



This VPP Practice Note provides guidance to developers, designers and planning authorities when considering a proposal for a service centre on a metropolitan freeway.

Designers and developers are encouraged to discuss the issues raised in this Practice Note with local council planners and VicRoads prior to lodgement of a planning permit application.

### What is a metropolitan freeway service centre?

A freeway service centre is land which has direct access to a freeway and is used to sell vehicle fuel and provide essential services and facilities to freeway users. Freeways, or sections of freeways, are designated as rural or metropolitan freeways by VicRoads. This Practice Note applies to freeway service centres located on a metropolitan freeway.

### Where can a metropolitan freeway service centre be established?

VicRoads nominates sections of Victoria's metropolitan freeway network where service centres may be appropriate. Further information on sites where development proposals are invited may be obtained from VicRoads.

### Planning considerations in the siting and design of a metropolitan freeway service centre

#### Impact assessment, site analysis and design response

An applicant is encouraged to carry out an impact assessment, site analysis and design response for a proposal.

The impact assessment should address:

- the impact of the service centre on the physical environment, including site formation, new servicing, vegetation retention and removal and proposed landscaping
- the likely effect on the amenity of surrounding land uses
- the visual impact of the development when viewed from the freeway and nearby existing developments and external colours, materials and finishes.

The applicant should prepare a site analysis/site context plan identifying factors such as the physical features of the site and area (including existing vegetation), surrounding land uses and the characteristics of surrounding built form.

A design response to the impact assessment and site analysis/site context plan should demonstrate how the particular design, layout and development has addressed factors affecting the site and other issues, such as driver sight distances, proximity to freeway access points and safe site ingress and egress opportunities.

#### Location

The location of a service centre must be in accordance with VicRoads requirements.

The location of a service centre should be determined based on traffic safety and appropriate land use planning principles. A service centre should be conveniently located for safe accessibility and properly identified so that drivers are aware of its presence in advance at a minimum of 5 km, 2 km and 1 km distance. Care must be taken in the siting and design of a service centre in, or within proximity of, visually or environmentally sensitive areas.

Applicants need to demonstrate that the site and its location are suitable for a service centre and that the presence of a service centre will not affect the safe operation of the freeway or the amenity of the surrounding area. If service centres are to be developed in pairs, to serve both carriageways, reference should be made to the location requirements of the Department of Infrastructure's *Freeway Service Centres Design Guidelines, May 1997* for rural freeway service centres.

#### Site layout and car parking

- The layout of the site should have regard to any features of the site, including vegetation.
- The layout of the service centre should provide for safe and efficient vehicle manoeuvring and ensure pedestrian safety. Most importantly, the layout should discourage any wrong-way movement back onto the freeway.
- The location of lighting should be carefully considered to ensure that all public areas can be well lit at night without the lighting causing a nuisance to surrounding land uses or the operation of the freeway.
- The issues of separating truck access/parking from car access/parking and the number of car parking spaces required need to be considered.
- Provision of car and caravan/boat trailer parking may be required, depending on the location of the service centre.
- Loading and unloading facilities should be provided in convenient locations and screened from pedestrian areas, nearby residential areas and the freeway.

**Built form**

- The scale, height, style and design of the service centre should have regard to the characteristics of the surrounding area, particularly the appearance and design of nearby buildings.
- The design of the service centre buildings should make a positive contribution to the surrounding environment.
- External materials and finished colours should have regard for the surrounding environment and land uses, in addition to the relevant corporate requirements.
- The service centre should be designed to make best use of site opportunities and overcome any site constraints.

**Facilities and services**

A metropolitan freeway service centre operates 24 hours a day on a seven-day-a-week basis.

Services and facilities that must be provided within a metropolitan freeway service centre:

- designated parking areas
- undercover fuel sales area for petrol, diesel and LPG
- an area of not more than 240m<sup>2</sup> for the sale of food, drinks and other convenience goods
- an indoor sit-down eating area
- outdoor seating and safe play area for children
- public toilets
- public telephones.

Services and facilities that must not be included:

- vehicle repairs (except for emergency vehicle repairs)
- retail facilities exceeding 240 m<sup>2</sup> in floor area
- video hire
- post office facilities/services
- gaming machines
- entertainment facilities such as live shows, pinball machines and amusement parlours
- sale, distribution and consumption of alcohol except that associated with a residential hotel/motel
- car or truck wash facilities.

**Access**

Access to and from freeways should be in accordance with the relevant requirements and standards of VicRoads. Approval from VicRoads is required for all access between the service centre and the freeway. Similarly, the standard of construction and other issues regarding access must be to the satisfaction of VicRoads.

Facilities for U-turns should not be provided across the median strip opposite a service centre.

There must be no vehicular access between the service centre and the local road network. For safety reasons, pedestrian access from the surrounding area should not be permitted.

**Signage**

Signage for a service centre should comply with all relevant requirements of VicRoads, the planning scheme and any relevant council policy. Signs may require a planning permit.

Service centre signage should be located along the freeway and within the site and not on surrounding local roads or land.

**Lighting**

Sufficient lighting should be provided to meet the needs of the service centre, without impinging upon the freeway or surrounding areas. Lighting should be baffled to prevent any light spill or glare beyond the site, especially if the service centre adjoins a residential zone.

**Buffers**

A landscaped setback of an appropriate size should be provided between the service centre and the freeway and between the service centre and the surrounding local area.

The extent of landscape setbacks at the front and side boundaries of the service centre should be assessed on a site specific basis. However, where the service centre adjoins a residential zone, the landscape buffer strip along the common boundary must be at least 3.0 metres wide.

**Landscape treatment**

Appropriate landscaping should be provided. All landscaping should be maintained in a good condition and not obscure driver sight lines. If the service centre adjoins a residential zone, except for the landscaped areas, only part of the site not occupied by buildings must be sealed to prevent dust.

**Further information**

Refer to the Freeway Service Centres Design Guidelines, May 1997, a detailed design guideline for rural freeway service centres, for further guidance in the preparation of a proposal for a metropolitan freeway service centre. These guidelines expand on this Practice Note and include explanatory diagrams. As they have been prepared specifically for rural freeway service centres, not all issues raised in the guidelines may be relevant to metropolitan freeway service centres.

Further guidelines for the development of metropolitan freeway service centres can be obtained from VicRoads.