Much of the discussion focused on public transport. Lord Mayor of Melbourne Sally Capp said at the forum that public transport is central to any discussion on liveability. “Public transport is absolutely the key to ensuring liveability right across Melbourne and is the most equitable way of connecting people to opportunities. We’re in full swing with Melbourne Metro One and a number of other transformational transport projects across greater Melbourne.”

Also being addressed in Melbourne is the issue of footpath congestion. Around 940,000 people come to the CBD each weekday and this is expected to grow to about 1.4 million over the next 20 years. “About 90% of trips around the city are by foot, but pedestrians have only 24% of infrastructure space available to them. That means we need to expand our footpaths and also address pedestrian flows around major train stations,” said Ms. Capp.

Healthy streets are a key theme of the London Transport Strategy. Cycling is already a major mode of transport, with 700,000 bike journeys per day, and the city is investing more than two billion pounds in the cycling network. Of more than 100 people attending the NLA forum, none had travelled to the city by car.

Air quality is a critical issue in London and a major incentive to improve public transport and extend ultra-low emission zones. In these zones, polluting vehicles are charged a fee 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Low-emission buses and council vehicles, as well as the disincentives for dirty vehicles, are expected to ensure London meets legal limits for nitrogen dioxide by 2025.

Selina Mason, a director of masterplanning at Lendlease, said that the private sector is also a determinant in liveability and has responsibilities beyond profit making. “You have to demonstrate that you’re providing benefits to a much wider constituency than yourself. It’s important that you’re creating equitable and positive benefits for those around you,” she said.

The sense of community was also linked to liveability, she said, citing a recent UK study that showed people felt community had declined in their lifetimes. “I think in this country that we’re not as cohesive as we once were. This is a really important factor; how can you create places that feel like they will be good neighbourhoods, where people can feel that they have a community around them and that they belong,” she said.

“Liveability has very much to do with the humanity that we show as a community. The sense of attachment and care make sure we are indeed a city for everyone.”

SALLY CAPP
Lord Mayor, City of Melbourne

“It’s important that the community are contributing to the design and generation of a place over time - that’s fundamental to creating a liveable environment. Focus on life liveability, what people want and need. Start from that, and you can’t go wrong.”

SELINA MASON
Director of Masterplanning, Lendlease
Ms. Mason said the possibility of creating a coherent long-term series of interventions across the central area of the city, as Melbourne has been able to do with laneway repurposing, green space, traffic island adaption and the urban forest was “massively limited” in London.

Tony Travers, Director of LSE London agreed with Mason, “It would be hard to produce a consistent approach of the kind we’ve heard from Melbourne with the current system of government. Central London has ten boroughs each with a little bit of their territory in the centre.”

“Abécrombie’s map looks at Post-WWII London as a collection of villages. I think this is something that we have in common as cities. Londoners very much relate to their local town centres. It’s a really strong sense of identity for them.”

Debbie Jackson
Executive Director, Greater London Authority

“IT would be hard to produce a consistent approach of the kind we’ve heard from Melbourne, with the current system of government. Central London has ten boroughs, each with a little bit of their territory in the centre.”

Tony Travers
Director, LSE London

“You need to recognise what your city is and build on that character – not try to build someone else’s city.”

Rob Adams
Director of City Design and Projects, City of Melbourne

Professor Rob Adams, Director of City Design and Projects at the City of Melbourne, talked about the Melbourne initiative ‘Grey to Green,’ which is a sustainable repurposing of the city driven by converting under utilised asphalt and other infrastructure into public open space. The City of Melbourne has transformed over 80 hectares of asphalt for pedestrian and park uses in an effort to meet rapid population growth, and to improve the public realm without having to acquire additional land.

Professor Adams said that the personality should not be designed out of cities when it comes to liveability. “It can’t be a pure strategy, it needs to have a bit of disorder, spontaneity and informality.”