

Submission Cover Sheet

North East Link Project EES IAC

531

Request to be heard?: yes

Full Name: Simon Barnes

Organisation: La Trobe University

Affected property:

Attachment 1: NEL_-_La_Trobe_

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: Submission via attachment 'NEL - La Trobe University EES response submission - June 2019 FINAL.pdf'

7 June 2019

Inquiry and Advisory Committee
North East Link Project

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in relation to the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) for the North East Link (NEL) Project.

La Trobe University, Melbourne campus is located in Bundoora, approximately 12km from Melbourne's CBD. The University was founded in 1965 and since then has grown to accommodate a significant student, staff and partner population on campus.

In addition to core educational facilities, land owned by the university is used for a range of purposes, including research and development facilities, playing fields, a medical centre, and a conservation reserve.

La Trobe University plays a significant role in the region as a centre of employment and innovation through education, research, and recreation. It has extensive existing relationships with business and industry and is actively pursuing new and stronger relationships, and the commercialisation of those relationships to create new businesses and jobs.

La Trobe University is broadly supportive of the aims of the NEL Project in building the missing link in Melbourne's orbital freeway network and removing trucks off local roads. The University sees tremendous benefits in the provision of direct access between residents of the eastern and south-eastern subregions of Melbourne and the large numbers of jobs and services located in the La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster.

Carefully managed, the NEL project will improve the economic, environmental and social prospects for all residents of Melbourne's north and east.

Although the University has an interest in the full range of environmental effects considered in the EES, the University's primary concerns are with the transport-related impacts of the project and strongly urge the Panel to address these issues to ensure the North East Link project delivers the best transport solution for Melbourne's north.

La Trobe University's submission

La Trobe University's submission broadly summarise into four points:

- I. The North East Link project is broadly supported by La Trobe University; however, the project needs to include more actions to reduce congestion in the short term, particularly improve public transport network and services across the Yarra River
 - The EES fails to address the issue of congestion improvements prior to opening of NEL
 - The EES does not contain detail of specific bus network and service improvements that will be applied when NEL opens
- II. The EES identifies a number of existing problems (such as comparatively high levels of car dependency in Melbourne's North-East) and articulates the problem being a lack of reliable and fast public transport services. The document lacks a range of meaningful solutions that directly address these problems
 - The EES shows that a lack of good regional and inter-regional public transport services contributes to the congestion experienced in the La Trobe NEIC, but no clear solutions are provided (despite a range of solutions being relatively simple and cost effective)
 - NELA needs to do more to capitalise on the predicted reduced volumes on arterial roads to improve public transport networks and travel times. The EES documentation does not contain any detail of these actions, or how the improved customer (road user) outcomes would be achieved
- III. There is a lack of strategic justification for the project in terms of the degree to which it meets the complex transport needs of the area with a single 'silver-bullet' approach, which is not supported by Victoria's legislative settings (in particular the Transport Integration Act) related to transport and urban planning
 - The NEL documentation does not provide detail on specific bus network and service improvements that will be applied prior to commencement or following completion of the project
 - The current EES document does not recognise that public transport usage could be increased at least to the rate it observes in similar parts of Melbourne if the network and service levels are improved

- There has been no attempt in the EES to highlight what public transport options would help to solve the problem in the short term and provide congestion relief during construction
 - There has been no analysis of whether transit network and service improvements could delay the need for State expenditure on NEL
 - This is a significant oversight. Disproportionate effort has been put into designing detail of one mode (car / truck), without sufficient analysis or detailed design regarding other modes in the corridor and how they contribute to the problem or could be applied to reduce the severity of congestion
- IV. The EES lacks detail in a number of critical areas (such as the impact of construction on traffic and public transport). Many of these critical gaps are noted in the EES peer review, but have not been addressed in the final document, leaving stakeholders uninformed.
- The EES does not detail the specific bus network and service improvements that will be applied during the construction phases of the project. This should include a 'road replacement bus network', similar to the 'rail replacement bus services' provided during level crossing removal projects
 - No analysis is made of the actual impact the NEL project will have on public transport
 - There is no holistic description of the impact of construction on walking and cycling
 - The EES does not provide detail of specific shared trail improvements that will be installed prior to commencement of the project and those that will remain following completion of the project

Specific Improvements Required for the NEL project

The North East Link (NEL) creates a number of opportunities to support the La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster (NEIC) to increase its potential economic value to the Victorian economy. However, we strongly urge the Panel to consider the various listed improvements to the current NEL plans and that more detailed explanations are required in order for the project to deliver on the benefits that are envisaged:

- a) Kingsbury Drive needs to be remodelled into one of Melbourne's great boulevards
- b) Urgent improvements to bus services across the Yarra River are needed, including faster and more frequent services and new routes between the Box Hill and Heidelberg rail corridors
- c) Long term public transport improvements across the Yarra River need to be planned in concert with NEL

- d) The impact of construction works needs greater consideration and 'road replacement bus services' should be deployed to reduce congestion during the construction period (in a similar way to their deployment during level crossing removal works)
- e) Existing bus routes in the region need to be made more efficient with fewer time-points
- f) Trail networks for bicycle riders and pedestrians need to be improved

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the EES documentation and we confirm that we would like to appear at the forthcoming Panel Hearings to advocate further for our submission.