FREeways SERVICE CENTRES

DESIGN

PREPARED BY HASSELL, OVE ARUP AND PARTNERS FOR
THE DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, MAY 1997
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1.1 Purpose of the Guidelines

The Freeway Service Centre Guidelines have been prepared to:

- Provide direction regarding the location, design and layout of freeway service centres, with particular reference to safety and access requirements, and to ensure that the objectives of the Guidelines are met;
- Provide assistance to local councils when assessing the planning merits of proposals for freeway service centres;
- Confirm the expectations of the Minister for Planning and Local Government in relation to the performance of freeway service centres.

1.2 Freeways affected by the Guidelines

The Guidelines relate to freeway service centres proposed to be located on declared rural freeways as shown in Figure 2.0 and, namely:

- Western Freeway
- Calder Freeway
- Hume Freeway
- Princes Freeway (East)
- Princes Freeway (West)

These freeways are all access controlled roads, where access to a freeway service centre is subject to an Access Agreement between VicRoads and a site developer. An Access Agreement will not be formally entered into until Planning approval has been obtained. Where these roads form part of the National Highway System, the concurrence of the Federal Minister for Transport is also required in order for access to be made available.

While the Guidelines specifically relate to service centres designed for freeways (access controlled roads), the objectives and principles can also be applied to rural highways where service centres are proposed with the prime objective of encouraging motorists to ‘break’ their journey to combat driver fatigue.
1.3 Definitions

Freeway Service Centre:

Land used to provide essential services and facilities for drivers which has direct access to a freeway. It must include the following facilities and services in the interest of driver safety:

- Designated parking for cars and trucks;
- Undercover fuel sales area (petrol, diesel and LPG);
- Food and refreshment facilities including sit down eating areas;
- Convenience shop with a retail floor area no greater than 240m²;
- Toilets;
- Public telephone;
- Local and regional tourist information;
- Outdoor eating area;
- A safe play area for children.

These essential services and facilities must be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

1.4 Current Policy

The State Section of all Planning Schemes contains a definition of a freeway service centre and sets out the current planning policy in relation to new freeway service centre provision.

In deciding whether or not to approve a freeway service centre proposal, the local council must be satisfied that the proposal meets the following criteria. The proposal must:

- Demonstrate that there is a genuine lack of facilities to meet the needs of drivers along a section of a freeway;
- Only provide services and facilities essential for driver safety;
- Comply with VicRoads safe access standards and ensure the continued safe operation of the freeway;
- Satisfy EPA requirements in relation to environmental effects;
- Achieve the principles and objectives of the Design Guidelines.

1.5 Approval process for new freeway service centres.

The flow chart illustrated on Figure 1.0 sets out the approval process for new freeway service centres.
The objective of the Design Guidelines is to provide a broad design framework within which new freeway service centres can be safely located and developed to provide a high quality range of facilities for the benefit of both road users and the wider community.

2.1 Vision

To produce freeway service centres that encourage drivers to stop, and that are:

- Safe;
- Well-located;
- Well-designed;
- Environmentally sensitive, and
- Responsive to the needs of the road user.

To do this the Guidelines must be:

- Responsive;
- Understandable;
- Achievable;
- Useful, and
- Fair.

2.2 Objectives

The primary objectives of the Guidelines are:

- To make a positive contribution to road safety;
- To encourage private sector development of service centres along the rural freeway network that will improve safety, comfort and convenience of travel;
- To encourage the provision of service centres at appropriate intervals within the network;
- To create service centres that are responsive to the needs of road users;
- To ensure that the required services are available on a 24 hour, 7 days a week basis.
 Specific safety objectives are:

- To encourage drivers to stop and break their journey;
- To provide safe and efficient traffic circulation;
- To minimise pedestrian/vehicle conflict;
- To ensure safety in leaving and entering the freeway.

 Site facility and layout objectives are:

- To allow for the provision of food and refreshments by way of convenience shop and restaurant(s) facilities;
- To provide comfortable and safe toilet and washroom facilities;
- To provide adequate parking, refuelling and servicing facilities for cars, articulated vehicles, B-doubles, coaches, trailers and caravans;
- To provide outdoor eating areas, play areas and recreational facilities, particularly for families;
- To provide telephone facilities;
- To provide tourist information, covering both local and regional areas;
- To provide for the possible future installation of emergency facilities for fire, police and ambulance.

 Environmental objectives are:

- To retain existing indigenous vegetation, as far as possible, and provide additional sympathetic planting, where appropriate;
- To ensure that sites can be serviced efficiently and do not pollute the environment;
- To respond to the contextual characteristics of the site in terms of its landform, vegetation, visual amenity and heritage;
- To provide buildings of architectural interest which will make a positive contribution to the environment.
A comprehensive Impact Assessment must be prepared for any prospective site for a service centre facility. This information must be made available to the local council as part of the supporting documentation for a freeway service centre proposal. The Assessment must be made in terms of the impact on the existing physical environment; the visual impact of the proposed new development and the effect of that development on the local economy, particularly of nearby towns and any other service centre facilities.

The impact of the proposed service centre on the following components must be fully described:

3.1 Physical Impact

A full analysis must be undertaken of the following physical components of the site and the surrounding landscape:

- Geology and soils;
- Landform;
- Drainage;
- Vegetation;
- Climate;
- Aspect;
- Existing utility services;
- Wildlife habitats, and
- Archaeological considerations.

The impact of the proposed development on these existing site characteristics must be thoroughly investigated. In particular the impact of the following new works must be clearly described:

- Site formation;
- New servicing;
- Vegetation retention or removal;
- Proposed landscaping.
3.2 Visual Impact

The visual impact of the development must be demonstrated with particular reference to the following criteria:

- Views from the freeway;
- Views from nearby existing developments;
- Views of surrounding landscape from the service centre;
- Built form;
- External colours materials and finishes;
- Lighting, and
- Signage.

Computer-generated and accurate photomontage illustrations should be prepared for the proposed facility with views provided from the freeway, (in both directions), and from any local vantage points or affected areas.

3.3 Cultural & Economic Impact

A detailed assessment must be made of the impact on the local human environment, including:

- Local economy;
- Adjacent towns;
- Nearby and on freeway service facilities;
- Heritage issues, and
- Archaeological and cultural issues.

3.4 Traffic Impact

An assessment of existing traffic conditions, together with an assessment of future freeway conditions 15 years from the service centre operating, must be provided:

- The alignment of the freeway;
- Ramp spacing and design;
- Circulation throughout the site;
- Parking areas;
- Service facilities;
- Pedestrian movements, and
- Existing and future freeway traffic volumes at the selected location.
The following Design Guidelines are intended to encourage the highest standards of planning and design so as to ensure maximum benefit to the road user, enhanced freeway safety and minimal disruption to the environment.
4.1 Location

Principles

- To promote road safety
- To provide maximum benefits to the road users
- To preserve the development of a safe, well-designed environment

Guidelines

- Service centres must be developed in accordance with safe traffic and appropriate land use planning principles.
- Service centres must be located at strategic intervals along rural freeways, preferably at no less than 50km from an existing or approved centre.
- Service centres must be conveniently located and drivers must be aware of their presence in advance. Centres should be identified to approaching traffic at a minimum of 5km, 2km and 1km distance.
- Care must be taken in the siting and design of service centres in visually or environmentally sensitive areas.
- Generally service centres should be established in pairs to serve both carriageways, with equivalent services offered at each facility. If the centres are staggered, the centre on the driver’s approach must be viewed first.
- No right turn or U-turn movements will be allowed across the median between pairs of service centres.
- Pedestrian links are prohibited between freeway service centres, including pedestrian movement across the central median.
- If only a single centre is proposed the proponent must demonstrate that the safe operation of the freeway is not affected by the presence of the freeway service centre.
ENTRY AND EXIT ROADS MUST BE CONSISTANT WITH VIC ROADS DESIGN GUIDELINES.
4.2 Entry and Exit

Principles

- To provide safe and efficient entry and exit to service centres
- To maintain a free and clear operating condition at all times

Guidelines:

- Freeway access arrangements must be consistent with the efficient and safe operation of the freeway, and the VicRoads Road Design Guidelines.
- Through traffic must not be able to access the local road system by way of the freeway service centre.
- Construction and maintenance of entry and exit ramps are to be at the proponents expense and at no cost to VicRoads.
- Safe Access must be provided in accordance with the Access Agreement between VicRoads and the site developer.
4.3 Landscape Buffer Zone

Principles

- To maintain a landscape buffer between the service centre and the freeway.
- To retain existing vegetation wherever possible.
- To integrate the service centre with the natural environment.

Guidelines

- Service centre pavements must be set back a minimum of 7.5 metres from the Freeway Reserve boundary.
- New planting in the landscape buffer zone must take account of any existing or proposed planting in the freeway reserve.

- Buffer Zone treatments should contribute positively to the role, amenity and character of the roadside environment, and should accommodate existing vegetation, wherever possible.
- Signage within the Buffer Zone must comply with these Guidelines.
PLAY AREAS NEED TO BE IMAGINATIVE AND EXCITING.
4.4 Facilities and Services

Principles

- To provide facilities and services to attract the road user and contribute to
  road safety and the quality of the environment.
- To restrict the facilities and services available to those which are essential
  for the road user.

Guidelines

- Only facilities that encourage a driver to stop and take a rest break will be
  allowed at freeway service centres.
- Facilities provided must be for the benefit of freeway users and should be
  directed towards satisfying their needs.
- Essential facilities must be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- The facilities should not generate additional traffic.
- The provision and maintenance of all on-site facilities is to be carried out by
  the proponent, at no cost to VicRoads.
- Services and facilities must include:
  - Separate refuelling facilities, situated under cover, and including petrol,
    diesel, oil, LP gas, air and water;
  - Designated parking areas;
  - Convenience shop, with a retail floor area no greater than 240m²;
  - Toilets (including provision for the disabled), and an infant changing room.
    Separate toilets may be provided for both public and truck stop use;
  - Food and refreshment facilities including sit-down eating areas. Separate
    facilities may be provided for the general public and truck drivers;
  - Public telephone (including STD);
TOURIST INFORMATION MUST BE AVAILABLE AT ALL SERVICE CENTRES.
- Children's play area. The play equipment should be safe, colourful, exciting and well-lit, with seating provided nearby to allow supervision. The play area must be able to be observed from the car-park, outdoor eating area and cafe/restaurant. It must be well-separated from vehicle access ways;
- Outdoor eating area with shelter/shade, tables, seats, rubbish bins and a drinking fountain;
- Tourist information facility with advisory material of both local and regional interest. This may be provided as a separate facility or integrated with the convenience shop.

- Service provision may also include:
  - Emergency vehicle repairs.
  - A drive-through take away food and refreshment outlet

- Services and facilities that must not be included:
  - Sale, distribution and consumption of alcohol;
  - Any accommodation except as may be appropriate for a caretaker or live-in manager;
  - Gaming machines;
  - Entertainment facilities such as live shows, pinball machines, and amusement parlours;
  - Post office facilities / services;
  - Car and truck wash facilities;
  - Vehicle repairs (other than emergency); and
  - Retail facilities exceeding 240m² in floor area.
4.5 Layout

Principles

Guidelines

- The layout of the service centre should be simple, understandable and accessible. The number of decision points for drivers should be minimised.
- Internal traffic circulation should be safe, directional, free-flowing and should allow easy access and exit. The progress through the facilities should be via a one way network, with return opportunities prior to exit.
- The layout of the service centre should discourage wrong-way movement back onto the freeway.
- Access and circulation should be designed to minimise potential pedestrian and vehicle contact and should not pass between a parking area and restaurant.
- Circulation of cars should be separate from that of large vehicles.
- All areas which are available for public use must be kept clean, secure and in a well-lit condition, 24 hours a day.
- Adequate provision must be made for heavy vehicles and cars towing caravans to be able to manoeuvre easily, and to leave the parking area in a forward motion without the need for reversing.
- Parking areas and coach set-down areas should be located to avoid pedestrian conflict with circulation roads.
- Circulation roads, within the site, should be designed for a low speed environment of 20km. per hour.
- Cars should be separated from large vehicles at the end of the off-ramp, and each should be provided with separate roadways through the facility.
PROVIDE RETURN OPPORTUNITY PRIOR TO EXIT.

TRUCK PARK
CAR PARK
RESTAURANT
LANDSCAPED PLAY AREA
SHOP
FUEL PLAZA

TRUCKS/COACHES
CARS
TRUCKS & CARS SEPARATED AT ENTRY FROM FREEWAY.

TO FREEWAY
- Access to the restaurant should not necessitate passing through the fuel plaza, and egress from the fuel plaza should not necessitate passing through the restaurant area.

- Car facilities should allow for a car/caravan combination. Truck facilities should allow for B-doubles and coaches.

- Where a drive-through take away food and refreshment outlet is proposed, the layout of the service centre must be designed to provide opportunities which encourage the driver to stop and take an effective rest break after using the drive-through. This encouragement may be achieved by providing strategically located toilets, an attractive car parking area or an attractive outdoor eating area between the drive through exit and the access ramp onto the freeway. A service centre with a drive through outlet which does not provide these opportunities, should not be developed in the interests of driver safety.

- Fuel pumps should be set back sufficiently from the off-ramp to ensure that vehicle queues from the fuel plaza do not restrict the operation of the ramp. The off-ramp should be of sufficient width to enable cars using the restaurant facilities only to by-pass the fuel queue in peak periods.

- An integrated facility is preferred, as shown in Figure 8.0, rather than a series of separate stand-alone buildings.

- If more than one building is planned they should be grouped to form clusters rather than be spread throughout the site (See Figure 9.0).

- Restaurant buildings, rest areas and picnic areas should be sited away from highway traffic noise.

- Covered ways should be provided to protect main pedestrian access routes.
BOLD ROOF FORMS CAN CREATE A VIGIBLY STRIKING EFFECT.
4.6 Built Form

Principles

Guidelines

- Buildings should demonstrate a high quality of architectural design.
- Buildings should be designed to take full advantage of aspect and views.
- The local and regional context should be taken into account in building design and layout.

- The development of 'non-standard' service stations and restaurant buildings is encouraged.
- Building surrounds should be designed to complement the architecture of the building but should not impede pedestrian and vehicular flow.
- Entrances to both the shop and restaurant should be visible from nearby car parks.
- All entrances should provide for disabled access.
THE DESIGN OF WESTGATE SERVICE CENTRE REFLECTS THE MODERN BUILDING TECHNIQUES OF THE BRIDGE ITSELF.
- The use of reflective or mirror glass is prohibited.
- The use of durable and high quality materials is encouraged.
- The design of building facades should make provision for external light fittings and signs as integrated architectural components.
- All buildings within the service centres should display a unified architectural approach in terms of style, height, massing, materials and colour.

Allow views over mature planting.

- Advertising signage associated with buildings should be integrated with the overall architectural approach and be consistent with these Guidelines.
AN EXAMPLE OF PARKING LAYOUT

Figure 12.0
4.7 Parking

Principles

Guidelines

- The parking areas must be sealed, drained and well-lit, and must provide adequate space for cars, motor cycles, cars with caravans or trailers, disabled persons, semi trailers, B-doubles and coaches. Where bicycle use is permitted, adequate parking must be provided.

- Parking and access for vehicles must comply with AS2890.1 - 1993 and AS2890.2 - 1989 (and as amended and/or updated).

- Parking for the disabled must be provided close to building entrances.

- Truck parking should be located so as to allow forward movement from the parking lot without the need for reversing.

- Parking areas must be separated from pedestrian areas. The use of a separation element such as planting is encouraged.
Parking should allow direct access to restaurant facilities without the need to cross circulation roads.
- Car, truck and coach parking areas must be separated. The car parking area must cater for cars, cars with caravans, and cars with trailers and must provide adequate disabled person parking spaces. The truck parking area must cater for semi-trailers, B-doubles, coaches and buses.

- Parking areas must be well-marked and clearly delineated.

- Parking areas must be located to allow safe and efficient pedestrian access to facilities and minimise the need for pedestrians to cross circulation roads.

- Parking areas for delivery vehicles should be well-separated from any service centre car-park or rest area.

- Parking is not permitted beyond the site boundaries.

- Car parks must be adequately signposted.

- Parking areas should be designed for flexibility of use and to allow overflow parking into other areas during periods of peak demand.

- Provision should be made for overflow parking on site, in the event of peak demand exceeding capacity. Overflow areas do not need to be sealed, but should provide firm conditions for both cars and pedestrians.
Locate unloading and waste collection area away from major view lines.
4.8 Loading and Unloading

Principles

Guidelines

- Loading and unloading facilities must be provided in accordance with AS 2890.2-1989 (and as amended and/or updated).
- Loading bays should be located separate from the main traffic circulation system and parking areas.
- Access to unloading facilities must be made from the large vehicle circulation road.
- Unloading operation must be possible without public access being impeded to the full range of facilities. This is especially important for the unloading of fuel at the plaza.
- Loading bays should not be visible from pedestrian areas or the freeway.
- The storage of refuse and materials for recycling should be well-screened and located away from pedestrian areas.
4.9 Signage

Principles

- To promote the safe and efficient identification of the service centre in advance of the freeway exit ramp.
- To allow for the reasonable identification of facilities.

Guidelines

Freeway Signage

- Signage related to service centres on freeways must at all times promote high standards of road safety.
- Signage should encourage motorists to take regular rest breaks.
- Advance signs should be provided in the freeway reserve in accordance with Section 16 of Traffic Engineering Manual Vol 2, Sings and Markings, RCA 1986. AS1742 may be used in conjunction with the RCA manual.
- Advance signs should be provided at spacings of 5km, 2km and 1 km before the exit.
- The inclusion of company logos in corporate colours is permitted provided that the sign is designed in accordance with the requirements of the road authority.
- Signs should be positioned to enhance the safe operation of the freeway.
- Signage to Service centres must comply with all relevant VicRoads requirements.
- Signage to restaurants must be to the satisfaction of the local council.
On-site Service Centre Signage

- Signage should encourage people to stop and take a rest break.
- Individual signs must not extend above the roof-line of the highest building.
- Signage should complement the style, scale and character of the service centre.
- The proliferation of large signs is discouraged.
- Where possible, signs should be grouped or included on a single mounting, to reduce visual clutter.
- Signs, associated with buildings, should not obscure architectural features and should not be located on or above roof-lines.
- Flashing signs should not be allowed.
- Restaurant signage must be located within the service centre area and must be lower in height than any tower sign on the site.
- Illumination should be concealed or integral with the sign or should be provided by sensitively designed and located spot lighting.
- Cabling to signs should be concealed.
- A-frame boards should not be allowed.
STRONG LIGHTING

FORECOURT LIGHTING

AMENITY LIGHTING

PEDESTRIAN AREA LIGHTING

SUBDUED LIGHTING

PERIMETER LIGHTING
4.10 Lighting

Principles

Guidelines

- Lighting to service centres must be in accordance with SAA Public Lighting Code AS1158 11986.
- Lighting must not interfere with drivers on the freeway.
- Lighting must not spill onto the freeway or adjoining land.
- Lighting within the freeway reserve must be to VicRoads requirements.
- Lower lighting levels should be considered in areas where truck drivers rest and sleep.
- All public areas shall be well lit.
- Moving or flashing lights are prohibited.
- Lighting design should complement the character of the building, but should not intrude on surrounding areas.
Figure 18.0

Water Quality Control Pond
4.11 Utility Services

Principles

Guidelines

- Services should be installed below ground and in shared trenches wherever possible.
- Grease and petrol interceptor traps must be installed on all stormwater systems.
- The provision and maintenance of all on-site utilities and services is to be carried out by the site developer, at no cost to VicRoads.
- The installation of water quality control ponds is encouraged to prevent the discharge of litter, petrol and oil into the waterway system.
Possible Landscape Treatment

Figure 19.0

- Mounding
- Screen views from nearby sensitive uses.
- Plant shade trees in parking areas.
- Provide picnic and play areas in a landscaped setting.
- Conserve existing roadside trees or plant new trees in setback.
- Amenity planting adjacent to buildings.
- Direction of traffic.
4.12 Landscape Treatment

Principles

- To protect, retain and enhance existing vegetation.
- To promote a high quality of landscape design.

Guidelines

- Consideration should be given to retaining existing vegetation at the earliest stage in the design process.

- A full inventory of existing vegetation should be provided to the local council prior to development, identifying species, location, height, spread, tree girth at 1m above ground, and condition.

- Trees and other vegetation to be retained must be protected from damage during construction works.

- Work on underground services must be carried out in a manner that minimises impact on trees and their root systems.

- A full planting plan should be provided with each proposed service centre development, illustrating locations of trees and plant beds, species, spacing and height.

- Plant species should be chosen to suit the local environment.

- New species to be planted must be to the satisfaction of the council. Preference should be given to the planting of indigenous species on rural freeways, excepting where contextual considerations strongly suggest alternative species.

- Tree and shrub pit preparation should ensure optimum growing conditions. Soil compaction, aeration and fertility should meet current horticultural standards.
PRESERVED TREES ADD MATURITY TO A NEW DEVELOPMENT.
- Plant material should be located so as to avoid obscuring signage, lighting or access ways.
- Consideration should be given to screening buildings from the freeway and surrounding areas.
- Mounding may be required to screen the facility, if deemed appropriate by the local Council. If so, the slopes should be no greater than 1:5 if grassed, or 1:3 if planted with shrubs.