

# TRAVEL IN AND AROUND HEPBURN SHIRE

Planning for transport is about understanding the needs of people and the economy. It's important to recognise the unique character of Hepburn Shire when planning any changes. As well as local people's needs, the large number of visitors

to the Shire must also be considered. Limited transport choices within the Shire means that car travel dominates, resulting in high transport costs for households in an area with an older population with relatively low income.

## Location and population

Hepburn Shire has a resident population of about 16,600 people (2021 Census). The main towns (Clunes, Creswick, Daylesford/Hepburn Springs, Glenlyon and Trentham) house two-thirds of the Shire's total population.

The Shire's tourism industry attracted 1.2 million domestic visitor nights and a further 884,000 domestic day trips in the year ending March 2023. All trips are heavily skewed towards weekends, with 66% of overnight trips and 62% of day trips including a Saturday or Sunday over the past five years (Tourism Research Australia, 2023).

During most Saturdays and Sundays, the "daytime population" of the Shire is double that of the resident population, producing a lot of extra traffic and demand for parking. This particularly affects key tourism centres, like Daylesford.

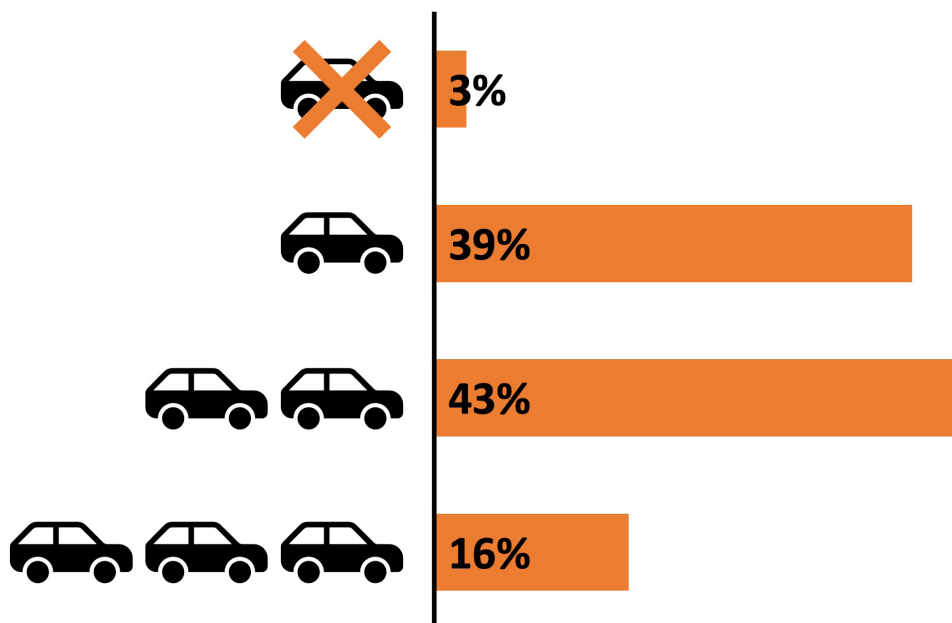
Additionally, one in nine houses in Hepburn Shire are listed on short-term rental platforms such as Stayz and Airbnb (AirDNA, 2023). This further highlights the transient nature of a significant part of the population.



Midland Highway entering  
Hepburn Shire from Ballarat

## Travelling in and around the Shire

### Over 80% of Hepburn Shire households have 1 or 2 cars

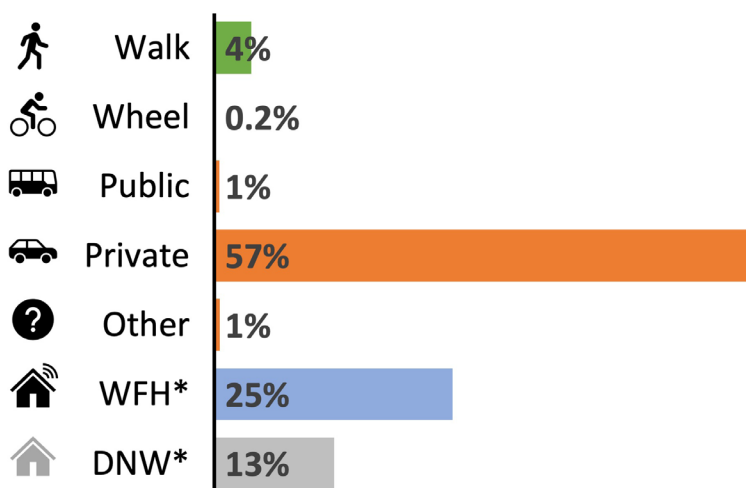


Source: 2021 Census

Most travel in Hepburn Shire uses private cars. For many, this is the only practical choice. Long distances between key destinations, low public transport service frequencies, poor connections and limited coverage mean that local people and visitors are highly car dependent.

Only 3% of households in Hepburn Shire are without a car, and nearly 60% have two cars or more.

### The majority of Hepburn Shire residents drive to work



Source: 2021 Census. \* WFH = worked from home, DNW = did not work

As a rural area, data on travel in Hepburn Shire is limited, but the evidence confirms the large amounts of car use. For example, in the 2021 Census, 25% of Shire workers worked from home and 57% drove to work, while only 4% walked and very small numbers wheeled or used public transport.

## Travelling in and around the Shire

On Census Day in 2021, about 1,700 Hepburn residents worked from home, and 2,200 travelled to work in the Shire. Another 2,200 travelled to work outside the Shire, primarily to Ballarat, Greater

Melbourne and Macedon Ranges Shire. 1,300 people came to work in Hepburn from outside, again primarily from Ballarat, Greater Melbourne and Macedon Ranges Shire.

### Shire residents travel elsewhere to work, while others come into the Shire



Source: 2021 Census

This illustrates that Shire residents rely on good access to surrounding places, not only for work but for health care, shopping, personal business and recreation. Ballarat, Bendigo and Greater Melbourne are important, as are places like Maryborough, Castlemaine, Kyneton, Woodend and Gisborne.

## Car ownership cost burdens

### Transport costs can take a large slice of income

Median household income in Shire of Hepburn is \$847 per week\*

This is 21% below the Victorian median figure

**\$847**

**\$230**

Typical weekly spending on transport\*\*

**\$230**

**\$318**

**\$299**



Transport\*\*



Mortgage/rent\*\*

Remainder

29% of Shire of Hepburn households earn less than \$500 a week\*

**\$500**

\* 2021 Census, 'Median equivalised total household income (weekly)'

\*\* Estimated for a family of 2 adults and a student, paying median mortgage/rent and running a medium sized car/SUV (running costs sourced from RACV)

Car dependency comes at a high cost to households. For example, a two-adult, one-student household with median income in Hepburn Shire may only have about \$300 a week left after covering their housing and transport costs.

Low-income households in the Shire may find it difficult to get around easily and cost-effectively, given the high reliance on car ownership and use. They may have to rely on older, cheaper cars (vehicles are generally older in regional areas than in capital cities), which lack modern safety features and are less fuel-efficient.



## Vulnerable transport users

Understanding the key needs of different groups of people is essential to health and wellbeing, especially in relation to travel, access and mobility. The Integrated Transport Strategy will use a person-centred approach to ensure that the most vulnerable users of transport are prioritised: this includes people living with a disability, the young and old, and different genders.

**24% of  
Hepburn Shire's  
population live  
with disability**

**18% of  
the population  
is over 70  
years old**

**51% of the  
population  
are women**

People living with a physical disability have particular challenges with travel. They often rely on others, or on special services such as the Multi Purpose (Maxi) Taxi Program. Access to public transport – and also getting around local areas – can be difficult, especially where the facilities are not well-designed. The Disability Discrimination Act sets standards for design of public places, including footpaths and public transport systems (like bus stops and vehicles), but many facilities fall well short of these standards, and can be poorly maintained.

Hepburn Shire's population has a median age of 52, which is significantly older than the Victorian average of 38.

Older people, especially when fully or partially retired, may have less mobility and tend to drive less than people of working age. From 75 years, people have to self-test for driving ability and can only keep a driving licence for three years at a time. Many would like to walk or cycle more but are often deterred by poor facilities and safety concerns.

Older residents may continue to drive even as their ability declines because there are not paths where they could ride a mobility device to local shops and services.

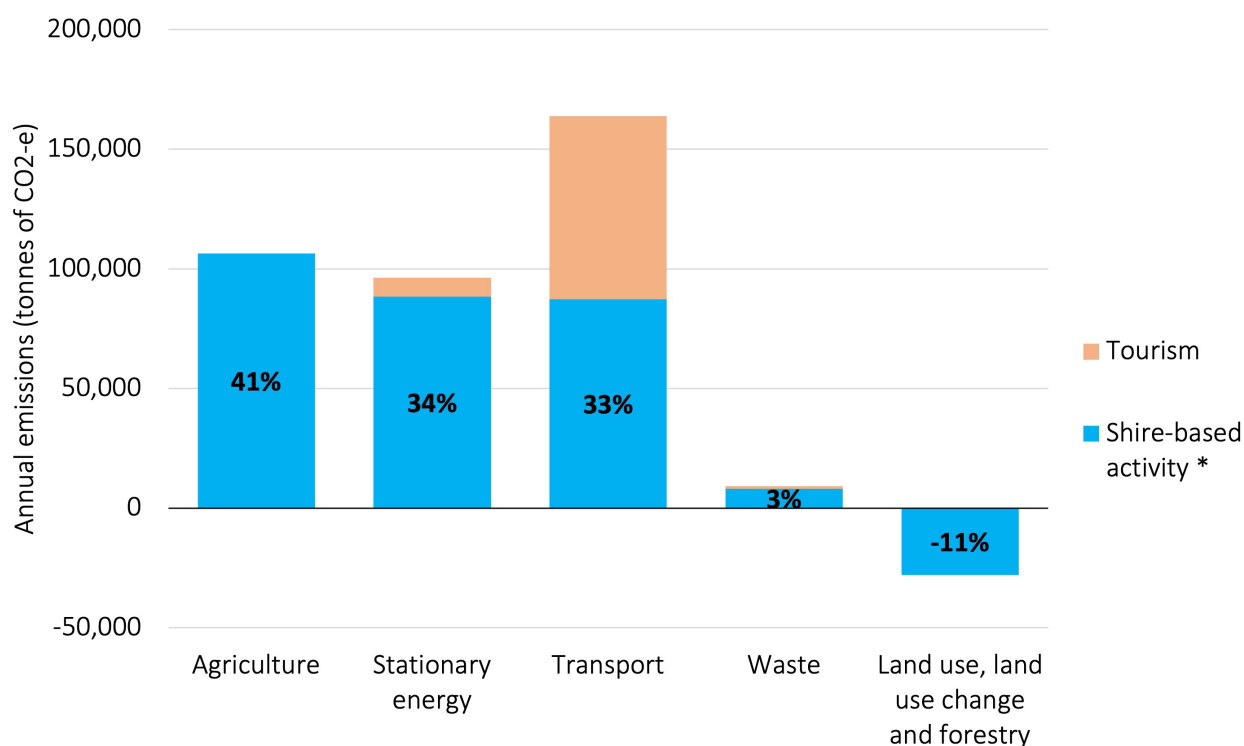
Women ride bicycles and use public transport less than men do. They also have different needs and transport use patterns to men. For example, in Hepburn Shire, 44% of people travelling to work in the 2021 Census are women, but they are only 30% of people cycling to work, and 40% of those using public transport. This is a common pattern in many places. Women are deterred by concern for their safety and security, especially if travelling alone. Transport services can also be unsuitable to their transport usage patterns (e.g. smaller more frequent local trips throughout the day).

## Environmental impacts of transport

The global climate crisis has become an increasingly important issue for local governments to tackle. It is well understood that actions to reduce emissions should also generate economic, social and environmental benefits. Council has been proactive in their approach to climate action by supporting Z-NET Hepburn Shire, a community partnership working toward zero-net emissions, as well as through Council plans and strategies.

Emissions from transport in Hepburn Shire make up 33% of total baseline emissions, attributed mostly to high levels of private motor vehicle travel. On top of this, visitors to the Shire produce a similar proportion of emissions.

### Transport produces 33% of Hepburn Shire-based emissions, and tourism activity nearly doubles this



\* Hepburn Shire residential, commercial, industrial, farming, and municipal sectors

Source: ZNET Hepburn Shire Community Transition Plan (2018)

## Costs to Council

Council is responsible for maintaining many transport infrastructure assets throughout the Shire. This includes approximately 612km of sealed roads, 844km of unsealed roads, 45km of footpaths, 82km of kerb and channelling, 165 bridges and 34km of drains. Council's maintenance budget for these assets is about \$2.9 million per year.

The impacts of steadily increasing traffic (especially heavy vehicles) and weather extremes from climate change (such as storms, stormwater flows and flash flooding) are significantly affecting

the condition of roads, which in turn affects user safety, fuel consumption and wear and tear on vehicles. Preventative maintenance, and frequent monitoring of road and path condition, will be needed to ensure that maintenance funding is used as efficiently as possible.



# WHAT IS TRANSPORT LIKE IN HEPBURN SHIRE TODAY?

Hepburn Shire's transport system is almost exclusively road-based, apart from a single rail line with a very limited passenger service. Bus and coach services are also limited, apart from Creswick, which is served by relatively frequent buses to and from Ballarat.

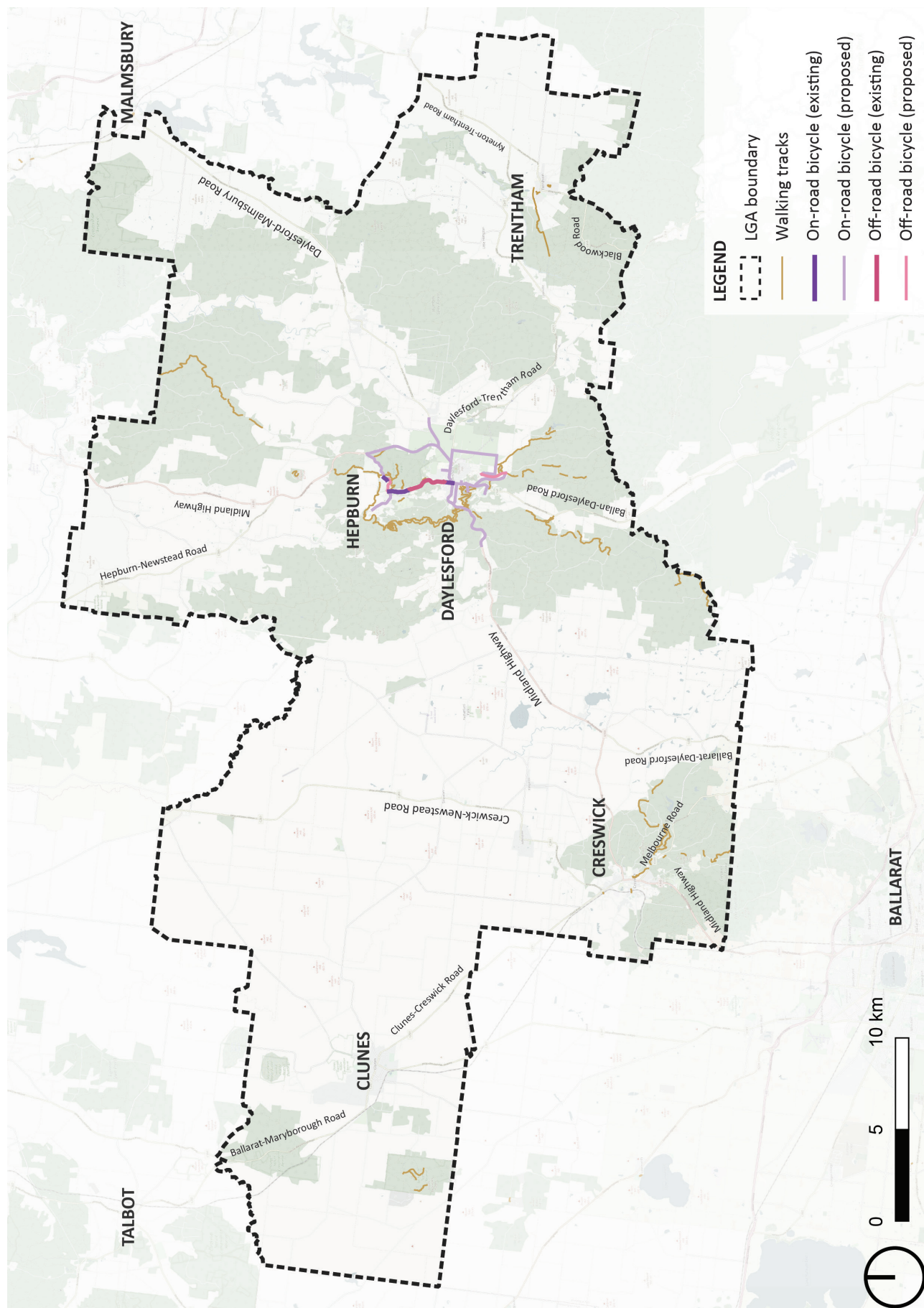
Walking and wheeling facilities are concentrated in the townships, where there are also connections into a growing network of recreational trails in surrounding forest areas.



Daylesford Lake Walking Path



# Walking and wheeling



## Walking and wheeling

Dedicated walking and wheeling facilities are concentrated in and around the main townships. Footpaths are generally located along local streets and, in some cases, next to arterial roads, often displaying outdated and low-quality designs that create unsafe environments for users. The Shire contains less of a traditional 'active transport' network configuration and is more of a recreational network, including walking tracks and on and off-road bicycle tracks.

Most of the street space in townships is allocated to car traffic and parking. While important for local businesses, this can make things more difficult for people walking and wheeling. The busiest area is Vincent Street in the middle of Daylesford, where conflicts between cars and walkers or wheelers are common, and footpaths get very crowded. Creswick has an increasingly busy centre along Midland Highway, where wide traffic lanes, angle parking and high truck volumes also compete with walkers and wheelers.

Elsewhere, especially in Hepburn Springs, Clunes or Trentham, there is much less through-traffic in the main streets, but they still get very busy at weekends.

Away from the main streets in towns there is much less car traffic, but in many places, walkers have to use the road carriageway where there are no footpaths. Solutions could provide safer streets while also protecting the heritage and rural feel that residents treasure.

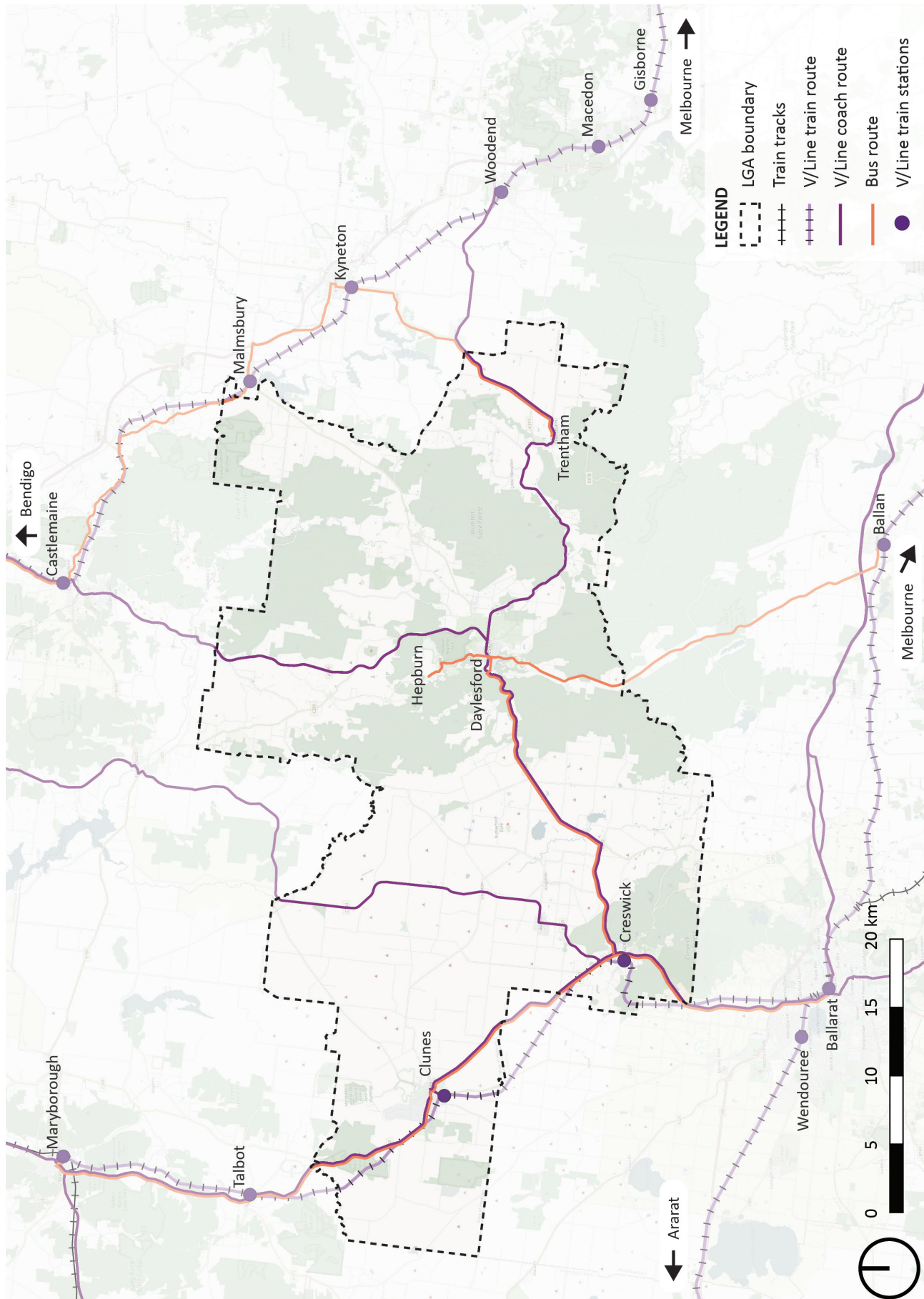
The tourist economy brings substantial weekend and holiday congestion for Daylesford and Hepburn Springs in particular, and to a lesser extent Trentham and Clunes. Residents and visitors enjoy recreational walking and bicycle tracks in and around the main townships.

There are some good off-road paths and trails which provide recreational walking and wheeling opportunities.





# Public transport



## Public transport in Hepburn Shire includes:

- Melbourne – Maryborough V/Line train service, with stations at Clunes and Creswick
- V/Line coach routes
- Regional bus routes

Service frequencies are relatively low.

The Melbourne-Maryborough V/Line service in the west of the Shire has only two services a day in each direction, while most of the regional and coach bus services that provide connections between the townships and beyond the Shire operate infrequently.

The weekday bus route between Ballan and Hepburn Springs via Daylesford operates only one service a day in each direction.

The most frequent services in the Shire are between Creswick and Ballarat; this enables Creswick people to access trains at Ballarat station. This route operates fifteen services in each direction on weekdays, and about half that amount on weekends.

Regional Coach services provide connections to the north, including Bendigo and Castlemaine. They also make connections between Daylesford and Woodend, providing the only public transport for Trentham residents. Despite being infrequent, these services connect to important facilities (such as health services in Kyneton), as well as train services on the Bendigo line.

Fares on regional public transport in Victoria have recently been capped to a maximum of \$10 per day (\$5 concession). Demand has increased substantially on regional train services, but regional bus and coach services have not seen the same growth, probably because of their infrequency.

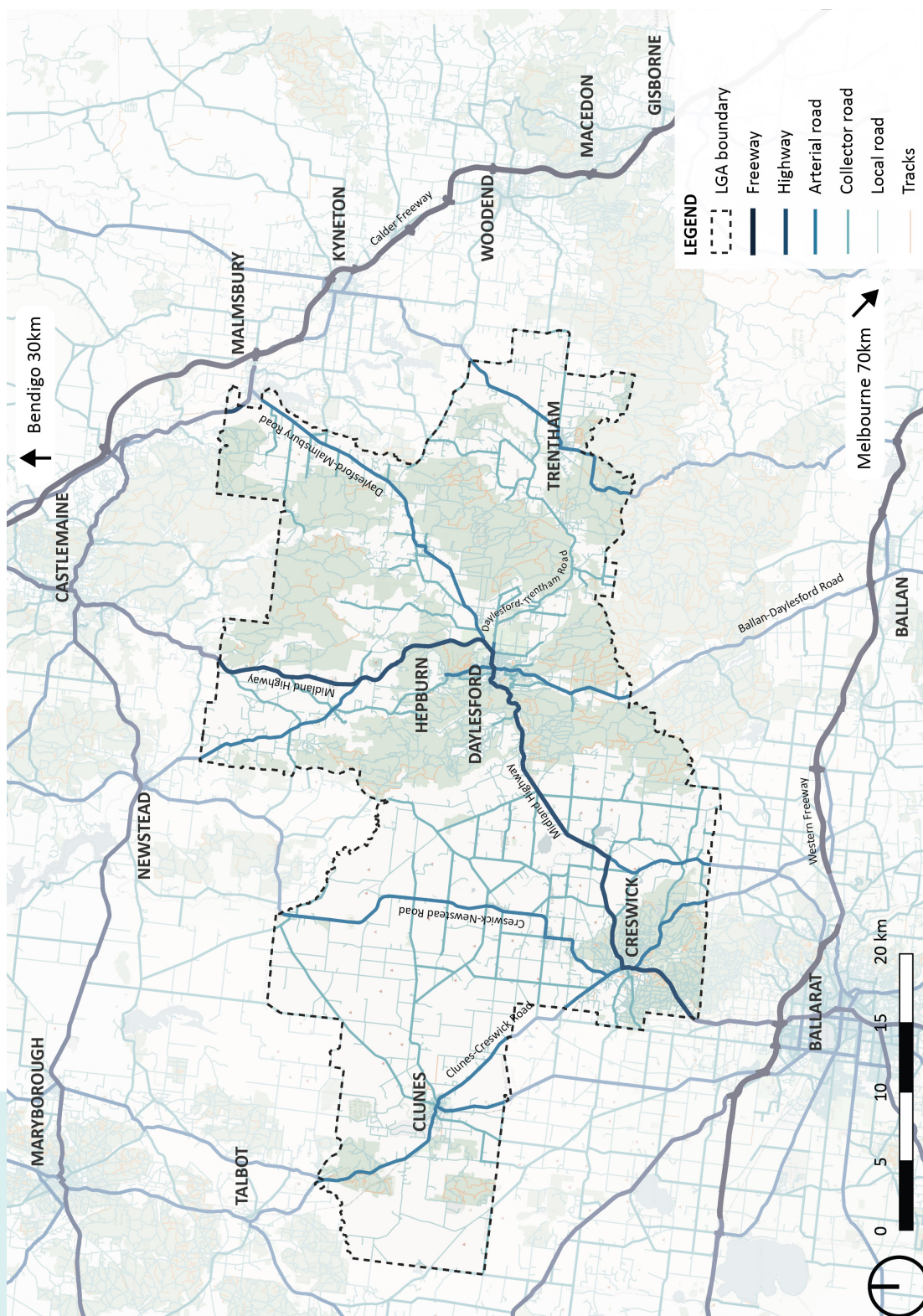
Where better frequency is provided, usage can increase substantially. For example, when train services to Ararat were increased in recent years, the improved timetable enabled Ararat students to travel by train to and from school in Ballarat much more conveniently than before.

At present, most bus and train services in the Shire use paper tickets rather than the myki system. The State Government recently awarded a 15-year contract to a new ticketing operator, who will run and upgrade myki to include use by mobile phones and credit cards. It is understood that the upgraded system will be rolled out throughout Victoria.





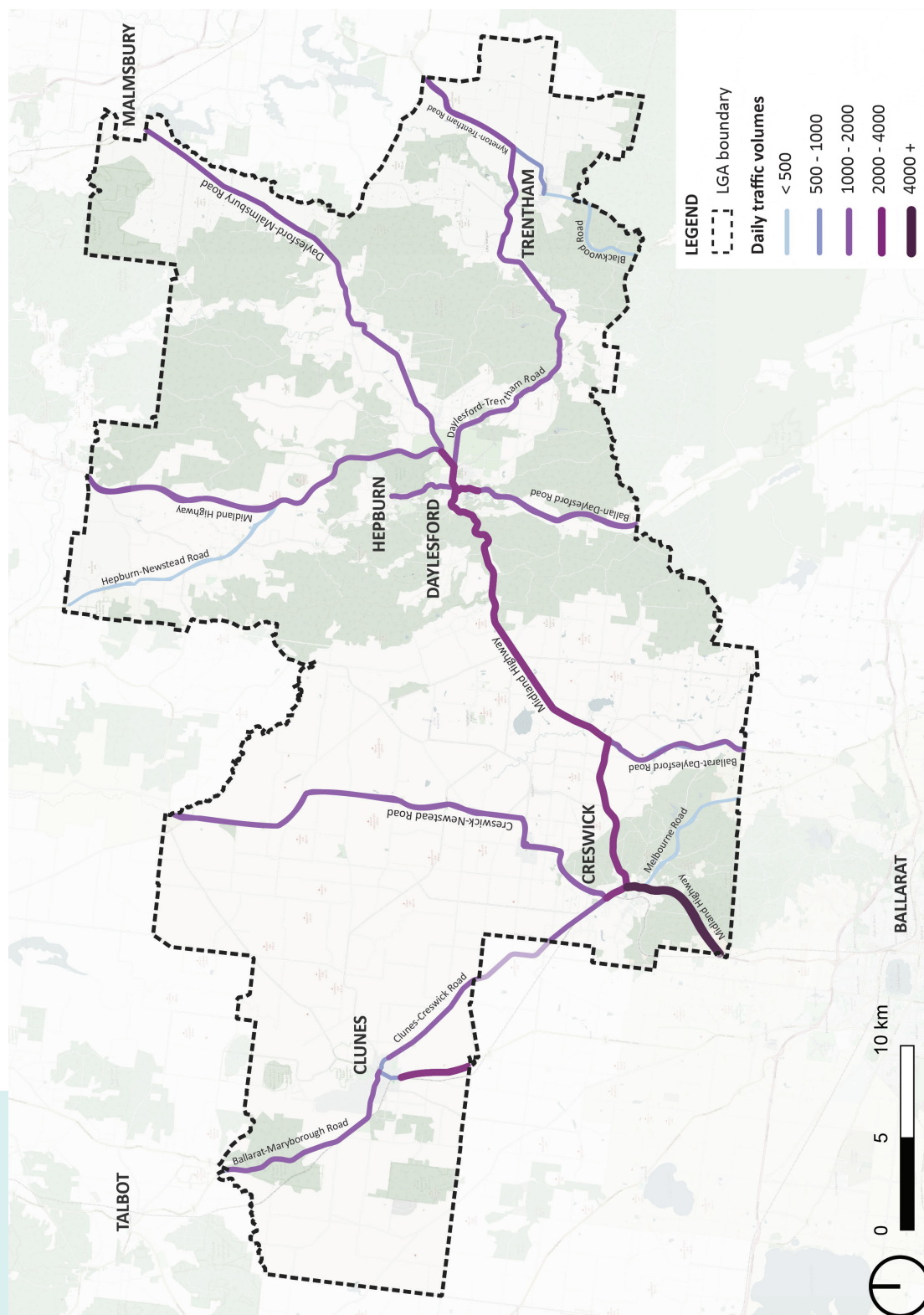
## Road network and freight



Hepburn Shire Roads

Hepburn Shire is serviced by an extensive road network. The Calder and Western Freeways connect the Shire to Metropolitan Melbourne, Ballarat and Bendigo, while the Midland Highway serves as an important north east south west route through the Shire.

Arterial and local roads provide links between the larger towns of Daylesford and Creswick, and smaller towns like Clunes, Hepburn Springs and Trentham. There are also many smaller settlements between these places. Distances between townships are anywhere from 15km to 65km, meaning that return journey times can range from 30 minutes to well over an hour and a half.



Hepburn Shire Traffic Volumes

The busiest roads are the Midland Highway and Ballan-Daylesford Road, which both serve Daylesford-Hepburn Springs.

Freight traffic is concentrated along Ballan-Daylesford Road and the Midland Highway, travelling directly through Daylesford. Truck routes are signposted in Clunes and Daylesford to divert heavy vehicles away from their main streets,

but in Creswick the Midland Highway carries trucks through the town centre.

The Maryborough rail line carries significant rail freight, especially grain, to the Port of Geelong via Ballarat.