Submission to Inquiry and Advisory Committee  
North East Link Project  
Supplementary Note on Design Speed and Cost

I have heard the panel ask the following type of question on a couple of occasions: Would the cost of providing the extra works that walkers and cyclist are asking for be better spent providing new road facilities in the outer suburbs where the need is greater?

I feel that this question has not been adequately answered and wish to offer the following to the IAC.

Most of Melbourne’s freeways were designed and built to carry traffic at 100 km/h. But they only did so for a relatively short time and now only do so in the off-peak times. The rapid growth in traffic has generally led to stop start conditions during peak periods which are becoming longer and longer. 80 km/h speed limits have been imposed on most of our freeways in order to improve their flow and to improve safety.

The following freeways have 80 km/h limits imposed for significant periods of time:
- Western Ring Road
- Monash Freeway
- Tullamarine Freeway

The following have permanent 80 km/h limits:
- City Link, tunnels to West Gate Freeway
- Calder Freeway at the city end
- East Link tunnels

There is some research evidence that the speed that optimises societal costs is around 80 km/h. [https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0386111214000259](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0386111214000259)

Probably the worst example of opportunity lost was the first part of the Eastern Freeway from Hoddle St to Bulleen Rd which was built at such a high standard that you could easily do 200 km/h on it if there was no traffic present. This was done at a very high societal cost. However the shared path built at the time was tokenistic and is still substandard 42 years later. A bicycle freeway will finally be created with the multi-million dollar upgrade that NELP is proposing.

So I raise the question of whether we should be designing inner urban freeways for 100 km/h travel.

The NEL will eventually fill up with traffic and slow down like all the rest. So wouldn’t it be more prudent to build it for 80 km/h travel and use the money saved to build the facilities for walking and cycling? There may even be money left over for the outer suburbs. The footprint of the project may be reduced as well and the impact on the community reduced.

So the question is: Is NELP planning to build a gold-plated freeway to the detriment of active transport and the community in general? Is history repeating itself?

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