



Merri-bek
City Council

Harding and Munro Street Community engagement report

December 2024



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Executive summary

Consultation Process	Platforms Used
Merri-bek City Council consulted with the community from 7 November to 10 December 2024, seeking feedback on Harding and Munro Streets streetscape improvements. We asked people to: 1. Share their experience of Harding and Munro Streets 2. Share their ideas for potential improvements	• Online survey • Direct mailing • Physical advertising • 2 pop-up sessions

Overview of Engagement



357 survey completions



12 emails received



4 phone calls received



2 pop-up engagement sessions

What we heard



- 357 people provided feedback and participated in the survey, either online or via hard copy
- The most common elements of the street currently that respondents like are connectivity, businesses and local facilities, and bike facilities.
- The most common challenges people are currently experiencing on Harding and Munro Streets are bike safety, traffic volume and speed, and lack of safe crossings.
- 52% of respondents suggested safety improvements for people riding bikes, which was the most common theme in the feedback we received
- Other popular suggestions were planting more street trees and street greening (42% of respondents); reducing speed of vehicle traffic (36%); and improved crossings for people walking and riding (28%)
- Some of the key locations suggested for improvements were the Hudson Street intersection and the Louisa Street intersection.

Introduction

We're working to improve the Harding and Munro Street corridor in Coburg, to make it a safer, greener and more enjoyable for everyone who uses it.

The project is centred around the Munro Street and Harding Street corridor through central Coburg, between Rose Street and Nicholson Street, shown on Figure 1 below.

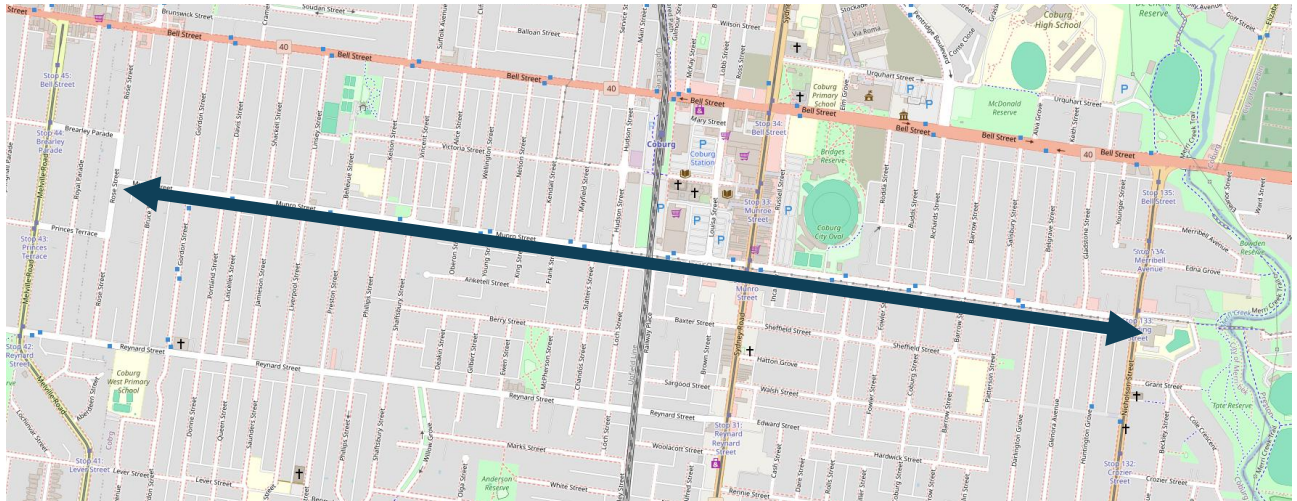


Figure 1 The Harding Street and Munro Street Corridor*

*Please note that the project area was shortened from Rose Street to Shaftsbury Street in the west after this round of engagement due to project budget constraints.

Why are we doing this

Harding Street and Munro Streets make up a corridor that runs through Central Coburg between Rose Street and the Merri Creek. It provides a great local connection to many essential services such as schools, shops, parks, sporting facilities, Coburg Station, the Upfield Shared User Path and the Merri Creek, and makes up a key section of our bike and walking networks.

Despite its importance for travel in Merri-bek, it is currently difficult to walk or ride a bike safely along or when crossing this street. As such, we are undertaking community engagement and design to make holistic improvements to the street.

Purpose of this round of Engagement

The purpose of this engagement was to get an understanding of how the community currently use the Harding and Munro Street corridor. We asked the community to identify what they liked about the corridor, what challenges they experience, and to offer some suggestions for improvements.

Using this information, we will develop some concept plans for streetscape improvements along the corridor and come back to the community for feedback on the designs.

Engagement activities



Online survey

The online survey was available on the Conversations Merri-bek website for over four weeks. The survey received 358 responses



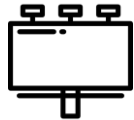
Letter to residents

5403 letters were sent to residents and property owners within roughly 400m of the project area



Emails

3380 emails were sent out to people who follow relevant transport projects on the Conversations Merri-bek platform



Physical advertising

Placards were erected at key points along the corridor



Stakeholder engagement

Key stakeholders were notified and invited to provide feedback, including all the schools in the vicinity, Merri-bek Bicycle User Group, Kinetic buses, the Sustainable Transport Advisory Committee, and Central Coburg Business Association.

International Association of Public Participation Spectrum

We engaged with our community on this project at the level of 'Consult' on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum, and in line with Council's Future Bike Lane Engagement Process (2022).

This meant our engagement was designed to ensure the concerns and aspirations of our community, including local businesses, community groups, and other stakeholders, are directly reflected in the concept designs that will be developed following this round of engagement. We will provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision so that our community understand our decisions when the detailed designs are completed.

Results

The survey had 6 questions to help gain an understanding of how people currently use the street, and what improvements they would want to see on the street. This section of the report presents the results of the survey, and the submissions received.

What do you like about Harding and Munro Street?

Respondents were asked what they currently like about the street, in order to help us understand what elements of the streetscape need to be maintained or enhanced. A thematic analysis of the responses has been undertaken. Below are the most common themes that emerged from the 357 responses:

1. Connectivity: 39% of respondents mentioned that Munro and Harding Street provides good, direct connections from where they live to shops, public transport, schools, the Merri Creek, and other destinations.
2. Harding-Munro Street is highly valued (32%) for its diverse range of businesses and local facilities that cater to the community's needs. The mix of retail shops, and cafes creates a vibrant atmosphere while supporting the local economy and offering convenience for residents and visitors. Additionally, essential community amenities such as libraries, parks, healthcare services, and family-friendly spaces make the street a practical and welcoming destination.
3. The bike facilities on Harding-Munro Street are widely appreciated (22%) for promoting safety, convenience, and connectivity. With painted bike lanes, most cyclists find it easy to navigate and access the area, it should be mentioned that some people find this unsafe and requested for dedicated bike lane. Cycling infrastructure on this street not only support environment friendly and active transport options but also link the street to nearby neighbourhoods, enhancing its role as a sustainable and accessible hub for the community.

Some examples of responses are shown below:

"It is a good east west corridor, it connects me to the Sydney Rd shops. I generally feel safer biking on Munro than Raynard st. I like the stoplight at the Upfield bike trail intersection."

"It is a direct route to central Coburg, whilst obviously avoiding Bell St."

"I like how connected it is to other transport routes, biking is my main mode of transport and it is easy to get to routes like the upfield path."

"Unfortunately I don't really enjoy the section from the train line on Munro Street to Melville Road at all as it is full of cars. The only thing I like is the new pedestrian lights under the train line on Munro St."

"As a cyclist there's not a lot to like about it, but I use it because it's often the most convenient route to take to certain destinations. At least it does have a painted-on bike lane, but this offers little protection."

What challenges do you experience of Harding and Munro Street?

We asked what issues or challenges people currently experience on Harding and Munro Street, to help focus design on making improvements to what is most needed. A thematic analysis was done on these responses. Below are the most common themes that were identified in the 358 responses:

1. Bike safety: Nearly half (47%) of respondents indicated that they do not feel safe cycling on Harding-Munro Street, particularly when riding with their families. Not enough separation from the high-speed traffic and parked vehicles are two of the major reasons that make cycling challenging for them.

2. Traffic volume: Approximately 31% of participants identified the volume of traffic, especially during morning rush hours due to school buses, as a significant challenge.
3. Vehicle speeds: High vehicle speeds and driving behaviour were reported as concerns by 30% of residents, making it difficult for them to use the street safely for walking and cycling.
4. Safe crossing opportunities: A lack of safe crossing points was mentioned by 24% of participants as a challenge, particularly for children traveling to school.

Some examples of responses are shown below:

“Fast moving and busy traffic; lack of shade and greenery; lots of concrete; no safety for cyclists”

“People use this street as a cut through to avoid traffic on Bell Street, this creates unnecessary traffic on residential roads. It would be good if this could be deterred, especially west of Hudson Street.”

“Hard to get onto from side streets”

“As a wheelchair user, navigating Rose St to Sydney Rd is poor, inaccessible at places and dangerous at times. Coburg shopping centre is also poorly designed for those living with disability, including those with limited mobility and the visually impaired. For myself, it is very difficult to roll straight up Munro St safely as many of the street crossings have raised lips and are not specifically designed to disability standards. Unfortunately this environment means I tend to avoid the trip which impacts my independence.

Sadly I noticed disability has not been specifically not been mentioned in the material relating to these improvements..this is a poor communications from Council, not all residents can walk or ride, but we can roll or get around with other aids/assistance..this needs to be acknowledged. I would be happy to be involved in any discussions moving forward or community engagement sessions.”

“The main challenge as a cyclist is dangerous and/or inconsiderate driver behaviour around the Coburg Central shopping area, particularly the two entrances to the car park (at Dan Murphy's and at the roundabout), at the intersection with Sydney Rd, and where Russell St meets Harding St. A major issue is simply the volume of cars using the Coburg Central car park - much more needs to be done to encourage the use of sustainable transport methods to access this area. While not part of this consultation's scope, it would be helpful if Council could compel the owners of Coburg Central car park to provide adequate bike parking outside shops (with the removal of parking spaces).”

What suggestions do you have to improve the streetscape of Harding and Munro Street?

Participants were asked to provide up to three suggestions of changes they would like to see on the street. A thematic analysis was undertaken on all the suggestions. The 5 most popular themes of the responses were:

1. Safer infrastructure for people riding bikes (52% of respondents): This included protected bike lanes, intersection improvements, better line marking and signage, and improved surfaces.
2. Street greening and tree planting (42%)
3. Speed reductions and traffic calming (36%): Suggestions to reduce the speed limit to 40km/h or 30km/h, more and better speed humps and thresholds, and slow points
4. Crossing improvements (28%) and general walking environment improvements (23%): such as zebra crossings and pedestrian signals, wider footpaths, improved footpath conditions
5. Infrastructure to reduce traffic volumes (19%): This included suggestions of traffic filters, one-way treatments, turning restrictions, and reducing access to and from side streets

Some other themes that emerged from the survey, but were not mentioned as regularly were:

- More parking restrictions; removing parking in certain areas; using alternative routes for people riding bikes such as Victoria Street or Reynard Street; improving the road surface; supporting local businesses; maintaining traffic flow.

Some respondents suggested improvements in specific locations, such as:

- Intersection of Louisa Street and Munro Street
- Intersection of Hudson Street, Munro Street, and Loch Street
- Intersection of Sydney Road, Munro Street and Harding Street
- Intersection of Harding Street and Nicholson Street
- Intersection of Munro Street and Rose Street

Some examples of suggestions are shown below:

"More trees and good quality landscaping particularly in the central business area"

"Protected bikes lanes in the central Coburg section"

"Speed lowered to 40 max and street design which doesn't look like high speeds are fine (narrow, bumps, trees)"

"Reroute heavy traffic to Bell St. (Easier said than done!)"

"Bike lane one side of street & parking other side of street, resurfacing road, increase pedestrian crossings & roundabouts with pedestrians giving right away to cars at roundabouts. Redo footpaths."

"Something to calm traffic/improve safety for bikes, pedestrians around Coburg activity centre."

Common travel mode on Harding-Munro Street

Survey participants were also asked how they typically travelled on or to Harding-Munro Street. Figure 2 shows the distribution of different modes on Harding-Munro Street.

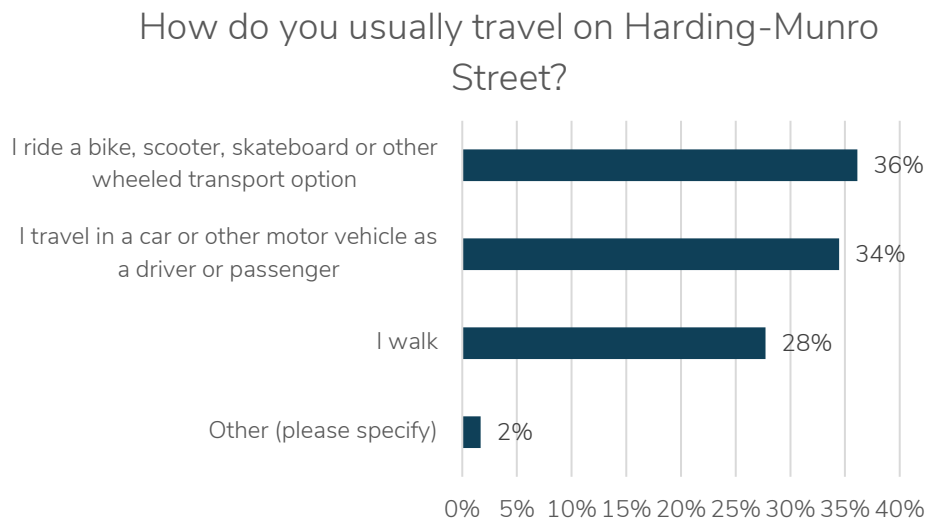


Figure 2 Common travel modes on Harding-Munro Street

Relationship to the project area

Respondents were asked what their relation to Harding-Munro Street was, with 6 options to choose from:

- I do not often use or visit Harding-Munro Street
- I work on Harding-Munro Street
- I live on Harding-Munro Street
- I visit venues, shops, parks, or businesses on Harding-Munro Street
- I travel on Harding-Munro Street to get to other places
- Other (please specify)

How participants responded is shown below on Figure 3.

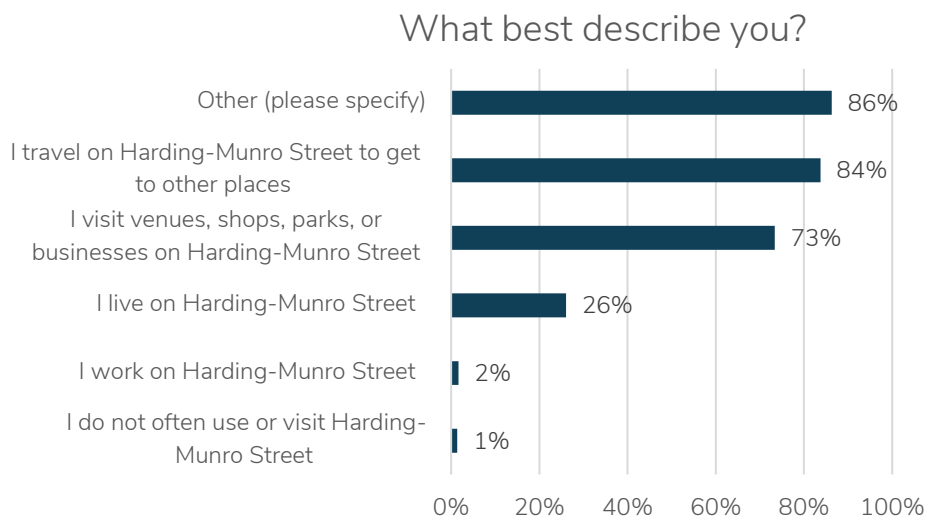


Figure 3 Relationship to Harding-Munro Street

Demographic analysis

Questions relating to personal characteristics were included in the survey, such as age, gender, and relationship to Merri-bek. These questions are asked so that we can better understand the different needs our residents have.

Out of the 357 responses received, 263 individuals provided their age, and the resulting distribution is displayed in Figure 4.

- The strong representation of the 25-49 age groups highlights the need for efficient public transport, active travel infrastructure, and commuter-friendly policies to support daily travel needs.
- The lower engagement from older adults may indicate barriers to participation or mobility challenges. Enhancing accessibility, age-friendly transport options, and pedestrian infrastructure could help address their travel needs.
- The low response rate from younger individuals (18-24) suggests the need to explore their travel preferences, such as active transport, or alternative commuting patterns.

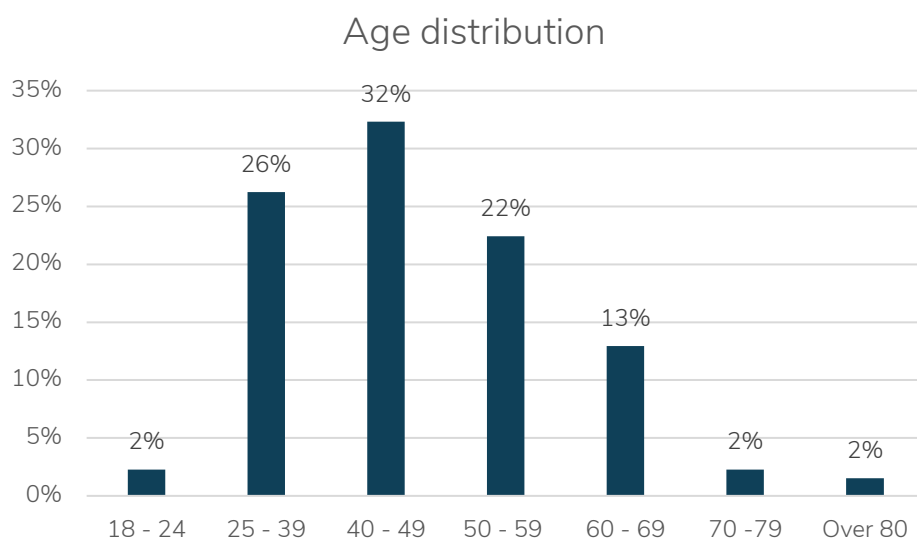


Figure 4 Age group of residents

A multiple-choice question was asked to ask what gender respondents identify as. Figure 5 highlighted the gender distribution of the responses. There was not a statistically significant difference in the participation of different genders.

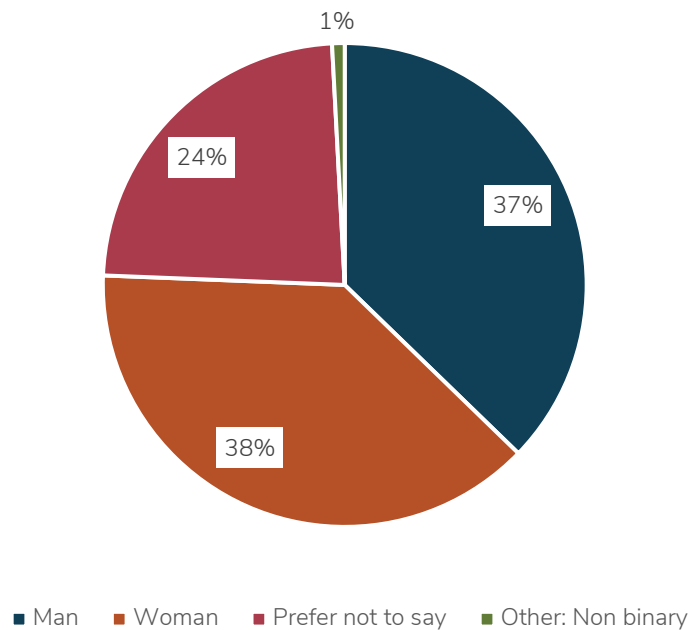


Figure 5 Gender distribution

Figure 6 shows the relationship of participants to Merri-bek. Most respondents (97%) identified as residents of Merri-bek City, and the remaining participants were either workers or visitors.

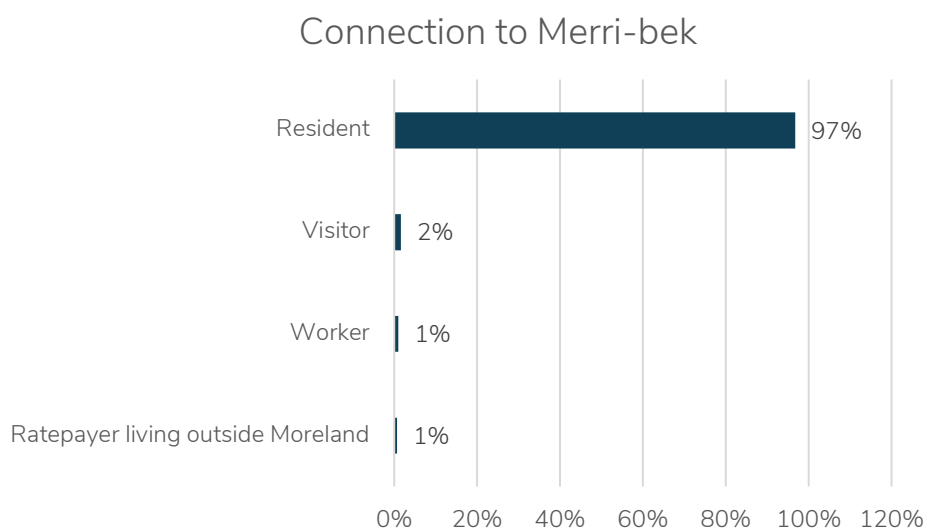


Figure 6 Relationship to Merri-bek