



PTUA submission to Caulfield to Dandenong level crossing removal project

March 2016

Summary

The PTUA supports the use of the most appropriate methods for removing level crossings, which in some cases may include elevated rail.¹

For the removal of the nine crossings from Caulfield to Dandenong (referred to as “CD9”) we agree that the proposed elevated rail alignment has a number of advantages, including better use of available land, and far less disruption required during construction.

However there are undeniable impacts to residents abutting the rail corridor, particularly between Caulfield and Oakleigh, and every opportunity must be taken to ameliorate or remove these impacts.

This should include ongoing consultation with residents on the best measures to reduce noise, visual and privacy impacts.

Design

We agree that the overall elevated design means land freed up can be made available for community uses such as parkland.

¹ <http://www.ptua.org.au/2016/01/11/level-crossing-options/>

Measures must be put in place to ensure vegetation can develop, that lighting is appropriate for users such as pedestrians and cyclists, and that graffiti is minimised.

More broadly, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles should be applied to ensure passive surveillance and favourable amenity for all users of these spaces.

Agreement must be sought with relevant authorities as to the maintenance of this land, to ensure that these spaces remain clean and well looked after.

Stations

We are generally pleased with the overall design of the new stations at Carnegie, Murrumbeena, Hughesdale, Clayton and Noble Park.

Some areas that for improvement or clarification would include:

Premium status

As we understand it, there is currently no change planned to the Premium or Host status of the stations to be rebuilt, with Carnegie and Murrumbeena to remain Host stations, Clayton and Noble Park to remain Premium, and Hughesdale to be neither.

Given anticipated population growth between Carnegie and Hughesdale, particularly as a result of the residential growth zones, as well as the Cranbourne-Pakenham line capacity upgrades which will improve rail services, it is expected that patronage will grow strongly in coming years.

Therefore the PTUA is calling for Carnegie, Murrumbeena and Hughesdale to all be upgraded to Premium status, with station rebuilds to include all necessary infrastructure to support a full time staff presence.

Platform design

We agree that in general, island platforms are desirable to assist with safety via passive surveillance, space efficiency in catering for peak capacity, and ensuring station facilities are easily available for passengers travelling in both directions.

While the structural 'wrap enclosure' might only partially enclose a station, the platform itself must be roofed for its entire length, to provide protection against Melbourne's rainy and sunny extremes. This roofing should be wide enough to offer protection from sun and rain coming from angles other than vertical. Provision of effective shelter the full length of the platform will help to ensure more efficient loading and unloading of trains rather than crowding around sheltered train doorways.

We suggest that each new station be differentiated using a theme colour, pattern and style that is relevant to the local area. In a similar way to the varying styles used in the City Loop, this helps people to associate the station to the location, and differentiates between a series of otherwise very similar new stations.

Platform access

We understand that stairs and lifts are to be installed as a minimum.

Given the expectation of a substantial rise from street level to the platforms, and limited speed and capacity of lifts, as well as strong patronage, we would urge that escalators be provided at all stations.

Should some stations remain unstaffed, remote monitoring via CCTV and/or emergency stop buttons could be used to assist with safety. While there may be a reluctance to place escalators at unstaffed stations, we note that in many existing Melbourne railway stations, escalators are already monitored remotely from elsewhere in the station complex - it is not necessarily essential for staff to be physically present by the escalators.

Further to comments under 'Design' above, application of CPTED principles would ensure passive surveillance of such facilities.

Pedestrian access

Overall, walking and cycling tracks must provide the most direct path to get to stations - avoid unnecessary corners, doglegs, backtracks and diversions. This includes careful placement of road crossings to maintain the most direct paths to get to stations.

Ideally pedestrian access to/from station platforms would be provided to both sides of the main road. If this is not possible initially, provide for the possibility in the future by building station platforms so that they span over the roads right from the beginning.

Particularly if this cannot be achieved, adequate crossing facilities must be provided to enable pedestrians to quickly and safely cross roads. Zebra crossings should be used on all roads which are not flagged as preferred traffic routes under the Vicroads SmartRoads scheme. Where zebra crossings are not provided, traffic lights must be programmed to ensure waits for pedestrians are minimised at all times, with response times within 10 seconds.

Pedestrian crossing signals *at intersections* should also default to green even where the crossing request button has not been pressed. This is to minimise unnecessary waits through another cycle for pedestrians that reach the crossing after the relevant phase has commenced.

Crossings must be appropriately located for access to bus stops - see below.

Given the expectation of stairs, lifts and escalators at each station, these should be designed in such a way as to offer access in a variety of directions in/out of the station, for instance escalators could run direct towards the main road and bus stops, while steps could be provided in the opposite direction for the benefit of local residents and park and ride commuters.

Bicycle access

To encourage bike and train commuting, Parkiteer cages should be provided at all the rebuilt stations, with provision for additional cages to be installed as demand grows.

We applaud the plan for a continuous bicycle/pedestrian shared path from Dandenong to Caulfield to be included in this project, but would note that the utmost care must be taken to ensure the safety and efficiency of cycling through station precincts - cyclists whether going to the station or beyond it should have direct and adequately separated paths from motor traffic, and busy pedestrian areas. Cyclists should not have to dismount to get past a station precinct safely.

Adequate crossing facilities must be provided for cyclists (and pedestrians) to cross roads (see above).

Given the anticipated use of paths for long-distance bicycle commuting, along the rail corridor, we recommend the use of separated paths for walking and cycling, in adherence with current best practice for minimising conflict and maximising safety.

Paths up and over roads

The ideal linear trail is continuous, and not interrupted by road crossings. We urge the LXRA to be innovative, and if possible include ramps and bridges to carry the linear trails up and over station precincts and cross roads.

It is possible to construct lightweight pedestrian and cycling paths that attach alongside viaducts, above the piers and below the decks - allowing them to pass over roads but remain under the rail deck.

There are two examples in Perth, WA: the Graham Farmer Freeway Bridge and the Armadale Rail Bridge across the Swan River between East Perth and the Burswood Peninsula. These bridges accommodate bike and walking paths in the space above the bridge piers, and below the road/rail decks.

Sample Images:

<http://expressway.paulrands.com/gallery/roads/wa/numbered/stateroutes/sr8/eastbound/images/05%20-%20Bike%20path%20under%20Winden%20Bridge.JPG>
<https://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/wa/a/26658064/perth-a-city-of-bikes/>

Bus/train interchange

At Carnegie, Murrumbeena and Hughesdale, it appears it will be convenient for passengers interchanging with southbound buses, with stops adjacent to the station entrance. However changing to/from northbound buses appears to require navigating pedestrian crossings and locating bus stops which have not been optimally placed.

If station exits cannot be provided on both sides of the road, we recommend ensuring the placement of pedestrian crossings and bus stops is carefully planned so that buses in both directions stop within easy reach of station entrances, and so that pedestrians are not tempted to cross roads unsafely.

At Clayton we understand northbound buses will turn off Clayton Road and stop along an access road close to the station entrance. This makes sense particularly for the routes that terminate at the station. It is critical that bus priority be used to ensure that buses are not delayed making this manoeuvre: including traffic light priority measures to prevent any delays for buses turning back onto Clayton Road.

Car parking

While the PTUA recognises that many train passengers value parking at stations, we do not believe that large amounts of parking is an efficient use of space in a suburban setting, particularly in the context of the suburban activity centres that have developed, and will continue to develop, around the stations included in this project.

Issues with large amounts of car parking in station precincts include:

- station precincts are high pedestrian activity areas that are ideally suited to high-value land uses including retail and other commercial activity. Car parking is a low-value, land-intensive use that squanders this space and reduces amenity;
- cars left unattended for long periods are targets for crime, and also provide hiding places that hinder passive surveillance;
- private vehicles are an inadequate access solution for a modern high capacity metro service, and can actively harm alternative access modes by reducing safety and amenity for walking and cycling or compromising the provision of feeder services.

Therefore we call for the overall number of car parking spaces to be maintained at most, but not increased, as part of this project.

The emphasis must be on more space-efficient methods of reaching the station, including walking, cycling and bus, as well as taxis, and ensuring retail activity and other uses in the space immediately around station entrances.

Disruption during construction

We understand one of the aims of the elevated rail proposal is to minimise disruptions to rail and road networks during construction. Given the large number of people using the Dandenong line, we would hope to see minimal interruptions to rail services, particularly on weekdays and during major events.

When bus replacement services are required, adequate resources (buses, support staff) must be provided. Where possible (for instance if buses use Princes Highway), measures such as dedicated bus lanes should be provided to ensure buses are not held up by other traffic.

Future expansion

We agree with the project aims of providing upgraded signalling and longer platforms, in line with strategies to increase the overall carrying capacity of the Dandenong line.

Given the substantial overall capacity increase from this project combined with the Melbourne Metro Rail Tunnel and the provision of High Capacity Metro Trains, we understand that the additional tracks may not be required for some decades.

However, planning for their construction should be done as part of this project, and appropriate overlays put in place. Should it be determined that future track expansion is likely to require property acquisition, it may be appropriate to offer optional acquisition now as part of this project, to assist residents who feel the impact of the elevated track cannot be overcome.

Consideration should also be given to gauge-convertible sleepers/infrastructure, to allow for future conversion to standard gauge as part of a broader rail freight strategy, should this arise.