

Please Quote: VRPC007263
(File No: PC026354)

Cr Roberto Colanzi
Mayor
City of Yarra
PO Box 168
RICHMOND VIC 3121

Dear Cr Colanzi

COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON CHANDLER HIGHWAY UPGRADE PROJECT

I refer to your letter dated 26 November 2015, regarding the Yarra City Council's resolution on the Chandler Highway Upgrade Project. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The Victorian Government has committed \$110 million to widen the Chandler Highway from Yarra Boulevard to Heidelberg Road in Alphington and build a new bridge over the Yarra River. The upgrade is designed to help ease congestion, improve reliability for drivers, and improve safety for all road users including cyclists and pedestrians.

After careful consideration of the overall impact to the road network and road users, residents and businesses, surrounding land, the environment and local heritage, the Victorian Government announced on 27 January 2016 the adoption of VicRoads preferred option. This includes building a new six-lane bridge to the west of the existing Chandler Highway Bridge and converting the existing bridge to a shared user path.

To assist in Council understanding the project in more detail, the following information is provided in response to the issues raised in Council's resolution.

(i) VISUAL IMPACTS

VicRoads will be undertaking urban design works in early 2016 and will engage with Yarra Council and the local community as part of this process. As part of the works, the prospective tenderers will be required to demonstrate strong urban design capabilities, which will be considered as part of the tender evaluation. VicRoads will be looking to achieve a high quality urban design outcome that is fitting for the environment and incorporates feedback from the community and local residents.

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(ii) ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The priority is to avoid and/or minimise impacts to trees and vegetation and to protect native or significant trees. An independent assessment found that the announced option would have less impact to significant native trees. The area to the east of the existing bridge contains more old, indigenous medium and large trees, compared to the small area of remnant vegetation on the western side. I also note that Council was provided the draft Flora and Fauna report on 30 October 2015. The table below compares the environmental impacts of the western and eastern options:

Alignment	Vegetation				Offset	
	Remnant patches (ha)	Scattered Trees	Total Extent (ha)^	Habitat Hectares	Amount (General Biodiversity Equivalence Units)	Minimum Strategic Biodiversity Score
West (4/6)	0.264	0	0.264	0.053	0.019	0.196
East (4/6)	0.000	14	0.985	0.197	0.060	0.162

^Where native vegetation includes scattered trees, each tree is converted into hectares using a standard area calculation of 0.071 hectares per tree.

(iii) IMPACTS ON YARRA RIVER

The new bridge is expected to be constructed in-line with the piers of the existing bridge. VicRoads expects that there will be no additional flood impacts. A hydrology assessment is currently being undertaken in accordance Melbourne Water requirements, for its approval. VicRoads and Melbourne Water will impose strict requirements on the contractor for works within the Yarra River floodplain. These requirements will be provided to Yarra Council when finalised.

(iv) NOISE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

VicRoads commissioned an independent noise impact assessment in early 2015 to assess existing and future traffic noise levels for nearby properties and local residents. A copy of the noise modelling report is available on the VicRoads website, vicroads.vic.gov.au.

The report indicates that current noise levels are already high. VicRoads will use this opportunity to reduce noise impacts to the surrounding area as much as possible by implementing a suite of noise mitigation measures including noise walls and other physical treatments. VicRoads will continue to meet with impacted residents to discuss specific treatment options.

A detailed noise assessment will now be undertaken for the confirmed alignment.

(v) TRAFFIC IMPACTS

The Heidelberg Road intersection will be upgraded to include additional turning lanes and a slip lane for easier and safer access into Heidelberg Road and the Chandler Highway. The traffic lights at the intersection will be adjusted to provide a balanced amount of green time for drivers passing through the intersection.

Drivers will experience a safer driving environment and reduced traffic queues when travelling through the intersection.

A new set of traffic lights will also be installed at the Chandler Highway and Yarra Boulevard intersection, providing easier and safer access for all road users heading towards Yarra Boulevard and Guide Dogs Victoria.

Travel times are expected to be reduced by up to 8 minutes during the AM peak and 13 minutes during the PM peak. Full traffic modelling results are available on the VicRoads website, *vicroads.vic.gov.au*.

(vi) LOCAL ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

VicRoads notes the community concerns regarding the AMCOR developer's plans to close right turn movements out of Coate Avenue. VicRoads has undertaken a detailed analysis and will retain current access arrangements at Coate Avenue. Access into and out of Rex Avenue will be left-in and left-out only, as presented in all design options on display in October 2015.

VicRoads will also be undertaking a formal consultation process for the implementation of clearways along Princess Street in Kew, and Grange Road in Alphington / Fairfield. This was raised as a possible improvement during the community consultation process.

(vii) BUS IMPROVEMENTS

During the consultation period there were many requests for more public transport services in the area, including more frequent bus services and additional bus stops. VicRoads is continuing discussions with Public Transport Victoria (PTV) to ensure that at the time of opening there are more frequent and regular bus services in the area, and prioritising these services along the new lanes.

(viii) BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

The preferred option will improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians, with a shared user path being built along Chandler Highway from Heidelberg Road to the Eastern Freeway. The shared user path will provide cyclists with a more direct and safer route to surrounding trails and paths, including the Main Yarra Trail. The shared user path will also link directly with the Chandler Highway and Yarra Boulevard intersection, giving cyclists safe opportunities to cross the highway and continue their journey along the Yarra River.

Cyclists will also enjoy more convenient and easier access to the Main Yarra Trail. The project involves providing an alternative to the 70 steps that are currently located along the Main Yarra Trail, which means cyclists will no longer have to dismount their bicycle to continue along the trail.

As a result of the consultation process the design is being refined, to include separated cycling lanes for cyclists travelling southbound, on-road facilities for cyclists travelling northbound, and a safe east-west crossing for pedestrians.

(ix) COST OF EASTERN ALIGNMENT

It is estimated that the adoption of an eastern alignment would require approximately 10,000 sq.m. from the Alphington Paper Mill site, as well as land from the Guide Dogs Victoria site and Willsmere Chandler Park. Including the value of this land pushes the cost of an eastern alignment option above \$140m, without including additional costs related to project delays, compensation and legal fees in the project cost.

(x) BENEFIT COST RATIO

Calculations to determine the Benefit Cost Ratio of various options are contained within the Business Case which is a Cabinet-in Confidence document.

(xi) OFFSETS AND REPLANTING

All offsets required for the removal of vegetation will be sourced and secured prior to construction. VicRoads is committed to consulting with the relevant Councils to determine suitable landscape plans for the site.

(xii) COMMUNITY INPUT AND RESPONSE

VicRoads has assessed this feedback and provided a response and commitment to the community, which is available on VicRoads' website, *vicroads.vic.gov.au*.

(xiii) PROJECT TIMELINES AND FUTURE PLANNING

With the State Government announcement of a preferred alignment VicRoads is now finalising future consultation plans for engagement with the community and Councils. This will include consultation with local residents regarding noise and visual impacts, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, use of the existing bridge, clearways and the final design.

VicRoads expects construction to commence by mid-2017.

(xiv) SOCIAL IMPACT

It is acknowledged that the project will have impacts on the local and wider community. VicRoads is committed to understanding what matters to people and gain that appreciation by asking them directly.

Following the recent community consultation we understand the social impacts that matter to those living near the highway are:

- project proximity to homes
- loss of amenity and visual impact for those living close to the project
- noise and air quality
- local access in and around the area and local traffic movement

A Local Community Impact Overview summarises this and is available on the VicRoads website.

(xv) DONCASTER RAIL

The Fairfield rail spur/Chandler Highway option for the Doncaster Rail alignment was not listed as a preferred option, as it has a number of significant disadvantages when compared to other options. This was acknowledged in the Yarra City Council's Ordinary Meeting of Council Agenda dated 24 November 2015. Council officers also acknowledged that all Chandler Highway options provide for pedestrian and cyclist access to a potential railway station located in the median of the Eastern Freeway.

(xvi) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

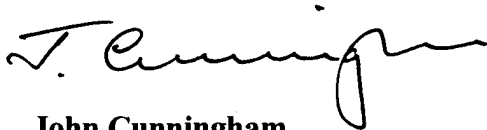
Additional information (that expands on the contents of this letter) is available on the VicRoads website. This includes the following reports:

- Community Feedback Analysis and Local Community Impact Overview;
- Traffic Modelling Reports;
- Heritage Impact Statement;
- Land Use Overview; and
- Traffic Noise Assessment.
- VicRoads response to community feedback

VicRoads will continue to work with the Yarra City Council, other key stakeholders and the community throughout the development of the Chandler Highway Upgrade design and during future construction of the works.

Should the Council require any additional information or clarification of the information provided, Mr Damien Afxentis, VicRoads' Project Director, Metropolitan Projects Western (Tel: 8572 7901), would be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely



John Cunningham
Acting Executive Director- Metropolitan Operations

24 / 2 / 2016