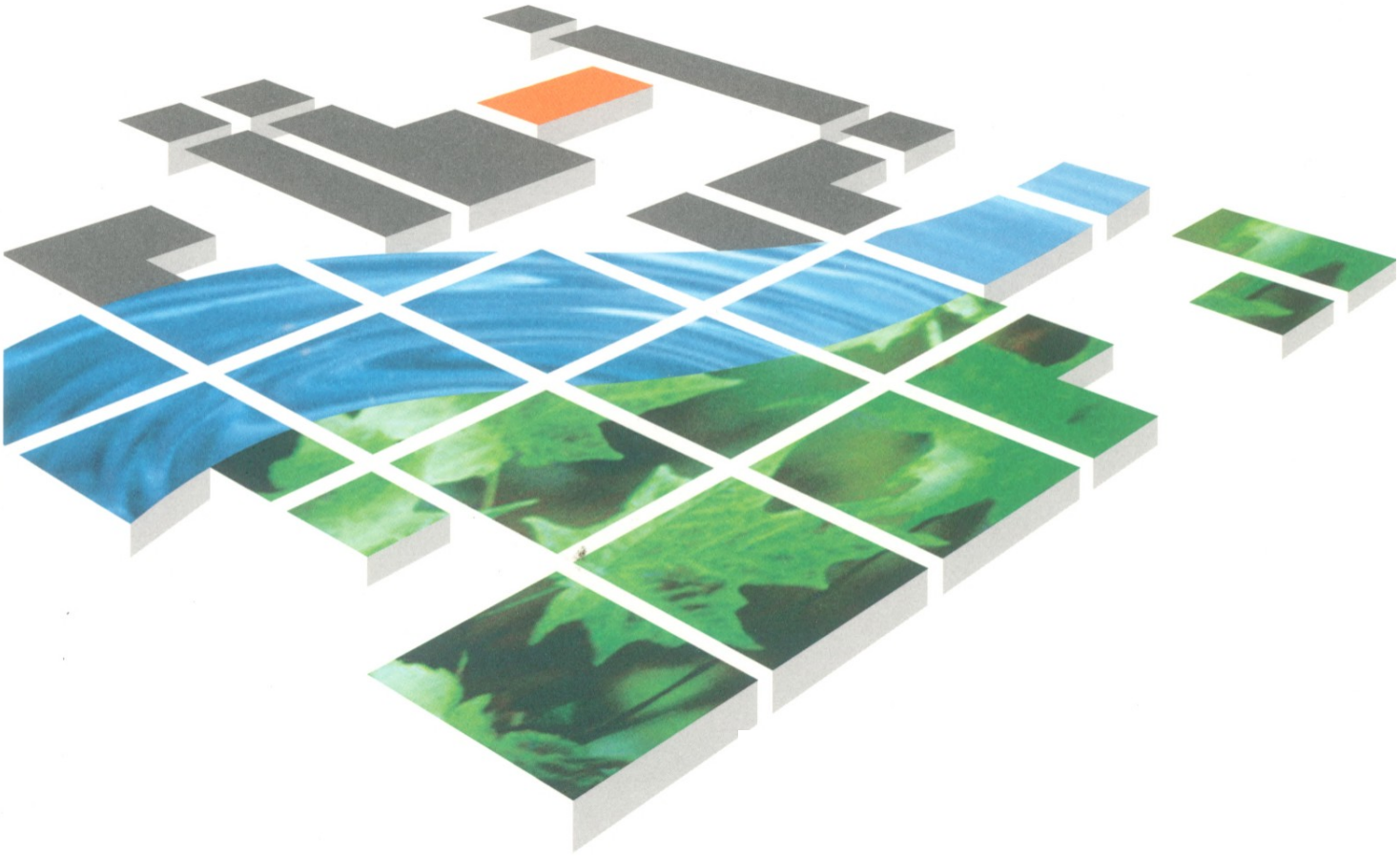

East-West Link Needs Assessment
Submission by Eastern Sector Councils

June 2007

Prepared by

Eastern Sector Councils

Assisted by

Ratio Consultants Pty Ltd
and
Booz Allen Hamilton

June 2007

Our Reference: 8019 #2 Report_070627_Bk.Doc

Disclaimer:

Neither Ratio Consultants Pty. Ltd. nor any member or employee of Ratio Consultants Pty. Ltd. takes responsibility in any way whatsoever to any person or organisation (other than that for which this report has been prepared) in respect of the information set out in this report, including any errors or omissions therein. Ratio Consultants is not liable for errors in plans, specifications, documentation or other advice not prepared or designed by Ratio Consultants.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A coalition of Councils in the eastern sector of Melbourne, radiating out from the Central Activities District (CAD), has a strong and mutual interest in transport infrastructure and services in the East-West Link Needs Assessment Study Area; the coalition comprises: Banyule, Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Melbourne, Whitehorse and Yarra.

The eastern sector Councils recognise the challenges for urban development and transport generally, that is climate change, "peak oil" and the negative social implications of car dependence. They endorse the State Government's targets for improving the sustainability of Melbourne's transport system, namely major increases in freight movement by rail and in person movement by public transport, and the more general target of a major reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Accordingly, the eastern sector Councils consider that it is critical for the Eddington Study Team to address these broad-ranging issues in carrying out the East-West Link Needs Assessment. It is recommended that, in its analysis and evaluation processes, the Study Team applies the following planning principles:

- the movement of freight, by road and rail, must allow optimum business efficiency, while minimising amenity impacts on residential and commercial areas;
- public transport must be improved so that all people have accessible, safe, frequent, and well-connected services, sufficient to provide a realistic alternative to private car travel;
- the road system must have a clearly-defined and agreed functional hierarchy; arterial roads must be managed to optimise their person and freight value throughputs, local streets must be protected from through-traffic so they can provide safe and amenable areas for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and local vehicular traffic;
- all elements, that is freight, public transport and roads, must contribute to the urban transport task in a way which optimises ecological sustainability.

The current travel patterns of the eastern sector Council areas are directly shaped by their development patterns and transport infrastructure. Much of the daily travel is commuting into the Central Activities District and, with limited passenger rail access, most commuting is by car. The Eastern Freeway is the major radial road facility, but its western connections are chronically congested in peak periods; this congestion will be exacerbated by extra regional car and truck traffic loads when EastLink is completed and connected.

Public transport patronage in Melbourne has enjoyed consistent growth over the last two decades; the surge of demand over the last two years in particular has highlighted the weaknesses of the current system. In the eastern Council areas, actions required to resolve current deficiencies include:

- providing a fast, efficient, high capacity transit system along the Eastern Freeway (e.g. light or heavy rail or improved bus services) to serve the eastern sector areas;
- increasing the capacity of existing railway lines (e.g. Box Hill to Ringwood);
- upgrading railway stations and commuter parking;

- eliminating railway level crossings, where practicable;
- improving bus services by increasing frequencies and providing more priority at congested road locations;
- expanding park'n'ride and other modal interchange facilities.

In order to achieve the State Government's targets for public transport usage, Melbourne's public transport system will require major upgrading in level of service and capacity. The East-West Link Needs Assessment provides an opportunity for an integrated and sustainable solution to some of the transport challenges of the eastern sector Councils, and of Melbourne more generally. The Eddington Study Team is urged to seek a solution with the following elements:

- a major upgrade of public transport services in the eastern sector, including more accessible, faster and more frequent service along the Eastern Freeway (e.g. light or heavy rail or improved bus services);
- use of the full range of Travel Demand Management measures to encourage private car drive-alone commuters to switch to alternative sustainable transport modes (i.e. carpool, public transport, cycle and walk) so that more arterial road capacity is available for high-value freight;
- at points of concentrated congestion, provide priority or exclusive-use traffic lanes for on-road public transport, carpool vehicles and for trucks (such as already apply on the eastbound ramps connecting Warrigal Road to the Monash Freeway);
- use road pricing to ensure that costs of vehicle operation fully reflect the economic costs of vehicle use and to discourage excessive use of private cars (e.g. apply tolls on driver-only or low-occupancy private vehicles on those roads, or at those times of day, where capacity is more valuable for freight traffic).

Different views are held by the various eastern sector Councils regarding the construction of a tunnel and there was not consensus in regards to support or rejection, but, if the Eddington Study Team recommends a mixed-traffic East-West Link road tunnel funded by tolls, it is important that there are no adverse traffic impacts on the at-grade local and regional network. In particular:

- the tunnel must be designed to accommodate hazardous cargoes and have full provision of emergency access facilities;
- there must be no easy opportunities for drivers to use at-grade roads to avoid tolls;
- feeder roads must be designed and managed so that noise and other amenity impacts on adjacent areas are contained to acceptable levels;
- local authorities must be permitted, and suitably funded, to modify the management of their local and regional roads to ensure optimum conditions for the local communities.

The eastern sector Councils seek an opportunity to present this submission to the Eddington Study Team, and to participate in its on-going analysis and evaluation activities.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In 2006, the Victorian Government released its transport strategy, known as "Meeting Our Transport Challenges" (MOTC). One of the actions identified in the strategy was to carry out an East-West Link Needs Assessment; MOTC outlined the assessment as follows:

> *Melbourne relies heavily on the Monash-West Gate corridor as the only major east-west link to support freight, and private traffic between the growth areas west and south-east of the CBD. Expansion of the port and growth in cross-town travel demand are putting significant pressure on this corridor and surrounding arterial roads.*
>
> *While the Monash-West Gate improvement package will relieve growth-driven congestion in the short to medium term, it is prudent to thoroughly investigate the need for an alternative east-west link.*
>
> *In late 2006, the Government will commence a needs assessment of the east-west corridor and develop options to address future demand along the corridor.*
>
> *The assessment will provide a comprehensive basis for future planning of alternatives to the Monash-West Gate route. It will consider not only private and commercial traffic, but also how public transport could be integrated into the corridor. The assessment will investigate and make recommendations to the Government on the full range of options, including light rail services along the Eastern Freeway, new bus services and interchanges, and other potential solutions.*

In late 2006, the Victorian Government appointed Sir Rod Eddington to carry out the East-West Link Needs Assessment. The terms of reference for the Eddington Study Team are as follows:

1. *Current transport volumes and patterns, and the likely changes to these volumes and patterns over the next 20 years, including the impact of Melbourne 2030, other Government policies and anticipated economic growth.*
2. *The capacity of existing and planned infrastructure to meet these future transport requirements.*
3. *How to balance the needs of freight traffic with the needs of residents in areas adjacent to freight movements.*
4. *Development of options to address capacity constraints and future demand, future needs of port and associated commercial traffic including the Government's 30/2010 target, and opportunities for public transport in the corridor.*
5. *In developing options, consideration will be given to a range of measures to meet future demands. Contribution to the achievement of Growing Victoria Together transport targets will also be considered as part of the assessment.*
6. *Funding issues, including sequencing of projects according to public and private funding capacity, and the capacity of the construction industry to deliver.*

The Study Area for the East-West Link Needs Assessment will extend from the Western Ring Road at the Deer Park Bypass, to east of Hoddle Street at the Eastern Freeway.

1.2 THE COALITION OF EASTERN SECTOR COUNCILS

One of the key initial tasks in the assessment is a call for submissions from interest groups or individuals. A coalition of Councils in the eastern sector of Melbourne, radiating out from the Central Activities District (CAD), has a strong and mutual interest in transport infrastructure and services in the East-West Link Assessment study area. The coalition comprises (refer Figure 1.1):

- Banyule
- Boroondara
- Knox
- Manningham
- Maroondah
- Melbourne
- Whitehorse
- Yarra

1.3 TRANSPORT CHALLENGES, TARGETS AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Each of the eastern sector Councils has, in recent years, prepared an Integrated Transport Strategy. Although the terminology and emphasis varies from one strategy to another, all strategies recognise similar **challenges** for urban development and transport. Some of those challenges are similar to those most recently identified by Victoria's Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability in his recent publication, that is[1]:

- climate change and the urgent need to significantly reduce the high levels of greenhouse gas emissions by our car-dependent transport system;
- 'peak oil' and the imperative to adapt our transport system so that in the future it is not reliant on oil as its primary energy source; and
- the social implications of car dependence including the increasing pressure on household budgets, particularly in outer areas, as the cost of fuel increases as well as the health costs associated with reduced exercise, road accidents and air pollution.

The City of Melbourne, faces the additional major challenge arising from the forecast rapid increase in road-based freight movement to and from the Port of Melbourne, with the most heavily trafficked port access roads being within its boundaries. Also, the City of Yarra is directly affected by traffic movements between the central area (ie CAD and the Port) and the eastern areas of Melbourne, via the Eastern Freeway.

The State Government has set three important **targets** for the future performance of the Melbourne transport system, namely:

- the Linking Victoria target of having 30 percent of port access freight transport by rail mode by 2010;

[1] "Creating a City That Works", Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, Melbourne, 2007.

- the Melbourne 2030 target of having 20 percent of motorised travel by public transport, by 2020;
- the more general target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent by 2050.

The eastern sector Councils endorse these targets, but consider that there is a need for a more comprehensive approach to planning Melbourne's transport future, if the targets are to be fully realised. The required transport planning **principles** are:

- the movement of freight, by road and rail, must allow optimum business efficiency, while minimising amenity impacts on residential and commercial areas;
- public transport must be improved so that all people have accessible, safe, frequent, and well-connected services, sufficient to provide a realistic alternative to private car travel;
- the road system must have a clearly-identified and agreed functional hierarchy; arterial roads must be managed to optimise their person and freight value throughputs, local streets must be protected from through-traffic so they can provide safe and amenable areas for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and local vehicular traffic;
- all elements, that is freight, public transport and roads, must contribute to the urban transport task in a way which optimises ecological sustainability.

It is possible that, during the period of the East-West Link Needs Assessment, the State Government will release more detailed plans to complement Meeting Our Transport Challenges (such as the long-awaited Bus Plan and Tram Plan or a Freight Transport Strategy aimed at increasing rail's role in good movement). In the interim, or in any event, it is important for the Eddington Study Team to establish its own integrated and sustainable transport planning principles, so that its consultation, analysis and evaluation processes can be suitably directed. The eastern sector Councils propose principles similar to those set out above as providing an appropriate basis for decision-making regarding the East-West Link.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THIS SUBMISSION

Within the context set out above, this submission provides a response from the eight eastern sector Councils to the six questions/topics identified by the East-West Link Needs Assessment (refer Section 2).

The submission concludes (Section 3) with a request for the opportunity for the eastern sector Councils to be involved in the subsequent deliberations of the Eddington Study Team, so that local as well as broader metropolitan issues are suitably addressed.

2 RESPONSES ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

2.1 CURRENT TRANSPORT VOLUMES AND PATTERNS, AND THE LIKELY CHANGES TO THESE VOLUMES AND PATTERNS OVER THE NEXT 30 YEARS, INCLUDING THE IMPACT OF *MELBOURNE 2030*, OTHER GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND ANTICIPATED ECONOMIC GROWTH

2.1.1 Population and Employment

As of the 2006 census, the aggregate population of the eight eastern sector Council areas was about 925,000 people. According to Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) forecasts, the aggregate population will increase to about 1,108,000 people by 2031. In line with the policies of Melbourne 2030, much of the increase will be accommodated:

- in new residential dwellings on small lots in designated growth corridors;
- in medium-density dwellings in and around Activity Centres (i.e. close to expanding job opportunities and well-served by local/regional public transport services).

All eastern sector Councils have development strategies which promote urban consolidation, focussed on Major Activity Centres, including (refer Figure 2.1):

- the Melbourne Central Activities District (CAD), Box Hill and Ringwood as Transit Cities;
- rail-based Principal and Major Activity Centres at Camberwell Junction, Nunawading Mega Mile and Greensborough;
- Doncaster Hill Urban Village and Knox City as bus-based centres.

If the DSE population and employment targets for the eastern sector are not met, then the Department of Infrastructure (DOI) travel demand forecasts, which are based on them, will also not be met. In particular, assumptions regarding residents in and around Activity Centres being able to walk, cycle or use public transport to local work locations, will not be met. Fewer local work trips by walk, cycle and public transport modes will mean more car-based travel.

It is important for the Eddington Study Team to undertake travel demand sensitivity analysis which addresses the impacts of wide-ranging population and employment growth scenarios, so that the implications on transport infrastructure in the East-West Link corridor can be properly assessed. In particular, the full range of demands for east-west public transport demand must be covered, so that the full range of transit options can be evaluated (i.e. express bus, bus way, light rail and heavy rail).

With an ageing population, residents in the eastern sector Council areas will increasingly require a choice of accessible transport modes which do not require car driving abilities.

2.1.2 Travel Patterns

The current travel patterns of the eastern sector are clearly shaped by the development patterns and transport infrastructure provided in the corridor. The area is largely dormitory therefore generating significant volumes of commuter traffic out of the region into the surrounding areas. The CAD and adjacent inner-city employment modes are the key destinations, but without high quality public transport services this movement tends to be more road based than other equivalent areas.

Data collected in 2001 for the Northern Central City Corridor Strategy (NCCCS) shows that most Eastern Freeway traffic terminates in the central area. As shown in Figure 2.2:

- only 9 percent of car traffic proceeded as far west as, or beyond the Tullamarine Freeway;
- only 26 percent of truck traffic proceeded the same distance to the west.

Figure 2.3 shows that public transport mode share for journeys to work in the CAD from the eastern corridor ranges from 29 percent to 39 percent, compared with over 50 percent for the Ringwood corridor.

The Eddington Study Team must recognise the role which the East-West Link currently plays in Melbourne's road and public transport system; that is, it is predominately the inner part of a radial system focussed on the central area, rather than a cross-town or central area bypass route. East-West Link options should recognise the relative demand for radial versus cross-town transport linkages.

2.2 THE CAPACITY OF EXISTING AND PLANNED INFRASTRUCTURE TO MEET THESE FUTURE TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS

2.2.1 Road Traffic Volumes

The 1997 extension of the Eastern Freeway, from Doncaster Road to Springvale Road, led to increased congestion at both ends, and on major outlet roads such as Hoddle Street and Springvale Road (especially in morning peak periods). The forthcoming East Link extension beyond Springvale Road, east beyond Ringwood and south to Frankston (and possibly beyond) will further overload the freeway and its access roads especially at the western end. Modelling work undertaken for the Manningham City Council, using Southern and Eastern Integrated Transport Authority (SEITA) data, graphically demonstrates the congestion effects of the East Link connection (Arup 2005, refer Figure 2.4).

EastLink will also provide a convenient route for business and light commercial vehicle traffic from the eastern areas to and from Melbourne Airport and regional highways. Even if heavy freight traffic from the south-east continues to rely on the Monash Freeway, that light commercial vehicle traffic will add to congestion on inner parts of the Eastern Freeway.

Bus services operating along the inner parts of the Eastern Freeway route, and trams operating along inner-suburban streets are increasingly delayed by (predominantly) private car commuter traffic. These delays reduce the level of service and reliability of the buses and trams, along those routes, discouraging discretionary travellers from using them.

The Eddington Study Team should analyse these issues in detail, so that the implications on all travel modes (not just cars and trucks) are fully assessed.

EastLink is likely to have major long-term effects on economic activity in the eastern areas of Melbourne[2]. As has been seen in the northern and western suburbs following construction of the Metropolitan Ring Road, second-order land use and traffic impacts of EastLink will extend well beyond those for 2011 shown in Figure 2.4.

The Eddington Study Team must ensure that long-term land use effects of EastLink, and their resulting traffic generation, are covered in its analysis and evaluation.

2.2.2 Public Transport Systems

Public transport patronage in Melbourne has enjoyed consistent growth over the last two decades; the surge in demand over the last two years in particular has highlighted the weaknesses of the current system in meeting the Government's own target of 20 percent of motorised travel by public transport by 2020. Improving public transport requires a two fold approach that makes the existing service more attractive as alternative means of travel, and provides adequate capacity to meet the expected demand.

The historical backlog of investment in public transport in the eastern region has directly led to the current unsatisfactory levels of crowding and reliability. MOTC goes some way to addressing the backlog, but much more investment is required to provide a public transport system that offers a real alternative to car use.

The East-West Link Needs Assessment must recognise the following (current) train, bus and tram issues, as well as looking to long term needs.

[2] For example, The Allen Consulting Group's recent report for SEITA estimates that EastLink will increase Gross State Product by $15 billion.

Current Train Issues

The eastern sector Councils are aware of the significant limitations placed on the rail system by the lack of capacity to/from and within the central area. They are concerned that this is a major threat to the State Government's ability to meet the ongoing system growth necessary to ensure a sustainable transport network. All the Councils consider the rail scheme proposed by Melbourne City Council, and the related opportunity to provide a light or heavy rail link along the Eastern Freeway to Doncaster, are worthy of detailed consideration (refer Figure 2.5).

The eastern region is currently served by the Hurstbridge line and Ringwood group of lines. These lines have witnessed significant growth over the last two years and, as at 2006, there is limited spare capacity for additional growth. Most of the existing lines have significant lengths of single track that limit both system capacity and reliability; in some cases, such as from Box Hill to Ringwood, the existing double track still limits capacity and reliability.

At many existing stations, the lack of appropriate passenger and inter-modal facilities are key issues. Such facilities are necessary to ensure ease of access and comfortable waiting/interchange conditions. While all stations warrant various levels of improvement, high priority locations include:

- Improved passenger safety and other facilities at inner-city stations such as Victoria Park.
- Box Hill Interchange - $20m-$30m is required to implement the Concept Plan developed by the State Government and Council to improve the rail and bus passenger areas and the station plaza.
- Ringwood Station – Requires extensive redevelopment to achieve its potential as a Transit City.
- Commuter Parking – Additional spaces are required at many locations but particularly Heathmont and Ringwood East and along the freeway corridor.
- Improved Interchanges – General improvements are required at Croydon, Ringwood East, Heathmont, Greensborough, Rosanna, Watsonia and Nunawading.

Railway level crossings continue cause major delays to vehicular traffic and to crossing bus routes, causing safety problems to all road users. Progressive upgrading, ultimately to full grade-separation, is required for all level crossings where such improvements are practicable.

Current Bus Issues

Bus services are generally the "poor relation" within the Melbourne public transport system, offering significantly lower levels of service than provided by the train and tram networks. While generally the coverage of bus services in the eastern Councils area is close to adequate (with Knox being the main exception), the level of service is poor and provision of on-road priority is close to non-existent.

MOTC has recognised the need to upgrade bus services and the DoI is now progressing with the introduction of new minimum bus service levels. However, the fact that the introduction of an hourly bus service is seen as a significant improvement illustrates just how poor existing service levels were. It is notable that tram and train service levels are between 5-8 services per hour and 3-4 services per hour respectively. Minimum bus service levels should be at least in this range.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the bus network, significant patronage increase has occurred on the Eastern Freeway services, to the point where there is now significant overcrowding and lack of space on the peak period buses and in the existing park 'n' ride facilities. This growth, in face of poor services, illustrates the significant latent demand that exists for a quality transit service.

All of the Councils associated with this submission regard the proposed DART, Orbital, SmartBus and Local Bus improvements as necessary but long overdue and these programs should be accelerated so as to be in place to meet growing demand, well before 2009/2010.

Current Tram Issues

The tram network is critical to meeting the transport needs of the inner eastern areas. Generally within this area the tram network provides good coverage and high service levels. However, the lack of on-road priority through critical sections results in slow services and poor reliability. The eastern Councils note the irony of the current situation, that when traffic congestion grows the level of service provided by the tram service falls, undermining the potential for a significant and sustainable mode shift.

There are a number of opportunities to incrementally expand the network to better integrate current and future urban development with the tram network. For example, the existing North Balwyn tram should be extended to Doncaster Hill Urban Village, thereby replicating the success of the Box Hill tram extension, and the Vermont South tram should be extended to Knox City.

2.3 HOW TO BALANCE THE NEEDS OF FREIGHT TRAFFIC WITH THE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS IN AREAS ADJACENT TO FREIGHT MOVEMENTS

2.3.1 Freight/Logistics Structure

The impact of freight on residential areas is most problematic in the inner areas of Melbourne and Yarra. In these areas, competition for road space on the existing arterial road network encourages freight traffic to divert onto smaller, less appropriate roads with adverse impacts on the communities affected.

The restructuring of Melbourne's container freight infrastructure could substantially reduce the numbers of containers being carried on trucks through the road network. For example, if rail sidings were extended onto all the main container wharves, and if rail-based intermodal hubs were established at (say) Altona, Somerton and Lyndhurst/Dandenong, there would be less need for a major concentration of container trucks at the Port of Melbourne and on its feeder/radial road network, less demand for road-based freight movements would mean fewer risks of truck through traffic using local/residential streets.

Further, if there was a more efficient system for using containers, there could be a major reduction in the numbers of trucks on the road carrying empty containers.

As part of the Victorian Government's Port@L project, there are plans for major upgrading of the Dynon rail yards; there are also plans to grade-separate Footscray Road and the existing railway line as part of the Port Rail Link development.

Nevertheless, with most port access traffic consignments hauled short distances, a major effort will be needed to achieve the State Government's target of 30 percent of such freight being hauled by rail by 2010.

With the DSE/DoI now having a freight traffic module in its Melbourne Integrated Transport Model (MITM), it is possible to analyse alternative freight/logistic strategies. The DoI model does not (yet) include freight movements by light truck; the network needs of this rapidly-growing commercial vehicle traffic category, such as for local deliveries and for transport of small/light, high value consignments, must be recognised.

As part of its assessment of the need to develop the East-West Link for truck freight, the Eddington Study Team must research the level of (in)efficiency of the current freight/logistic practices, and assess the full range of options for their improvement.

2.3.2 Priority for Freight Trucks

The economic value of travel time for business travel and trucks is many times that for private car travel (refer Table 2.1):

TABLE 2.1: VALUES OF VEHICLE OCCUPANT TRAVEL TIME AND FREIGHT VEHICLE OPERATING TIME (VICROAD, 2006 URBAN ROAD ONLY)

Vehicle Type	Occupant Travel Time ($ per person-hour)	Freight Travel Time ($ per vehicle-hour)
Private Car	$9.23	-
Business Car	$29.52	-
Light Truck	$19.32	$0.51
Heavy Rigid Truck	$20.22	$4.73
Six-axle Articulated Truck	$20.94	$14.00

That means that, wherever possible, arterial road traffic operations should be arranged to minimise delays to trucks. Consistent with the overall transport planning principles set out in Section 1.3, and in support of broader initiatives to increase the freight role of rail, there are three meaningful ways in which this could, subject to detailed investigation, be done:

- encourage private and discretionary travel to use public transport services which do not interfere with on-road truck operations (especially light or heavy rail services with full grade-separation from the surface road network);
- at points of concentrated congestion, provide priority or exclusive-use traffic lanes for trucks (such as already apply on the eastbound ramps connecting Warrigal Road to the Monash Freeway);
- use road pricing to ensure that costs of vehicle operation suitably reflect the economic costs of vehicle use (e.g. apply tolls on driver-only or low-occupancy private vehicles on those roads, or at those times of day, where capacity is more valuable for freight traffic, as is done on the Dublin Port Tunnel).

Such measures may have potential for delivering similar economic benefits to freight operations as would constructing new roads for unrestricted (mixed) traffic use. These measures must be thoroughly assessed by the Eddington Study Team.

The importance of the East-West Link as a freight traffic route is enhanced by its role as the convenient route for transport of high-value consignments, such as between the established and emerging manufacturing industries in the eastern suburbs and Melbourne Airport.

2.3.3 Environmental and Amenity Impacts

Where there is unavoidable proximity between freight traffic and incompatible commercial and residential land uses, that freight traffic should be tightly controlled and regulated by, for example:

- vehicle size or mass restrictions;
- time-of-day operating limits;
- prohibition on hazardous cargoes (except for local deliveries);
- roadside acoustic treatments to contain vehicle (predominantly truck) noise to acceptable limits.

Increased truck traffic along the East-West Link and the Eastern Freeway, for example, will increase noise and pollution impacts on adjacent residential areas. Appropriate measures must be applied to contain the impacts to acceptable levels.

2.4 DEVELOPMENT OF OPTIONS TO ADDRESS CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS AND FUTURE DEMAND, FUTURE NEEDS OF PORT AND ASSOCIATED COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC INCLUDING THE GOVERNMENT'S 30/2010 TARGET, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN THE CORRIDOR

2.4.1 Addressing Capacity Constraints on Freight

The most sustainable ways of removing capacity constraints on road freight transport, both now and in future, are outlined in Section 2.3, namely:

- maximising the contribution of rail, thereby reducing the capacity needed for road/truck freight movement;
- restructuring Melbourne's intermodal hub (road/rail container) system to minimise the need for road transport of full and empty containers;
- encouraging private car drive-alone commuters to use alternative sustainable transport modes (i.e. carpool, public transport, cycle and walk) so that more arterial road capacity is available for high-value freight;
- subject to detailed investigation, providing priority or road pricing preference for trucks along congested routes or at congested intersections.

If there is evidence that the above actions are insufficient to provide substantial improvements in freight system efficiency, it may be necessary to provide additional traffic capacity (e.g. East-West Link as a tunnel). In that eventuality, it is important to ensure that community benefits are maximised by:

- designing any tunnel to accommodate the special requirements of hazardous cargoes;
- providing access roads with sufficient capacity;
- ensuring that any tolls are structured so that surface roads are not attractive as alternate routes with associated amenity impacts (as per Toorak Road diversions off the Monash Freeway) which typically fall to local Councils to solve/manage.

The Eddington Study Team must ensure that, if a new arterial road is proposed along the East-West Link, all local streets are returned to local communities, so that they can decide on their preferred future mix of uses for open space, walk, cycle, public transport, local vehicular traffic and parking.

2.4.2 Addressing Capacity Constraints on Transit

As discussed in Section 1.3, Melbourne 2030 set a target of 20 percent of motorised travel by public transport by 2020; the Government has also recently set a target of 60 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. There are no clear strategies for achieving these two targets, but a major increase in pubic transport usage, and hence capacity, is certain to be required (i.e. over and above the extra capacity needed to deal with the recent increase in transit patronage due to increased petrol prices).

Clearly the State Government must complete their MOTC program as a priority. Given the significant "unexpected" increase in ridership, this program should be accelerated to ensure the current mode shift is not undermined by the lack of adequate system capacity. Furthermore, the Government must quickly engage with all stakeholders to develop a long term (beyond MOTC) plan for public transport improvement and expansion.

Critical to the needs of the eastern Councils is identifying the best way of providing a high capacity, high quality transit system to meet the needs of the eastern sector Council areas (including along the Eastern Freeway, as outlined in the East-West Link Needs Assessment terms of reference). The need for such improvement has been recognised consistently in previous planning studies (the NCCCS being the most recent) and the Government's failure to identify a preferred solution and commit to its implementation is a concern to all eastern sector Councils.

Bus and light rail are potentially appropriate options, but both of these have significant limitations if restricted to the existing surface road network at both the Doncaster and CAD ends. It is likely that the only feasible option that provides a high quality solution would involve tunnelling at either end of the Eastern Freeway segment. International experience suggests that, in this situation, a medium capacity or Light Metro system using the latest in automatic technology and providing high frequency (12 services/hour or better) would be an alternative which overcomes many of the limitations associated with incremental expansion of the existing heavy rail network.

A high quality transit system alone, whether using buses, light rail or heavy rail, will not meet all the needs of the eastern Councils area. Other upgrades are required to ensure the existing infrastructure is used to its fullest extent. This includes:

- Elimination of all single line sections of metropolitan railway. Single line railways have no place in a metropolitan rail system and their continued existence in the metropolitan Melbourne is testament to the historical lack of investment in the system.
- Resolving other railway capacity constraints, such as providing a third line from Box Hill to Ringwood.
- An extensive interchange improvement program including the Box Hill, Ringwood and Greensborough centres.
- Upgrading all other railway stations to modern standards.
- Elimination of level crossings on major arterial roads on the Ringwood line.
- Full and early implementation of the SmartBus and Orbital programs.
- Improvement to minimum bus service levels (2 buses/hour, 7 days per week) throughout the metropolitan area.
- Expansion of park'n'ride facilities at stations and along the freeway corridor.

2.5 IN DEVELOPING OPTIONS, CONSIDERATION WILL BE GIVEN TO A RANGE OF MEASURES TO MEET FUTURE DEMANDS. CONTRIBUTION TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GROWING VICTORIA TOGETHER TRANSPORT TARGETS WILL ALSO BE CONSIDERED AS PART OF THE ASSESSMENT.

In formulating a preferred "option" for the East-West Link, there is an opportunity to concurrently address the State Government's three overall transport targets:

- improving the capacity and economic efficiency of Melbourne's (and the State's) freight distribution system;
- increasing public transport usage to meet its 20/20/20 target;
- decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.

In relation to the first, use of the East-West Link as a heavy rail freight route would require a detailed and evidence-based assessment of need, compared to other modes. Environmental and amenity issues would also require careful consideration. However, an East-West Link option which reduces private car traffic, and which therefore releases arterial road capacity for high-value freight would provide significant (albeit indirect) benefits to overall freight distribution efficiency.

In this context, the eastern sector Councils preferred option for the East-West Link is one which contributes to an integrated and sustainable transport system, including a major improvement in public transport infrastructure and services. Initially, this could comprise a higher level of operational priority for the existing bus services along the Eastern Freeway and its feeder roads, together with greatly increased capacity and convenience for park 'n' ride and cycle/walk access facilities. Later, depending on the outcome of feasibility studies, light rail or heavy rail could be appropriate (e.g. from the Melbourne CAD, along the Eastern Freeway, servicing Doncaster Hill Urban Village and beyond).

Such improvements in public transport along the East-West Link should be seen as part of a comprehensive improvement program for the eastern sector of Melbourne, including:

- upgrading of the Hurstbridge and Ringwood railway lines;
- grade-separation of railway level crossings (e.g. Springvale Road);
- upgrading Box Hill, Greensborough and other major tram/bus/rail interchanges;
- upgrading all other railway stations to modern standards;
- extension of tram services beyond Balwyn North to Doncaster and beyond Vermont South to Knox City;
- improving on-road operating conditions for Orbital and Smart Bus services.

To encourage full utilisation of the improved public transport infrastructure and services along the East-West Link, there should be a major increase in State Government commitment to (and support of) Travel Demand Management. While the formative Travel Smart program is commendable, a much more widespread and intensive effort is required to achieve a significant community shift to the sustainable transport modes (i.e. carpool, public transport, cycle and walking).

The Northern Central City Corridor Strategy (2003 Draft Report) concluded that, through a combination of Travel Demand Management, improved public transport, road and parking management, there would be no need for construction of a new road along the East-West Link corridor. However, if a major road solution is ultimately proposed for the East-West Link, it is important that the remaining parts of the road network have revised traffic management arrangements so as to:

- allow improved operating (priority) conditions for trams and buses;
- allow increased capacity and safety for cyclists and pedestrians (e.g. widespread application of the Copenhagen bike lanes, as being implemented by the City of Melbourne along Swanston Street);
- discourage and/or prevent overspill traffic from using local streets, such as those drivers who currently choose Toorak Road to avoid the tolled section of City Link.

2.6 FUNDING ISSUES, INCLUDING SEQUENCING OF PROJECTS ACCORDING TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDING CAPACITY, AND THE CAPACITY OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TO DELIVER

2.6.1 Project Evaluation and Resource Allocation

All Local and State Governments have long lists of projects competing for scarce resources; the issue is not which projects are worthwhile, but which of the worthwhile projects should have top priority.

In assessing options for the East-West Link, the Eddington Study Team must not allow marginal (and arguably meaningless) potential travel time savings to low-occupancy private car occupants to dominate the economic analysis. Instead a comprehensive triple-bottom line analysis must be done, that is covering (not only) economic aspects, but also social and ecological aspects. That form of analysis would be consistent with the transport planning principles set out in Section 1.3, and it would allow all aspects of improved public transport to be fully recognised.

The Federal Government recognises the national importance of transport infrastructure which improves freight movement, (e.g. access to ports, airports and regional highways). When projects can make major improvements, AusLink subsidy funding can be obtained. It could be argued that, from an overall sustainability point of view, public transport improvement projects are just as (or even more) deserving of Federal subsidy funding.

In the East-West Link case, the proposed public transport improvements would materially assist freight operations, as well as being beneficial for private travel. On that basis, they should qualify for Federal financial subsidy assistance.

2.6.2 Funding by Tolls

Funding is an important consideration for any major project. Tolling has been adopted as a preferred means of funding major road projects for many years in Melbourne, most recently for the CityLink and EastLink projects. Tolls, or an equivalent, have not been adopted to the same extent to fund public transport improvements. Both the Brisbane and Sydney Airport Rail Links were funded through private sector finance but remain controversial because of their failure to deliver the expected passenger volumes.

Since the introduction of tolls on CityLink, the Moonee Valley City Council reports that traffic volumes on Mt Alexander Road have increased by more than 40 percent. This is comprised of "toll avoiders" who choose not to pay the CityLink charges but who previously would have used the freeway. Overall, Moonee Valley estimates the impact of CityLink tolls is in order of $60m due to the higher congestion. Toorak Road is likewise impacted by CityLink; Yarra Trams estimate that travel times on the Toorak tram route have increased substantially due to the increased congestion.

In Sydney, with Australia's most recent example of a "cross city" tunnel, the potential conflict between tolls and project objectives is most clear. The objective of Sydney's cross-city tunnel was to remove through traffic from the streets of central Sydney; it was as much about improving the amenity of central Sydney as it was about improving the travel time for the users of the tunnel. However, the tolls were applied only to the motorists who, predictably, objected to being "forced" to pay. The end result was traffic volumes lower than expected and, importantly, the objective of improved amenity was not realised to its fullest extent.

Different views are held by the various eastern sector Councils regarding the construction of a tunnel and there was not consensus in regards to support or rejection, but, if the Eddington Study Team recommends a mixed-traffic East-West Link road tunnel funded by tolls, it is important that there are no adverse traffic impacts on the at-grade local and regional network. In particular:

- **the tunnel must be designed to accommodate hazardous cargoes and have full provision of emergency access facilities;**
- **there must be no easy opportunities for drivers to use at-grade roads to avoid tolls;**
- **local authorities must be permitted and suitably funded to modify the management of their local streets to ensure optimum conditions for the local communities, including pedestrians, cyclists, public transport services and local vehicular traffic.**

Also, any tolls should be seen as an opportunity to discourage excessive private car use, and generate funds for public transport and other sustainable transport improvements, rather than solely to repay tunnel construction debt.

3 FURTHER INVOLVEMENT IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

It is critical that the mistakes of the past are not repeated should a new East/West tunnel be built. One of the key benefits of such a project should be improved amenity on and around the surface road system. For public transport, this should mean greater levels of on-road priority and less impact from traffic congestion.

The eastern sector Councils support the position adopted in Melbourne City Council's transport plan that, should a new road and public transport tunnel be built, there should be a corresponding reduction in the through-traffic capacity of the surface road network. The road space freed on the surface should then be dedicated to public transport priority, improved cycling and pedestrian networks and as new "urban" space (e.g. open space).

In recent years, Councils in Melbourne have been actively involved in preparing Integrated Transport Plans, to assist in implementing the State Government's Melbourne 2030 (and related) development strategy for Melbourne. In addition, some of the eastern sector Councils have participated in the Northern Central City Corridor Strategy and the North East Integrated Transport Strategy. Although some progress has been made through Meeting Our Transport Challenges, there is an urgent need for more direct and substantial State Government involvement in resolving transport issues, particularly relating to public transport.

The East-West Link Needs Assessment provides (another) opportunity for the resources and local knowledge of Councils to assist in the planning of major transport infrastructure. Beyond the opportunity to make this submission to the Eddington Study Team, the eastern sector Councils seek the following:

- an opportunity to present this submission to the Eddington Study Team;
- on-going Council participation in the consultation, analysis and evaluation in the East-West Link Needs Assessment;
- accelerated procedures for planning, design and implementation of tram, bus and rail improvements, including interchanges, in the eastern sector Council areas;
- integration of land use and transport planning for Melbourne, including participation by Local Government, so that sustainable transport objectives can be more efficiently achieved.