules 2009
(A bus lane is a special purpose lane that is designated for the exclusive use of public buses. The Road Rules allow motorists to drive for up to 100 metres in a bus lane if it is necessary to either enter or leave the roadway. Other vehicles can travel in a bus lane if permitted by traffic signs.)

Policy Application

1. Policy Guidance

For most decisions, the policy guidance can be used directly. If the policy guidance can be applied, then the policy principles are considered met. Refer to *Policy Guidance* section of this policy.

2. Policy Principles

Where the policy guidance may not be appropriate and it is necessary to deviate from the policy guidance, then a principle-based decision needs to be made. All the policy principles need to be addressed.

The decision must be documented and approved as outlined in the *Responsibilities* section of this policy.

3. Policy Exception

Any deviation from policy principles is discouraged and should only be made in line with broader Government Policy, Strategies and Legislation. Where it is absolutely necessary to deviate from any of the policy principles, a principle-based decision should be made demonstrating why deviation from the policy principles is considered necessary and acceptable.

The decision must be documented and approved as outlined in the *Responsibilities* section of this policy.

Policy Principles

Policy principles have been developed to define VicRoads' position and support decision-making regarding the use of bus lanes by other modes. To comply with this policy, all the policy principles are to be addressed to achieve the Policy Objectives.

Further guidance is provided in the *Policy Guidance* section of this policy.

1. Sustainable transport principle

- Support reliable travel times and the efficient movement of buses
- Maintain and where possible improve the efficiency of the transport network

2. Road user expectation principle

- Support all road users to clearly and easily understand which modes are permitted to use which bus lanes
- Where other modes are currently permitted to use bus lanes, give greater consideration to maintaining access due to existing stakeholder expectations

3. Road safety principle

- Maintain and where possible improve safety for all modes





Policy Guidance

To align with all the policy principles, the following guidance may be used:

Coaches

Coaches may travel in all bus lanes across the declared urban arterial road network in Victoria, unless signed otherwise.

The use of bus lane by coaches positively aligns with all the policy principles. Coaches are considered suitable for admission to bus lanes as they operate similarly to buses.

Bicycles

Bicycles may travel in all bus lanes across the declared urban arterial road network in Victoria, unless signed otherwise.

Bicycle use of bus lanes aligns positively with all the policy principles. Ideally, bicycles and buses would be separated due to their differences in operating speed and mass. However, by preventing bicycles from using the bus lane, bicycles would be required to travel in the traffic lane adjacent to the bus lane. This is not the safest place for bicycles.

Where it is practical, buses and bicycles should still be separated. This can be encouraged by providing:

- bicycle facilities on the same road as the bus lane. These facilities would need to offer an appropriate level of service to make it more attractive than riding in the bus lane; or
- an appropriate bicycle facility on a nearby parallel road. The parallel road would need to provide a satisfactory alternative for cyclists that would have otherwise used the road with the bus lane.

Bicycles should still be permitted to access bus lanes, in locations where the aforementioned bicycle facilities are available, to provide local access for cyclists to destinations along bus routes.

Taxis and private hire vehicles (VHA/B/Cs)

Taxis and private hire vehicles (VHA/B/Cs) use of bus lanes align with all the policy principles. At this stage, taxis and VHA/B/Cs operate in several bus lanes across Melbourne with no demonstrated operational issues; these modes may continue using these bus lanes.

Taxis and VHAs may use the following bus lanes:

- Eastern Freeway exit ramp (Westbound onto Hoddle Street)
- Hoddle Street (Southbound)
- Victoria Parade (Eastbound)

Where operational or safety issues arise from using the aforementioned bus lanes, taxis and VHAs may be removed.

Motorcycles

Motorcycle use of bus lanes does not fully align with the policy principles, specifically the road safety principle. The findings from studies of motorcycles in bus lane trials has revealed there is an increase in crash risk for motorcyclists using a bus lane, particularly right turn against and left turn sideswipe crashes. Motorcycles are not considered a suitable mode for admission to bus lanes.



Non-Emergency Patient Transfer (NEPT) Vehicles

Allowing NEPT vehicles to utilise bus lanes will reduce the effectiveness of bus priority and consequently reduce their contribution to network efficiency. Furthermore, many bus lanes have sophisticated technology at signalised intersections to give priority to buses. This technology may be made ineffective by allowing other vehicles in the bus lane. Hence, NEPT vehicles are not considered a suitable mode for admission to bus lanes.

Other modes

Unless permitted under the Road Rules, other modes of transport (including motorcycles and non-emergency patient transport vehicles) may not travel in bus lanes.

Note - The Road Rule 158(1)(a) allows motorists to drive for up to 100 metres in a bus lane if it is necessary for the driver to drive in the lane to either enter or leave the roadway. Other vehicles can travel in a bus lane if permitted by traffic signs.

Responsibilities

Table 1 - Roles & Responsibilities of VicRoads Officers

<p>Regional Directors / Project Directors</p> <p>Use the policy guidance</p> <p>Use the policy principles in situations not covered by the policy guidance to make a principle-based decision and document the decision-making process.</p> <p>Approve policy principle-based decisions</p> <p>Demonstrate why it is necessary to deviate from the policy principles (policy exceptions) and document the decision making process.</p> <p>Endorse exceptions to this policy and seek approval from Strategy and Policy Governance Committee.</p>
<p>Director Integration Services</p> <p>Review, monitor and disseminate this policy</p>
<p>Strategy and Policy Governance Committee</p> <p>Approve this policy</p> <p>Approve exceptions to this policy</p>

Policy Evaluation and Review

This policy will be evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis to monitor its progress towards achieving the intended outcomes.

Contact Details

Questions relating to this policy should be directed to the Manager Transport Integration, Integration Services, VicRoads.

Policy Governance

Policy Ownership and Approval Record

Business Area Owner – Transport Integration, Integration Services

Rev. No. Date Released	Sections/Update	Description of Revision	Approved by:
Rev. 1.0 July 2016	First Edition	Development of policy	Executive Director Policy & Programs on July 2016

This policy is effective as of the date of approval.

Bicycle and coaches are not permitted in bus lanes, unless signed otherwise, until road rules come into effect on 1 July 2017.

Related Documents

Document Title	Reference