

5.1 NORTH EAST LINK - COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE NORTH EAST LINK TECHNICAL SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corridor Option C is strongly supported as the preferred option for the North East Link. This is consistent with Council's long held position recognising the need to complete Melbourne's Ring Road as a direct orbital link from the Metropolitan Ring Road to Eastlink at Ringwood.

On 7 August 2017, the North East Link Authority released a Technical Summary identifying four preferred Corridor Options, and held ten drop-in community sessions over a two week period in mid to late August. All four Corridor Options impact on the City of Banyule, although Corridor Options C and D are towards the municipality's northern boundary. Whichever option is chosen, Banyule is in the unique position of being impacted by all options, to varying degrees.

A response to the Technical Summary has been prepared for Council consideration. Corridor Option C is preferred as it provides an orbital connection from the Metropolitan Ring Road at Greensborough to EastLink, south of Ringwood. Corridor Option C is considered to provide greater regional benefits and better meet the North East Link project criteria. Corridor Option A, which provides connection from the Metropolitan Ring Road at Greensborough, through Banyule to connect with the Eastern Freeway at Bulleen is not supported.

Consistent with Council's North East Link Project Action Plan adopted in April 2017, the Banyule North East Link Transport Forum was held in May 2017. A second Forum was held on 6 September 2017. The majority of attendees supported Corridor Option C.

A key message for the Government is what the community are saying. Council has conducted a postcard survey of 52,000 residential properties inviting residents to select their preferred option and to share their views on the options. **Of the nearly 8,000 responses 68% of residents do not support Corridor Option A with the strongest preference being for Corridor Option C.**

Council has initiated a North East Link Group of Councils, comprising Banyule, Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Nillumbik and Yarra Ranges, to share information and advocate to the North East Link Authority for the best outcomes for the north east region.

Corridor Option C is strongly supported by the Victorian Transport Association. Council analysis of the North East Link Technical Summary indicates that Corridor Option A does not meet the North East Link project criteria on a number of measures, including, but not limited to:

- Inadequate capacity at the Eastern Freeway to cater for any additional traffic travelling west and inadequate capacity at the Mullum Mullum / Melba tunnels for traffic travelling east.

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- Corridor Option A mostly catering for commuter traffic which is contrary to the NELA objective for the North East Link to improve freight efficiency.
- Community Severance impacts on the communities of Greensborough, Watsonia and Macleod.
- Potential increased traffic volumes and traffic noise on arterial roads and the local road network.
- Potential environmental impacts on Banyule's parklands, reserves and green open space including its effects on the State significant Banyule Flats and Warringal Parklands.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes Banyule community's support for Corridor Option C.
2. Strongly supports Corridor Option C which is considered to provide greater regional benefits and better meet the North East Link objectives.
3. Rejects Corridor Option A as not meeting the North East Link objectives on a number of measures, including but not limited to:
 - a) Inadequate capacity at the Eastern Freeway to cater for any additional traffic travelling west and inadequate capacity at the EastLink Mullum Mullum / Melba tunnels for traffic travelling east.
 - b) Propensity of Corridor A to cater for mostly commuter traffic which is contrary to the North East Link Authority objective for the North East Link to move freight more efficiently.
 - c) Impacts of severance on the communities of Greensborough, Watsonia and Macleod.
 - d) Potential increased traffic volumes and traffic noise on arterial roads and the local road network.
 - e) Potential environmental impacts on Banyule's parklands, reserves and green open space including its effects on Banyule Flats and Warringal Parklands.
4. Endorses Council's response to the North East Link Technical Summary at Attachment 1 and forwards a copy to the North East Link Authority, Premier of Victoria, Minister for Transport and local Members of Parliament.
5. Notes Council's list of complementary projects (Refer Section 5 of Submission to North East Link Authority in Attachment 1) and requests the North East Link Authority incorporate them into the project.
6. Develops a Resourcing Plan and Communication Strategy to promote Council's support for Corridor Option C and associated transport projects in the north east of Melbourne.
7. Notes Council's letter to the North East Link Authority of 26 September 2017 requesting the release of all available technical data used to compile the North East Link Technical Summary, to provide a greater understanding of the background and outcomes of the document – Attachment 2.

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| <p>8. Notes the Victorian Transport Association (VTA) support for Corridor Option C – Attachment 3.</p> |
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COUNCIL PLAN

This report is in line with Council's City Plan key direction to "support sustainable transport".

BACKGROUND

Council's long held position recognises the need to complete Melbourne's Ring Road as a direct orbital link from the M80 Metropolitan Ring Road to EastLink at Ringwood.

At its 14 December 2009 meeting, Council considered an initial report on the status of the proposed North East Link and an overview of relevant Council resolutions and positions on the link, regional transport, and associated heritage and environmental issues. An update report has been presented to Council quarterly.

In September 2016, Council established the North East Link Focus Group to provide a formal mechanism to consult with representatives of the Banyule community throughout the development of an action plan advocating on the North East Link. The North East Link Project Action Plan was adopted by Council in April 2017.

Infrastructure Victoria released its Infrastructure Strategy in December 2016 which included the North East Link as a top priority with construction recommended within 10 to 15 years.

In November 2016, the Federal Government announced funding for an investigation into transport in North East Melbourne, including options for a future road link in the north east, followed by a commitment from the State Government of \$35 million to develop a business case, along with planning approval and tender processes in 2018 and up to \$10 billion to complete the construction of the Metropolitan Ring Road if re-elected in 2018. The Victorian Budget 2017/18 increased the funding to \$100 million.

The North East Link Authority (NELA) was established by the State Government in December 2016 to oversee the delivery of the North East Link project. NELA is responsible for all aspects of the project including developing the business case, stakeholder and community engagement and procurement. The State Government has indicated that it will announce the preferred route in early 2018, with the Environmental Effects Statement and procurement processes being progressed through 2018 to enable a construction contract to be let following the 2018 State Election.

The Banyule North East Link Transport Forum on 30 May 2017 was attended by 700 residents. Following the forum, Council took the initiative to convene the North East Link Group of Councils – Banyule, Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Nillumbik and Yarra Ranges to share information and advocate to NELA for the best outcomes for the north east region.

On 7 August 2017, the State Government announced four preferred corridor options. Each option begins at the Ring Road in Greensborough and connects to either the Eastern Freeway or EastLink, with all options involving tunnels, new surface roads

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and bridges. Immediately following the announcement, NELA conducted twelve (12) drop-in community information sessions, including three in Banyule, at Rosanna, Ivanhoe and Greensborough.

A second Banyule North East Transport Forum was held on 6 September 2017, attended by over 300 residents. In September, Council conducted a postcard survey of 52,000 residential properties inviting residents to select their preferred option and to share their views on the options. Postcards were to be returned by the end of September. The outcome of the survey results as of early October have been included in this report with a final updated outcome to be included in a late report at the 16 October 2017 Council Meeting.

The Victorian Transport Association (VTA), which represents nearly 800 owners of transport companies and supporting services, has written to Council confirming its preference and support for Corridor Option C. The VTA recognises that Corridor Option C connects directly with EastLink and it will be the most attractive route for heavy vehicles. Corridor Option C delivers a freight access route that enables smooth movement of heavy vehicles through a specified route. The Victorian Transport Association letter confirming its position is included at Attachment 3.

LEGAL CONSIDERATION

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation contained in this report.

HUMAN RIGHTS CHARTER

Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (the Charter) outlines the basic human rights of all people in Victoria. The Charter requires that governments, local councils and other public authorities comply with Charter and to consider relevant Charter rights when they make decisions.

In developing this report to Council, the subject matter has been considered in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

It is considered that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues.

ADVOCACY

Council has long recognised the need to complete Melbourne's Ring Road as a direct orbital link from the M80 Metropolitan Ring Road at Greensborough to EastLink at Ringwood, together with supporting public transport improvements.

Given community concerns and government interest in transport in the North East of Melbourne, it is considered vital that Council maintains its strong advocacy position in order to hear from and obtain the best possible outcomes for the community.

In July 2016, Council appointed a Transport Advocacy Manager to help guide Council's response to critical transport projects and to influence thinking and developing advocacy strategies and alliances for the North East Link.

North East Link Project Action Plan

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In September 2016, Council established the North East Link Focus Group to provide a formal mechanism to consult with representatives of the Banyule community throughout the development of an action plan advocating on the North East Link. The North East Link Project Action Plan was adopted by Council in April 2017.

The Action Plan identifies four goals and nine actions which will address the issue of advocating for and facilitating discussion on the possible route options for the completion of the Metropolitan Ring Road, as well as identifying a future vision for Rosanna Road.

The goals of the Action Plan are to:

- Jointly advocate for the completion of the Metropolitan Ring Road;
- Facilitate and encourage discussion on potential route options for the completion of the Metropolitan Ring Road;
- Determine the vision of Rosanna Road; and
- Promote the Action Plan.

Rosanna Road

Council continues to advocate to VicRoads for improvements to Rosanna Road. Recent works include the completion of road safety improvements at the intersection of Rosanna Road and Lower Plenty Road and other intersection safety improvements. Discussions have also taken place on the possibility of relocating some power poles or removing them and undergrounding power lines on Rosanna Road to reduce the number to power pole truck strikes and improve road safety.

Council has indicated to VicRoads and NELA that the current Rosanna Road issues must be addressed in the short term. The NELA data confirms that the current traffic volumes are very high and continual throughout the day. It is inappropriate that resolution of the current traffic issues on Rosanna Road remain for ten years until the North East Link is completed.

CURRENT SITUATION

Progress Update

The NELA is developing a business case to identify the preferred NEL corridor alignment based on four corridor options presented in the North East Link Technical Summary (NELTS) released on 7 August 2017. NELA is seeking community and stakeholder input into its evaluation. Council's response to the NELTS has been prepared for consideration (Attachment 1).

Following the assessment of responses and further developing the technical, environmental and planning issues, NELA will present the Business Case to the State Government in December 2017. NELA will seek planning approval and are preparing tender processes to meet the Government's plan to be 'construction ready' prior to the State Election in November 2018.

The NELA has publically released a rudimentary time line (Table 1).

Time Line	
2017 Phase 1	Developing the business case for the project. Decision on a preferred corridor (Ministerial announcement December 2017)

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Early 2018 Phase 2	Detailed Design. Planning Studies including environmental, social and technical investigations. Proposed alignment along the preferred corridor decided.
Mid 2018 Phase 3	Procurement begins with project released to the market and the beginning of the competitive tender process. Further refining of the design and alignment.
Late 2018 Phase 4	State and Commonwealth approvals sought. Contracts signed after the 2018 Election. Preferred contractors selected in 2019.

Table 1 – NEL Project Timeline

The NELTS provides a snapshot of NELA’s investigations and analysis so far relating to:

- Why the North East Link is needed, including an overview of key existing conditions in Melbourne’s north-east
- Potential corridor options for North East Link
- How each of the options may perform against key areas of interest identified by stakeholders

Each Option begins at the Metropolitan Ring Road in Greensborough and connects to either the Eastern Freeway or EastLink. All options involve tunnels, new surface roads and bridges (see Figure 1).

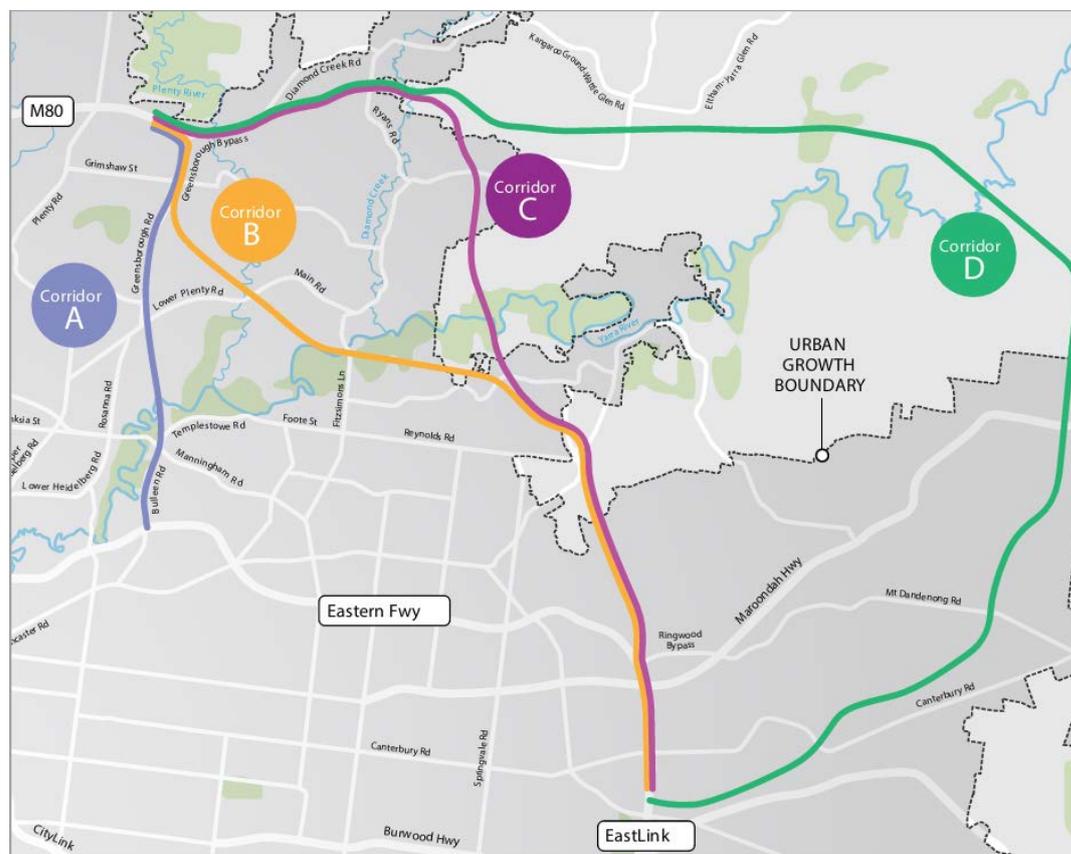


Figure 1 – NEL Corridor Options

Corridor Option A

Corridor A is defined as an 11km corridor which follows the Greensborough Highway south using the existing road reserve to Lower Plenty Road. Additionally, this Option

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may include improvements to the Eastern Freeway between Chandler Highway and Springvale Road. When Corridor Option A is considered from its origin at M80 to the Eastern Freeway and the possible improvements to the Eastern Freeway are included, the total travel distance is 26km, comparable to Corridor Options B and C.

The road will be tunnelled from Lower Plenty Road to Manningham Road and then run alongside Bulleen Road connecting to the Eastern Freeway at Bulleen. Corridor Option A will be a new freeway-standard road with Greensborough Highway and Bulleen Road being retained for local use. Interchanges are identified at the M80, Grimshaw Street, Lower Plenty Road Manningham Road and the Eastern Freeway near Bulleen Road.

NELA has scored Corridor Option A as performing very well against a series of measures including: reducing congestion in the north east; getting trucks off residential roads in the north east; connecting businesses; improving public transport connections and travel times; and improving connections for pedestrians and cyclists.

Corridor Option B

Corridor Option B is a 24km corridor which provides a semi-orbital connection from the M80 metropolitan ring road to EastLink at Canterbury Road. From the M80, the corridor follows Greensborough Highway south, using existing road reserve to just south of Grimshaw Street.

From Grimshaw Street, there is extensive tunnelling south east to near Heidelberg-Warrandyte Road, then overland to Reynolds Road and tunnel to EastLink. Interchanges are identified at the M80, Grimshaw Street, Lower Plenty Road/Main Road, Reynolds Road and EastLink at Canterbury Road. Corridor B also includes a proposed extension of Reynolds Road and improvements to Springvale Road, north of Mitcham Road. NELA has scored Corridor Option B as performing either well or neutral to a range of measures.

Corridor Option C

Corridor Option C is a 26km corridor which connects the M80 to EastLink at Canterbury Road. The corridor follows the M80 east overland, partly in the existing road reservation, to Ryans Road, then extensive tunnelling south to near Heidelberg-Warrandyte Road, then overland south to Reynolds Road and tunnel to EastLink. Interchanges are identified at the M80, Diamond Creek Road, Ryan's Road, Reynolds Road and EastLink at Canterbury Road.

Corridor Option C provides a true orbital function with greater connectivity between Melbourne's northern and south-eastern areas.

NELA has scored Corridor Option C as performing well to a range of measures including: reducing congestion in the north east, getting trucks off residential roads in the north east, connecting businesses, improving public transport connections and travel times and improving connections for pedestrians and cyclists.

Corridor Option D

Corridor Option D is a 40km corridor which connects the M80 with EastLink at Wantirna, using part of the proposed Healesville Freeway Reserve. The route travels east overland from the M80 to Eltham-Yarra Glen road, then extensive tunnelling to south of Maroondah Highway at Lilydale and overland to Eastlink at Boronia Road. Interchanges are identified at the M80, Eltham-Yarra Glen Road, Maroondah

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Highway, Mt Dandenong Road and EastLink at Boronia Road. NELA has scored Corridor Option D as performing poorly or very poorly against a range of measures.

A copy of each Corridor Plan is provided at Attachment 4.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Announcement of four Corridor Options

Following the State Government announcement of four preferred corridor options on 7 August 2017, public consultation commenced within five days. Concern was expressed about the lack of notice for the first community drop-in information session on 12 August. The consultation process is considered rushed and insufficient to allow the community to fully participate.

NELA Drop-in Information Sessions

NELA conducted ten drop-in style information sessions throughout north and east Melbourne between Saturday 12 August and Thursday 24 August to inform the community about the corridor options. Three of the information sessions were held in Banyule in Ivanhoe, Rosanna and Greensborough. Two further sessions in Boroondara and Knox were added in September 2017.

All sessions were well attended by the community, with Council representatives attending each session. Issues raised by the community included:

- Concern at the style of community consultation conducted by NELA.
- Concern that the North East Link would not be built for at least ten years and transport issues would continue to build for Rosanna Road, Greensborough Highway and Grimshaw Street.
- No solution to placarded and over dimensional freight using Rosanna Road.
- Environmental concerns about the impact on land at the Simpson Army Barracks, Banyule Flats and Warringal Parklands.
- Concern at the wider regional transport and strategic freight issue.
- Lack of consideration of public transport alternatives.
- North East Link connection to Eastern Freeway and its inability to cater for additional traffic to the CBD and western suburbs.
- Corridor Option A creating a split in the Banyule community.

Banyule North East Link Transport Forums

In representing its community, Council has actively worked to inform residents about the North East Link corridors and their impacts on Banyule. Information has been shared in the form of advertisements in the Leader newspaper, social media posts, postcard survey and via The Banner and the Shaping Banyule website.

On 30 May 2017, Council hosted the first Banyule North East Link Forum. Over 700 residents attended the Forum which included a panel of speakers representing Council, North East Link Authority, VicRoads and RACV. In a first for Banyule, the event included a live feed to Facebook, which attracted over 2,500 views, with many people posting comments and providing feedback during the session.

In response to the State Government announcement of the four preferred corridor options and community response to the NELA drop-in information sessions, a second

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Banyule North East Forum was held on 6 September 2017, which was attended by over 300 residents. The event included a live feed to Facebook.

Feedback collated from the forum and through online comments through the Shaping Banyule website highlighted a resounding objection of Corridor Option A (52%) and Corridor Option B (33%), with a majority of people citing a preference for Corridor Option C (77%).

The community was also invited to submit comments on the night. A summary of the comments is given below in Themes (*Table 3*) and Corridor Options (*Table 4*).

Theme	Comment
Environment	Protect our green wedges. Tunnel smoke stacks. Environmental Impact Study to be done now. Leave parks and gardens alone. Protect the Plenty River and Banyule Flats area. Impact on Kangaroos and threatened species.
Traffic/Transport	Placarded trucks cannot use tunnels. Severance caused by a freeway link. Flow on effects on Eastern Freeway and Eastlink. Tolls on Eastern Freeway. More Freight on rail and better public transport.
Amenity	What will interchanges look like Compulsory Acquisition of property Impact on community due to severance
General	Too expensive A preferred route should not be before a business case Wants say on the final option

Table 3 – Community Comments - Themes

Theme	Comment
Corridor Option A	Would be a travesty to the Environment. Truck Noise and Pollution. Decision on Corridor A already made. Corridor A not viable due to capacity issues on Eastern Fwy and Bulleen Road. Corridor A not cheapest when Eastern Fwy added.
Corridor Option B	Environment concerns. Transmission Lines undergrounded. Middle ground option.
Corridor Option C	Best outcome. Original proposal and better for trucks.
Corridor Option D	Best for growth, future generations

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	Cost effective
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Table 4 – Community Comments - Corridors

Postcard Surveys

To help inform Council's response to the NELA corridor options, Council sent a reply-paid postcard to every household in Banyule inviting residents to select their preferred option and to share their views on the options. The information was also shared on-line through the Shaping Banyule website. This is one of the largest forms of consultation that has ever been conducted by Banyule Council which reflects the importance of the issue and the desire to understand community views. 52,000 postcards were sent out with 6,285 postcards counted (although more have been received late and not yet counted) and 1,277 responses on Shaping Banyule (Table 5) at the time of completing this report. The responses provided strong support for Corridor Option C and 68% preferring a Corridor Option other than Corridor Option A.

Response Type	Number Received	Corridor A	Corridor B	Corridor C	Corridor D
Shaping Banyule	1,277	33%	14%	45%	7%
Postcard	6,285	32%	22%	37%	8%
TOTAL	7,474	32%	21%	39%	8%

Table 5 – Community Response (Valid responses only)

A late report will be provided to the 16 October 2017 Council meeting providing an update of the survey results.

North East Group of Councils

Council instigated a North East Link Group of Councils, including Banyule, Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Nillumbik and Yarra Ranges, to share information and advocate to NELA for the best community outcomes for the north east region. The Group considers the North East Link project to have the potential to deliver the most significant benefits ever seen in north east Melbourne and want to take this unique opportunity to capture significant benefits to all communities affected by the project.

The Group of Councils has met on a number of occasions including a workshop identifying common interests and topic areas that the Group wish to investigate jointly, and sharing views about priorities and opportunities related to the North East Link project.

The Group identified consistent themes related to regional issues including:

- Quality of public transport forces high reliance on cars.
- Travel patterns in the region are very diverse and not well understood.
- Active travel could be a much bigger part of the solution.
- Many arterial roads experience highly congested long peak periods.

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- Cross town public transport links need to be faster and more customer focussed.
- Population growth is adding pressure to aging networks.
- Need to look at the wider region holistically (north of M80 and south of M1).
- Railway reliability needs to be improved.

The Group formulated a range of complementary solutions around the themes of: outer east travel; active travel for local trips; Doncaster to CBD travel; regional bicycle travel; pricing of congested links; land use integration; longer distance travel across the region; road management; environment; and existing and new land use nodes. There was broad support for Hurstbridge Railway Line Improvements (Stage 2) and the Northern Arterial road project.

Additionally, the Group has identified a number of next steps including:

- Developing a Regional Integrated Transport Strategy.
- Building a case for arterial road and public transport investment to occur sooner than the north east link.
- Sharing experience and staff skills to improve outcomes for the local community and region.
- Collaboration on complementary works that can help solve congestion.

A copy of the summary of the Group of Councils discussions is provided at Attachment 5.

DISCUSSION

The key issues discussed in this section have been determined through consultation with the Banyule community and from analysis of the information made available by NELA.

Corridor Option C is considered the correct choice to best meet the transport needs now and into the future and meet the objectives of the project set out by NELA. It is clear that benefits, particularly freight, can be derived from the proposed North East Link, however it is critical that the correct corridor option is chosen. There is no doubt that an improved transport network is essential to make travel in the region easier, more reliable and is necessary to cater for current and future growth.

Council has long advocated for the completion of the Metropolitan Ring Road as a direct orbital link from the Greensborough Bypass to Eastlink, east of the tunnel. This would connect the freight centres of Dandenong, a future potential Port of Hastings and the agricultural centres in Gippsland with freight centres in northern Melbourne and the Hume Freeway and other interstate corridors.

Given community concerns and government interest in transport in the North East of Melbourne, it is considered vital that Council maintains its strong advocacy position in order to hear from and obtain the best possible outcomes for the community. Council will continue its advocacy through its Transport Advocacy Manager position, its North East Link Project Action Plan and the North East Region Group of Councils.

Analysis of North East Link Technical Summary

Council has requested the release of all available technical data used to compile the NELTS, to provide a greater understanding of the background and outcomes of the

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document. No additional information has been provided. The lack of transparency in information released has created significant concern in the community and made it difficult for Council to fully analyse all corridor options.

Corridor Option A

The NELTS and community updates present Corridor Option A as the best performing solution, listing benefits such as reducing congestion in the north-east, getting trucks off residential roads, and connecting more people to jobs and education. However, it is considered that this is a simplistic matrix of benefits.

Corridor Option A is forecast to carry a high volume of traffic at both the southern and northern ends. It does not provide a true orbital function, only adding to inner urban road capacity. It is not significantly adding to the strategic arterial road network capacity as it replaces an existing route whereas all other options provide an additional arterial road connection in the north east of Melbourne. Furthermore, a focus on inner urban road capacity will result in mode shift away from public transport in inner urban areas and exacerbate congestion on the connecting arterial road networks.

Corridor Option A will require significant additional lane capacity to be built on the Eastern Freeway to convey the existing and future traffic to EastLink and Melbourne CBD. Further, it is limited by the steep gradients in the Mullum Mullum and Melba Tunnels, making it unattractive to freight vehicles and increasing congestion. Corridor Option A will sever suburbs in Banyule, impacting those communities and affecting the community spirit, health and wellbeing of local residents.

Corridor Options A and B

Corridor Options A and B have a greater length directly impacting on Banyule than Corridor Options C and D. The main impacts and disadvantages of Corridor Options A and B have been grouped together under four categories – Environment, Social/Community Connectedness, Amenity and Traffic/Transport.

Environment

The parkland, reserves and green open space in Banyule are highly valued by the community and are valuable parcels of land. They are significant from a biodiversity and environmental perspective.

Banyule Flats and Warringal Parklands are environmentally sensitive habitats of state significance. The Warringal Parklands and Banyule Flats Ecological and Conservation Values assessment has been forwarded to NELA. Long lengths of tunnelling, with adjacent works during construction, has the potential to undermine sensitive flora, fauna and natural ecosystems. Impacts of air vents from tunnels also need careful consideration.

Additional to Banyule Flats and Warringal Parklands, Banyule has many other reserves and open space of local and regional importance which could be affected by Corridor Options A and B (Table 6).

Corridor Option A		Corridor Option B	
<i>Name</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Significance</i>
AK Line Reserve	Local	Gabonia Avenue Reserve	Local-Regional as corridor

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Watsonia Primary School	Local	Elder Street Reserve	Regional as corridor
Winsor Reserve	Local	Glenauburn Park	Local to Regional as corridor
Simpson Army Barracks	National - Commonwealth Land	Yallambie Park	Regional
359-389 Service Road, Watsonia	Local	Heidelberg Golf Club	Regional
Borlase Reserve	Local	Yallambie Tennis Club	Local
Creekbend Reserve	Regional	Montpellier Reserve	Regional
Riverbend Walk	Local	Yarra Valley Parklands	State
Warringal Parklands	Regional		
Banyule Flats	State		
Banyule Billabong	State		
Banksia Park	Regional		

Table 6 – Corridor Options A and B Reserves and Open Spaces of Significance

Social/Community Connectedness

Corridor Options A and B have the potential to divide Banyule into east and west communities. In particular, they will divide the communities of Greensborough, Watsonia and Macleod from community facilities, schools, shopping centres and the Hurstbridge Railway Line. The introduction of noise walls adjacent to the surface level sections of the NEL along Greensborough Highway will present a physical barrier. It is also noted that many more Banyule residents live immediately adjacent to Corridor Option A than the other corridors, increasing impacts from this route.

Amenity

Potential land acquisition at future interchanges, including at AK Line reserve (affecting football and cricket communities) and Borlase Reserve need to be carefully considered. Compulsory acquisition and loss of property and land is very likely along Corridor Option A, given its close proximity to dense residential development and community facilities. Amelioration of noise and visual impacts both during construction and once built has not been addressed in the NELTS.

Traffic/Transport

NELA has identified reducing congestion on key roads in Melbourne's north east, and removing trucks from roads in the north east, as important issues for the project. It is considered that Corridor Option A has the potential to carry and attract mainly commuter vehicles due to its immediate connection to the Eastern Freeway and would not serve freight vehicles which would have to negotiate an already congested Eastern Freeway and Mullum Mullum / Melba tunnels. Corridor Option C, which provides a direct link between the M80 and Eastlink, would better serve freight movements, and is supported by the Victorian Transport Association.

Although NELA has stated that a range of active and sustainable transport solutions will be provided complementary to each Corridor Option, no detail has been supplied of what these solutions will entail.

Corridor C

Corridor Option C provides the best opportunity to improve road connections for surrounding communities and provides access to the largest number of jobs. It

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provides freeway services to a wide catchment in a manner that has the potential to improve economic prospects of a very large area by providing a new connection in the arterial road network. This option also better serves the freight industry and best meets the NELA stated Objectives.

Corridor Option C provides the best interface between urban and non-urban areas, as it lies close to the Urban Growth Boundary and would reinforce this boundary. It has the potential to provide an additional firebreak for local communities during bushfire events. Corridor Option C provides a decongestion benefit to a much greater proportion of overall journeys. Corridor Option C also shows a significant proportion of origins and destinations are more directly served by the alignment, with a significant difference between traffic volumes at the north and south of the proposed link.

It is expected that Corridor Option C will reduce general traffic and truck volumes on the Eastern Freeway, this will provide the opportunity to include sustainable transport options and bus rapid transit along the Eastern Freeway.

Extensive tunnelling along Corridor Option C will have less impact on community severance and environmental concerns. It will also serve to provide opportunities for urban growth in the corridor. Of note, the community has indicated that Corridor Option C would create a firebreak against bushfires in the Nillumbik region and provide more escape routes and security to residents.

Although there is a lack of information provided, it is expected that Corridor Option C would require less compulsory acquisition of land than Corridor Option A given its extensive tunnelling and development not being immediately adjacent to it.

Corridor Option D

Banyule does not consider that Option D is a viable option due to its 40km length and extensive impact on the Urban Growth Boundary.

Victorian Transport Association

The Victorian Transport Association (VTA) represents nearly 800 owners of transport companies and supporting services in the supply chain and logistics industry. It has become the strong advocacy group in Victoria for this industrial sector.

The VTA is a strong advocate for NEL and believes that the value to community amenity and economic productivity of the project is obvious and easily definable. Of the four corridor options, the VTA's favoured option is Corridor Option C. The VTA recognises that Corridor Option C connects directly with Eastlink and it will be the most attractive route for heavy vehicles. The VTA has indicated that it is not in favour of Corridor Option A.

North East Link Complementary Projects

A complementary projects list has been compiled which comprises a list of works which should be included in the NEL scope or as early works. The list has been prepared in response to a request from NELA for Council input into the business case.

The list considers the most appropriate projects to assist in addressing the transport needs in the north east of Melbourne irrespective of the Corridor Option selected.

**NORTH EAST LINK - COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE NORTH EAST LINK
TECHNICAL SUMMARY cont'd**

The projects include:

- Duplication of the Hurstbridge Rail line from Greensborough to Eltham an increase in service frequency to a minimum of 10 minutes throughout the day.
- Improved integration of train and bus services including a new transport interchange at Greensborough.
- New bus routes – particularly more direct connections across regional barriers including the Eastern Freeway.
- Improvements to existing bus routes – particularly to improve access to tertiary education and major activity centres.
- Provide multi-deck car park at Watsonia Railway Station.
- Strategic cycling corridors – particularly connecting major activity centres and completion of the Northern Regional Trails Strategy.
- Pedestrian improvements around local schools and to public transport services.
- Public Open Space improvements.
- Address immediate safety issues on Rosanna Road.

FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

Council has previously committed to fund the Transport Advocacy Manager position for a further period of 12 months to June 2018.

Council at its meeting of 28 August 2017 resolved to proceed with the September 2017 Banyule North East Link Community Forum and resident survey at an a cost of approximately \$50,000 to be allocated from the 2017/18 Budget.

Additional budget funding will be required to undertake further analysis of the proposed routes based on the release of additional information from the North East Link Authority. Funding will also be required to support submissions to Advisory Panels on the Environmental Effects Statement process and on advocacy and communication to the public on Council's preferred position.

TIMELINES

The NELA requested submissions to the NELTS by 18 September 2017. Following Council's request, the NELA has agreed to an extension to the 17 October 2017.

Following consideration of submissions, the NELA is expected to make a recommendation to the State Government on a preferred corridor by December 2017. A Ministerial Announcement confirming the preferred route is anticipated in early 2018. This will mark the end of Phase 1 of the project.

Phase 2 will include detailed design and planning studies including environmental, social and technical investigations. The proposed alignment along the preferred corridor will also be decided.

Phase 3 commencing in mid-2018 includes procurement with the project released to the market and the beginning of the competitive tender process. Further refining of the detailed design and alignment will be undertaken. If the Labour State Government is successful in the 2018 State Election, the Government has indicated that the preferred contractor will be selected and contract signed in 2019.

NORTH EAST LINK - COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE NORTH EAST LINK TECHNICAL SUMMARY cont'd

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Section 80C of the *Local Government Act 1989* (Act) requires members of Council staff, and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council, to disclose any direct or indirect interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION

Council's long held position on the North East Link recognises the need to complete Melbourne's Ring Road as a direct orbital link from the Metropolitan Ring Road to Eastlink at Ringwood.

Given community concerns and government interest in transport in the North East of Melbourne, Council has maintained its strong advocacy position in order to hear from and obtain the best possible outcomes for the community.

The State Government has announced four corridor options for the North East Link and has held ten drop-in community sessions. Council has conducted a number of community consultation activities including a Banyule North East Link Transport Forum and Residential Postcard Survey inviting residents to select their preferred option and to share their views on the options. **The Banyule community has expressed a preference for Corridor Option C.**

Corridor C is strongly supported by the Victorian Transport Association (VTA).

Analysis of the North East Link Technical Summary indicates that Corridor Option A does not meet the North East Link project objectives on a number of measures including, but not limited to:

- Inadequate capacity at the Eastern Freeway to cater for any additional traffic travelling west and inadequate capacity at the Mullum Mullum / Melba tunnels for traffic travelling east.
- Propensity of Corridor Option A to cater for mostly commuter traffic which is contrary to the NELAs objective for the North East Link to improve freight efficiency.
- Community Severance impacts on the communities of Greensborough, Watsonia and Macleod.
- Potential increased traffic volumes and traffic noise on arterial roads and the local road network.
- Potential environmental impacts on Banyule's parklands, reserves and green open space including its effects on the State significant Banyule Flats and Warringal Parklands.

Corridor Option C is considered to provide greater regional benefits and better meet the North East Link objectives on a number of measures including:

- Provides a true orbital function from the Metropolitan Ring Road to Eastlink – serving the growth areas in the north and the south-east.

**NORTH EAST LINK - COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE NORTH EAST LINK
TECHNICAL SUMMARY cont'd**

- Avoids the known existing grade issues of the Mullum Mullum / Melba tunnels.
- Connects directly to EastLink which has capacity for additional traffic as opposed to the congested Eastern Freeway.
- Provides greater additional freeway kilometres with the potential for better connection to the arterial network and communities.
- Provides a natural firebreak against bushfires in the Nillumbik region.

Council has compiled a list of works which it considers should be included in the scope of the North East Link project or as early works in response to a request from the North East Link Authority for Council input into the business case due at the end of 2017. The list considers all possible alignments of the North East Link, the implications for Council and suggested improvements that would apply regardless of the route chosen.

ATTACHMENTS

No.	Title	Page
1	Banyule Response to the North East Link Technical Summary	
2	Letter to North East Link Authority Requesting Provision of Information	
3	Victorian Transport Association(VTA) letter	
4	NEL Corridor Options	
5	NEL Group of Councils Workshop Outcomes	