



East-West Integrated Transport Proposal (EWITP)

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Melbourne City Council

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East-West Integrated Transport Proposal (EWITP)

Summary

- The proposed tunnel linking the Eastern Freeway with Deer Park is an expensive and inappropriate response in a time of concerns over oil supplies, increasing evidence of human-induced climate change and poor standards of public transport alternatives.
- Attempts to increase road capacity invariably result in “induced traffic” with no net benefit for existing road users.
- Public transport enhancements are sorely needed along the Doncaster corridor and other broadly East-West corridors including Knox, Rowville and Werribee.
- The proposal pays insufficient attention to removing impediments to increased mode share for rail freight.
- Melbourne City Council should proactively engage in advocating for improved public transport across Melbourne and dedicate financial and human resources to this activity.

Introduction

In 2005 the Melbourne City Council is rehashing a repeatedly discredited 1950’s freeway plan that could cost \$10 billion to implement, the key feature of which, to quote one of the report’s own authors, we’d “be better off not building”. Also, contrary to the assumptions of many people who would support it in the general community, is not expected to reduce congestion.

Noteworthy observations in the report

Despite its obvious shortcomings, the EWITP actually contains a good deal of insightful observations about transport and this corridor in particular. For example:

- “Projects that attempt to relieve traffic congestion have always proved to be short-lived ... because the extra road space they create induces additional traffic¹ ... and simply creat[e] more and more congestion” (page 1 of EWITP – page 23 of Agenda Item 5.8)
- “the road tunnel proposal alone will not provide the wider benefits of the EWITP” (page 6 of EWITP – page 28 of Agenda Item 5.8)
- “The Doncaster corridor has long been considered public transport disadvantaged” (page 9 of EWITP – page 31 of Agenda Item 5.8)
- “the capacity limitation of a bus-based system is such that it could not achieve the share of

¹ Since the first high profile recognition of the “induced traffic” effect by the UK Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment in 1994, numerous studies have shown that increasing road capacity results in additional traffic as people switch from other modes (i.e. public transport) and/or make longer or more frequent car journeys. Increased road capacity could include additional road space or removal of constraints to traffic flow such as traffic lights. This “induced traffic” brings congestion levels back to where they were prior to the addition of extra road capacity with no net benefit for existing road users. Further information is available at <http://www.ptua.org.au/myths/congestion.shtml>

demand that is required for the corridor” (page 9 of EWITP – page 31 of Agenda Item 5.8)

- “a rail service ... in a dedicated reservation, well-served by integrated bus services, walking and cycling links ... is the only real way to provide a quantum shift in public transport mode share in the eastern corridor” (page 9 of EWITP – page 31 of Agenda Item 5.8).

Or to quote the report's author once again:

“... the real key to solving congestion is to shift people from car to public transport”
Transport consultant William McDougall – co-author of report, *The Age*, 1 September 2005

Similarly, the Agenda Paper produced by council staff makes some important observations that are unfortunately not adequately addressed in the proposal:

- “The lack of transport choices in middle and outer suburbs significantly adds to individual private transport costs, social dislocation and access to employment opportunities – particularly with rising fuel prices” (paragraph 24, page 5 of Agenda Item 5.8).
- “[T]wo thirds of metropolitan Melbourne’s residents only have access to bus services. These services are notoriously poor; average peak serviced are 40 minutes, the average finish time of buses is before 7pm and only 18 per cent of buses operate on Sundays. As long as 66 per cent of metropolitan Melbourne are without public transport services, only a third of the broader population have the choice of using public transport to access the City of Melbourne” (paragraph 26, page 5 of Agenda Item 5.8).

In other words, the construction of freeways does nothing to improve mobility for the one third of Melburnians who cannot drive, and around two thirds of Melburnians are forced to drive along corridors such as the Eastern Freeway because they are not provided with adequate public transport alternatives. In the absence of unlimited funds for capital works, spending should be prioritised for public transport measures that address mobility and equity issues for low income and non-driving individuals and households without inducing additional car journeys.

Shortcomings in the report

The Age reported on 1 September 2005 that the report's main flaw – the freeway tunnel - was “only advocated ... after a brief from a senior town hall officer called for it”. This pre-ordination of the report's contents perhaps explains various fundamental flaws and inconsistencies that show up in the report, including:

- Page 10 of the EWITP (page 31 of Agenda Item 5.8) claims that freight transport would save time and money with the tunnel, yet there would not necessarily be a reduction in peak hour travel times for private transport.
- Despite its recognition of the induced traffic effect and repeated claims that this proposal does not increase road space or capacity, it seems to grant motor vehicles a new unrestrained underground freeway of at least the current corridor's width, whilst allocating the existing surface roadspace to other existing users of the corridor (i.e. road based public transport, cyclists, etc). As obliquely conceded at paragraph 21 of Agenda Item 5.8, this effectively represents a doubling of roadspace and makes the old mistake of trying to treat congestion by making driving more attractive.

- Page 10's outline of the impact on freight transport completely ignores rail freight, despite this being, supposedly, one of the key elements of the proposal.
- The very concept of linking the Eastern Freeway to Deer Park flies in the face of council's recognition that most of the freeway's traffic is destined for nearby inner suburbs, the CBD and south of the CBD as outlined in council's paper for this agenda item (paragraph 15) and the Northern Central City Corridor Study (NCCCS).
- The EWITP and covering Agenda Paper make frequent references to the importance of public transport, yet the vast majority of the spending put forward in the proposal is aimed at private motor vehicle traffic.

The Agenda Paper also makes a significant omission at paragraph 12 when it fails to mention the possibility of reallocating existing transport funding from roads to public transport. If the government achieves its goal of 20 per cent of motorised journeys being undertaken by public transport by 2020 (ie a shift away from private car travel), it is likely that little, if any, additional road capacity will be required over the next 15 years. Conversely, a doubling of public transport patronage will require significant additional capacity and is unlikely to be achieved without a major rebalancing of transport funding. This glaring disparity in capacity necessitates a re-ordering of transport priorities away from urban road construction and towards public transport enhancements.

The investment required to implement the EWITP serving just one road corridor could deliver metro-wide public transport extensions and boost service frequencies, operating hours and reliability right across the city which would have the following benefits:

- improved access and mobility for non-drivers;
- less induced traffic;
- a safer transport system that is less prone to accidents;
- encouragement of more energy efficient transport choices requiring less oil; and
- reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollution.

Congestion through the inner north

PTUA makes the following observations about congestion through the inner north:

- The EWITP correctly identifies heavy rail to East Doncaster as a priority investment to improve mobility in the Eastern Freeway corridor.
- A rail line could provide much higher capacity along the corridor at much lower cost than a freeway.
- There is no immediate need for a Doncaster rail link to access the city through an expensive tunnel via North Melbourne. PTUA can only assume the report's suggestion of this route is intended to justify the inclusion of a tunnel in the EWITP, as the hospital and university precincts are already relatively well-served by trams. If anything, the focus should be on giving these trams genuine priority over motor vehicles to boost their effectiveness and attractiveness.
- The Doncaster rail link was proposed as part of the original plans for the Eastern Freeway, but subsequently shelved. This could happen again.

- Other public transport enhancement in the north and northeast would also improve mobility and reduce pressure on the corridor, for example:
 - South Morang train extension;
 - tram 48 extension to Doncaster Hill;
 - boosting frequencies on the Hurstbridge, Epping and Upfield lines; and
 - accelerated roll-out the Smartbus program.
- The EWITP fails to canvas these other enhancements to public transport in the northeast, and therefore can only ever offer partial and temporary relief to mobility problems in the corridor.

Pressure on the Westgate

The EWITP points to pressure on the existing East-West corridor crossing the Westgate Bridge. PTUA notes that a key factor in this pressure is the lack of adequate public transport west of the Maribyrnong River which forces people onto the Westgate Bridge. Pressure on this corridor originating from the western suburbs could be eased by measures including:

- boosting service frequencies on Williamstown, Werribee and Watergardens suburban train lines;
- boosting frequencies on Geelong and Melton V/Line services (and future electrification of the latter); and
- accelerated roll-out of the Smartbus program and other service improvements across the area.

Similarly, the pressure on the Monash freeway corridor leading to the Westgate is exacerbated by the lack of rail services to Rowville, Knox and beyond Frankston, as well as lack of adequate bus services enabling commuters to access the south-eastern rail lines.

The EWITP addresses none of the deficiencies, and council would be well served by advocating for their rectification at source rather than simply treating their symptoms.

Conclusion

- At a time when outer suburban councils right around Melbourne are calling for better public transport, we need to be improving the coverage and frequencies of rail and bus services in all corridors, not just the Doncaster corridor.
- At a time when oil prices are cutting into household budgets and consumer spending, we need to free Melburnians from car dependence.
- At a time when climate-related disasters are wreaking havoc in Africa, Asia, Europe and America, we need to prioritise less polluting modes of transport and land-use patterns.
- The proposed tunnel does none of these things, so council must immediately reject it and turn its attention to promoting improved public transport to the north and south as well as to the east and west of the city.

Recommendations

The City of Melbourne should engage with the State and Federal Governments and other stakeholders seeking enhancements to public transport across metropolitan Melbourne including (but not restricted to):

- Construction of a heavy rail line from Victoria Park to East Doncaster;
- Extension of the Epping line to South Morang;
- Construction of a heavy rail line to Rowville;
- Extension of the Frankston line to at least Baxter;
- Electrification of the Sydenham/Watergardens line to Sunbury;
- Extension of the no. 75 tram to Knox;
- Extension of the no. 48 tram to Doncaster Hill;
- Upgrades to frequencies and operating hours to trains, especially in the western and northern suburbs;
- Immediate rollout of the Smartbus program;
- Traffic light priority for trams and buses;
- Traffic calming measures through the inner north to improve liveability and further encourage mode shift to public transport, cycling and walking.

The City of Melbourne should dedicate financial and human resources towards the encouragement of a mode shift towards public transport across greater Melbourne, possibly utilising the proceeds of the City Parking Levy.