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Sharing the main street

A Practitioners' guide

to managing the
road environment
and traffic routes
through commercial
centres



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Foreword

The early 1970's heralded Australia's first attempts at improving the safety and 'livability' of local streets as the usage of motor vehicles grew significantly. From these initial steps into environment- and safety- motivated traffic management, the focus of local area traffic management has expanded to include the improvement and enhancement of local centres or the *'Main Street'* so that not only is safety a dominant factor, but so too, the quality of the road environment for all users within the community. Hence the advent of *Sharing the Main Street* and the need for the "Sharing the Main Street - Practitioners' Guide".

The previous 1993 edition of these Guidelines was a joint venture of the RTA and the Federal Office of Road Safety. At that time, the Guidelines were a significant first step, as no such document existed in this area. Subsequently, the Sharing the Main Street concept grew and the RTA encouraged the application of the principles for environmental adaptation by making grants available for local government authorities to carry out feasibility studies. Many local authorities took up this opportunity, further assisting in the development of the Sharing the Main Street concept.

A performance review of the Sharing the Main Street projects was undertaken in 1998. The Review was conducted by Hans Westerman, Emeritus Professor in Town Planning, University of New South Wales; with assistance from Professor John A Black, Professor of Transport Engineering, University of New South Wales; Milly Hawley, Principal of Geoplan, Sydney; and Chris Stapleton, Principal of Christopher Stapleton Consulting, Sydney. The Review showed that overall, there was a high level of satisfaction, perceived safety had improved, speeds were lower, crossing was easier, the quality of the environment was much better, and business had improved.

Each Main Street is unique, and as such, this Guide is aimed at providing information on the principles of environmental adaptation, rather than provide an exact method. The Review clarified that the main principles set out in 1993 remained valid. However, the new Guidelines are dynamic, having evolved from the first edition, to reflect current technical standards and requirements and the experience gained from the Review.

This second edition should be read in the context of current RTA directives and guidelines. The importance of up-front Strategic Planning, is reinforced and the Guide provides more information on design, as well as additional material on public transport, cyclists, the needs of mobility and visually impaired people, and more coverage of safety audits.

An interdisciplinary approach integrating a large number of skills and diversity of stakeholders is a vital mechanism in making these Guidelines a reality through a successfully implemented Main Street scheme. These schemes are designed to ideally be 'self-enforcing' so that speeds, crossing patterns and amenities contribute, amongst others, towards a safe and efficient centre for all road users.

The RTA intends these Guidelines to be used by Local Authorities (Councillors and Professional staff), Consultants, Public Authorities, Community groups and bodies such as the Traffic committee and Main Street committee. The RTA's role in the Sharing the Main Street program is that of promoter of awareness of what latest tools are available to practitioners for the most appropriate safety and environmental adaptation of centres along sub-arterial roads. The RTA encourages the use of the Guidelines in practice and has a role in ensuring the projects conform with its policies and Guidelines.

It is hoped that these Guidelines will be the next significant step in achieving the safe and efficient interaction of all road users in the Main Street environment.

Paul Forward

Chief Executive

Introduction

Introduction

What is Sharing the Main Street?

‘Sharing the Main Street’ means adapting the Main Street - or a centre along a sub-arterial road - to improve the safety and the quality of the road environment to all its users.

People using these areas have a range of needs:

- Pedestrians need to be able to cross safely and conveniently;
- Visitors need to be able to park;
- Motorists and cyclists need to be able to move safely through the centre;
- Businesses need to attract customers;
- Transport operators need space for loading and unloading;
- People with impairment need to be able to use the area safely and comfortably;
- The community needs an attractive and safe centre to visit and to meet; and
- Public authorities need to keep costs down.



Fig. 1 Taree, before adaptation (November, 1997)

The Main Streets of rural towns, and most sub-arterial roads, not only perform a traffic function, but also provide access to the activities along their frontage. Increased traffic has accentuated two major problems. One, the priority in the traffic function is impeded by the activities along the frontage - particularly in areas where there are high levels of parking turnover or many parking manoeuvres, turning movements and crossing pedestrians. Two, the activities along the frontage suffer from the impact of traffic noise and vehicular pollution, access to sites and difficulties for pedestrians who want to cross.

Purpose and scope of the Guide

Environmental adaptation aims to resolve these problems by clarifying the relationship between the road and frontage activity functions and by formulating and implementing proposals to reduce conflicts between them.

‘Sharing the Main Street’ requires an understanding of, and support by, the people and organisations affected (the ‘stakeholders’), collaboration between different disciplines, and arrangements for implementation that may involve different government agencies.



Fig. 2 Taree, one year later (November 1998)

Each Main Street, or centre along a sub-arterial road, is different. Apart from a unique location and development history, there are differences in road reservation width, traffic volumes, traffic composition, proportion of through and local traffic, extent and type of frontage activity, built form, street design and many other factors.

The purpose of this Guide is to provide information on the principles of environmental adaptation and how they can be applied in a wide range of situations.

The focus of the Guide is on the preparation of conceptual design. The Guide does not address aspects of detailed engineering design, urban design, landscape design and development control.

Structure of the Guide

The Guide (Figure 4) has been structured as a practical guide to the planning, design and implementation of proposals for the environmental adaptation of Main Streets and centres along sub-arterial roads.

Part 1

sets out the issues to be considered in environmental adaptation, and the type of objectives and strategies needed to address them.

Part 2

deals with the range of situations that may occur and indicates which Parts and sections of the Guide may be relevant for different situations.

Part 3

addresses planning for environmental adaptation. This will be necessary only in situations identified in Part 2.

Part 4

explains the design for environmental adaptation and is relevant in all situations. A wide range of measures is available and the design process for combining these measures is described.

Part 5

provides information on assessment and evaluation. There are different approaches, depending on the scale and nature of the project.

Appendix A

provides details on the purpose, application and limitations of each of the measures.

Appendix B

explains how to construct an Assessment Balance Chart for more complex projects and how to use performance indicators.

Structure

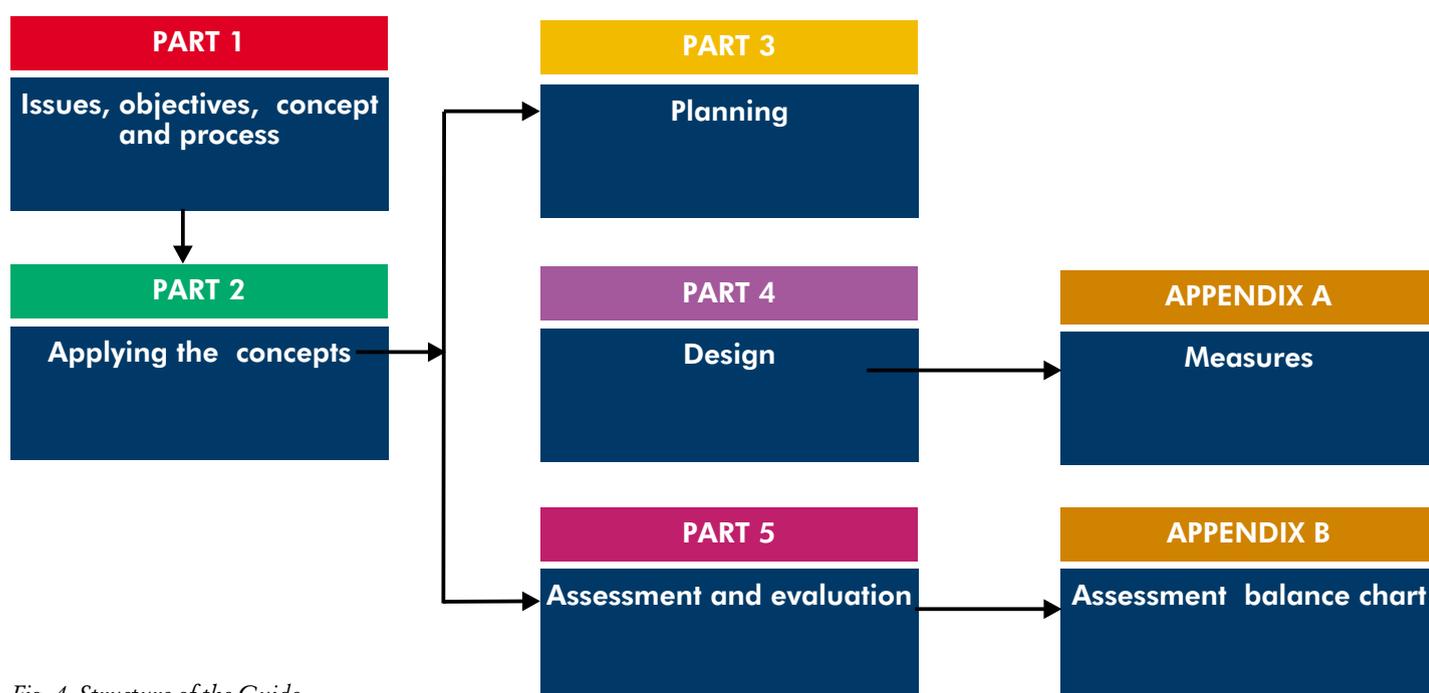


Fig. 4 Structure of the Guide

Context

Background

The original version of this document, published in 1993, was based on a research report prepared for the Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales (Westerman et al. , 1989) and a study for the Federal Office of Road Safety(FORS) and the Road Safety Bureau of the Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales (RTA) (FORS, 1992).

The second edition is based on this original version and a review of its performance and effectiveness, undertaken by Hawley, Stapleton and

Westerman for the Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales in 1998.

The 1993 document was a joint enterprise between the RTA and FORS and had a national distribution. The second edition is initiated and published by the RTA as an RTA document. It reflects current technical standards and requirements in New South Wales.

As a result there are differences between the two versions and this second edition should be regarded as the operative document in New South Wales.

The Guide in relation to the RTA’s planning and management system

The RTA is in the process of developing a Traffic Calming Strategy for New South Wales. Key issues include:

- formalise the road hierarchy;
- effectively discourage and manage through traffic;
- encourage motorists to travel at speeds that are appropriate within the surrounding environment;
- maintain local accessibility;
- overall performance of traffic calming schemes;
- funding of traffic calming schemes;
- improve the access of public transport and emergency vehicles;

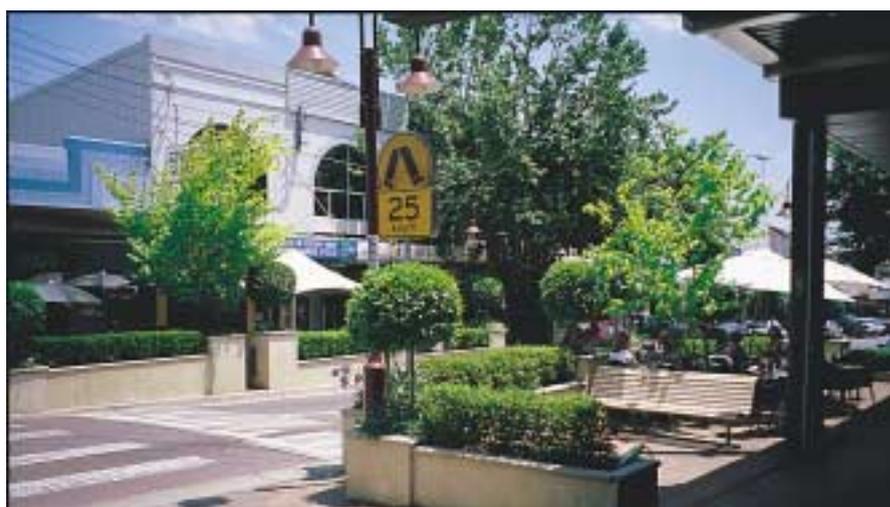
- encourage the use of State and Regional Roads; and
- integrate traffic calming schemes more closely with the adjacent land use.

One of the key objectives of the Strategy is to facilitate the consolidation of pedestrian activities into concentration areas within ribbon development shopping and town centres precincts. Eight strategies have been identified, all of which are incorporated in this Guide. It should be noted that the Guide goes beyond traffic calming and also addresses the causes of conflict and the land-use and transport strategies needed to reduce them.

The principles indicated in the Guide are unrelated to any legal road classification scheme (such as State Roads). Where there is a potential conflict between such a classification and the measures contained in the Guide, the scope for modifying the classification and applying the measures should be explored with the RTA.

The information contained in the various Parts is intended to be used as a guide to good practice. It is generally consistent with the *Guide to Traffic Engineering Practice* (Austroads, 1988), RTA Technical Directions and RTA Guidelines for Local Area Traffic Management Facilities.

Figure 3 Environmental adaptation, Crows Nest.



Related programs

The Main Street/Small Towns Program is administered by the NSW Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD).

Its objectives are to:

- revitalise small and medium-sized communities outside the Sydney region;
- assist communities to develop a vision for their future and implement a practical community plan; and
- skill local people to make decisions about their community's economic future.

Communities with a population over 1500 are eligible for planning assistance, and communities with a population over 1500 and less than 15,000 are eligible for co-ordinator and project funding at implementation stage.

The focus is on business and enterprise development, marketing and promotion, technology and communication, and continuity in program implementation.

The Metropolitan Main Street program is another and recent initiative of DRSD. Its objectives are similar to the Small Towns program. From July 1998, metropolitan communities have been eligible to apply for assistance for planning and training towards the sustainability and revitalisation of their business areas.

The Department provides advice and resource materials to interested communities.

Other programs

Integrating programs

There are advantages in integrating these programs with the Sharing the Main Street process of environmental adaptation (Table 1).

- Both programs address the future development of the Main Street and require a strategic view before preparing action plans.

	Main Street Program	Sharing the Main Street
Issues	Economic development Social development	Traffic and safety Parking Quality of the environment
Vision	What do we want to achieve?	
Strategies	Business activity Tourism Heritage	Land use Transport Built environment
Development Planning	Business development plan Tourism promotion plan Heritage enhancement	Concept plan Development plan Detailed design
Implementation	Action plans	Reconstruction Management of the road space Frontage development control
Monitoring and review	What did we actually achieve and can we do better?	

Table 1 Relationship between Main Street programs

Setting up a project

Organisation and management

The Guide is not an exact method to be followed rigorously. Each situation is different and judgement should be exercised in the light of the many factors which usually influence the choice of solution and detailed treatment.

It is important, therefore, to give careful thought to the organisation and management of the project, the interdisciplinary nature of it, the involvement of the many stakeholders and the development of a process which allows for progressive decision-making.

There usually are four main stages: planning, concept design, detailed design and implementation. An indicative organisation is illustrated in Figure 5. At

each stage there is a need for assessment and evaluation, involving the active participation of stakeholders, reference groups and decision-makers.

For example, at the design stage, an interdisciplinary design team, consisting of, say, a planner, transport planner, urban designer and engineer, develops the initial concept, and consults with stakeholders and a reference group. After consulting with the Steering Committee (and the Council and RTA if required), the project proceeds to the next stage.

The composition of the team and the role each team member plays can vary with the stage of the project.

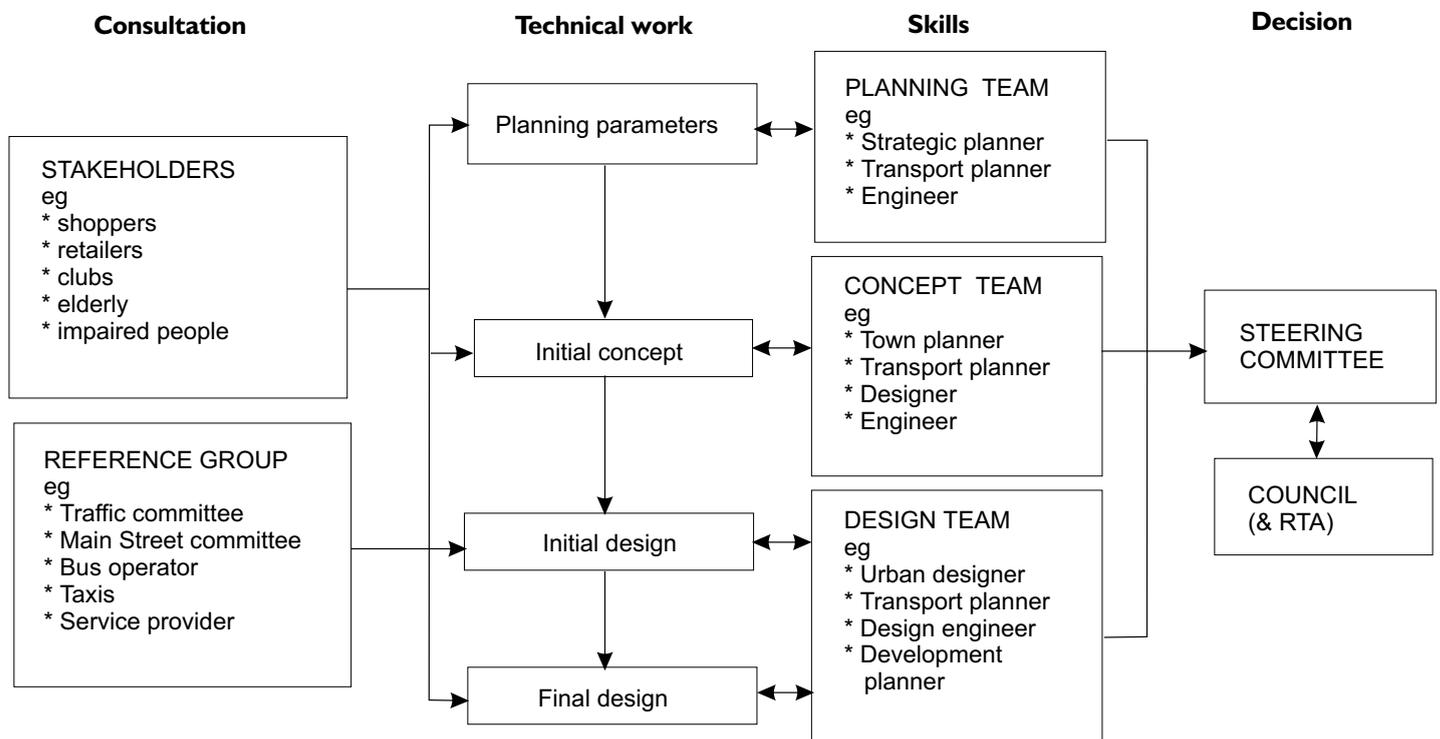


Figure 5 An illustration of an organisational framework