

Advocacy Priority:

Avenel Pedestrian Rail Crossing



Overview

Avenel is growing – and it's time that local infrastructure kept pace.

Strathbogie Shire Council is calling on the Victorian Government to invest \$3.1 million in urgent safety upgrades at two pedestrian rail crossings in Avenel – Bank Street and Ewings Road – to support a safer, more connected and accessible township.

New developments continue to bring young families and visitors to the area. But without a modern, safe, and accessible pedestrian crossings near the train station – a key gateway to the town – lives are being placed at risk and we are missing opportunities to support inclusive growth.

This *Investment in Tomorrow* will improve safety, enhance accessibility, and reinforce Avenel as a well-planned, future-ready destination for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

Strathbogie Shire Council is urgently seeking \$3.1 million in funding from the State Government to deliver critical safety upgrades at two pedestrian rail crossings in Avenel: Bank Street and Ewings Road. These crossings are essential access points near the Avenel train station and serve as vital pedestrian links for schoolchildren, families, older residents, and the wider community.

In 2022, Council worked with the community to develop draft streetscape plans, which included a new carpark and road safety enhancements adjacent to the intersection of Banks Street and Saleyard Road. Discussions are ongoing with the Department of Transport and planning and VicTrack to determine a mechanism for progressing these works.

There is currently no formal pedestrian crossing at Ewings Road, and a recent serious incident involving a school-aged child and a freight train, at the Banks Street crossing, has reinforced the immediate need for investment in infrastructure that prioritises safety and accessibility.

The Problem

Avenel's population is steadily growing, supported by new housing developments to the west and north-west of town. These areas are predominantly home to young families, meaning more children and pedestrians are crossing the railway daily to reach essential services like the school, post office, pharmacy, medical clinic, and community facilities.



However, the current crossings at Bank Street and Ewings Road are outdated and present significant safety risks:

- No active pedestrian gates or signal integration
- Non-compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)
- Ewings Road lacks a formal footpath, forcing pedestrians to walk along unsafe road shoulders
- Bank Street crossing lacks a formal pedestrian path on the southern end and requires pedestrians to cross an arterial road from the northern side
- A recent near-fatal incident at this location involving a 9-year-old girl and a train has exposed the urgency of these hazards

In addition to pedestrian issues, the complex intersection where Queen Street and Bank Street meet the rail line has been the focus of over four years of community advocacy calling for both safety and amenity improvements.

While the installation of controlled pedestrian gates would significantly reduce risk, complementary streetscape and traffic treatments identified in the 2022 concept designs would deliver a safer, integrated solution for both pedestrians and road users.

This is also an opportunity to resolve longstanding land management and access issues between Bank Street and Ewings Road, providing a safer and more connected transport corridor through the heart of Avenel.

Without urgent intervention, these outdated and unsafe crossings will continue to place lives at risk—particularly those of children and vulnerable residents.

The Solution

Strathbogie Shire Council proposes comprehensive upgrades to both crossings to improve pedestrian safety and ensure full compliance with accessibility standards.

Proposed Infrastructure Enhancements (both crossings):

- Installation of active pedestrian maze gates linked to train signals
- Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs) to AS1428.1 standards
- Automatic swing gates and escape gates
- New and upgraded footpaths connecting to existing infrastructure (especially critical at Ewings Road).



Crossing-Specific Details:

Bank Street Crossing:

- Four pedestrian mazes with active swing gates and four escape gates
- Likely requires full replacement to achieve DDA compliance
- Estimated cost: \$900,000–\$1,200,000

Ewings Road Crossing:

- Two pedestrian mazes with active swing gates and two escape gates
- New footpath links to improve access and visibility
- Estimated cost: \$750,000–\$900,000

Estimated Pedestrian Safety Project Cost: \$1.65M–\$2.1M

Road Safety improvements
Car Parking and linear Park
landscaping cost: \$1M

Total Project Cost: \$3.1M

Community Benefits

- Significantly improved safety at two high-risk rail crossings
- Full DDA accessibility compliance
- Safer access to schools, health services, and community infrastructure
- Alignment with broader regional transport and infrastructure goals
- Addresses long-term community priorities for the Queen/Bank Street intersection

Conclusion

Avenel is ready for future opportunities – but safety must come first. The most recent near fatality incident involving a child must serve as a catalyst for action. With concept plans already developed and community support firmly in place, Council is ready to move quickly into detailed design and delivery with the support of the State Government, VicTrack, and the Department of Transport.

Strathbogie Shire Council has a clear plan and strong community backing to deliver safer, more accessible rail crossings at Bank Street and Ewings Road. This plan has been discussed with and is supported by key State Stakeholders. The time to act is now.

We urge the State Government to fund this critical \$3 million project and partner with us to deliver infrastructure that protects our most vulnerable, unlocks economic opportunity, and strengthens the liveability of a town on the rise.

By investing in a safe tomorrow, the State Government can help prevent future tragedies and deliver the infrastructure that Avenel's growing and engaged community deserves and has long been advocating for.

Let's work together to build a safer, more connected Avenel — one that's ready for the future.