



Public Transport Users Association
Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane
Melbourne VIC 3000

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Yarra City Council
Strategic Planning Unit
PO Box 168
Richmond
VIC 3121
Email: strategicplanning@yarracity.vic.gov.au

Dear Sir/ Madam

SUBMISSION ON DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL: ALPHINGTON PLACE PROJECT

The Public Transport Users Association is the recognised consumer organisation representing passengers of all forms of public transport in Victoria.

The PTUA appreciates the opportunity to make this submission which principally addresses transport-related issues which in our view need to be resolved as part of this project.

We would be pleased to discuss the contents of this submission at your convenience, and would welcome the opportunity to meet with Councillors and Officers to discuss the detail of our submission.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Morton
President

Att.

SUBMISSION BY PTUA ON DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL: ALPHINGTON PARK

Overview

Putting new housing in existing suburbs is desirable if it will mean better use of existing services, including public transport.

However, where public transport is inadequate or already full, more services need to be provided to reduce new residents' car-dependency.

The redevelopment of the AMCOR site is a significant infill *development* opportunity, but the public transport services in the area must be upgraded *before the new residents and businesses move in* if this large-scale redevelopment is to be workable.

The City of Yarra is known and admired as a leading and successful advocate of better active and sustainable transport. It is vital for the wellbeing of existing and future residents that this advocacy continues.

Summary of conclusions

Without marked improvement in local public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure the Alphington Place development will be highly car-dependent.

This will generate significant increases in traffic on the local, arterial and freeway road systems; and it will impose collateral costs on neighbours and the local environment, and put greater pressure on the already clogged Eastern Freeway and Hoddle Street corridors.

Recommendations

The City of Yarra should campaign for upgraded public transport services and infrastructure serving Alphington Place directly as well as filling major gaps in public transport services which contribute to traffic congestion in the local area. The Cities of Darebin, Banyule and Boroondara should be invited to participate in this campaign.

Key demands of this campaign should be:

- Provide higher-frequency train services on the Hurstbridge line, including outside peak hours and on weekends;
- Provide seven-day-a-week services on the 350 route bus (La Trobe University to the CBD on Chandler Highway), with evening services at least on weekdays and no less than 10-minute frequencies during peak hours;
- Provide seven-day-a-week services on the 546 route bus (Heidelberg to the CBD on Heidelberg Road), with evening services at least on weekdays and no less than 10 minute frequencies during peak hours;
- Provide a more direct route for the 609 route bus (Hawthorn railway station to Fairfield) with services seven days a week and 10 minute frequencies during peak hours;

- Extend route bus 624 from Harp Junction in Kew to Alphington Station via Earl Street and Chandler Highway to provide a key north-south connector in the East Yarra and Darebin area;
- Immediately preserve the median reservation along the Eastern Freeway for a rail service to Doncaster, and undertake to plan and build this train line with a station at the Chandler Highway, on the south of the site;
- Declare Heidelberg Road, Grange Road and Chandler Highway as bus priority roads under VicRoads *SmartRoads* program, and provide associated signalling and lane priority.

Yarra City Council should commission modelling to assess mode shift and relief to traffic congestion to be gained from upgrades to public transport services and walking and cycling infrastructure serving the Alphington Place project and surrounds, to inform its planning and advocacy.

On the site itself, car parking should be kept to an absolute minimum and walking and cycling infrastructure maximised.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

Current and prospective transport patterns

Car ownership is high and increasing in Alphington. Comparisons of journey to work data from the 2011 Census show that a significantly lower proportion of journeys to work by Alphington residents are made by public transport (20%) compared with residents of other inner northern Melbourne suburbs. For example, 26% of Clifton Hill residents and 24% of Thornbury residents take public transport to work. Journeys to work from suburbs such as South Yarra, Brunswick and Richmond where public transport is superior is higher still. (See *Integrated Transport Plan* (GTA, February 2015) at www.alphingtonpapermill.com.au)

Travel to work data from the 2011 Census shows that a very large proportion of the residents of Northcote to the immediate west of Alphington travel to work to locations to the south-west of the site. In fact about 45 % of residents work in the City of Melbourne, City of Yarra or the City of Port Phillip. These comprise 11,603 journeys to work each day. About 24%, (or 6,327 journeys daily) work in Darebin itself or in locations generally to the north of Alphington Park.

Analysis included in the Integrated Transport Plan concluded that 52.5% of Alphington Park's residents would be employed in Melbourne with 12.3% employed in the City of Yarra.

Because most travel to work occurs during the morning and evening peak periods when transport infrastructure and services are most stretched, analysis of travel to work data is a valuable indicator of gaps in the current transport system. To the degree that this data may mirror the likely travel behaviour of residents of Alphington Park it also provides valuable guidance on the additional pressure the project is likely to place on existing infrastructure and services.

Most recent publicly available average daily traffic counts in road segments adjacent to the Alphington Park site are shown in Table 1 below. Overall it shows 38,000 vehicles per day on Chandler Highway and 23,000 to 26,000 vehicles per day on Heidelberg Road.

Road segment	Average daily traffic count, 2013
Chandler Highway between Yarra Boulevard and Heidelberg Road, north bound	20,000
Chandler Highway between Yarra Boulevard and Heidelberg Road, south bound	18,000
Grange Road between Heidelberg Road and Separation Street, north-bound	11,000
Grange Road between Heidelberg Road and Separation Street, south-bound	11,000
Heidelberg Road between Station Street and Chandler Highway, east-bound	12,000
Heidelberg Road between Station Street and Chandler Highway, west bound	14,000

Heidelberg Road between Chandler Highway and Lower Heidelberg Road, north-east bound	11,000
Heidelberg Road between Chandler Highway and Lower Heidelberg Road, south-west bound	12,000

Table 1: Daily traffic counts, Chandler Highway and Heidelberg Road

Source: VicRoads, annual average daily traffic volumes, freeways and arterial roads 2013

According to the *Traffic Management Plan* (GTA February 2015), Appendix C, Alphington Park will generate an aggregate 18,650 additional vehicle movements per day on weekdays. About half of these are expected to be generated by residents and about 7,600 by the retail outlets. These are expected to include 1,610 vehicle movements in the AM peak hour and 2,592 vehicle movements in the PM peak hour on a typical weekday. This would constitute a substantial extra load on the arterial road network, as the great majority of these vehicle movements can be expected to feed into Heidelberg Road and the Chandler Highway corridor.

Proposed duplication of Chandler Highway and Grange Road grade separation

The Victorian government has promised major road works in the area, including the duplication of the Chandler Highway bridge and the grade separation of the Hurstbridge railway line crossing in Grange Road in Alphington. These projects are the "status quo" approach to dealing with traffic congestion - simply to build additional road capacity - which has been repeatedly demonstrated to not be a durable solution to the problem of increasing motor car use.

There has been no genuine attempt by past governments to effect significant mode shift from the private motor car to sustainable modes, including public transport, in this part of the Melbourne metropolitan area. These two projects would at best provide temporary respite from the current congested conditions on Chandler Highway and Heidelberg Road. Existing congestion concentrated on the Chandler Highway is likely to be relocated into Princess Street in Kew and in Grange Road in Alphington, as well as into Heidelberg Road.

Current and required public transport

The public transport capability in the area is poor and if current service standards were to persist it is certain that Alphington Park will be highly car dependent, adding even further to growing road congestion in the area.

Rail services

Current public transport services include the Hurstbridge rail line which, outside peak hours, runs a twenty minute service on weekdays and weekends, with 30 minute services from mid to late evening seven days a week. This compares poorly with better quality services elsewhere on the metropolitan rail network, especially on the Frankston, Dandenong and Ringwood corridors where off-peak and weekend services are much more frequent, including 10 minute services during the day on weekends.

Route bus services

The *Integrated Transport Plan* notes (p. 16) there are four route bus services in the neighbourhood, the 609 from Hawthorn railway station to Fairfield via Kew on the Chandler Highway corridor, the 546 from Heidelberg to Victoria Market on the Heidelberg Road corridor, the 340 from La Trobe University to Melbourne CBD on the Chandler Highway corridor, and the 508 from Alphington railway station to Moonee Ponds. It said that these services operate only on weekdays and quite rightly assessed the 609, between Hawthorn railway station and Fairfield, to not meet acceptable standards for public transport provision.

It should be noted, however, that the 340 service was absorbed into the 350 service from 27 July 2014 and the 508 service in fact operates seven days a week, not only on weekdays.

The 609 service takes a very indirect route which increases travel time and therefore renders the service less attractive than it would otherwise be, and runs only five services a day. It would not be a realistic transport option for residents or visitors to Alphington Park, even though it is the only route bus that provides a service north and south of the Eastern Freeway on the Chandler Highway corridor.

The 624 service between Oakleigh railway station and Kew would also assist in filling the gap in north-south public transport services if it were to be extended to Alphington railway station. It would complement the service provided by an upgraded 609 service if it were to operate with an increased service span and frequency on weekdays and weekends.

The 350 route bus service from the Melbourne CBD to La Trobe University, Bundoora, runs on the Grange Road, Chandler Highway, Eastern Freeway, Hoddle Street and Victoria Parade corridors. It has a fairly consistent headway of about 20 minutes throughout the day and service concludes very early in the evening with final departures just after 6.00 p.m. The most recent publicly available data from Public Transport Victoria showed that combined average weekday patronage for the 340 and 350 services was 1092 in 2010-11 and 1027 in 2011-12.

Increases in frequency, together with the upgrading of bus lanes on Hoddle Street and Victoria Parade, now underway, would significantly increase the attractiveness of this service. Currently, it takes up to 33 minutes in the morning peak for the trip from Grange Road to Melbourne Central (Lonsdale Street) in the Melbourne CBD. This should be able to be reduced with the imminent introduction of dedicated bus lanes in Hoddle Street and Victoria Parade.

The 546 service has a relatively short service span from about 6.30 a.m. until 6.30 p.m. Monday to Friday with service frequencies of about 30 minutes throughout the day. There are no weekend services.

The 508 service between Alphington railway station and the Moonee Ponds interchange has a much superior service span from about 5.30 a.m. and 9.30 p.m. with service frequencies of 15 minutes on Monday to Friday, 6.00 a.m. to 10.30 p.m. and 30 minute frequencies on Saturdays. Services run between about 8.00 a.m. and 10.00 p.m. with 40 minute frequencies on Sundays.

It is important to note that under VicRoads *SmartRoads* program which classifies the arterial road network for preferred uses neither Heidelberg Road nor Grange Road/ Chandler Highway are shown as bus priority routes, but as preferred traffic routes. However, parts of Separation Street and Darebin Road are bus priority routes. In the City of Boroondara, the northern section of Princess Street which connects with Chandler Highway is not shown as a bus priority route either.

Changes introduced on 27 July 2014 to route bus scheduling for CBD services on the designated Chandler Highway Belmore Road corridor to Box Hill and Doncaster Hill activity centres is likely to have resulted in a significant increase in public transport patronage on the corridor. The 302 and 304 services to Box Hill and Doncaster Hill now run on a 15 minute headway on weekdays and about every 10 minutes during peak hour times, with 20 minute services on weekends.

This experience is highly instructive of what could be achieved with improved bus services on the Chandler Highway north of the Eastern Freeway and on Heidelberg Road. In fact, there is good reason to believe that the potential patronage growth could be very substantial given the services would be operating in areas of significantly greater population density than in northern Boroondara, which is also an area of very high car ownership.

Doncaster rail

In the lead-up to the recent state election campaign, the City of Yarra campaigned alongside community groups for a rail service to Doncaster. This followed the effective dumping of the project by the Napthine government, after promising it in the 2010 election, and its subsequent embrace of the East-West Link project.

A rail service to Doncaster Hill via Victoria Park railway station on the Eastern Freeway reservation would doubtless attract substantial patronage, and particularly by those travelling to and from work during peak times. The rail service would take significant numbers of cars off the Freeway and free up traffic on the on and off ramps at Chandler Highway. The train service, with a station at the Chandler Highway, would attract significant patronage from residents in the south western area of Alphington Park. Regrettably, the Public Transport Minister, Jacinta Allan, was recently reported to say that the Doncaster rail service would not be built for at least the next 11 years (*Manningham Leader*, Monday, March 23, 2015, p. 8).

An immediate task for the City of Yarra and other public transport campaigners, therefore, is to secure a commitment from the Victorian government that a rail service will be planned for and built and that it will immediately guarantee that the reservation on the Eastern Freeway is secured for that purpose.

Green travel plans and the Chadstone parallel

It is noteworthy that La Trobe University, Bundoora Campus, which is the terminus for the 350 service, increased parking fees and tightened access by car to its Bundoora campus from the beginning of 2015 for the express purpose of encouraging staff and students to travel to and from the campus by more sustainable means, including by public transport.

This demand management measure should reduce car trips to and from the campus each day, and in so doing stimulate passenger demand for route bus services including the 350 service. Interestingly the University expects the operations of its car parking to be cash flow positive in future, and this revenue is to be devoted to sustainable transport initiatives. This is a very useful message for the proposed "green travel plan" for the redevelopment of the Alphington Park project.

Several potential initiatives for a future Green Travel Plan for the development are identified in the Integrated Transport Plan (para. 4.4.3, pp. 45, 46). Interestingly, it includes the establishment of an internal bicycle users group to improve facilities for cyclists and to encourage cycling, but there is no recommendation for an allied group to work for improvements to public transport.

The proposed initiatives to stimulate use of public transport are weak and are essentially "educational" in character. It would not be unfair to say that initiatives of this nature in other development settings, whether they be commercial, retail or residential in character, have been largely ineffective.

This has been the case at Chadstone Shopping Centre, for example, which was first established in 1960 with a business strategy that relied entirely on cheap motorised transport and free parking. It is probably now the most car-centric destination in Metropolitan Melbourne, apart from Melbourne Airport, and singlehandedly generates major road congestion on Warrigal Road and Princes Highway in Chadstone and Malvern East.

Chadstone's 2003 Green Travel Plans for visitors and staff focused primarily on information assistance for public transport users (see Chadstone Integrated Transport Plan 2003, pp. 42, 43). The PTUA opposed a major expansion of the Chadstone Shopping Centre at that time principally on the grounds that Chadstone, a Principal Activity Centre under Melbourne 2030, was isolated from the major public transport networks; major upgrades to public transport were required to bring access to Chadstone up to standard; and because it was counter-productive to permit large-scale increase in area at Chadstone before public transport improvements are in place. The PTUA opposed yet another car-centric expansion of Chadstone Shopping Centre in 2012, broadly along the same lines. Regrettably, this project also proceeded with the full support of the Stonnington City Council. The Chadstone experience should be avoided at all costs at Alphington Park.

Car parking at Alphington Park

Residential parking

The scale of car parking to be provided at Alphington Park is an important consideration for the development, both in terms of the transport modal mix (i.e. sustainable transport use as opposed to motor cars) at the site and its influence on housing affordability. In general terms, the less car parking that is provided the more conducive the development will be for sustainable transport modes and the more affordable the housing stock.

The provision of on-site parking is very expensive, both in terms of construction costs and the opportunity costs of alternative use of space foregone in a development such as this, whether it be for additional housing, commercial or residential space, or public space.

For instance, two level underground car parking is estimated to cost between \$1,490 and \$1,605 per square metre or between \$47,700 and \$51,400 per car, whilst a three-storey car parking station of open-sided construction is estimated to cost \$590 to \$635 per square metre or between \$16,500 and \$17,900 per car (Rawlinsons, Edition 31, 2013, p. 51).

From the perspective of prospective purchasers of properties at Alphington Park, these costs are reflected in the sale price of the property. Thus, a purchaser of a dwelling in a multi-occupancy development with two car parks may, without having regard for land costs, pay about \$100,000 more than she would if the dwelling was not provided with car parking.

The transport behaviour consequences are also very significant. Residents who are required to "invest" \$100,000 in two car parking spaces with their dwelling will almost certainly buy two cars and use these vehicles for most of their trips.

The likely situation here is somewhat analogous to the situation with developments everywhere, whether they be on the urban fringe or closer to the centre of Melbourne. Householders compelled to incur significant fixed costs in the form of parking, and in the absence of viable public transport options, will make most trips by car. However, just as with the new housing investments on the urban fringe, good quality public transport must be made available at the time the development is sold and occupied for the transfer of trips to public transport, cycling or walking to be maximised.

It is also understood that at this time the project proponents have as yet not been successful in signing up a business partner for the relatively small "affordable housing" element of the project (i.e. to comprise only 5% of the 2,500 dwellings to be constructed), which is anticipated to have relatively little car parking associated with it. A boost to the affordable housing component of the project would be likely to reduce the volume of on-site car parking on site.

Retail parking

The project will provide 19,300 square metres of retail premises with a supermarket as the anchor tenant. At the community consultation held at the Alphington Bowling Club on 17 March, representatives of the proponents were unable to say how much car parking would be assigned to the retail element of the project. Timely introduction of high quality public transport to serve Alphington Park and surrounding areas would significantly reduce the pressure for larger volumes of parking for the commercial and retail elements of the project.

It is notable that the trade area for the retail component of the project is relatively extensive and includes parts of Clifton Hill, Kew, East Ivanhoe and Northcote and most of Fairfield. In this respect, it could be expected that the retail offerings will attract trade away from smaller local retailers with a more localised customer base. The net effect, therefore, is to increase average customer trip length which, if unless made by sustainable transport modes, would further increase traffic congestion across a substantial area of the inner north and north-eastern suburbs .

Impact of Alphington Park on the wider road network

Hoddle Street

One of the major points of debate associated with the Baillieu-Napthine governments' controversial East-West Link was the assessment of how much, if any, assistance it would provide in relieving congestion on Hoddle Street. The informed view is that it would have provided relatively little assistance given that inner Melbourne, including the Melbourne CBD, are the major destinations for traffic on the Eastern Freeway. However, Hoddle Street will remain heavily trafficked and traffic originating in the north, including on Heidelberg Road, makes a significant contribution to traffic numbers on the most heavily trafficked segments of Hoddle Street.

Thus, effective measures to convert motor car trips to public transport trips in the north, including from the Cities of Darebin and Banyule, would significantly benefit Hoddle Street. On average an estimated 27,000 vehicles enter and exit Hoddle Street on the Heidelberg Road ramps each day, with an estimated 31,00 vehicles per day on Hoddle Street each day in the road segment between Heidelberg Road and the Eastern Freeway on ramp. The most heavily trafficked segment of Hoddle Street is immediately south between Alexandra Parade and Johnston Street, with an estimated 79,000 vehicles per day.

It should be concluded, therefore, that solid improvements to route bus services on the Chandler Highway corridor that then travel to the Melbourne CBD on the route of the 350 service, together

with an upgrade of the 546 service on Heidelberg Road to serve Alphington Park would have such an impact. This would be assisted by upgrades on the Hurstbridge rail line.

North-south traffic movements

As pointed out earlier, there are no worthwhile route bus services on the Chandler Highway linking major destinations in the Cities of Yarra and Darebin in the north with the City of Boroondara in the south. Such services could make a major contribution to relieving congestion on the Chandler Highway.

Other regional influences increasing the demand for transport

There are several other trends and forces at play in the area which are already impacting on the demand for transport in an area that is underserved by available public transport and active transport infrastructure. The matters listed below are not exhaustive but each is significant in its own right. Of greatest concern is that under current policy settings, they are set to complement Alphington Park as sources of growing volumes of motor car traffic.

Population

The first of these influences is population growth. The population of the City of Darebin, for example, has been growing very strongly since 2005, at an annualised rate of about 1.45%. The population of the City of Yarra grew strongly in 2012 (2.6%) and 2013 (3.2%).

Residential zones

The new residential zoning applied in the City of Darebin is likely to facilitate further population growth and demand for transport services as a relatively small area of the residential areas of the municipality was classified as Neighbourhood Residential Zone 1, which of the three residential zones most strongly constrains higher density development, relative to other municipalities .

Ivanhoe structure plan

The Ivanhoe Structure Plan, which was adopted by the Banyule City Council in December 2012, is likely to facilitate increased commercial development in Ivanhoe, which is located on the Heidelberg Road corridor, as well as larger residential developments.

The Austin Health Complex

The Austin Health Complex which has a staffing complement of about 6,500 is understood to be responsible for about 20,000 traffic movements each day. Relatively few staff or visitors to the Austin use public transport despite being located next to Heidelberg station and on several bus routes, including the 903 SmartBus.

Environmental issues

Traffic noise

Current traffic congestion in Heidelberg Road and Chandler Highway tends to reduce traffic noise because of lower vehicle speeds. Any expansion of capacity on Chandler Highway which increases vehicle numbers and average speeds may well increase traffic noise levels in the area.

The project proponents propose to retain high walls on the western (Chandler Highway) and northern (Heidelberg Road) perimeters, in large part to maintain the heritage value of linking Alphington Park to its industrial past. This would provide some protection from traffic noise for those who live or work at Alphington Park.

Buildings on the opposite sides of these two roads, primarily residences with some small business premises in Heidelberg Road, are low scale and are likely to remain so. They will be increasingly exposed to the noise effects of any increases in vehicle numbers and vehicle speed.

It is understood that no work has been undertaken to assess the reflected effects which might also be caused by the high walls to be maintained on the Chandler Highway and Heidelberg Road perimeters of the site. This work should be undertaken.

Air pollution

People who live near heavily used road corridors, such as Heidelberg Road and Chandler Highway/Grange Road are at risk of illness from air pollution, including particulate emissions from internal combustion engines.

Light spill

The incidental exposure to artificial lighting at night can have adverse health effects. Potentially, those most likely to be affected include residents in close proximity to Chandler Highway and Heidelberg Road.