



# Swapping Seats

## Case Study

### Key Safety Focus: Truck Blind Spot Awareness

Rail Projects Victoria is building the Metro Tunnel Project, including five new underground train stations and twin 9km tunnels under Melbourne. Many of the project's construction sites are located in the Melbourne CBD.

Swapping seats was an interactive activation commissioned by Rail Projects Victoria and developed and delivered by Bicycle Network to help deliver the key safety messages developed.

As part of the effort to ensure bicycle riders are kept safe during the construction period a communications campaign was created with a focus on the following three behaviours to improve cyclist safety:

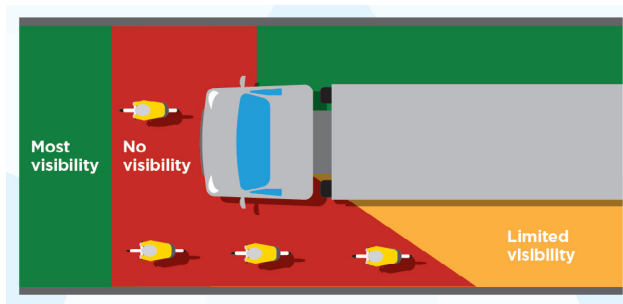
- Anticipate & React to Turning Vehicles – “When I approach intersections and roundabouts, I will anticipate & react to turning vehicles by backing down, being patient, and not undertaking (passing on the left) a Heavy Vehicle (HV).”

- Be Seen and Know Blind Spots – “When travelling with motorised traffic I will place myself where I can be seen.”
- Communicate with Others – “When I am riding, I will proactively communicate with other road users.”

### The issue/ risk identified

Cyclists may not be familiar with cycling near construction trucks and therefore may not be aware of some of the risks that are inherent when large vehicles cannot see them because of having large blind spots. Turning vehicles can also be an issue as they cannot see cyclists in their blind spots as they turn, and they often move into the inside lane creating a space cyclists might think is ideal to move into.

Alerting cyclists to behaviours that enable them to remain safe in the presence of construction trucks was a key focus of the communication campaign.



## Delivery approach

A number of communication campaign elements were created (e.g. hoarding posters, postcards, community videos), and an activity was used in a number of different locations called 'Swapping Seats'.

The Swapping Seats activities provided an experiential learning opportunity so that cyclists could see first-hand what blind spots look like from a truck driver's seat inside a real life heavy rigid construction truck.

The activity included education about stopping distances of trucks, experiencing real life blind spots, and how cyclists should behave near trucks. The installation also included an information kiosk providing safety reminders, postcards and some collateral to take away eg post cards, ankle bands, water bottles, Bike Law handbooks.

Cyclists who sat in the truck were interviewed about their experience and this 'live footage' could then be used in social media channels to provide peer education to other cyclists.

## Stakeholder consultation undertaken to development/implement the initiative

This initiative arose from the Construction Truck and Community Safety communications working group that met and utilised the input of a number of different internal and external stakeholders, including cycling Non-Government Organisations.

The concept of the 'Swapping Seats' campaign is based on Transport for London's long-running 'Exchanging Places' campaign and was designed in close consultation with NZ Cycling Action Network's 'Share the Road' campaign managers.

## Key challenges and how they were addressed

It was important that the activation locations were selected carefully to ensure that they had safe access for cyclists – all locations selected were off-road but adjacent to high-use bicycle corridors and had construction trucks operating nearby.

Utilising university premises worked well, as did community festival locations, and another location was on the banks of the Yarra River.

It is also good if the weather is on your side!

## Swapping seats experience supporting elements

### 1. Collateral - Use of postcards:

- places a focus on truck blind spots and ABC (Anticipate, Be seen, Communicate) messaging
- used to draw participants in, provides something to speak to and is easy to take away



### 2. Heavy Vehicle experience

The heavy vehicle experience invites members of the community to step up into the driver's seat of a HV and speak directly with a professional HV driver. People are then asked to look in the windows and mirrors and a device which visualises the bike and rider as they move around the vehicles.

The experience raises awareness of the risks posed by truck blind spots including when a HV is undertaking a left hand turn.

By allowing vulnerable road user and HV drivers to interact, the experience attempts to humanise both the truck driver and the cyclist, by allowing each to understand the other's perspective.

### 3. Stop, Look, Wave Kit

The Stop, Look, Wave kit (provided by Volvo Group) is used to demonstrate how a HV behaves differently on the road, especially when engaging in a left-turn manoeuvre.

### 4. Digital

Bicycle Network and Rail Projects Victoria created digital content to convey the key messages. The digital content serves to support and expand the reach of the activation beyond those who experienced it in person.



## Additional information:

- Youtube: [youtube.com/watch?v=JqlcMjHt\\_8o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqlcMjHt_8o)
- Websites: [bicyclenetwork.com.au/swappingseats](https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/swappingseats)  
<https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/about/mtia/rail-projects-victoria/initiatives/safety-initiatives>

## Project summary

The Swapping Seats initiative was specifically selected for the Metro Tunnel project in recognition of the high active transport use in the urban environment.

A bustling Melbourne CBD precinct combined with multiple movements per minute of heavy vehicles carting spoil and other equipment to/from construction sites placed a new focus on the need to raise awareness of people/plant interface risks.

Swapping seats events came about through the collaboration of not-for-profit organisations, the construction industry, and Vulnerable Road Users (cyclists, pedestrians and motorcyclists), with the benefits made clear in the favourable feedback received from drivers and general public on:

- improved understanding of the 'why' not just the 'what' of the risks;
- self-declarations of intent to change behaviour for safer practices when riding near trucks; and
- potential for subsequent 'water cooler' conversations in wider community, such as dinner table conversations with the cyclists in the family.

