

How do you make a difference?

PTV learning outcomes

- Students are aware of the opportunities to use public transport
- Students understand personal and societal benefits of public transport
- Students are confident to use public transport
- Students understand why their actions are important to being safe on and around public transport
- Students know how to be safe on and around public transport

Duration

Sequences are intended to be delivered in 2–4 lessons.

Overview

In this learning sequence, students determine improvements they would like to see in public transport. They research ways of suggesting improvements to public transport authorities and other decision makers, and prepare letters and emails for this purpose. They prioritise future improvements and develop arguments to support their points of view. Students also review safety information provided by public transport authorities and create their own advice that targets primary-school-aged children.



Curriculum alignment

Levels 5–6 Civics and citizenship

VCCCG010

Identify and discuss the key features of the Australian electoral process

VCCCC015

Identify different points of view on a contemporary issue relating to democracy and citizenship

Level 5 English

VCELY319

Use comprehension strategies to analyse information, integrating and linking ideas from a variety of print and digital sources

VCELY329

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive print and multimodal texts, choosing text structures, language features, images and sound appropriate to purpose and audience

Level 6 English

VCELY347

Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts

VCELY358

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience

Engage

To set the scene in readiness for discussing the question 'How can public transport be improved?', students watch the first 45 seconds of Public Transport Victoria's (PTV) YouTube video [The Network Development Plan – Metropolitan Rail](#). The video focuses on metropolitan train travel, but the issues raised and statistics presented have relevance to regional Victoria and to other forms of public transport.

Students identify the major challenges facing Melbourne's metropolitan train system, ie, catering for the city's rapidly increasing population and the associated expanding urban development. Students consider the implications of these statistics for public transport in the future in regard to:

- transport needs for different times of the day and night, days of the week and times of the year
- servicing and connecting different parts of the city
- catering for a wide diversity of travellers
 - age, mobility, language skills, etc.

In small groups or as a class, students prioritise what they regard as being the most pressing issues facing public transport generally in Victoria. They also list improvements they would like to see in public transport services specifically in their local area, including safety considerations. The suggestions can be prioritised and reviewed to ensure they are reasonable and more likely to be acted upon.



Explore

Using PTV's [Journey Planner](#), students investigate how they would travel to different destinations using public transport. Destinations might include: grandparents' houses, beaches, aquatic centres, sports matches, cinemas and regional centres. This investigation might raise new issues, for example, long waits for connecting services, lengthy walking requirements or indirect routes. Students consider solutions to these problems and what the consequences of these solutions might be, for example, a new bus route will cost more money to run and might deliver more travellers to stations that service already overcrowded trains.

Having identified improvements to public transport and additional issues using PTV's Journey Planner, students can research to find out who is responsible for improving public transport and how they can be contacted.

Students list the public transport authorities that operate in their local area. These might include: [V/Line](#), [Yarra Trams](#), [Metro Trains](#), [Westernport Ferry](#), [Westgate Punt](#) and [local bus operators](#).

Students navigate the websites of relevant transport authorities to find email or postal addresses before matching which authority would be the most relevant to send their specific recommendations to for improving public transport. A useful link is PTV's [Student Media Enquiries](#) page.

Explain

Teachers can explain that public transport is the responsibility of the Victorian government. In consultation with the Premier, government ministers, backbenchers and public service officers, the Treasurer decides how much money will be allocated to different projects in the state, including those related to public transport. The government's spending decisions are influenced by a range of considerations:

- the government's election commitments
- the current state of Victoria's finances and the funding available for service delivery and projects and initiatives
- understanding of future requirements of the Victorian community – statistics and forecasting
- public opinion
- advice from experts within government ministries
- requests from members of parliament
- lobbying from organisations such as the [Public Transport Users Association](#) (PTUA).

Students identify ways they might be able to influence funding decisions, for example, communicating with local members of parliament, local councils or media outlets, the PTUA or other interested groups.

Local communities, which form electorates, elect representatives to the Victorian parliament. These representatives, who are either members of a political party or 'independent', are charged to act on behalf of their communities. Students can write to, or seek meetings with, local members or Ministers to express their concerns about public transport and to offer suggestions for improvements. Students can also ask their local members to explain who makes decisions about public transport and how members of the community might influence those decisions.

Teachers can explore the process politicians follow to become members of parliament and what their obligations to their constituents are. Members of parliament and political parties who do not listen to their constituents or act in their interests are at risk of being voted out at the next election.

Useful resources include:

- Victorian Electoral Commission's Becoming a State election candidate (under Candidates and Parties) (<https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/>)
- the Parliament of Victoria's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1A532A5AD6FB3704>)
- the Australian Electoral Commission's Candidate creator (<http://passport.vec.vic.gov.au/vote/candidate-creator/>)
- the portal to information about all aspects of the Victorian government (<https://www.vic.gov.au/>).

Students draft letters or emails to their local member of parliament, to the Minister for Public Transport or to one of the transport authorities, outlining their suggestions for improvement. Teachers can remind students of some of the features of persuasive texts, including:

- outlining benefits of the suggestions
- using evidence to support the suggestions
- predicting and countering arguments against the suggestions.

Students share their drafts with classmates to ensure their correspondence is courteous, concise and clear, features correct spelling and grammar, and presents a persuasive argument for the suggested changes.

In order to avoid overwhelming recipients with correspondence, the class should then either work together to create one improvement suggestion, or nominate the most compelling or persuasive improvement already drafted to be sent to the nominated authority. The class may also consider the correspondence being an open letter and featuring it in the school newsletter or social media pages.

Teachers should review the letter or email before it is sent.

NB. School policies will determine whether it is appropriate for students to send emails from their own accounts, or whether they should be sent from a generic email account. If there is any concern it may be preferable for students to send letters rather than emails.

Elaborate

Students can also consider alternative ways to suggest improvements to public transport. They might also consider the range of opinions and potentially competing interests there might be in regard to the best way to provide safe, reliable and affordable public transport into the future.

Options for suggesting improvements include:

- contacting the [Public Transport Users Association](#) (PTUA)
- contacting the local member of parliament
- writing letters to local newspapers
- contacting local councils.

Teachers can ask students to nominate issues that they could, as a group, present to the PTUA, media outlets or local council. The selection process can be managed democratically with students voting to choose several issues of importance.

They can then work in small groups, with each group developing arguments as to why they believe one of the selected issues is the most important. One student from each group can then present these arguments to the class, who, after hearing all the arguments, can vote for what they collectively believe is the most pressing issue.



Evaluate

Some of the challenges presented by the future scenarios for public transport in Victoria will relate specifically to aspects of safety. Students can determine which safety behaviours are likely to require greater attention in the future, taking into account considerations such as increasing numbers of passengers and vehicles, peak hour demands, suburban expansion and 24-hour travel.

Students can review transport authorities' safety webpages and discuss the effectiveness of each, particularly for school-aged travellers. Students consider how the safety messages are communicated: language, illustrations, readability and formats. Useful website pages include:

- Public Transport Victoria's Travelling safely (<https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/more/travelling-on-the-network/travelling-safely/>)
- Metro Trains' Safety (<http://www.metrotrains.com.au/safety/>)
- V/Line's Safety (<https://www.vline.com.au/Fares-general-info/Safety>)
- Yarra Trams' Tram safety (<https://yarratrams.com.au/tram-safety>).

Students prepare safety advice for a local form of public transport, especially designed for a target audience of primary-school-aged children. Students can discuss ways in which safety behaviours and priorities vary for different age groups, eg. primary-aged school students, teenagers and adults.

They can also discuss the most appropriate medium/mode of communication for that audience. Advice can be whatever form students believe will be most effective. Students can share their safety advice with classmates and discuss the merits of different presentations. They can determine criteria for assessing the value of the safety advice presentations.

Students may have also received responses to their emails or letters from transport authorities or from their local member of parliament. They can share and discuss the responses, and the likelihood of action being taken. They can perhaps also consider what step they could take next in advocating for improvements in public transport with an eye on the future.