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East-West Transport options review
Department of Transport
GPO Box 2797
Melbourne VIC 3001

Dear Sir/Madam,

Than you for the opportunity to submit comment on the final report on the East West Link Needs Assessment (EWLNA).

Although not located within the study area, the City of Stonnington recognises the significant impact of the Enquiry's recommendations on wider metropolitan Melbourne. As such, the City's submission focuses on the broader implications for public transport, road transport, cycling, the link between transport and land use planning, funding implications and the environment.

It is our understanding that in addition to preparing a formal response to the EWLNA's recommendations, the Victorian Government intends to release a new transport plan for the wider metropolitan area. The City of Stonnington would commend a broader planning approach, suggesting there is an urgent need to develop a holistic, strategic response to Melbourne's transport needs, which is made in the context of climate change, carbon emission constraint and the impact of 'peak oil'.

The City of Stonnington would also welcome an opportunity to provide input to the Government's metropolitan transport plan.

I am pleased to provide the City of Stonnington's submission to EWLNA, attached below. If you wish to discuss our submission please telephone me direct on 8290-3533.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian McLauchlan', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Ian McLauchlan
Transport & Parking Manager

CITY OF STONNINGTON SUBMISSION ON EAST-WEST LINK NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINAL REPORT

The City of Stonnington welcomes the opportunity to submit feedback on the final report on the East West Link Assessment (EWLNA). Although not found within the study area, City of Stonnington recognises the significant impact of the Enquiry's recommendations on the wider metropolitan Melbourne.

As such, this submission focuses on the broader implications for public transport; on road transport; cycling; the link between transport and landuse planning; funding implications; and the environment.

Study Limitations – Future Opportunities

The City of Stonnington commends the Victorian Government on commissioning the study and its commitment to addressing the north-west region's transport related challenges through long term strategic planning. As such, the study is a good start in the right direction, be it limited by its Terms of Reference.

The geographic scale and expected cost of EWLNA's recommendations make it more apparent than ever that for Melbourne to be innovative, competitive and sustainable, the city needs significant investment in transport. To do that effectively and equitably the Government must develop and implement a complete, metro-wide transport plan. EWLNA, opens up an opportunity for the Victorian Government to pursue a more holistic approach and extend its commitment to strategic transport planning to a wider metropolitan area.

The study responds to current travel patterns but does not give sufficient weight to the urgent need to change these patterns by managing travel demand more effectively in order to reverse the trend towards increasing green house gas emissions from transport. Factors, such as for example, increased reliance on information technology as a means of reducing the need for commuting; the impact of cultural change towards a lifestyle conducive to more 'compact living'; growing social ecological consciousness and responsibility are not to be underestimated. These contemporary trends, which impact on travel behaviour provide the State Government with an opportunity to review the 'predict and provide' philosophy underpinning the study scope, and to prepare its response accordingly.

Although contained within the bounds of the Terms of Reference, the study is limited in its response to impending issues facing our city, these being: climate change; carbon emissions constrained economic and political environment; and the looming issue of 'peak oil'. In responding to the EWLNA's recommendations the Victorian Government has an opportunity and a responsibility to redress the limitations of the study brief and make its transport decisions in the context of these issues.

Public Transport and land Use

City of Stonnington applauds EWLNA for recognising the urgent need for major investment in public transport and supports its recommendations to provide for high capacity/high speed transport services as a priority. Stonnington strongly supports these recommendations as they will increase transport choice and reduce reliance on private vehicle travel, particularly for commuters.

The City agrees with EWLNA that this will require a generational 'step up' in Melbourne's rail capacity, and urges the State Government to embark on a continued expansion throughout metropolitan Melbourne of the heavy rail network. Of particular benefit to Stonnington are

capacity improvements of the rail network in the centre, which are likely to have a positive flow-on effect at the 'spokes'.

However, the significant cost associated with the recommended infrastructure, particularly Recommendation 1 - 17km Melbourne metro rail tunnel – would have significant impact on Government's ability to fund other public transport projects over the next 20 years. As such, a detailed assessment against social, environmental and economic costs and benefits is required. As is a thorough exploration of non-infrastructure based solutions to rail capacity and quality of service problems experienced now and expected in the future. Here, a metropolitan wide perspective would be of great value in not only weighing up the real costs and benefits of major infrastructure investments; but also in identifying other possibly more urgent, public transport projects.

City of Stonnington also supports EWLNA's recommendation for escalating city-wide implementation and enforcement of priority measures for trams and buses. Providing priority to on-road public transport is central to facilitating people movement by improving the efficiency with which road space is utilised. This must be achieved while ensuring that pedestrian safety, amenity and economic vitality of Activity Centres is not compromised. The recent announcement of Government's intension to extend clearway operating hours as, partly, a means of improving on-road public transport efficiency, should not be applicable to Activity Centres, as it will compromise their amenity and vitality. Re-allocation of road space to the benefit of public transport is the key here, however it should be determined in a strategic manner, like for example through the process undertaken in developing Network Operating Plans (draft), where VicRoads actively engaged with local authorities and identified the various functions of roads within their municipalities.

As recognised by *Melbourne 2030*, thriving Activity Centres are fundamental to achieving long term, economically, socially and environmentally sustainable solution to Melbourne's transport needs, and introduction of measures aimed at improving bus and tram priority should be compatible with and not conflicting with this key State Government strategy.

Further to this effect, Stonnington supports EWLNA's recommendation for the State Government to continue to implement *Melbourne 2030* and to take stronger action to accelerate the development of vibrant suburban hubs in Melbourne's west. Transit Cities and thriving Activity Centres are fundamental to achieving modal shift from single occupant car travel to more sustainable modes, such as the use of public transport, walking and cycling. Their success is fundamental to addressing the increased demand for travel resulting from projected population growth. While this population growth poses a serious challenge, it also offers an unprecedented opportunity to exploit the associated economies of scale and growing demand for a variety of housing types. This puts the State Government in a unique position to work with other levels of government and the private sector to increase densities near public transport hubs and to encourage co-location of 'trip generators' such as employment, recreational, community, retails and entertainment services and facilities.

Road Tunnel

Stonnington has concerns as to the long term, Melbourne wide benefits of the proposed road tunnel. EWLNA justifies this recommendation by arguing that "*...the evidence is clear that the number of trips made by car in Melbourne will increase by a substantial amount for the foreseeable future – and the city's road network must be able to cope with this increasing demand in an efficient and sustainable manner.*"

However, there is substantial historical evidence, which suggests that increasing road capacity results in increased demand for road travel. It is anticipated that the proposed road tunnel would fail to improve east west connections and mobility over an extended period of time and as such its practicality and effectiveness as a long-term, sustainable solution is in serious doubt.

These, together with the projected minimal return on such a large investment (BCR Value of 1.4 at best), raise concerns about the project's viability.

In light of the expected cost and environmental impact, the proposed road tunnel undermines the net benefit of EWLNA's package of commendable recommendations, particularly those relating to higher level of investment in public transport and the development of urban areas conducive to walking and cycling.

As such, the City of Stonnington does not support EWLNA's recommendation to treat the proposed rail projects and road tunnel as a package and we urge caution in pursuing the latter unless and until a more thorough analysis is undertaken. This work however, should be secondary to further analysis of metro-wide public transport needs, which should be prioritised and pursued as soon as possible.

Cycle Connections

City of Stonnington strongly supports EWLNA's recommendations for improving cross city cycle connections as a way of increasing transport choice and reducing reliance on private vehicle travel. Being one of the Inner Melbourne Action Plan member councils, Stonnington recognises the importance of high quality cycle infrastructure and good connectivity with key destinations and trip generators, such as places of employment, entertainment, education, recreation, retail, community and other services.

Provision of highly linked cycle routes, as recommended by EWLNA, requires the cooperation of numerous authorities and all levels of government, including local authorities. However, in some cases the level of investment required for infrastructure such as bridges, ramps, and acquisition of land etc. exceeds local government's resource capabilities. The State Government must be prepared to work closely with local authorities to identify priority links in the cycle network and it must be prepared to fund key infrastructure that local authorities may not be able to afford but that are of strategic importance.

Funding

The City of Stonnington strongly supports EWLNA's recommendation to seek "*early discussions*" with the Commonwealth Government regarding funding contributions towards the recommended projects. In particular, we urge the State Government to advocate for major investment in public transport, initiatives targeting modal shift towards active transport, such as walking and cycling, and rail freight projects.

Stonnington however, does not support EWLNA's recommendations regarding funding contributions by public transport users or a surcharge on municipal rates.

Melbourne commuters already pay among the highest public transport fees in Australia and any further price increases may be counter productive to encouraging public transport use and gaining the modal shift required to effectively deal with road congestion and green house gas emissions.

Similarly, using property rates as a funding source will have a detrimental impact on municipal fund raising capacity and thus local governments' ability to provide vital community services and infrastructure, including sustainable transport initiatives, which many Councils are already pursuing. As such, we urge the State Government to thoroughly explore other methods of financing future transport projects.

Furthermore, Stonnington urges caution in making the recommended infrastructure investments, on the basis that a detailed analysis against economic, environmental and social costs and benefits for the whole of metropolitan Melbourne is required. We agree with the study that a "*generational step-up*" in transport investment is necessary. We agree that it will be costly and that investment in public transport should be made a priority.

The sheer scale of funding required for the recommended projects is illustrative of the urgent need to develop a holistic, strategic response to Melbourne's transport needs. This response must be made in the context of climate change, carbon emissions constrained economic and political environment, and the impact of 'peak oil'. The State Government must be able to make infrastructure investment decisions based on a thorough understanding of the 'complete picture' and should prioritise accordingly. Otherwise, it risks spending the state's limited funds on projects with limited net benefit for the whole of Melbourne and the future generations.