

NORTHERN CENTRAL CITY CORRIDOR STUDY

COMMUNITY FORUM

7 – 9 p.m., 23 May 2001
Collingwood Town Hall

Forum Notes

Introduction

The purpose of the forum was to enable the community to find out about the study process, to highlight issues that need to be addressed and discuss possible options that should be investigated in the study.

The forum was attended by approximately 200 community members, and was opened by Cr Sue Corby, Mayor of the City of Yarra. The Minister for Transport, the Hon Peter Batchelor MP, introduced the study process that he had initiated, and addressed the issue of the composition of the Community Reference Group (CRG). He indicated that he considered the CRG's membership covered the full spectrum of community interests. He also noted that the CRG was only one part of the consultation process.

After brief presentations from Bob Evans (Study Director), Rodger Eade (Community Reference Group Chair), and William McDougall (Study Manager), the forum was opened to questions and comments from the participants. This session was facilitated by Bruce Turner (Fulcrum International) with assistance from Leanne Taylor (Fulcrum) and Stephen Smith (Department of Infrastructure).

The following notes summarise the questions and comments made by the community during the forum, together with written comments provided via feedback forms circulated at the forum.

The following information will be used by the study team, alongside the results of other forms of consultation, to guide the development and assessment of strategy options.

Questions and comments from the floor

Public transport

- Public transport should run 24-hours a day.
- In its current state, the public transport system is not very useful for the residents who live in the outer eastern suburbs.
- What incentives are there for the private companies to improve the public transport systems, and what is their potential role?
- The Eastern Freeway reserve was originally reserved for a rail line. What happened to that proposal?
- We must address the issue of ownership of the public transport system in order to fix the problems. The private ownership of public transport does not work.

- A Park and Ride facility should be built at the western end of the Eastern Freeway. There is a piece of land that could be acquired for this purpose near Victoria Park Station, from which commuters could catch trains into the city.
- There is a lack of front-line staff that makes it unsafe for users of public transport.
- The Government should spend the amount of money that has been spent in the last 30 years on roads, over the next 30 years on the public transport system.
- We need to fix what is already in place, such as the lack of public transport services, timetable problems, connection issues, and the existing poor bus service.
- Trams and buses should be designed with low floors and loading areas for bicycles, surfboards and wheelchairs.
- We need more frequent, reliable, responsive and safe public transport which people can use not just for commuting but as an attractive alternative to car use.
- Increase the frequencies on weekends.
- A train line should be put on each side of the Eastern Freeway all the way out to Ringwood to provide a very fast loop into the city, with a Park and Ride facility at the Ringwood end of the freeway.
- There is no problem with the public transport in the study area; it is the people travelling in from the outer suburbs that are causing the problems.
- We need to improve public transport from the outer suburban areas to improve the study area.
- The emphasis of the study should be on addressing public transport issues in the outer north-east (Eltham) and even further east.
- Everywhere else in the world, people are moving towards public transport except here in Melbourne.
- Public transport must take funding precedence.
- We need a method of separating the various modes of transport e.g. trams and cars.
- We need to improve the overall network of public transport linkage services to other major transport services such as trains.
- We should investigate a fast rail service run out along the Eastern Freeway median strip to service residents around the Doncaster area. It could join up to the existing railway at Nunawading. As it passed inbound along the grass on Alexandra Parade, it could go underground where the grass ends at Nicholson Street, then go on to an underground station at the tram terminus near Nicholson Street, then on to join existing rail at Parliament Station.
- Stop the outer freeway madness by providing public transport solutions. Visit cities overseas, such as Toronto, that prove that freeways do not solve transport problems, they just create larger and more difficult ones.

- In Toronto, there is a mini bus service within 200 metres of each house that takes you to a fast train into the city, linking to several modes of inner city public transport. We should be looking at something like that.
- For public transport to work, the Government should own it. The equivalent amount of money spent on roads/freeways for one year should be put into public transport to really bring it up to scratch; fully manned stations, trams, trains, making public transport safe for all at all times 24 hour service.
- Freight should go by rail.
- To solve problem of traffic congestion in inner suburbs, the provision of excellent public transport in outer suburbs is necessary. This will probably involve large commuter carparks at stations.
- I would like the study to seriously consider a train route to the eastern suburbs along the Eastern Freeway median strip. No stops in areas already serviced by trams.
- In Royal Parade, right-turning motor vehicles are directed onto the tram track by road markings. It can take up to six minutes for a southbound tram to clear an intersection. A northbound tram can be delayed by up to fifteen minutes by right-turning motor vehicles. These delays make a mockery of tram timetables, where the headway (time between trams) is six minutes.
- Royal Parade needs to be made a clearway, and right-turning trams need to turn from the left-hand lane. Royal Parade has ample capacity for this proposal, because at present southbound traffic in Sydney Road, Brunswick is one lane off-peak and two lanes in the peak feeding three lanes in Royal Parade. In the opposite direction, one of the three lanes in Royal Parade feeding two lanes (peaktime) in Sydney Road is redundant.
- As to the East Coburg/Moreland tram routes, insufficient time is given at the Elgin and Lygon Streets intersection for two trams together to get through the intersection. The second tram is delayed for a complete cycle of the lights.
- Insufficient time is given for two trams together to get through the Victoria and Elizabeth Streets intersection for Route 50 and 57 trams (North Melbourne and West Maribyrnong).
- At the Victoria Parade and Nicholson Street intersection, right-turning cars often delay trams in Victoria Parade, causing the missing of an entire traffic signal sequence. In addition, insufficient time is given for both north/south bound trams and motor vehicles to clear the intersection after the traffic lights change.
- The railway or tram to Doncaster along the Eastern Freeway needs to be built. I recall that in the mid 1970s the ramp was built for the proposed Doncaster railway, to connect with the Hurstbridge line at Collingwood, but was filled in again as the railway was not then to be constructed. In the interim before a train line or tramline to Doncaster is built, the bus service to Doncaster needs to be run more frequently so that it will attract greater numbers of car drivers.

Road traffic

- Traffic has increased on the Eastern Freeway by people avoiding the City Link tolls.
- There should be tolls on Hoddle Street or toll on the inner Eastern Freeway to subsidise the public transport system. The city is focused more and more on cars, which is evident from the number of car parking facilities in the CBD.
- I live in Princes Street and the amount of trucks that use that road is an issue.
- More street closures are needed to discourage short car trips.
- Cars are not sustainable for a long and equitable future.
- A top priority should be to lessen the build up of traffic on our roads, as it affects our quality of life.
- The quality of life and social equality in our community depends in part on massively reducing car dependence and providing quality public transport.
- You know as well as the community represented here that the problem is the amount of traffic. Consequently, the only way to realistically address the situation here is to ameliorate traffic levels. Anything else is clearly not influenced by the community's views.
- A major concern with the possibility of linking the Eastern and Tullamarine Freeways is that it would place a massive physical divide through the community and it would increase traffic noise and air pollution in residential areas and encourage car use over public transport.
- We live in Alexandra Parade and although the traffic doesn't bother us greatly we don't want it to become any worse.
- Start focusing on public transport, not cars, look outside this area at outer suburb car drivers and their needs. e.g. Park and ride, more trains etc.
- We need to discourage cars from outer suburbs being brought into the corridor, but we need to also discourage inner city-residents driving out of the area. A provision for better public transport on 'non-peak' routes is required.
- Can you prove that a freeway has ever solved transport problems anywhere in the world?
- Car based transport in cities is expensive, polluting, discriminatory and inefficient. Other methods (walking, cycling, public transport) are essential to Melbourne's function in the 21st Century.
- I would like to see the study seriously consider a tunnel linking the Eastern Freeway to Citylink (under cemetery). This should be tolled. Those who do not wish to pay toll can use existing route.

- I would like the study to seriously consider an elevated expressway down the length of Hoddle Street/ Punt Road along the same lines as the Bangkok elevated expressway.
- I would like the study to seriously consider the installation of peak hour tolls along Hoddle Street/Punt Road.
- Tolling is generally a good idea, but the present system is deficient because it does not discriminate between peak and off-peak users.
- At present most of the traffic along Princes Street, Carlton and Cemetery Road, takes Macarthur Road and Elliott Avenue to Racecourse Road in North Melbourne and Flemington, or takes Gatehouse Street and Harker Street to North Melbourne. The suggestion that the Eastern Freeway needs to connect to the Tullamarine Freeway is based on the false premise that the cross traffic is entering and leaving the Tullamarine Freeway.
- Princes Street, Carlton needs to be downgraded for city commuter traffic, with redirection to Hoddle Street and Victoria Parade, and re-education to use public transport from Doncaster.
- The Eastern Freeway is attractive for those who want to avoid tolls on Citylink, and measures need to be taken to make it less attractive.

Bicycles

- Bicycles must take priority over private motor vehicles.
- What can be done to get the various bodies together like all of the affected councils to discuss and promote more bicycle use?
- There has been a loss of pedestrian and bike access in the area.
- Bike travel should be strongly encouraged by providing more bike lanes and secure parking facilities.
- Bicycle lanes along the Eastern Freeway need to be improved to provide for more direct routes along the freeway.
- There is a need for safer conditions for cyclists. Bike lanes of adequate width on arterial roads as well as smaller local streets.
- Replace parking spots with wide bike lanes.

Environment

- Global warming and the accompanying environmental and social impacts should be addressed immediately.
- What measures are the study team taking to make sure that the environmental and social concerns are also addressed through this study?

- Air quality is a major concern. At present the air smells and we get short of breath waiting for a bus on Hoddle Street.
- Tunnels etc reduces pollution.
- Users should pay for roads, especially commercial users. They are the ones that produce most of the pollution.

Consultation

- Will there be any community consultation forums held in the outer areas to see why residents aren't using public transport?
- The terms of reference for the community reference group do not provide enough flexibility for the study to have the power to change things.
- The study team/Community Reference Group needs to listen to the affected communities and adopt the measures favoured by them.
- The Community Reference Group inadequately represents the views of the public. VicRoads is not a community member.
- I am concerned about the terms of reference for the Community Reference Group as this group is not wholly a 'community representative body.'
- If the Government wants this freeway, it will go ahead – the transparencies are obvious. The Minister invites a former VicRoads employee to head the study, yet swears that VicRoads has nothing to do with this study. Who is steering who?
- Current process gives lip service to the issues of addressing public transport in the outer north-east but does not get to the fundamental issues of how change will be brought about.
- The survey was not specific enough and it was obvious it will be used for public relation purposes. The questions were not phrased properly so as to clearly distinguish between people who favour car-based transport and those who favour public transport.
- Put the PTUA on the reference group and remove the RACV.
- Despite the politician at the forum trying to reassure us that this forum does not have a predetermined outcome, I did share, sadly, in a cynicism that the forum is only a public relations exercise. I fear that whatever its outcome, it could be swept away if the outcome didn't suit. Is your forum more than lip service?
- The format was good, especially having the CRG terms of reference and priorities spelled out. It was frustrating waiting 40 minutes to hear them. It was excellent giving so many people the opportunity to speak.
- Not one person who attended the meeting expressed their desire for a freeway. Yet the freeway madness in the outer suburbs continues with the support of RACV and VicRoads both of which are on the reference group.

- The surveys and meeting seem to be a great hoax and public relations activity.
- I was disappointed in the underlying attitude of the Forum. It reeked of academic arrogance. Only an idiot would expect instant feedback of a worthwhile content. Good visionary people must be elected (not stool pigeons appointed). When seeking feedback from a single meeting (forum) all feedback must be couched with background knowledge and straightforward decisions. When the St Heliers proposals were exhibited all the architect firms designs were bad. The best submission came from the kindergarten – clear thinking. This forum seemed to have an underlining agenda to solve the problem of joining the Eastern Freeway with the Tullamarine Freeway. We want democracy and increasing transparency and accountability.
- The study appears heavily biased towards freeways ie. Bob Evans is from a Vicroads background; Rodger Eade performed a role in the Scoresby Freeway.
- People without freeway connections ie. Bill Russell and Public Transport Users Association (PTUA) are excluded.
- Thank you for the opportunity to engage in the process. There are clearly some well defined stakeholder positions. It should be pointed out that there were also opportunities to expand the agenda to include a strategy for the whole of Melbourne.
- I do not believe the views, which predominated at the forum, represent the majority of the community. Live in North Fitzroy and witness the following problems on a daily basis: 1) Huge build-up of traffic heading west on Eastern freeway and going down Punt Road/Hoddle Street, or along Alexandra Parade, 2) Hoddle Street constantly clogged with no feasible alternative, and 3) Alexandra Parade/Princess Street acting like a wall cutting off North Fitzroy from Fitzroy and North Carlton from Carlton.

Studies

- If you are going to be conducting studies you need to also conduct experiments, e.g. run buses in a certain area in the outer suburbs and see what happens.
- All of the information you need has been done before (see the Morrie Crow collection, Town and Country Planning Association).
- Bill Russell completed an impact study on the Eastern Freeway. Will this information be used in this study?
- Will there be enough funding to do all the research?
- Is there going to be a separate study of each of the areas of interest?
- Are there going to be democratic elections for representatives to review and workshop the development of proposals?
- Once the reports and recommendations are put forward, will the community get the option of approving them?

- Will it be possible for the Government to cancel all procedures and ignore the recommendations?
- Will the overall development of the CBD be considered in relation to this study area, and if the study recommendations are in conflict with Melbourne City Council's goals, who will have the sway of influence?
- I have a concern about the inaccuracies of the reports and studies, e.g. in the late 80s, an EES was completed for VicRoads and it underestimated the amount of traffic that would use the Eastern Freeway (the estimated cars per day was 98,000 and the actual was 116,000).
- Every time a study is completed we get another freeway.
- Will this procedure be constrained to operate within the State Government's inadequate guidelines on Environment Effects Statements given there is currently a review of the environment assessment process for major projects?
- Full information should be made public for all options on the key or core indicators of the EES and the methodology to be used for the EES.
- Most of the input is reactionary to today's problems. How can we be presented with the future conditions and known future problems to be able to deal with them pro-actively?
- I'd like to comment on the VicRoads' study that showed that only 5% of the traffic travelling along the Eastern Freeway want to go to the Tullamarine Freeway. In light of that, I'd like assurances that the freeway proposed to link these two freeways will not go ahead
- Community groups should be funded so that they can conduct their own independent studies.
- Most of the ideas were dealing with today's problems, not designing to alleviate future problems and creating a better future. The 1970's Strategy planning Process of the Melbourne City Council was much better (more expensive I agree) but it would be cheaper if the authorities used the generated data. Most of the recommendations are still applicable today.
- I note that the Melbourne Metro News (06/06/01) has a story this week on impact of tunnel fumes. Your North Central Corridor Study should include provision for initiatives to reduce 'dirty' emissions like diesel buses/trucks which make significant contributions.
- I trust Bill Russell's report will be a reference for the study.