

WHITEHORSE
CITY COUNCIL

Suburban Rail Loop Issues and Opportunities in Whitehorse

October 2022



Introduction

Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) is a significant project that has the potential to change how we move around metropolitan Melbourne and influence where we work, learn and live. Whitehorse City Council looks forward to the improved transport options that this project will bring.

A project of this size, complexity and ambition will involve significant disruption, particularly during the lengthy construction phase, in order to achieve the long term benefits. While being generally supportive of the project, Whitehorse City Council (Council) wishes to work with the Victorian Government on two key issues:

1

Avoid and minimise the social, amenity and environmental impacts on the Whitehorse community

2

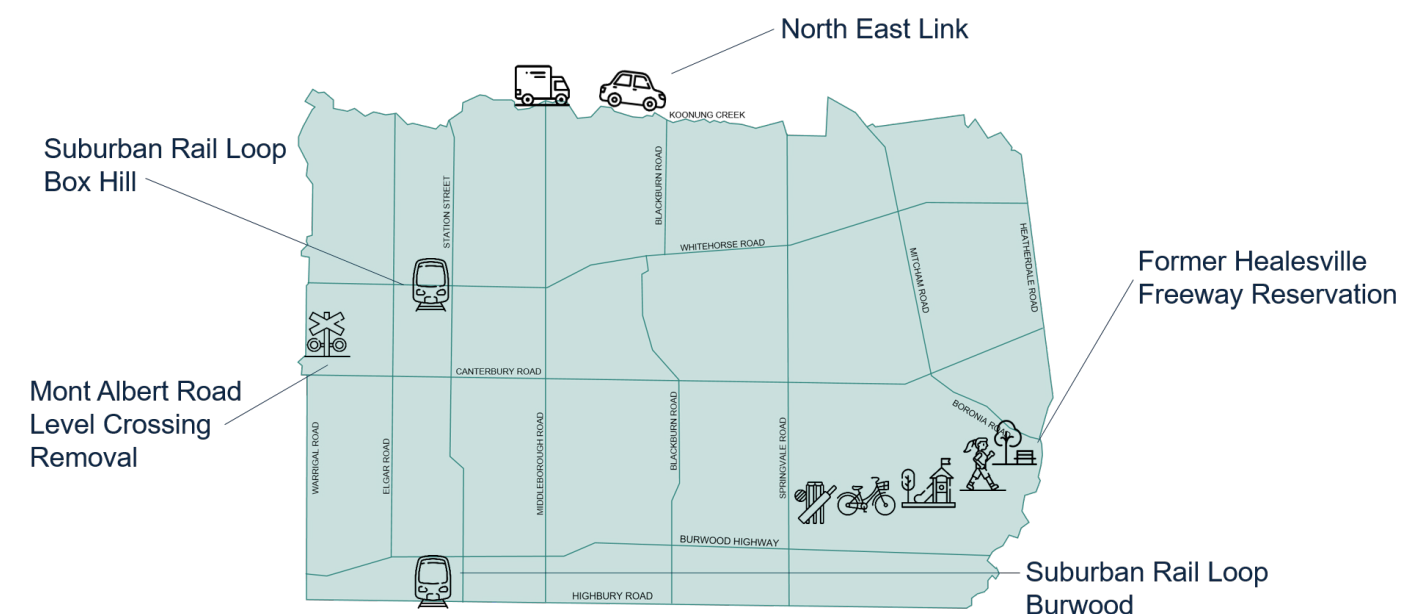
Maximise the look, feel and usability of the SRL infrastructure and the areas surrounding the stations

There is significant Victorian Government activity within the City of Whitehorse, including 'Big Build' projects and other initiatives, some of which are shown on the map below.

Cumulatively, Suburban Rail Loop, North East Link and the Mont Albert Road Level Crossing Removal projects will potentially impact around 5,000 trees in Whitehorse and will temporarily or permanently disrupt approximately 300,000m² of open space. Council seeks a collaborative approach between all Victorian Government agencies in order to coordinate project outcomes, timelines, processes, impacts and disruptions across these projects.

This document outlines the key matters Council is seeking to be delivered through the SRL project, or delivered concurrently through other Victorian Government projects.

These requests are in addition to the matters decided by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change in her assessment of the SRL Environmental Effects Statement (EES),



Victorian Government major projects in the City of Whitehorse

Box Hill



In addition to the commitments made as part of the EES process, Council is calling upon the Victorian Government to include the following actions within the SRL plans in Box Hill.

Traffic and Transport

- 1 Ensure the concurrent completion of the underground connection between the existing Box Hill station and the new SRL Box Hill station.
- 2 Redevelop the dysfunctional and unsafe bus interchange that is currently above the Box Hill Central shopping centre. The need for urgent attention is acknowledged in previous Victorian Government reports including the 'Box Hill Transit Interchange Ministerial Advisory Group report' and the 'Box Hill Transit Interchange Steering Committee report'.
- 3 Ensure the SRL east-west cycling path within the Whitehorse Road median connects to the Box Hill to Hawthorn Strategic Cycling Corridor, via Nelson Road to Hopetoun Parade.

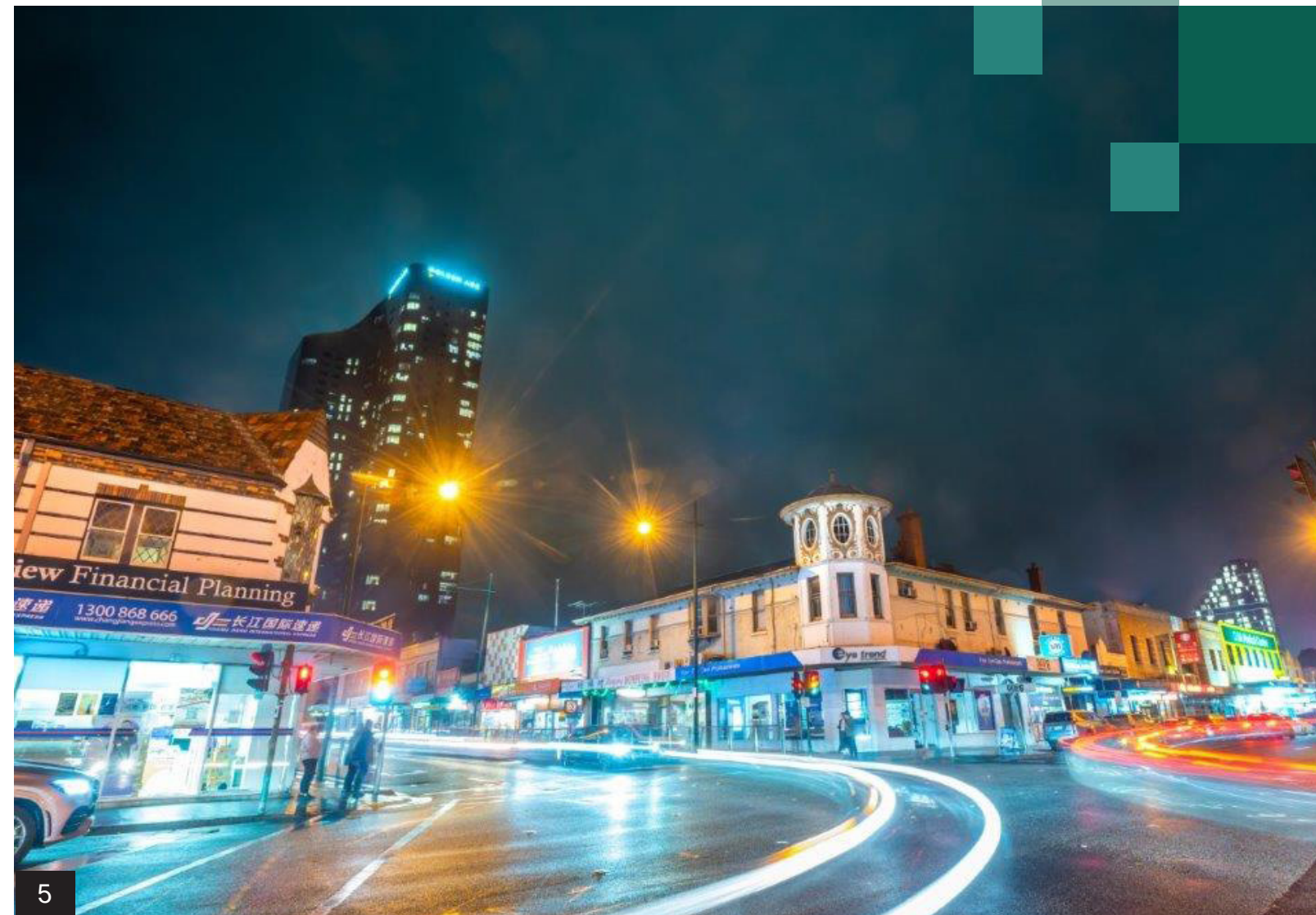
- 4 Improve the amenity and functionality of Bruce Street to provide a convenient pedestrian route to the northern precincts of Box Hill during the SRL construction phase, including hard surfaces, tree planting, street furniture and lighting improvements.
- 5 Undertake a full review of bus routes and timetables to ensure they meet the needs of passengers transferring to and from SRL trains.
- 6 Review the functionality of arterial roads surrounding Box Hill (eg Middleborough Road, Canterbury Road and Elgar Road) to ensure they are attractive options for through traffic, resulting in greater capacity for motorists whose destination is central Box Hill.
- 7 Ensure construction trucks access the southern construction site via Station Street rather than Whitehorse Road, to enable the retention of further heritage buildings on Whitehorse Road.
- 8 Address all locations in Box Hill, including intersection performance, where the traffic Level of Service is assessed as worse with the Project compared to without the Project, eg Watts Street at Whitehorse Road.

Open Space and Environment

- 1 Ensure the replacement open space is a convenient, accessible and high quality alternative for community members impacted by SRLA's occupation of Box Hill Gardens.
- 2 At the conclusion of construction, return surplus land to Council for use as open space and civic infrastructure, eg land on corner of Station Street and Main Street.
- 3 Ensure early planting of mature replacement trees to allow more time for the canopy to develop. Liaise with Council and the community early to determine appropriate locations for the replacement trees.

Land Use Planning, Urban Design and Business

- 1 Retain all buildings within Box Hill covered by a Heritage Overlay, particularly the Colonial Gas Association building at 942-946 Whitehorse Road, the adjacent building at 948 Whitehorse Road and the former Railway Hotel at 950 Whitehorse Road.
- 2 Ensure all SRL works are consistent with Council's draft Box Hill Structure Plan and Urban Design Framework and consistent with Council's guidelines for the Box Hill urban realm treatments.



Burwood



Council is seeking the following actions in Burwood, in addition to the commitments made as part of the EES process.

Traffic and Transport

- 1 Upgrade the surface and connections along the Gardiners Creek Trail strategic cycling corridor between Box Hill and Burwood, and further south into the City of Monash.
- 2 Construct a new pedestrian and cycling bridge over Gardiners Creek to connect to McIntyre Street.
- 3 Address all locations in Burwood where the traffic Level of Service is assessed as worse with the Project compared to without the Project, eg McComas Grove at Burwood Highway; Highbury Road at Sinnott Street, and Elgar Road at Burwood Highway.
- 4 Undertake a full review of bus routes and timetables to ensure they meet the needs of passengers transferring to and from the SRL stations.

Open Space and Environment

- 1 Ensure there is no net loss of public open space, including returning Sinnott Street Reserve to Council post construction.
- 2 Naturalise Gardiners Creek along the full section between Burwood Highway and Highbury Road.
- 3 Complete the Lundgren Chain Reserve from Cumming Street through to McComas Grove to provide a direct off-road link to the SRL Burwood Station.

Land Use Planning and Urban Design

- 1 Protect and enhance the residential interface around the station precinct.
- 2 Provide high quality public realm, architecture and wayfinding. Integrate place specific elements into the designed and constructed outcome that are relevant to the locality.
- 3 Enhance connections to the industrial precinct to the south and west of Burwood Station.



SRL Precincts

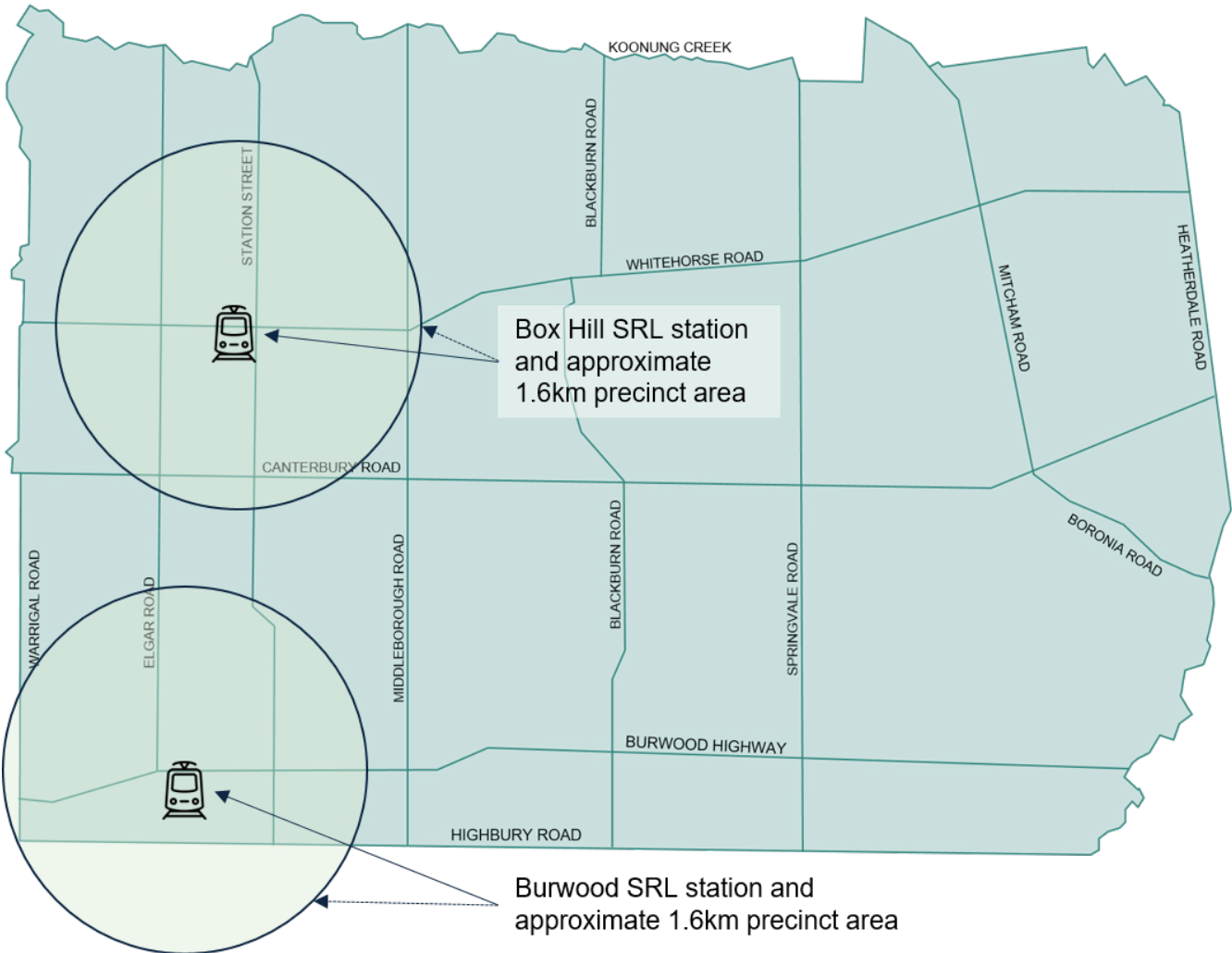
Council is supportive of the transport benefits that SRL will bring, however want to see robust processes in place to ensure the planning and delivery of precinct planning is undertaken with the community's interests in mind and with meaningful community input that genuinely influences the project.

The Suburban Rail Loop Act 2021 was passed through the Victorian Parliament without community consultation or dialogue with local governments. The powers that the Act gives to Suburban Rail Loop Authority directly impact the planning role of Whitehorse Council, and introduces a level of uncertainty regarding how SRLA's powers will be used.

Council understands that Precinct Structure Planning will be led by SRLA and will provide directions for growth and changes in land use for areas up to 1.6km around each of the SRL stations. Community engagement will be a vital component of the planning process. Council will be strongly advocating for good outcomes for the community that focus on sustainable growth and change around the SRL stations. In particular for housing, employment, community infrastructure and public spaces.

Council has put a great deal of effort into developing strategies and policies to guide land use planning within the municipality. These documents are based on extensive engagement activities and Council is confident that they represent the views of the Whitehorse community.

Council calls upon the Victorian Government to use these strategies and policies as the basis of the SRL Precinct Structure Planning process. The key strategies and issues are discussed further in this section.



Draft Box Hill Structure Plan (BHSP) and Urban Design Framework (UDF)

Strategic plans at the state and local level consistently identifying Box Hill as a key strategic, economic and housing centre. The draft BHSP acknowledges the significant growth and demographic change that is predicted to continue within this Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC). While the Victorian Government has chosen to not advance the documents through the Planning Scheme Amendment process at this time, the draft BHSP and UDF still outline the position of Council and describe the vision for the built form, public spaces, movement and transport. The key themes in the BHSP and UDF are:

- Re-balance the mix of floor space from 70% residential and 30% employment to 50% each
- Ensure building designs follow the controls in the UDF regarding street interface, overshadowing of public realm, wind, height and setbacks
- Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, including connectivity between modes
- Develop open space that promotes social interaction and are engaging and safe
- Include landscaping (including on private land) which reflect the character of each of the neighbourhoods within the Box Hill MAC

Box Hill Urban Realm Treatment Guidelines

This document guides applicants and Council in the redevelopment of streetscapes in Box Hill. It aims to get a consistent public/ private interface.

Housing Strategy and Neighbourhood Character Study

Together, these documents identify future housing needs and the residential character of different parts of the municipality, as well as areas for housing growth and change. They recognise residential areas that Council and the community seek to preserve as well as those areas with greater opportunity for growth. For example Mont Albert is classified as 'Limited Change' in the Housing Strategy and 'Garden Suburban' in the Neighbourhood Character Study, and contains heritage places and precincts plus stately trees that define the character of the area. Council seeks SRL respect the character of this area throughout the precinct planning process by restricting the precinct to the Box Hill MAC.

Heritage and the environment along Gardiners Creek are other matters Council is keen to see respected and enhanced through the SRL precinct planning process.



Residential Corridors Built Form Study

The Study guides new development along the Burwood Highway and Whitehorse Road corridors where the Residential Growth Zone has been applied. The design guidelines aim to improve the amenity of apartment developments along these important boulevards and their interface with adjoining lower rise residential properties by establishing suitable building height, setbacks and landscaping requirements. This work should be incorporated into the SRL's precinct planning process.

Investment and economic planning

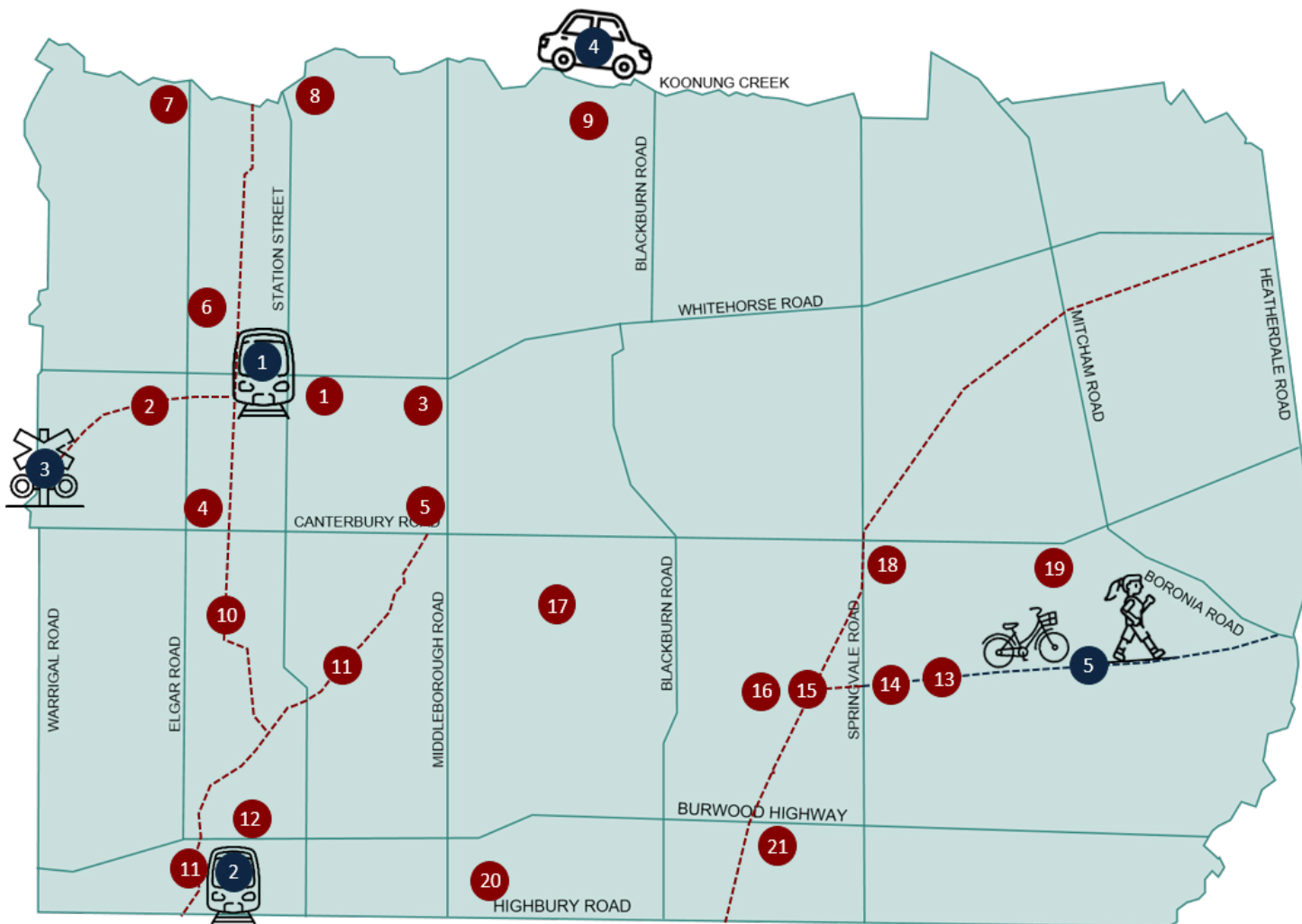
Council is seeking comprehensive, transparent, long-term commitment to investment in economic planning in Whitehorse. Box Hill and Burwood could be elevated to National Employment and Innovation Clusters (NEICs). They have the capability of being nationally significant areas of employment and business activity with the right support.

Employment land and housing are particularly important as they are levers for economic stimulus and quality of life.

Council would like to work with the Victoria Government to plan for shared economic and social outcomes for the City of Whitehorse and the broader Melbourne East region, building on existing industries, strengths and enabling new opportunities, connections and partnerships.

Opportunities for complementary projects

As discussed in the introduction, there are multiple Victorian Government projects concurrently being planned and delivered within the City of Whitehorse. There are opportunities for Council and the Victorian and Australian governments to work collaboratively on projects that complement the work being undertaken by the State and provide a cohesive environment throughout the municipality. Some of the projects where state and/ or federal funding is invited are shown below.



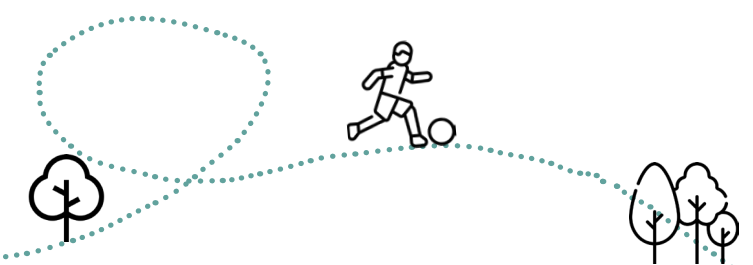
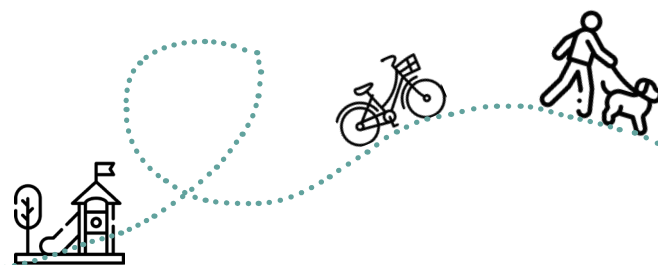
Current Victorian Government transport projects within the City of Whitehorse

1. Suburban Rail Loop Box Hill
2. Suburban Rail Loop Burwood
3. Mont Albert Road Level Crossing Removal
4. North East Link
5. Former Healesville Freeway Reservation

State and federal funding invited for complementary projects within the City of Whitehorse

1. **New open space between Harrow Street and Ellingworth Parade Box Hill** - Transform the existing Council off-street car park into a new open space
2. **Box Hill to Hawthorn Strategic Cycling Corridor** - Construct this Strategic Cycling Corridor, including road/rail crossings, to connect to the east-west cycling path being constructed by SRLA along Whitehorse Road
3. **City Oval** - Redevelopment of a multipurpose venue for the community to participate in educational, recreational and sporting activities
4. **Aqualink Box Hill** - Construction of a new indoor sports stadium
5. **Sparks Reserve** - Install artificial grass and sports lighting on the west sports field to increase soccer activity
6. **Hagenauer Reserve** - Install sports field lighting to a standard appropriate for athletics competition
7. **Elgar Park North East** - Install sports field lighting to a standard appropriate for hockey competition
8. **Koonung Creek Trail Strategic Cycling Corridor** - Upgrade the path surface, connections and introduce additional path lighting to benefit cyclists, dog walkers and pedestrians
9. **Koonung Park redevelopment** - Redevelop the pavilion and sports field, install a new electronic scoreboard and improve lighting
10. **Koonung Creek to Gardiners Creek Easy Ride Route** - Connect SRL and NEL projects via a cycling route that predominantly uses local streets
11. **Gardiners Creek Trail** - Upgrade the surface, improve connections and add pathway lighting along this Strategic Cycling Corridor between Box Hill and Burwood
12. **Bennettswood Reserve** - Redevelop the northern sporting precinct including playing surface and new sports field lighting
13. **Davy Lane sports precinct** - Develop the open space in Davy Lane Forest Hill into a sporting precinct with sports field ovals, a pavilion, lighting and car parking
14. **Strathdon House** - Install a new nature and sensory play space
15. **Pipe Track shared use path** - Construct the remaining sections of this Strategic Cycling Corridor between East Burwood and Mitcham, including a connection to the proposed shared use path along the former Healesville Freeway Reservation
16. **Forest Hill Reserve** - Redevelop the sports pavilion
17. **Mirraboopa Reserve** - Construction of a new synthetic soccer pitch, new pavilion and supporting car park and sports field lighting appropriate for competition
18. **Aqualink Nunawading** - Redevelop the pool and associated facilities
19. **Vermont Recreation Reserve** - Redevelop the sports pavilion
20. **Ballyshanassy Park** - Redevelop the sports pavilion
21. **East Burwood Reserve** - Construct a multi-use major precinct pavilion and regional play space

Further funding opportunities, including funding amounts, can be found in Council's *Partnership Opportunities* document.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Whitehorse City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional owners of the land. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging

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