

NORTHERN CENTRAL CITY CORRIDOR STUDY

Transport and urban solutions
for the inner north

ISSUES AND TRENDS



September 2001

Department of Infrastructure

Northern Central City Corridor Study

**Transport and urban
solutions for the inner north**

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Executive summary

The Northern Central City Corridor Study is investigating transport and land use issues in Melbourne's inner northern suburbs, with the aim of developing an integrated strategy that will:

- improve public transport;
- improve walking and cycling;
- reduce car dependency;
- manage arterial roads and freight; and
- enhance urban amenity.

The strategy will cover the area's needs over at least the next 20 years and will anticipate and guide the type of development and activity growth that will occur in this time frame.

Through travel contributes significantly to transport issues in the inner north. As a result the study is looking at initiatives beyond the core area of study, as well as within it.

This initial report, prepared by the Department of Infrastructure, provides an overview of issues and trends, summarises the findings of community consultation and discusses options and initiatives to be investigated in the next stages of the study.

Sustainability

The study will seek to establish a basis for a more sustainable transport and land use solution for the area. It is important that social, economic and environmental considerations are integrated and balanced to enable better decisions to be made, with outcomes that achieve more sustainable development.

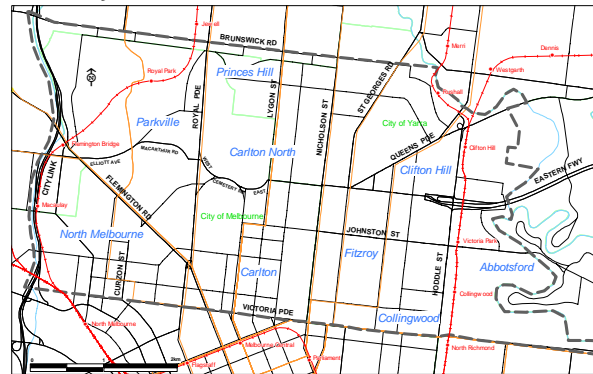
The Melbourne Metropolitan Strategy, now being developed, will establish a planning and development framework for the metropolitan region of Victoria for the next 20-30 years. The strategy will focus on how land use and transport systems can best support economic, social and environmental goals. In addition, the Cities of Melbourne and Yarra are both planning for sustainability. The Northern Central City Corridor Study will need to find solutions that complement and support these strategies and plans.

Land use and demographics

The study area contains about 64,000 people and nearly 80,000 jobs. Recent reversals in trends of declining population show that the area is becoming more attractive as a place to live. Population growth (of residents, students, workers and visitors) is expected to continue into the future as more industrial land is converted to

residential and commercial uses, especially in the southern parts of the area (Abbotsford, Carlton and North Melbourne).

The study area



The inner north is important for a wide variety of economic activities, including major health and education facilities, retail and entertainment, office and home-based businesses, tourism, leisure and sporting activities, and major industry (although this is declining).

In common with the rest of Melbourne, car ownership has increased and public transport's share of journeys to work has declined in the inner north, for at least the past 20 years.

Future growth trends will place more pressure on resources in the inner north. Greater numbers of people living in, working in and visiting the area will generate new demands on infrastructure and services, especially transport.

Transport

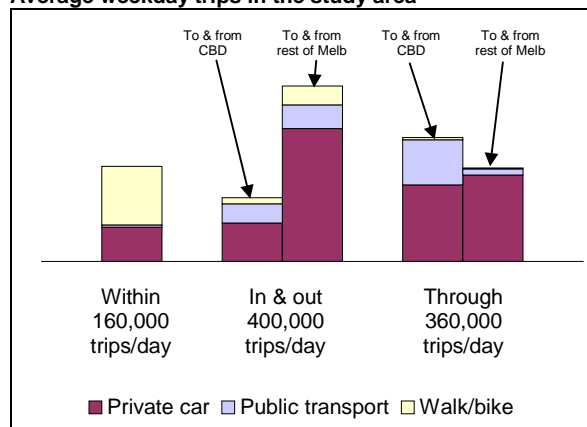
The main trends in transport in Melbourne over the last forty years or so can be summarised as follows:

- Road space, car parking facilities and demand for car travel have increased, resulting in steadily rising levels of traffic congestion, pollution and noise, and an extension of peak periods in both the morning and evening.
- Public transport patronage and service frequencies have declined, while bus and tram services have become slower and less reliable due to traffic congestion. There have been comparatively few public transport infrastructure improvements.

An ambitious, integrated network of freeways was proposed in the 1969 Melbourne Transportation Plan. It was partially cancelled in

1973, without being replaced by an alternative overall plan for mobility. Since then, progressive construction of parts of the original freeway plan have seen a steady shift in Melbourne's travel patterns, away from public transport and towards the private car. In the inner north, road traffic levels and congestion have increased dramatically over the last 30 years. This has been due to overall travel growth, but the construction of the Eastern Freeway in particular added considerable volumes of traffic to Hoddle Street, Alexandra Parade and Princes Street, and overflows onto other streets as well.

Average weekday trips in the study area



Travel demand

Over 80% of travel in the area starts and/or finishes outside the area. Most of this is travel to and from the area, but through travel is also a significant component. The CBD and its surroundings to the south generate the majority of through trips, both by road and public transport. Most travel within the area – 62% – takes place on foot or by bike, with about 36% by private car. Surprisingly, few travellers within the area use public transport.

Road traffic

Major roads in the area carry large volumes of passenger traffic including cars, trams, buses, motorcycles and bicycles. Walking takes place throughout the area. Truck traffic is also significant on some roads and causes considerable stress and concern to residents and other road users.

Private vehicle traffic using the area's roads results in considerable congestion, pollution and delays to other road users (especially trams and buses). Eastern Freeway users are a primary source of congestion. In the mornings there are long queues on the freeway, while in the evenings, there are traffic queues along streets in the inner north to gain access to the Eastern

Freeway and other arterial routes, such as Sydney Road and Heidelberg Road.

Routes used by traffic from Eastern Freeway



Traffic volumes on the Eastern Freeway increased by over 30,000 vehicles a day after it was extended to Springvale Road. The freeway now carries about 140,000 vehicles a day at its western end. This traffic is split roughly equally between Hoddle Street and Alexandra Parade. Two-thirds is to and from the CBD, its southern surroundings and the inner northern suburbs. Only 15% at most appears to be to and from the west and north-west (most of this probably uses the Macarthur Road/Elliott Avenue route through Royal Park, to and from the Racecourse Road, Tullamarine Freeway and City Link).

Origin-destination surveys will be carried out to get a more accurate picture of how cars and trucks use the east-west route (Alexandra Parade-Elliott Avenue). It is likely that significant proportions are making north-south movements, but using sections of the route in an east-west direction.

Public transport

Public transport is generally well patronised, and provides good north-south coverage in the inner north. Services, though, are focussed on the CBD to the south and are less frequent outside peak hours. The main impediments to public transport gaining an increased share of the travel market are considered to be:

- Poor coverage of outer catchments by public transport, especially in the eastern and north-eastern suburbs;
- A lack of integration between services serving the inner north; and
- Poor reliability of bus and tram services due to traffic congestion.

Within the inner north, public transport is hampered by delays from road congestion, a general lack of east-west services, and poor

access to key areas such as the University of Melbourne.

Cycling and walking

Significant numbers of people cycle in the area, and they are relatively well provided for. However improvements to the principal bicycle network, linkages through parks and gardens, road crossing and end of trip facilities would further enhance the attractiveness of cycling. An opportunity exists to create a fine-grained and comprehensive bicycle network and related facilities in the area that would be a major encouragement for more cycling by the community.

Pedestrians experience some significant problems, including the dangers and delays of crossing major arterials, the lack of east-west linkages and the generally poor condition of footpaths, especially in the southern part of the area and to/from the CBD. Improvements to these aspects could significantly enhance the safety and attractiveness of walking, especially for the young, elderly and people with disabilities.

Social conditions

The resident population primarily consists of students, public housing tenants, young professionals, families and the elderly. There are also Aboriginal and non-English speaking communities. The community of the area varies considerably by time of day and day of the week, because, as well as residents, many workers, tourists and visitors use the area.

The major roads and transport corridors in the area tend to divide communities and make access to local facilities more difficult. Alexandra Parade and Princes Street are particularly significant in this regard, severing the communities to the north and south.

Environmental values

Environmental issues in the inner north include:

- Noise – residents in the area are affected by noise from stop-start traffic on several major arterial roads (and other heavily used roads), and are also affected by noise from free-flowing traffic on the Tullamarine and Eastern Freeways.
- Airborne pollutants and greenhouse gas – technological breakthroughs and a marked change of attitude will be required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport. Initiatives could include changing travel mode, improving vehicle efficiency and fuel economy.

- Soil and groundwater contamination – contamination arises from past decisions to locate industrial sites close to watercourses and drains. Opportunities exist to contain and allow cleaning-up of contamination, and create buffer zones between contamination sources and receptors.
- Vegetation and habitat – the Yarra River, Merri Creek and Royal Park are the major areas of ecological value in or adjacent to the study area.
- Stormwater and water quality – preservation and improvement of water quality in the Yarra River, Merri Creek and Moonee Ponds Creek would be a beneficial by-product of transport system and land use improvements.

Heritage, urban and landscape design

The history of the inner north can be traced back to Aboriginal tribal lands and to the earliest days of European settlement. It includes:

- the first of Melbourne's developed suburbs (Fitzroy and Collingwood);
- the evolution of important transport routes;
- many landmark places;
- heritage precincts related to the industrial, ecclesiastical and social history of Melbourne; and
- the area's parklands and reserves, originally a vast green belt which surrounded the infant township and its suburbs.

The area is of great significance for the amount of physical evidence that remains to illustrate this history, especially from the 1850s gold rush and the 1880s boom years.

The strong and highly significant heritage, landscape and urban design features of the area are a major constraint to infrastructure development. Opportunities exist to preserve and enhance heritage and urban design values in a number of key locations.

Engineering considerations

Engineering of transport and land use solutions will require sympathy and integration with the existing urban fabric, avoiding any adverse effects such as the demolition of valuable property or inappropriate encroachment on parks and open spaces. Major services and utilities share the main transport corridors in the area, including major drains along Alexandra Parade, through Royal Park and North Melbourne. Geological and hydrogeological considerations will be examined as appropriate for options under consideration in the next stages of the study.

Community consultation

The study so far has involved consultation with the community and a range of interest groups, including those represented on the study's Community Reference Group. Valuable views and opinions have been provided to the study team. These are being used to develop the goals, assessment criteria and the actual initiatives to be assessed in forming an integrated strategy.

The main common themes from the consultations are:

- dissatisfaction with traffic and related problems, namely pollution, congestion, truck volumes, traffic noise and parking facilities;
- satisfaction with the eating and entertainment facilities, cultural events, coverage of public transport, provision of open space, and the sense of community
- opposition to linking the Eastern and Tullamarine Freeways, and to road-building in general;
- strong support for public transport improvements, including rail, light rail or bus expressway in the Eastern Freeway corridor;
- support for improved conditions for cycling and walking, especially improved networks and linkages; and
- a need to widen the scope of consultations to include those who travel to and from or through the area from outside (perceived to be the cause of many of the problems in the area).

Aboriginal community groups echo many of the concerns of the wider community but also highlight the significance of Merri Creek, Rushall station area, scarred trees and the need for consultation before ground disturbance. The Merri Creek/Yarra River confluence and the old Health Service centre on Gertrude Street were also singled out. The importance of the community spirit in Fitzroy and Collingwood was emphasised, as was the need for Aboriginal people to be heard, as they often have different perspectives and concerns to non-Indigenous people.

The community has provided a long 'wish list' of initiatives covering all aspects of transport and land use in the area. The list includes many local initiatives, but also includes measures outside the study area, such as rapid transit in the Eastern Freeway corridor, improvements to north-south rail and tram lines and controls on parking supply in the CBD. Overall there is a strong focus on initiatives that will improve public transport, cycling and walking, reduce car dependency and manage overall travel demand.

Next steps for the study

Following community feedback on this report and emerging issues, the next step is to develop possible strategies from the range of initiatives suggested, and to undertake an initial appraisal of how they meet social, environmental and economic objectives or goals.

An initial appraisal report will be prepared and released for community comment late in 2001. The report will present the possible strategy options, and will select and define the best option or options for more detailed assessment.

Following community comment on the initial appraisal, the best options will be further refined and assessed, and the preferred strategy will be identified and developed. A draft strategy will be released for a further round of community comment early in 2002.

After incorporating community input, the draft strategy will be finalised and recommended for adoption by State and Local Governments as appropriate. The aim is to present the strategy in the first half of 2002, with recommendations on implementation from that date onwards.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Northern Central City Corridor Study is investigating transport and land-use issues in Melbourne's inner north, covering:

- Abbotsford
- Carlton
- Carlton North
- Clifton Hill
- Collingwood
- Fitzroy
- Fitzroy North
- North Melbourne
- Parkville
- Princes Hill

The study will develop an integrated strategy with proposals for improving transport in these areas, including facilities and services for walking, cycling, public transport, freight and private car use now and in the future. It will also propose initiatives to address land use, urban design and heritage conservation issues.

The study will apply triple bottom line¹ assessment techniques to assess options and develop a sustainable, integrated strategy, covering the following emerging themes:

- Improving public transport
- Improving walking and cycling conditions
- Reducing car dependency
- Managing arterial roads and freight
- Enhancing urban amenity

The strategy will cover the area's needs over at least the next 20 years and should anticipate and guide the type of development and activity growth that will occur in this time frame, to provide a more sustainable future.

A description of the study process is available through the study web site at www.doi.vic.gov.au/innernorth, or by contacting the study team on 9655 6659.

1.2 This report

This report has been prepared by the Department of Infrastructure. It provides an overview of existing conditions and trends in the inner north area, and summarises the findings of the specialists covering the following aspects:

- Land use and demographics
- Transport provision and use
- Social conditions
- Environmental considerations
- Heritage, landscape and urban design
- Engineering issues

References to the specialists' existing conditions reports are given in Appendix B.

The report also gives the results of community consultations to date, including the work of the study's Community Reference Group, a community forum held in May 2001 and a questionnaire survey of residences and businesses in the area.

Finally, it summarises the key issues and outlines the options and initiatives being investigated in the next stage of the study.

¹ 'Triple bottom line' refers to the combination of social, environmental and economic outcomes

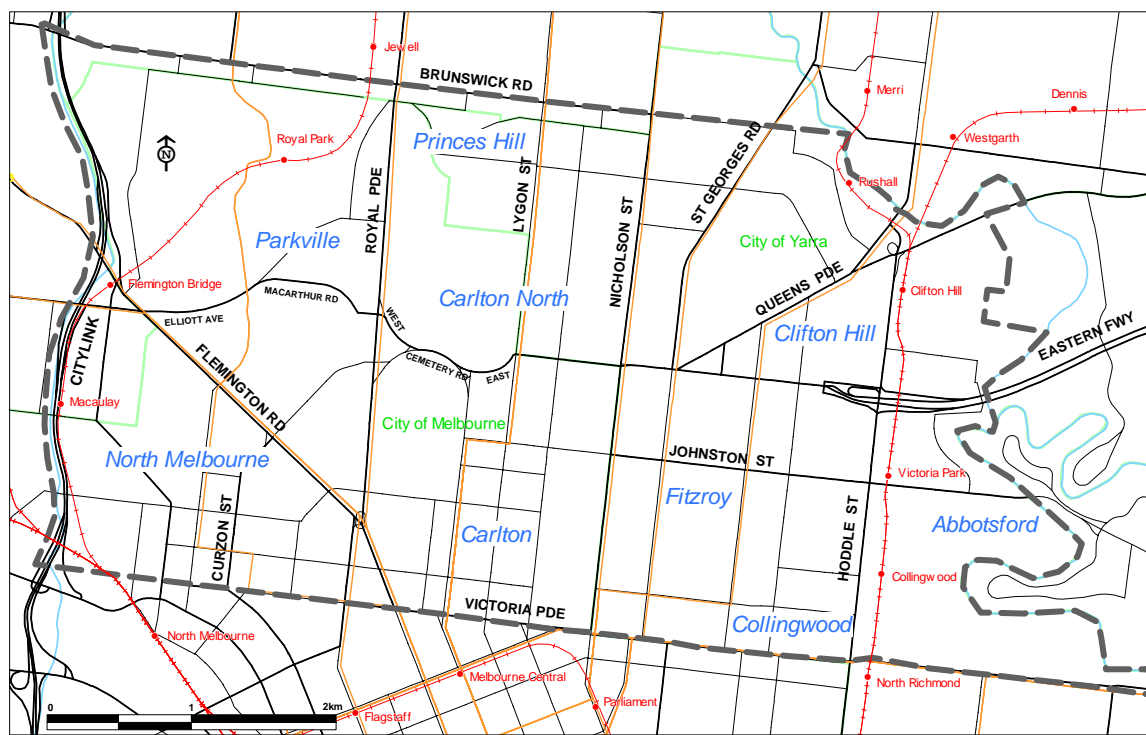
2 The study area

2.1 Core study area

The core area of study extends east-west from the Yarra River near the western end of the Eastern Freeway to the southern end of the Tullamarine Freeway, and north-south from the northern part of Melbourne city centre to the general vicinity of Brunswick Road. This area is in the City of Melbourne and the City of Yarra, and equates to the inner northern suburbs shown in Figure 2.1.

The study area was chosen because it is the primary area of influence of a possible road link between the Eastern and Tullamarine Freeways, which had been resurrected from earlier planning by the Kennett Government. The Bracks Government has decided to look at the broader picture of transport and land use in the area, before making any decisions about new transport infrastructure.

Figure 2.1 The core study area



2.2 Wider area of consideration

Many transport issues in the core study area are caused by travel generated well outside, particularly in the corridors to the east, north, west and south-west and the CBD to the south. Because of this it is inevitable that the study will consider initiatives outside the core area. The extent of these initiatives and their effects will be defined as the study proceeds.