

City Access and Movement

Perth is growing, and more people are travelling to, from and through the City each day. This is increasing pressure on the transport network. A large share of traffic is passing through rather than stopping in the city, while limited street space must also support walking, cycling, public transport and local activity. How this space is managed will shape how well the city functions, how people experience it, and how it grows into the future.

Context

The City of Perth is Western Australia's capital and primary destination for employment, education, retail, recreation, and culture. This central role means that access to, from and within the city needs to work well for a wide range of people and activities. Strong population growth over the past decade has increased pressure on Perth's transport network. Improving access and movement across the city, including more reliable journey times and safer, more comfortable streets, will support economic productivity and growth. It will also help create a healthier, more sustainable and more liveable city.

Quick Facts

Analysis of Journey to Work data (from the 2021 Census)¹ shows 130,000 people travelled to work in the City of Perth, with the various way people travelled to the City illustrated in Figure 1.

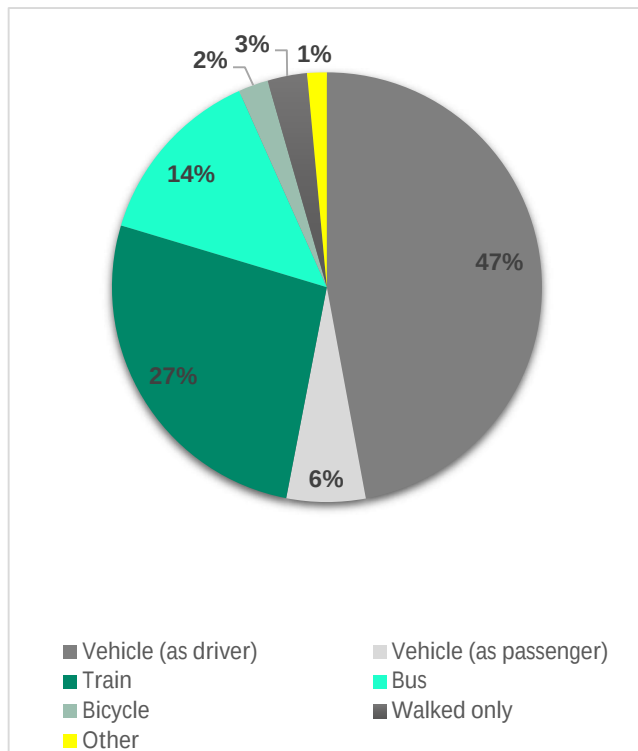


Figure 1 Journey to work mode with City of Perth as a destination, 2021

Issues and Constraints

Some of the challenges that shape access and movement in Perth are as follows:

Geographical constraints

Limited crossings of the Swan River funnel traffic through the city. A constrained east-west grid and narrow central streets also limit connectivity.

Through traffic

Through traffic refers to trips that start and end outside the City of Perth boundary. These trips use City roads, adding pressure to the network without contributing to local activity. The streets with the highest proportion of through traffic are St Georges Terrace, Wellington Street and William Street, with vehicles using these streets to cross Central Perth in an east-west direction or to access Mitchell Freeway from the William Street ramps.

Conflicts between different modes of transport

Different transport modes such as cars, buses, freight, bicycles, and pedestrians compete for limited space, requiring trade-offs in how streets are allocated and used.

Parking pressure

Redevelopment and closures have reduced off-street parking. While on-street parking remains, this can impact the amenity and functionality of the public space.

¹ The Journey to Work (JTW) data is from the 2021 Census, which occurred soon after one of Perth's COVID-19 lockdowns, and on a

day when Perth experienced a severe winter storm. This likely affected travel patterns on Census Day.

Lessons from Other Cities

Cities around the world face similar challenges in providing safe and efficient travel for residents and visitors.

The City of Perth has already taken steps to rebalance street space towards active and public transport modes. This includes the redesign of St Georges Terrace in 2010, which reduced general traffic lanes and introduced bus priority. It also includes the East End streetscape upgrade in 2020 and the Two-Way Streets Program.

The City can draw on further lessons and successes from other cities:

Balancing Multi-Modal Access in Dense Urban Areas

Prioritising and investing in active and public transport can transform how people access and move through a city. Singapore's rapid and widespread rail expansion – from five stations in 1987 to more than 160 MRT stations today – coupled with enhancements in last-mile connectivity, has shifted how people travel and established the MRT network as the backbone of Singapore's transport system.

Managing Car Dependence while Improving Transit and Active Modes

Managing vehicle movement, alongside improvements to public and active transport, supports a shift away from car dependence. Paris uses low emission zones, which limits access to certain areas for electric, hydrogen and clean combustion vehicles only for periods of the day. The city has also implemented lower speed limits, and converted car-focused streets into cycling corridors. Vancouver has invested in transit and bikeways, supported by land use planning that places homes near transit. Groningen and Ghent use traffic circulation plans, which are designed to manage traffic flow by dividing the city into zones and encouraging the use of peripheral or ring roads, thereby restricting through traffic vehicle movement in the city centres.

Managing Through Traffic to Improve City Function and Amenity

Strategically identifying and distinguishing between trips with a City destination and trips passing through supports better use of street capacity. Cities such as Melbourne, Paris, London, Ghent and Groningen use this approach to guide design and capacity decisions.

Congestion Management, Pricing, and Network Integration

Congestion charging, such as Singapore's Electronic Road Pricing and London's Congestion Charge Zone, may not be suitable in Perth. Strategies focused on parking pricing and supply, as used in Melbourne and Paris, may be more relevant for discouraging private vehicle use.

Opportunities

Key opportunities for the City are as follows:

Advocacy and Policy

The reallocation of street space towards active and public transport modes is a proven strategy. However, it requires a coordinated approach involving collaboration across various agencies and levels of government. The City should work closely with State agencies to develop and advocate for policies that improve public transport access. This includes improving connections for the first and last part of each journey.

Data and Monitoring

Traffic counts and survey data are already extensive, but origin-destination data remains limited. This data is important for understanding travel patterns and access needs.

Digital navigation data is increasingly available and can help fill these gaps. It can provide insights into speeds, travel times and congestion hotspots, supporting more targeted transport interventions.

Infrastructure and Network Opportunities

A key opportunity is the State Government's plan to introduce more ferry routes across the river. These services can improve connections and support access across the city. The City can complement these changes by improving links to walking, cycling and public transport. This will strengthen the overall network and support shifts to more sustainable travel.