

**Union Road, Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert Level  
Crossing Removal Project**

**Submission from Whitehorse City Council**

18 February 2021

## **Summary**

Whitehorse City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Union Road and Mont Albert Road level crossing removal project (LXRP).

The opportunity to remove these two at grade crossings at Mont Albert Road and Union Road, and to have their replacement with a safer alternative is supported in principle by Council. We provide this submission, to ensure the best possible outcome is developed by the LXRP for those members in the community who are most affected by this project and to ensure the locality of Mont Albert (for the City of Whitehorse) is developed suitably and respectfully.

We have noted throughout our submission areas of concern; areas of support and what we request from the LXRP to ensure the project is developed with meaningful input from the stakeholders this project is being completed for.

## **Introduction**

The City of Whitehorse welcomes the removal of the at-grade level crossing at Mont Albert Road.

We acknowledge this major state government funded investment as the basis of this project to help people move comfortably and efficiently throughout the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, and to contribute to a more sustainable transport system.

A double fatality involving two local residents occurred at the Union Road level crossing in 2016. It was a tragic incident that affected many members of the local community. The removal of these level crossings will ensure an incident of this nature does not occur again.

In relation to the current proposal, the LXRP has confirmed there are two non-negotiable elements. The first is the consolidation of the two train stations (Surrey Hills Station and Mont Albert Station), into one premium station. The second is the lowering of the existing railway lines in a “trench” system, under both Union Road and Mont Albert Road.

These elements are acknowledged, however Council has concerns about the consolidation of the two stations to one.

We are particularly concerned about the very limited opportunity and short time frames we have had to present our, and our community’s concerns, in relation to this proposal. We want to assure ourselves, and our community members, that this design response provides the best possible, functional and integrated outcome for this location. Further, this project changes so many aspects about the locality of Surrey Hills and Mont Albert that we want to ensure what is built IS the best possible integrated urban design solution for this locality that can be looked back in years to come, favourably.

This document provides a better understanding of the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert communities. As with many a successful project that involves community and public infrastructure, the suggestions provided should be considered and integrated into the project's delivery and final outcome.

Further, we have incorporated our "asks" and aligned our commentary (as suggested by the LXR) with the following key areas:

- *Overall look and feel of new station.*
- *How you want to use the new station precinct.*
- *Materials used for the station and surrounding areas.*
- *Screening and barriers along the rail trench.*
- *Landscaping and seating options.*
- *Pedestrian and cycling connections.*
- *Style of the new pedestrian bridge at Mont Albert Village.*
- *Future use of the old Mont Albert Station building.*
- *Location and inspiration for public art.*
- *Provision for car parking.*

Where we consider the above areas to be too restrictive, we have added suggested key areas to ensure broader aspects can be addressed. These key areas are considered critical to both Whitehorse and Boroondara Councils, and the communities they represent.

This massive investment by the State Government in addressing the level crossing removals at Union Road and Mont Albert Road is undeniably significant. It presents a once in a lifetime opportunity for the community, Councils and the State government to work together and collaborate to achieve the best possible outcome for the community and future users of this infrastructure.

Through this submission and on-going work with the LXR, both Boroondara and Whitehorse Councils have expressed the need for meaningful consultation with the whole community. We need to assure our community their voice is legitimately heard throughout the project – both at a design level and delivery.

This submission recognises and responds to the intention of the LXR to seek planning approval from the Minister for Planning via *Clause 52.03 - Level Crossing Removal Project* of the Boroondara and Whitehorse Planning Schemes. In responding to the *Clause 52.03* elements of the proposal, we have aligned our commentary with the topics suggested by the LXR in their consultation collateral and listed below:

- *Project boundary.*
- *Construction-related impacts.*
- *Environmental impacts.*
- *Amenity impacts.*
- *Native vegetation.*
- *Heritage.*

Whitehorse Council express concerns about the potential removal of the Mont Albert Station which is listed as a heritage building on Council's Planning Scheme. Further, our community has confirmed this same sentiment. The removal of this historic building will have a major impact on the local community and Council wishes to make it very clear to the LXR that this building must be retained. It must be retained, even if it means it needs to be dismantled carefully, and then rebuilt in the same (or an agreed "other" profile and suitable location), at Council's discretion. The key here, is that the current location of the Mont Albert train station is irretrievably linked to the Mont Albert Village – both through its historical context, as well as in its physicality.

At this stage, Council is envisaging that this structure will be rebuilt in exactly the same location that it currently is in, which means that a suitably located deck or plaza space will need to be constructed over the proposed rail cutting, to maintain this structure in the same (or immediately nearby) location within the Mont Albert Village. What Council wants is something very similar, if not identical, to what was done at the Mentone Station, where the structure was retained and rebuilt in exactly the same location with a suite of well suited historical and well thought out urban elements.

Council also requires the LXR to incorporate in their design a proposed deck over the cutting, linking Lorne Parade and Beresford Street - in the area between Mont Albert Road and the new Mont Albert station northern entrance. The deck will create a distinctive plaza like space (a northern concourse, if you like), that ensures the station has a visible and functional link orientated towards Mont Albert Road and the Mont Albert Village.

This document and its attachments (when read together), form Council's submission to the Union Road and Mont Albert Road - Level Crossing Removal project. It also includes community consultation input that Council has received. These submissions have been referenced in the Appendix of this document.

Council's understanding of the project has been informed by the information the Level Crossing Removal Project (LXR) has published and provided on its website, and via its electronic distribution lists. We express our disappointment that information has been distributed so late in the process to Council, essentially when major decisions have already been made by the LXR. We last received information in late 2019 provided, and were only updated in early 2021 with the current "consolidated" station proposal.

This lack of communication and lack of engagement with both Council and the community, is of concern. Further, the same has been noted by many who are following the progress of this project.

The current proposal and the two non-negotiable elements have been acknowledged and must be addressed to ensure they provide a suitable outcome in the future. The first non-negotiable, is the consolidation of the two train stations (Surrey Hills Station and Mont Albert Station), into one premium station. The second non-negotiable is the lowering of the existing railway lines in a "trench" system, under both Union Road and Mont Albert Road.

These two non-negotiable elements of the proposal are acknowledged, however Council expresses its concern once again about the consolidation of the two stations into one. Council supports the retention of the two train stations with one at Surrey Hills and one at Mont Albert - as previously presented and discussed.

The preference to maintain two separate train stations is held for various reasons, including:

- Providing public transport infrastructure that is accessible and located where people can continue to easily and safely access it - no matter their mobility.
- Continue to support the transit oriented development nature of the Mont Albert station by having the station situated close to or within the Mont Albert Village (a much loved neighbourhood shopping village). The current location of the station enables and encourages commuters to frequent and support traders in the Village, rather than having them bypassed.
- Not needing to convert Lorne Parade into a one way street and losing all of the existing commuter parking in the street.
- The impact on Mont Albert Village and loss of trade by having the station located 400 metres away from it.

Throughout this submission we have included a number of 'asks' of the LXP and where appropriate - the Minister for Planning. At the heart of most of them is the need to engage and work with the community, traders, businesses and Council. We cannot underestimate this very important opportunity to engage - which in turn allows for the development of solutions that meet the needs of those connected with this project.

Further, the Minister for Planning will better understand the grass roots issues that are created as a result of this project, and will be able to make decisions accordingly.

The multi-million dollar investment by the state government in this project, offers a unique opportunity for all parties to meaningfully collaborate and achieve the best outcome for the communities of today and tomorrow. The users of this infrastructure in the future, will become the custodians of the project and will ensure that through their use of it, there is pride and care taken when using it, rather than reverting to undesirable use and vandalism. We know this is a downfall of infrastructure being developed, without community care and input. Traders, Councils and the State government need to collaborate to achieve the best possible outcome for the community.

This submission also recognises and responds to the intention of the LXP to seek planning approval from the Minister for Planning via *Clause 52.03 - Level Crossing Removal Project* of the Boroondara and Whitehorse Planning Schemes.

Feedback to *Clause 52.03* focusses heavily on the Planning Project Boundary (PPB) as it impacts a large number of Whitehorse roads, reserves and amenities along with potential impact on sports grounds within the municipality. We have serious concerns about the size of the PPB and query the need for and suitability of many of the local, narrow streets the LXP has included in the PPB. The majority of streets in

Surrey Hills has vertical clearance restrictions because of the well-established and cherished street tree lines, which render them effectively impassable for the types of heavy vehicles generally associated with major construction works.

For many reasons, the use of sports fields for project purposes is not supported and will not be tolerated by the community, Council, sporting groups and park and reserve users. The negative and long-term impacts for the organised sporting clubs who rely on these reserves is not palatable. Neither is the likely impacts from the occupation on the neighbouring Lorne Parade Reserve - even though it doesn't belong to Council.

Council reinforces the importance in meaningful contributions towards this iconic project. We look forward to further conversations to ensure what is developed as this project progresses into its built form – is a point of pride for the community and future users.

## Project understanding

The LXP has published limited information about the project.

Our understanding of what the project consists of is outlined below, and is based on the *information available to Council at the time of preparation of this submission*. Council has not been privy to information above and beyond what has been circulated in the public domain; on the LXP website and via electronic distribution lists.

The key points we understand that form the basis of this project are as follows:

- The consolidation of the two train stations currently at Surrey Hills and Mont Albert, to be consolidated into one premium station.
- The western entrance to the new station will be approximately 150m east of the current Surrey Hills station entrance.
- The eastern entrance to the new station will be approximately 400m west of the current Mont Albert station entrance.
- The single, premium station will provide premium passenger facilities including staff, kiosk, toilets, covered waiting areas and CCTV.
- Some additional public infrastructure development is to be associated with the existing train station locations.
- The lowering of the rail line into trench under Union Road and Mont Albert Road.
- The trench will:
  - Accommodate the three existing tracks and one premium station building and platform infrastructure, including vertical transport (i.e. lifts and stairs).
  - Be between 7m and 9m deep.
- The trench will not:
  - Be capped, with the exception of the station concourse area at the western end of the platform.
  - Be future-proofed to cater for a fourth track if deemed necessary in the future by the relevant authority.
- The provision of car parking “generally” within the footprints of the two existing car parks at the Surrey Hills station. The car parks will be at-grade and will not be under or above ground multi-deck structures.
- The installation of pedestrian operated signals to enable at-grade crossing of Union Road and Mont Albert Road - generally near the location of the existing boom gates across both roads.
- The construction of shared path infrastructure from Union Road to approximately the western entrance of the existing Mont Albert station only on the south side of the train tracks.

- The creation of a 'new space' fronting Union Road, adjacent Bedford Avenue. (The LXRPs have noted in their collateral the "future use of this area will be determined in consultation with the community").
- The removal of a number of healthy, established trees and other vegetation from the public realm. (The LXRPs have noted trees and vegetation removed as a direct result of the project works will be replaced).
- The removal of some or all on-street parking from Lorne Parade, Mont Albert and the conversion of the road to one-way and the narrowing of this street.
- The closure of Beresford Street, Mont Albert between Gordon Street and Mont Albert Road.
- Construction impacts on the community from mid-2021 to sometime in 2023 or later.
- Early works, including service relocations, are planned to commence in mid-2021.
- Major construction commences in 2022.
- The boom gates will be removed sometime in 2023.
- It is not clear when the new station and Lilydale/Belgrave rail line will return to regular operation.
- There is no information available about whether the removal of the boom gates is the final construction task or, as has been the case on other level crossing removals where the train tracks have been lowered into a trench, if there are a number of other construction tasks to follow the physical removal of the boom gates from the site.

### **Project non-negotiables: Consolidation of the train stations**

Council is aware of the train station design 'guidelines' the LXRPs are working within and the 'requirements' these 'guidelines' place on the project, being train stations must be located on straight sections of track and cannot be located on curved sections of track. Council is also aware of the desire of the LXRPs to ensure train stations are not, in their opinion, "too close together".

Council recognises these two items, when combined, have resulted in the LXRPs proposing the consolidation of the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert train stations into one, premium station.

We respectfully challenge the LXRPs to:

- Review the 'guidelines' and reconsider their interpretation of the same.

- Rethink and reconsider their opinion on what is a suitable separation distance for train stations, taking the mobility of the community rather than a seemingly arbitrary acceptable separation distance into account.
- Consider the impacts that this will have to both Mont Albert Village traders, as well as Union Road traders.
- Consider accessibility, mobility and amenity impact by segregating the community due to the proposed rail cutting between Mont Albert Village and Beresford St. Access between the two areas is currently possible through the station.

The aims of challenging the LXP to review, reconsider and “put themselves in the shoes of” passengers are to have the project provide two train stations rather than one. Further, it is to ensure a clear and thorough understanding of how ‘guidelines’ are applied for future projects.

While the new station appears to be closer to the Union Road shopping centre than Mont Albert Village shops, the proposed location of the single train station is of concern to Council.

## **Accessibility and functionality**

The LXP has noted the western station entrance will be approximately 150m from the current Surrey Hills station entrance. This is considered to be a long distance for some passengers to walk to access public transport, noting the bulk of the walk is through a car park, and effectively disconnects the public and school bus services operating on Union Road from the trains. Any integration between public transport services that exists now will be severed by the LXP proposed location of the train station.

There is also a long distance and walk for commuters wanting to get from the proposed eastern exit of the station to the drop off / kiss & ride area earmarked at the corner of Mont Albert Road and Beresford Street (332 Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert). The eastern station access is to be located 400m west of the current Mont Albert station location and will present distance access concerns to some local members of the community.

The LXP proposal will disconnect the train station from the Mont Albert shopping centre and discourage multi-purpose journeys. It will no longer be quick and easy to drop by the shops to purchase groceries or a bottle of wine after work. The almost accidental ‘transit oriented development’ nature of the current Mont Albert train station will therefore be permanently lost.

## **Passenger amenities**

There is little detail about platform infrastructure, including passenger amenities available for review. Noting however, the location of the car parking and the brief notes and shades of blue on the diagram (*published in the December 2020, Community Update by the LXP*) - the bulk of passenger amenities will be located at the western end of the platform.

These amenities are expected to include:

- Public toilets.
- Staffed ticket office.
- Indoor waiting area.
- Secure bicycle parking.
- Wayfinding signage.
- Myki top-up and checking machines.
- Accessible drinking fountains.
- Dynamic passenger information boards.

There appears to be little to no space at the eastern end of the platform to provide anything more than a small sheltered entrance, one Myki machine and vertical transport (i.e. stairs and a lift). Should passengers accessing the station from the eastern end require any of the amenities listed above, they will need to walk the length of the station to access these services. For anyone with a mobility impairment, including a parent or carer with children, or anyone in a rush, this may be an impossible ask. This is important to raise as a concern as the LXRП has highlighted the accessible parking being located at the eastern end of the works area at 332 Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert.

We hope our assumption about the location and provision of passenger amenities is entirely incorrect and, should the project proceed with one single station rather than two, all amenities will be provided at both ends of the platform, including accessible parking spaces.

## **The ask**

The LXRП:

- Provide two train stations - one at Surrey Hills and one at Mont Albert.
- Review the 'guidelines' applied to the project that 'require' train stations to be located on straight sections of track and reconsider their interpretation of the same.
- Rethink and reconsider their opinion on what is a suitable separation distance for train stations, taking the mobility of the community rather than a seemingly arbitrary acceptable separation distance into account.

Should the LXRП insist of providing only one station, they must:

- Locate the station to better connect it with the Mont Albert shopping centre and Mont Albert Road on-road public transport services. It is acknowledged that Boroondara will prefer similar for the station location to connect with the Union Rd shops and Union Rd transport services.
- Ensure the eastern entrance / exit of the Station must be much closer to Mont Albert Road and as far away as possible from Gordon Street.
- Engage and work with Council to improve accessibility and functionality of the train station, platforms and other public infrastructure and amenities.

- Provide passenger amenities, including but not limited to those listed below, at both ends of the single platform:
  - Public toilets.
  - Staffed ticket office.
  - Indoor waiting area.
  - Secure bicycle parking.
  - Wayfinding signage.
  - Myki top-up and checking machines.
  - Accessible drinking fountains.
  - Dynamic passenger information boards.
  
- The removal of the Mont Albert Station, which is listed as a heritage building on Councils Planning Scheme, must be retained, even if it means that it needs to be dismantled carefully and then rebuilt in the same location, or at another location nearby at Council's discretion.

At this stage Council is envisaging that this structure will be rebuilt in exactly the same location as it is currently in, which means that a deck / plaza area will need to be constructed in order to maintain this structure in the same location. What Council wants is something very similar, if not identical, to what was done at the Mentone Station, where the structure was retained and rebuilt in the exactly the same location, with the reuse of certain material, like the bluestone edge blocks on the station, to be transformed as seats, very similar to what was done at Mentone.

Further, it is noted the red bricks with bluestone cappings located at the central platform foundation of the existing station may date back to the 1890's where station masters "stepped up" from the track onto the platform to sell out-bound tickets. *(Extract from the Mont Albert Village Traders Association & Station Gardening Group Submission)*

Furthermore, Council requires that the historic survey marker etched within the bluestone platform capping must be retained and reused as part of the station reconstruction and Plaza construction.

Council requires the LXP to incorporate in their design a proposed deck over the cutting linking Lorne Parade and Beresford Street, in the area between Mont Albert Road and the new Mont Albert station (eastern entrance). The deck will create a distinctive plaza like space (a eastern concourse, if you like) that ensures the station has a visible and functional link orientated towards Mont Albert Road and the Mont Albert village.

The plaza like space should be designed for public use and incorporate a well thought-out site layout that invites community use and site specific place making opportunities. It should not be "over-designed" and be irrelevant to the locale. Community and Council consultation will be integral to achieve this.

# Surrey Hills - The community

## Our people

Information and data from the 2016 ABS census <sup>[1]</sup> provides interesting insights about the Surrey Hills community. This is the community directly impacted by and likely to directly benefit from the removal of the level crossings at Union Road and Mont Albert Road in the long term.

From experience developing the Whitehorse Community Plan, we know the Surrey Hills community is engaged and interested. They want to actively and positively participate in the development of projects in their suburb which seek to enhance the amenity of their neighbourhood.

The population of Surrey Hill is 5,274 and consists of households of 2.65 people on average. 2,082 dwellings make up Surrey Hills, with a relatively low population density of 33.34 people per hectare.

Of the 5,274 community members that call Surrey Hills home, the median age is 38. In 2016, Surrey Hills had a higher proportion of children (under 18) and a lower proportion of persons aged 60 or older than the City of Whitehorse as a whole and 41% of the community are couples with children.

Over 25% of the community was born overseas, with China, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, India and New Zealand, the top five countries of origin within the Surrey Hills population (in highest to lowest order).

19% of the community speak a language other than English (LOTE) at home, with Mandarin, Greek, Cantonese, Italian and Vietnamese the top five LOTEs spoken (in highest to lowest order). Other languages include Hindi, Sinhalese, Indonesian, Korean and Spanish.

21% of the total population use public transport daily. Noting the available public transport in the area, most will catch trains from Surrey Hills train station.

4% of the Surrey Hills community reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability. When comparing the 2016 ABS census to the 2011 ABS census, this percentage rose and is expected to continue to rise as our community ages and ages in place.

There are many community reference groups in Surrey Hills and three groups who must be consulted on the project are the Surrey Hills Historical Society <sup>[2]</sup>, the Box Hill Historical Society and the Surrey Hills Progress Association<sup>[3]</sup>.

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<sup>[3]</sup> <https://www.surreyhillsprogress.org.au/>

## **Mont Albert - The community**

### **Our people**

Information and data from the 2016 ABS census <sup>[1]</sup> provides interesting insights about the Mont Albert community. This is the community directly impacted by and likely to directly benefit from the removal of the level crossing at Mont Albert Road in the long term.

From experience developing the Whitehorse Community Plan, we know the Mont Albert community is engaged and interested. They want to actively and positively participate in the development of projects in their suburb which seek to enhance the amenity of their neighbourhood.

The population of Mont Albert is 4,753 and consists of households of 2.58 people on average. 1,986 dwellings make up Mont Albert, with a relatively low population density of 30.88 people per hectare.

Of the 4,753 community members that call Mont Albert home, the median age is 40. In 2016, Mont Albert had a higher proportion of children (under 18) and a similar proportion of persons aged 60 or older to the City of Whitehorse as a whole and 38% of the community are couples with children.

Of the nearly 31% of the community born overseas, China, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, India and New Zealand, were the top five countries of origin within the Mont Albert population (in highest to lowest order). 25% of the community speak a language other than English (LOTE) at home, with Mandarin, Cantonese, Greek, Italian and Hindi the top five LOTES spoken (in highest to lowest order). Other languages include Spanish, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese and Japanese.

24% of the total population use public transport daily. Noting the available public transport in the area, most will catch trains from Mont Albert train station.

2.7% of the Mont Albert community reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability. When comparing the 2016 ABS census to the 2011 ABS census, this percentage is slightly higher and is expected to continue to rise as our community ages and ages in place.

The Box Hill Historical Society is an active community group in the area and should be consulted in relation to the project.

### **Mont Albert Village businesses**

Mont Albert Village is located centrally along the western border of the Whitehorse municipality, specifically between Mont Albert Road and Churchill Street in Mont Albert. It is a traditional 'strip' shopping centre located along Hamilton Street with

additional retail & office properties continuing into Churchill Street and along Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert.

Mont Albert Village has a vast array of businesses to satisfy every shopping need in one visit. There are many businesses to enjoy ranging from amazing cafes, bakeries and a patisserie, through to shops where you can buy fresh produce, sensational meats and other gourmet food items.

In addition, Mont Albert Village has businesses such as a newsagent, dry cleaners, a post office, community shopping centre, opportunity shops, clothing / accessories retailers, a florist, health and beauty services, home furnishings, specialty shops and even professional service providers.

Residents including retirees, commuters, students of all ages travelling to schools and tertiary institutions and young families with children frequent the centre on regular basis.

### **During construction**

While the transformation of the existing Mont Albert Road level crossing to 'rail under road' will create a safer environment for all transport network users including pedestrians, cyclists, train drivers and passengers - there will be significant disruptions to the community who live, work, recreate and shop in Surrey Hills and Mont Albert.

These disruptions will start with the early works in mid-2021, continue through the construction works and may not finish until the 12 month defects liability period is over in 2024 or 2025.

### **Our people**

The disruption experienced by our community will range from being a minor inconvenience for some; to being severely damaging for the health and wellbeing of others, and everything else in between.

While it would be convenient for the LXP to treat all concerns and disruptions in the same manner, this is considered to be inappropriate given the potential intensity of impact and disruption for some of the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert community.

The range of impacts affect different parts of the community and their experience associated with the project.

Our community has very clearly expressed concerns about the inconvenience the project will cause and Whitehorse Council expects that the LXP listens and addresses those concerns. Council also wants to know how those concerns will be dealt with, and what mechanisms the LXP will put in place to manage them.

The 'every day' life of our community must not be adversely impacted by the level crossing removal.

## **Our businesses**

The level crossing removal at Mont Albert Station has the potential to tear apart the heart of the village feel during the lengthy construction period.

This potential stems from the location of the train station, the car parks, the depth and length of the proposed trench and the anticipated heavy vehicle movements and routes within the area. The potential, if realised, would irreversibly damage the shopping centre that has managed to not only survive Covid-19 but thrive through 2020.

Council is very concerned about the adverse impact the level crossing removal will have on all businesses in the Mont Albert Village. We want all businesses to survive and continue to thrive. We do not want to see businesses close as a result of the LXR works.

All businesses in the Mont Albert Village are important stakeholders and deserve the full attention and respect from the LXR. We consider it is important to bring to the attention of the LXR the two businesses at 343 and 345 Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert. Both of these small businesses will be engulfed by the LXR works by virtue of their location next to the train line and station and must be treated with care and respect and consulted as part of the works and during construction. As well as these 2 properties the properties in Hamilton Street, which back directly onto the back of the railway reserve must also be kept in the loop and not be disrupted. As with the community, a bespoke approach will be required from the LXR in how it liaises with and supports each business in the centre. The support provided by the LXR must focus on the best interests of the businesses and not the LXR.

## **The ask**

The LXR must:

- Engage and work with each and every community member impacted by the project to listen and respond to their concerns, to the satisfaction of the community member or associations.
- Assign a dedicated contact person for each community member and that LXR officer must listen and respond and do so empathetically, responsibly and in the best interests of the community member and not the LXR.
- Maintain the community's access to Council services, including but not limited to rubbish, recycling and green waste collection (including the anticipated future FOGO service), meals on wheels, Maternal and Child Health services, and on-street parking.
- Provide support to each business, to the satisfaction of each business, throughout the level crossing removal works to ensure each business remains open and viable.
- Establish a traders only 'Trader Community Reference Group' to bring the traders together in one forum, to consult with the group and to deliver support that meets their collective and individual needs.

- Maintain access for deliveries to businesses and collection of rubbish, recycling, food waste, waste oil and the like throughout the construction period, including the early works.
- Maintain access to on-street parking and off street parking (between Mont Albert Rd and Hamilton Street) along the length of Lorne Parade, Beresford Street and Hamilton Street throughout the construction period, including the early works. Attention to be provided and offered for disabled user accessibility during and post construction.
- Work with Council and traders to create, fund and deliver a marketing strategy for the shopping centre which showcases the *village feel* campaign for Mont Albert.

Council welcomes discussions with the LXP about providing pop-up spaces for existing businesses in the shopping centre to occupy.

# Surrey Hills - The place

## Past

Whitehorse derives its namesake and logo from a white horse dating back to the 1850s, when a white horse statue adorned the front entrance of the City's first hotel and two-storey building. Today, a memorial stands on the former site of the hotel and the white horse symbolises the City's identity.

Surrey Hills received its name from Surrey County, England, by an estate agent and councillor, J.H. Knipe (1828-95).<sup>[4]</sup> In the 1850s small farms and grazing runs, were scattered across Surrey Hills and some of these were marked for public use before being sold for development. Some parks and gardens were donated by the general public or acquired to offset unpaid rates.

In 1882, the railway extended from Camberwell to Lilydale, and by 1892 most of the land was subdivided for housing, particularly around the new railway stations. The Surrey Hills train station opened on 13 August 1883. During early investigations, engineers were initially unwilling to allow trains to stop at Surrey Hills claiming potential difficulties with the gradient and that there was not enough traffic to warrant the stop. By 1888, a second platform arrived, and by 1930 a small goods yard to the south of the station. In 1966, the signal box and goods yard were removed, and the present-day station building and platform were converted to an island platform.<sup>[5]</sup> Intensive residential development followed the announcement to extend the train line to Lilydale. Residential development was also stimulated by the provision of amenities in Surrey Hills. In 1890 the Education Department opened a school within the original Windsor Park Estate, which is located in the north-east corner of the Whitehorse portion of Surrey Hills.

The Windsor Park Estate was developed on land that was originally located in the south east corner of Henry Elgar's 1841 Special Survey. The property was surveyed, subdivided and then released for sale in stages from December 1883. The streets were laid out in sweeping curves and contains extensive streetscape planting. The Windsor Park Estate is considered of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Whitehorse and was provided protection under the Whitehorse Planning Scheme after the completion of the *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review 2012*<sup>1</sup>. There are further heritage properties to the north in Mont Albert.

The railway also caused a commercial boom, spurring new retail centres around the stations including the shopping village along Union Road in Boroondara. Lot sizes across Surrey Hills are generous, with extensive gardens and period homes. The dominant materiality is brick produced in the nearby suburb of Hawthorn. During this time street trees were planted on main roads, and a century later side streets had street trees, nature strips, improved drainage, traffic islands,

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<sup>[4]</sup> [Surrey Hills | Victorian Places](#)

<sup>[1]</sup> Windsor Park Estate Heritage HO243 Heritage Citation, City of Whitehorse

lights and pavement installed. The first bike paths began to be established in parks in 1985.<sup>[7]</sup>

## **Present**

In Whitehorse, Surrey Hills is roughly a square shape contained by Elgar Road to the east, Riversdale Road to the South, Warrigal Road to the west and Windsor Crescent to the north.

The Surrey Hills neighbourhood character is broadly recognised as low rise one to two-storey detached and semidetached Victorian timber architecture and Edwardian villas, terraces, units and townhouses, with leafy outlooks.

The rail corridor is close to several arterial roads including Canterbury Road and Mont Albert Road in an east-west direction and Elgar Road in a north-south direction. Local streets are tree-lined and mostly follow a grid pattern, with some curved streets interspersed throughout.

The landscape character surrounding the rail corridor is characterised as gently undulating topography that rises to the north and south from the rail corridor, with sections of the rail corridor sometimes being in a shallow cut. A majority of the surrounding character is leafy green suburban residential areas with significant trees. There is one bus stop on each side of Windsor Crescent with a single unmarked bay, servicing route 766 and one bus stop on each side of Union Road with a single marked bay, servicing route 612. These buses are used by schoolchildren who transfer to Surrey Hills train station before and after school. Schools within the area include Surrey Hills Primary, Our Holy Redeemer School, and many childcare centres and kindergartens.

Currently cycling access to the train station is promoted with the Parkiteer cage and bike hoops in front of the Coles local, in Boroondara. No on- or off-road bicycle facilities are located in the Surrey Hills area to facilitate safe and easy access to the train station and shopping centre by cyclists. Pedestrian access is encouraged to the train station and shopping centre through the local street network in both Boroondara and Whitehorse.

## **Mont Albert - The place**

### **Past**

Mont Albert owes its name and the shopping village its existence to Mont Albert Station. Established and opened on 11th August 1890 in an open field at the top of the gradient rising eastward from Surrey Hills towards Box Hill, the Station allowed early steam trains to stop and start without loss of traction or power. Newer trains were soon able to easily stop anywhere on the gradient, but Mont Albert Station was

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<sup>[7]</sup> [SHADY PLACES: Hawthorn's Parks, Gardens and 'Public' Property.](#)

established and has remained in use ever since as a secondary station on the Lilydale-Belgrave line.

The Station attracted new residents to the area and handsome residences were established looking across open paddocks in the 1890s. The Mont Albert Progress Association planted trees to beautify the railway reserve, with some flowering gums and old peppercorn trees still growing along the side of the rail corridor. For the next 30 years, it is recorded that local children walked across the paddocks and along the railway line collecting wild flowers. Steam trains ran until 1922 when electrification of the line from Flinders Street Central Station to Box Hill was completed.

The current Mont Albert Station building was constructed in 1911, and the first purpose-built shop in Hamilton Street village around the same time. A range of shops along Hamilton and Churchill Streets within 100 meters of the Station soon followed, catering for railway patrons walking to and from the Station and, as the 20th century progressed, roads were sealed and car parks added. The Station had nucleated a growing village.

Over the next 100 years the fortunes of Mont Albert Station and the village waxed and waned as changing train schedules and fare structures affected the choice of local residents to use the Station or walk an extra 5-10 minutes to Surrey Hills or Box Hill. Positioned at the top of the rise between the busier junctions of Surrey Hills and Box Hill, it has always been a quiet Edwardian place seen from the windows of trains passing through. 'Stopping all stations' trains come through every 15 minutes, with passengers stepping on and off in quieter numbers than the rush hour crowds at Surrey Hills and Box Hill.

Over the years, amenity at the Station has improved; a subway replaced the original overhead footbridge in 1971, the same year a third track was added to the rail corridor. This required an island platform to be built and ticketing office redesign. The gatekeeper at Mont Albert Road crossing was no longer needed when automatic boom gates were installed in 1962. Stationmasters and ticketing staff became a thing of the past with progressive automation and now itinerant inspectors, maintenance crews and PSOs only appear as required. As the number of Metro passengers steadily increases, residents and retailers are ever present and maintain a watchful eye on the Station.

*(Information extracted from the Mont Albert Village website:  
[www.montalbertvillage.com.au](http://www.montalbertvillage.com.au))*

## **The Present**

The suburb of Mont Albert has the boundaries of Kenmare Street to the north, Elgar Road to the east and Windsor Crescent to the south. The western boarder encompasses Wilson Street, York Street, and in the north-west section it joins Whitehorse Road, and follows it to Barloa Road. It continues along Barloa Road, Carlyle Crescent and Carrick Street to meet Kenmare Street.

The Mont Albert neighbourhood character includes a mix of architecture, comprising Victorian, Edwardian, Federation, Californian Bungalow and interwar buildings. Many of the properties are included in the heritage overlay, either as part of a heritage precinct or due to the individual heritage significance of the buildings.

Buildings are generally 1-2 storeys in height and most detached, with some attached apartment infill development throughout.

The rail corridor is close to several arterial roads including; Whitehorse and Mont Albert in an east-west direction and Union and Elgar Roads in a north-south direction. Local streets are tree-lined and follow a grid pattern. The road treatments are sealed, with some streets consisting of bluestone kerb and channels.

The landscape character surrounding the rail corridor is characterised by tree line streets, with regular planting along the nature strips and instances of avenue planting in some areas. Mont Albert retains its original character because it never attained the traffic volume and status that would demand dramatic redevelopment. While well maintained with modern amenity, it preserves its Edwardian charm complemented by its shrubs and gardens. Gardens are formally planted with exotic vegetation and tall canopy trees.

There is one bus stop on each side of Mont Albert Road between Louise Avenue and St Georges Avenue servicing route 766. Schools within the area include Surrey Hills Primary, Our Holy Redeemer School, and many childcare centres and kindergartens.

There is a bicycle rack at the Mont Albert train station, with cycle access to the station available along Beresford Street to the north and Churchill Street to the south. There are cycle connections beyond Mont Albert to surrounding suburbs.

### **Future - During construction**

There is a real risk that area around the train stations, train line, the reserve on Lorne Parade and Hamilton Street shopping centre will become an uninviting and unsightly place during the construction period, starting with the early works in mid-2021. This environment will adversely impact traders, residents, visitors and public transport users. Essentially anyone who visits the Hamilton Street shopping centre, as well as those who live nearby and around the Lorne Reserve Park area, including Lorne Parade.

The Mont Albert community and traders, along with Council, are proud of the beauty of their village area and do not want to see the environment degraded for the sake of or during construction. We expect the LXRPA will have developed ideas to ensure the area is not degraded and becomes an eyesore.

It should go without saying the retention of safe, reliable, accessible and convenient access routes for all transport modes and abilities to the shopping centre is critical to its survival. Access for pedestrians and cyclists across the rail line, as well as access

through, around and on the wider road and footpath network are critical elements of project planning and delivery we anticipate the LXRPP will design to meet the needs of the community.

## The ask

The LXRPP must:

- Engage and work with the community, traders and Council to refine, design, fund and deliver measures to ensure the area is not degraded and does not become an eyesore during construction.
- Ensure hoarding, where installed, is sympathetic to the natural and cherished Surrey Hills and Mont Albert surrounds.
- Provide a construction management plan for community and Council comment.
- Develop hoarding which tells the project's story, describes the timeline for the project, provides peep holes at children height to watch the construction unfold, is colourful and ensures the community does not look at a blank, dark hoarding that invites graffiti/tags.
- Look to the creative hoarding programming for the Melbourne Metro project<sup>3</sup> for inspiration.
- Engage and work with the community, traders and Council to develop a context understanding of how people (abled and disabled) frequent, visit and currently use the Mont Albert train station and Hamilton Street shopping centre.
- Engage and work with the community, traders and Council to develop, design, fund and deliver a safe movement plan for all transport modes that considers, but is not limited to:
  - o The context understanding of how people use the train station and shopping centre.
  - o Fully accessible routes to the shopping centre from all directions.
  - o Routes to public transport services, including trains, buses and train replacement buses.
  - o Public transport provision.
  - o Routes to the local schools, kindergartens and other education opportunities.
  - o Appropriate wayfinding and public information connecting the local surrounds.
  - o Integration between transport modes and the provision of safe, comfortable spaces for people to wait, which offers protection from the elements of the weather.
  - o Locations for Protective Services Officers for public transport.
  - o Deliveries and collections by heavy and other vehicles for all businesses.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://metrotunnel.vic.gov.au/about-the-project/creative-program/cultural-programming>

## Urban design and landscape

### Surrey Hills and Mont Albert - The place - Future - Post construction

In responding to the LXP suggested topics, the post construction future of Surrey Hills and the Hamilton Street shopping centre is shared in this section of the submission.

The overarching theme, and ask, of the post construction future is the proper and effective engagement, consultation and working with all stakeholders, the community, the traders and Council, from the very early stages of the project.

### Materials used for the station and surrounding areas

The new train station and public realm materiality must be reflective of and distinctively represent the historical flavour of the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert locale.

To achieve this, aim and to improve amenity and create new spaces for people to meet and congregate the materials must reference the:

- Recognise and enhance the qualities that make Surrey Hills and Mont Albert special, and not be an “over designed” or contemporarily “awkward” environment.
- History of the suburb and the train station.
- Victorian timber architecture and Edwardian style architecture and their brick and weatherboard building materials.
- Existing train station elements, including the heritage components of the Mont Albert Station building.
- Formal and informal landscaping in the area.

The public domain and station must embed into its surrounding context with legible ground surfaces linking people through the public domain and stitching the station into its surrounds. Both the public domain and the station must give a *nod of recognition* to the history of Surrey Hills and Mont Albert.

Council and the community expect the LXP to adopt a conservative, yet complimentary materiality approach to the space, as well as in the landscape selection.

Council encourages the LXP to reuse materials from the demolition as landscape features and elements. Further, the LXP must reference the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert formal garden landscape features. In particular at Mont Albert Station, the bluestone edging along the existing station platform must be reused and the foundation works of the central platform foundation which we understand is made up of red bricks with bluestone caps, potentially date back to the 1890s. These elements also represent the story telling component of the station where the station masters “stepped up” from the track to the platform to sell out-bound tickets. This story should be told in the new space.

Further - of great historic significance is one particular bluestone platform cap which has a survey marker etched on it, displaying the exact distance (chains and links) from that very marker to Flinders Street Station in the CBD. This particular bluestone must be retained and used in its exact location, with its elevated level to sit above the decking which should form part of the plaza area. This plaza area should also contain the rebuild of the old weatherboard Mont Albert Station which has historical significance to not only council but the community as a whole.

No matter whether the trench is capped or not, it is important the exposed materials in the trench are of a high quality and finish to provide a positive passenger experience. It is essential the trench sides and other exposed surfaces constructed and installed by the project are not attractive to taggers and graffiti.

## The ask

The LXRP must:

- Provide Council with a design brief for comment on the new station buildings.
- Incorporate relevant principles of the Urban Design Protocol.<sup>4</sup>
- Develop a material palette in collaboration with the Community Reference Group, the Surrey Hills Resident Association, the Mont Albert Trader Community Reference Group and Council to ensure local ownership in the project.
- Help people to orientate themselves and understand how the surrounding streets work and best ways to get there through art and way finding signage.
- Develop a materiality plan that:
  - o Provides high quality surface finishes for all project elements.
  - o Does not encourage graffiti and tagging.
  - o Identifies the materials chosen for the building and landscapes.
  - o Has a defined maintenance plan for new public spaces and all other elements.
  - o Engages with Council to ensure the materials meet the needs and expectations of Councils for any asset Council may own and be responsible for post construction.
  - o Has hold points in the construction program to allow for site meetings with Council to discuss materiality of any asset Council may own and be responsible for post construction.
  - o Delight the senses and mind.
  - o Work with local artists to create a plaza feel with sustainable and efficient lighting strategy for the public realm.
  - o Maintain and enhance the local vegetation and landscape.
  - o Looks to implement the same features and materiality which was used at the recently completed Mentone Station and the plaza area which retained the weatherboard stations.

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<sup>4</sup> [Creating Places for People — an urban design protocol for Australian cities | Infrastructure Australia](#)

- Look to the Earth Sciences Garden at Monash University<sup>5</sup>, the Pitt Street Mall Sydney<sup>6</sup> and Prahran Square (previously Cato Square)<sup>7</sup> for inspiration.
- Embed the history of the train stations and train line into the public realm.
- Provide a finish to the trench sides that is something other than unsightly shotcrete.
- Use appropriate screening, including the use of trees and vegetation, along the sides of the rail corridor within the residential streets like Lorne Parade, Beresford Street, Hamilton Street, etc.

## The architectural approach

Ideally, the new train station's architectural response should draw on the surrounding character of Surrey Hills and Mont Albert to provide a train station that is complementary to the neighbourhood context and provides an open and inviting precinct that forms part of the public transport infrastructure to the area.

Whilst there are a substantial number of Edwardian homes in the precinct, Council does not wish to replicate this period of design but rather draw from this context in a complimentary yet contemporary and “insightful” manner. In general, the following elements should be considered:

- **Materials:** Consider adopting similar materials that are predominantly used in the adjacent neighbourhood precinct such as utilising brick and timber façade elements which provides warmth and texture.
- **Building form and articulation:** Reducing visual bulk and mass to avoid dominating the precinct. Consider how the facade can be integrated with the surrounding streetscape in a visually appealing manner without being reproductive and that is also considerate of human scale.
- **Roof profile:** Consider a roof form for the pedestrian bridge and decked plaza areas that makes reference to the sloping rooflines of the surrounding residential built form.
- **Screening and barriers:** Consider screening along the rail trench that is articulated with depth and character, rather than a bland and flat element. Potential variations in height and colour could also assist in avoiding a monotonous element that extends for several metres.

In regards to the future use of the old Mont Albert Station building, this could form an extension to the retail village along Hamilton Street by providing a semi-enclosed station structure that functions as a café and train themed children’s play area which keeps intact the Edwardian character of the building. The heritage façade must be preserved and opened up to the footpath and adjacent nature strip with retail and playground activation.

<sup>5</sup> <http://landezine.com/index.php/2017/11/earth-sciences-garden-monash-university-by-rush-wright-associates/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://landezine.com/index.php/2013/10/pitt-street-mall-by-tony-caro-architecture/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.aspect-studios.com/au/project/prahran-square/>

This quaint remnant of Melbourne's railway history should be restored and reactivated by a younger demographic of the community, and engage with the quaint and unique character of the building. This area must be decked and form a plaza area which is very similar to what was constructed at Mentone Station.

### **The ask**

The LXP consider the elements listed in the architectural approach to the built form of the project.

### **How you want to use the new station precinct**

The Surrey Hills and Mont Albert community is diverse, active and connected, with a wide range of needs. The Mont Albert community visit Mont Albert Village and use Mont Albert station on a daily basis. The Village must retain its village feel and this must not be lost as part of the LXP works. They know the area intimately and will expect the LXP to deliver high quality community and public assets that are well maintained, work for the community and are reflective of their needs.

The proposed rail trench will segregate the community from the Beresford residents and shopping centre and will, for some, be an insurmountable barrier to cross no matter the number of pedestrian bridges or underpasses provided. The community deserves a better outcome and expects the project to improve connectivity.

To cater for the needs of the community and Council now and into the future, noting this is a once in a lifetime investment in the Surrey Hills area, the public spaces and infrastructure delivered by the LXP, including the train station and platform infrastructure, must:

- Be accessible for all ages and abilities.
- Be fairly and equitably delivered throughout the precinct.
- Be dynamic and flexible.
- Ensure passing through, accessing and exiting the station is a breeze and not a hassle or a barrier.
- Be green and lush.
- Provide diverse public experiences.

Pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and drivers needs must be considered in the design of the new station precinct, but not at the expense of each other and not at the expense of the Union Road shopping centre and the Hamilton Street shopping centre.

### **The ask**

The LXP must:

- Cap the trench from at least the eastern end entrance to the platform concourse, all the way to Mont Albert Road.

- Cap the trench where the current Mont Albert Station is situated at the moment and create a large public plaza area public square so the Mont Albert Station itself can be repositioned in the exactly same location and the rest of the plaza (capped) area can be used as civic space for the community. The Design needs to be very similar to what has been adopted at the recently completed Mentone Station where the existing station buildings were retained, restored and then placed in the exact same location as they were:
- Engage and work with the community and Council to:
  - o Design the civic space to occupy the trench cap between the eastern entrance to the station platform and Mont Albert Road.
  - o Design the new parkland adjacent to the Mont Albert Station and include the nearby traders in the process with a view possibly providing a new outdoor dining space or use it to establish a new garden space.
- Work with the Community Reference Group, the Trader Community Reference Group and Council to develop a management and activation plan for the new public spaces.
- Work with Council to ensure the capped trench are seamless, accessible and as landscaped as possible to reduce the heat island effect.
- Ensure there are diverse public experiences in the overall public realm by working with the community to co-design and create the new spaces and encourage art interventions.
- Work with Council, friends of the station and the station master at creating a welcoming and safe environment feel at the station post construction.
- Ensure the 'new space' on Union Road and the proposed Mont Albert plaza:
  - o Works in many modes.
  - o Is connected to the train station car park and, if the trench is capped, the trench cap so that it can be used as one space.
  - o Is seamlessly designed with infrastructure to support and enable Council and others to host public events.
  - o Considers active sporting including bouldering and nature play elements in the public spaces to provide interest for all age groups.
  - o Provides drawcard features (including embedding tech into the furniture, places to sit and work etc.) to encourage people to linger in the space and the Union Road and Hamilton Street shopping centres.
  - o Includes a public toilet, potentially a 'Changing Places'<sup>8</sup> facility, that is available to the general public 24/7 in a location agreed by Council.
- Provide passenger amenities including, but not limited to the following, at both ends of the platform:
  - o Way finding signage which connects into the surrounding Surrey Hills context
  - o Public toilets.
  - o Staffed ticket office.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://changingplaces.org.au/build-a-facility/designs/>

- Indoor waiting area.
  - Secure bicycle parking facility.
  - Myki top-up and checking machines.
  - Drinking fountains.
  - Passenger information boards.
- Ensure trees and landscaping are embedded in the public realm to provide shade, shelter and to cool the large expanses of concrete.
  - Engage and work with the community and two Councils to design the upgraded park and landscaping on Lorne Parade Reserve, including the upgrade of the existing play space infrastructure under Council's guidance.
    - Active sporting elements must be considered for inclusion in the upgraded playground on Windsor Crescent.
    - The playground must have nature play elements included and cater to the diverse needs of children.
  - Look to Dandenong Civic Space<sup>9</sup>, the Yangan Square, Perth<sup>10</sup> and 447 Collins Street<sup>11</sup> for inspiration.

### **Screening and barriers along the rail trench**

Noting the request above, that the trench be capped and covered with a civic space, we offer commentary on screening and barriers along the rail trench should the unpalatable outcome of the trench remaining uncapped and it being a gaping chasm segregating the community occur.

Council understands and acknowledges the tragic and upsetting need to provide anti-jump barriers on bridges, overpasses and alongside rail line trenches. We encourage the LXR to take an innovative but sensitive approach to the design of these barriers, along with consideration of discreet signage that encourages anyone experiencing trouble to contact Lifeline or similar organisation.

As has been previously discussed, the community and Council are proud of the amenity of the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert areas. The established and lush landscaping is a highly valued element of the environment and connects the community to the history of the area. The neighbourhood lacks, in a positive sense, large numbers of hard landscaping elements, with the focus on established street trees, greenery and formal landscaping.

The neighbourhood amenity in Surrey Hills is not disrupted by garish, fluoro design. The area is known for its Edwardian and Victorian timber architecture and gentle design approach. The brightly coloured Perspex noise wall panels, like those on the Chandler Highway Bridge and EastLink, are not an appropriate design intervention for Surrey Hills or Mont Albert.

<sup>9</sup> <http://landezine.com/index.php/2019/04/dandenong-civic-square-by-rush-wright-associates/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://landezine.com/index.php/2018/08/yagan-square-by-aspect-studios/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.australiandesignreview.com/news/new-park-melbourne-cbd-endorsed/>

## **The ask**

The LXR must:

- Ensure any and all screening and barriers respond sensitively and respectfully to the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Village context and sit seamlessly within the local environment.
- Ensure lush green landscaped elements and trees are considered in the screening.
- Engage and work with the community, Council, businesses and traders to design all screening and barriers along the rail trench – with ample design time allowed in the project delivery.
- Provide adequate screening and noise attenuation to affected properties.

## **Landscaping and seating options**

The landscaping of the project area is lush, green and well established. Visitors to the Union Road and Mont Albert Village shopping centres, the train stations and the community enjoy and value highly the local landscape. The area has both formal and informal landscaping, with the former focused around the shopping centres.

Additionally, the street trees are well established and generally healthy.

We expect existing street trees within the project works area – both along arterial and local roads - are protected and retained, and rail infrastructure is located to achieve this. We expect the avenue of street trees within Mont Albert Road to be further enhanced and protected.

Council, the Surrey Hills community and the Mont Albert community expect landscaping delivered as part of the LXR to be reflective of the surrounding landscape context and to be designed in conjunction with all stakeholders. Seating options should be varied to cater to all community needs now and into the future.

These needs include encouraging congregation and meeting of different cohorts within the diverse community of Surrey Hills and Mont Albert, offering places of respite and adding to the amenity of the streetscape. Sufficient and appropriate public lighting to be provided within the precinct to encourage pedestrian activity, and public transport use at all hours of the evening with degrees of safety and confidence. A well-lit public environment will assist to work towards dissuading any anti-social behaviour and enhancing public visibility and safety.

## **The ask**

LXR must:

- Engage and work with Council to:

- Develop a planting palette to Council's satisfaction.
  - Retain as many of the health trees as possible.
  - Understand the size of trees and other plants expected by Council.
  - Develop the best seating palette to Council's satisfaction and the diverse community needs.
- 
- Provide way finding signage in the station forecourt which connects with the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert identity and neighbourhood.
  - Provide irrigation to new garden beds.
  - Install anti-graffiti coating to surfaces.
  - Liaise with Council's for all detailing.
  - Provide exercise equipment in the new parks which caters to an older demographic and nature play elements to cater for children in the new civic spaces.

## **Arts and culture**

### **Location and inspiration for public art**

The level crossing removals are exciting opportunities to showcase the community's rich culture and history by designing an atmosphere which is unique and a reflection of the community and local area.

We welcome and encourage the LXRP to properly consider and invest in art interventions through the life of the project, from early work starting in mid-2021, through construction and post-completion. Art interventions could include:

- Multi-sensory art installations and sculptures, using sight, touch and sound to create a playful atmosphere.
- Murals which are bright and abstract to create intrigue and to be a mitigation tool for graffiti in the station area.
- Functional and creative lighting which is visually appealing both day and night, and creates a sense of safety.

The hope is the incorporation of the art installations generates a welcoming and safe environment for the community to gather and linger. It would provide a pleasant arrival and departure experience to both visitors and residents alike.

To ensure the design of artwork is a true reflection of the community's past, present and future, we ask that a community arts engagement process be undertaken by the LXRP with input from Council. The process would engage community stakeholders with the aim of providing a narration of place to reflect the history and heritage, its members and aspirations.

Possible themes which could emerge and be celebrated through public artwork could include:

- Strong connections to Surrey Hills history and heritage, including indigenous beginnings.
- Surrey Hills famous gardens and leafy streets.
- The rich history of the Mont Albert Station.
- Music, culture and art which is fostered within the community.
- Hamilton Street and its local traders, village feel community and history.

### **The ask**

Noting the details above, the LXRP properly consider and invest in art interventions through the life of the project, from early work starting in mid-2021, through construction and post-completion and involve Council in the creation and planning processes.

# Trees, biodiversity and Water Sensitive Urban Design

## Trees

While the transformation of the existing Union Road and Mont Albert Road rail crossing to 'rail under road' will create a safer environment for transport network users, there will be many in the community that will be distressed at the loss of canopy trees near the rail line and carpark and by any impacts from works on street trees within the project boundary.

Many of the trees in the vicinity of the new station and along Beresford Road are considered significant due to their size. They provide shade and contribute to the character of the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Village.

Council and the community will expect the LXP to adopt a conservative approach to any identified tree removals and are strongly encouraged to retain trees where possible. Council encourages the LXP to reuse the timber from felled trees for example for seating, tables, in landscaping, for shade structures and creating habitat for native fauna. There are a group of residents who currently care and look after the trees within the Surrey Hills carpark. The Tree Preservation Society being one group which keeps a very keen interest in trees which are removed within the municipality.

Following the lead of other Victorian government major state transport projects, it is expected the LXP will develop a tree replanting plan to replace trees removed for the project on a 2:1 basis and that the trees are replaced as close as possible to the site of loss. If trees cannot be planted near the site of loss or in the project area, it is expected the LXP will negotiate with Council to plant trees and associated understorey elsewhere in Surrey Hills/Mont Albert or nearby suburbs in locations.

## The ask

The LXP must:

- Develop a tree removal plan which:
  - o Clearly identifies trees to be removed for works and trees that do not need to be removed.
  - o Provides an assessment of the condition, arboriculture value and canopy spread of all trees in the Major Transport Project Facilitation Act declared project area.
- Assess and document all non-tree vegetation to be removed.
- Engage and work with Council to develop and implement a Tree Protection Plan, which complies with the relevant Australian Standards, to protect trees and their root systems from damage during the works.
- Engage and work with Council to develop and implement a tree, canopy and vegetation replacement plan that sets out how trees and other vegetation to be removed will be replaced to provide shade, urban character, habitat and amenity values.

- Engage and work with Council to reuse and repurpose all trees felled by the LXP in the project area.
- Engage with the community and interested stakeholders like The Tree Preservation Society (but not limited to) and discuss these plans.

## **Biodiversity**

It is expected that for a well-developed municipality like Whitehorse, the areas of open space and landscape are protected to maintain floral and faunal biodiversity. Council manages over 350 open space areas, 20 bushland reserves and over 175 play space environments.

Building on existing activities to enhance local biodiversity within our open spaces, there would be broad community support to continue this theme into the developments that form part of the new station precinct.

1. Where new landscapes will be developed, plant types need to be approved by Council to ensure they provide suitable habitat for local fauna, and are contextually relevant.
2. With the loss of canopy trees around the station precinct, and therefore loss of fauna and perching / nesting structures, the LXP must replant trees that encourage birdlife and other relevant fauna.
3. To enhance play opportunities as part of the precinct; there is nowhere for children to play safely in the Surrey Hill shopping centre. The LXP could create a small playground close to Union Road that features suitable opportunities for play, with input from Council.
4. Water is a critical element for fauna in the environment. There are opportunities to provide bird baths or other water features which should form an important aspect of the new design.

## **The ask**

The LXP engage and work with Council and the community to design and implement the biodiversity integration suggestions detailed.

## **Water Sensitive Urban Design**

The level crossing removal at Surrey Hills and Mont Albert presents opportunities for Council and the LXP to collaborate to deliver water sensitive urban design (WSUD) initiatives that seek to improve water quality and reduce the impact of high intensity rainfall events on the community. Benefits could also be realised in the protection of public assets during these same events.

The car parks proposed, along with the trench cap sought by both Councils, may have the potential to be a large area of impermeable surface that adds to the urban heat island effect if not considered and treated with drainage improvements (e.g. swales) and permeable or semi-permeable surfaces. Both treatments would retain water in the landscape allowing trees a better opportunity to access water, improving growth rates and canopy cover, providing shade and aesthetic value to this area.

Permeable or semi-permeable pavement could potentially slow the flow of runoff from the car park surfaces, helping to mitigate local nuisance flooding.

The new train station is likely to have a significant roof area and, as such, significant water harvesting potential. This potential needs to be realised to ensure the station precinct is built and operates to ESD expectations. The integration of rainwater tanks into the station design ensure harvested water can be supplied to all toilets and potentially used for irrigation and cleaning. If designed well, the rain tanks could be visible (as opposed to screened or underground) and be a visible demonstration of good sustainable design.

### **The ask**

The LXP:

- Design and deliver permeable or semi-permeable surfaces to the car parks and improve drainage through the installation of vegetated swales or bio retention swales to convey runoff.
- Include passive irrigation elements throughout the project.
- Integrate rainwater tanks into the design of the train station.
  - Connect the tanks to the public and staff toilets and, if water volume and quality allows, irrigation and cleaning operations also.

## **Walking and cycling**

### **Pedestrian and cycling connections**

An overarching project objective is to provide better connections for pedestrians public transport users and cyclists. The LXP's proposal to achieve this is limited to:

- New shared paths connecting Union Road to the new station and through to Mont Albert Road.
- Removal of the old pedestrian underpasses under the rail line at Union Road and construction of new, signalised at-grade road crossing points.
- Construction of a new pedestrian bridge across the proposed rail trench at the current Mont Albert station location.

The proposed pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is thought to be poor and there are many missed opportunities to provide high quality walking and cycling outcomes for the community and missed links to existing Victorian government projects.

The Surrey Hills and Mont Albert neighbourhoods to the shopping centres is very walkable, with the community walking to the area from up to a km away. Through 2020 and Covid-19 there seemed to be an increase in demand for walking and cycling infrastructure as the community discovered their neighbourhoods. While the community in Surrey Hills and Mont Albert is connected, to a certain degree, this

increased demand occurred in the neighbourhood and more people were walking and cycling for transport and relaxation.

Council and the community expect the level crossing removal project to further improve the connectivity with walking and cycling infrastructure, including shared paths, bicycle parking, bicycle repair stations, seating, lighting, wayfinding and shade.

### **Strategic context**

A feasibility study is currently being developed by the Department of Transport (DoT) for the Box Hill to Hawthorn (BH2H) Strategic Cycling Corridor (SCC). The feasibility study assesses route and treatment options for a bidirectional cycling corridor between Box Hill Train Station in the east and Hawthorn in the west, with a potential connection over the Yarra River into Richmond.

As part of the SCC feasibility study, both Boroondara and Whitehorse Councils recognise a significant opportunity to deliver a safe, direct and comfortable off-road walking and cycling facility predominantly along the Lilydale/Belgrave railway reserve, including the section of track to be upgraded by LXP for the new Surrey Hills/Mont Albert station.

This shared path would be suitable for riders of all ages and abilities, connecting several major activity centres, while also catering for CBD commuter trips. It would eventually link up to the already constructed Box Hill to Ringwood Shared User Path to the east, connect to the Anniversary/Outer Circle Trail, enabling connection to the Koonung Creek Trail, the soon to be built North East Bicycle Corridor and further east to EastLink and Peninsula Link trails.

Usage data and feedback from the community consistently indicates bicycle riders have a strong preference for riding on separated, off-road paths where they can avoid the risk and stress of interacting with parked cars and fast-moving vehicular traffic on roads. Community surveys have also indicated there is a significant 'untapped market' of people who would like to begin cycling or ride more often, however they are reluctant to do so because of the lack of safe, off-road infrastructure connecting them to their destination.

Recent advice from the DoT regarding the BH2H SCC indicates the off-road path options along the rail corridor scored strongly in a weighted multi-criteria analysis compared to alternative on-road alignment options.

### **Walking and cycling design elements**

In order to unlock significant active transport benefits and achieve a high standard east-west link, an integrated solution with LXP's Union Road and Mont Albert Road project is absolutely critical. To achieve this, the following elements should be included in the project scope.

## **A grade separated pedestrian and cycling crossing at Union Road**

This will provide a safe, continuous and non-stop link which will minimise delays for traffic on Union Road as well as improving safety and travel times for commuter cyclists and pedestrians (including rail users). A grade separated facility will also appeal to a significant number of recreational users and is likely to contribute to a mode-shift to active transport.

A grade separated crossing will:

- Eliminate the need to dismount and wait for signalised crossings, resulting significant travel time improvements for active transport.
- Improve traffic flow with fewer red cycles for on-road traffic.
- Logically connect the segments of the future BH2H trail together.

We know that the Blackburn Road level crossing removal project completed in Whitehorse in 2017 included an underpass for the Box Hill to Ringwood shared use pedestrian and cycling path, as well as an additional signalised pedestrian crossing at road level.

It is worth noting Federal Government, State Government and Council strategies/plans have a strong focus on constructing grade separated facilities (underpasses and overpasses) for existing at-grade shared path crossings, with examples within the City of Boroondara are detailed below.

- Gardiners Creek Trail at Glenferrie Road and Warrigal Road:
  - o The Victorian government funded a shared path bridge over Gardiners Creek to allow use of the underpass instead of forcing users to cross at signals on Glenferrie Road.
  - o The Federal Government funded a shared path underpass for users of the Gardiners Creek Trail to cross Warrigal Road.
- Main Yarra Trail at Chandler Highway
  - o The Victorian government funded a shared path underpass at Chandler Highway to allow path users a safer and more convenient crossing of Chandler Highway than at the at-grade pedestrian signals.
- Anniversary Trail
  - o A proposal to construct a new shared path bridge over Toorak Road to allow path users a safer and more convenient crossing than the at-grade pedestrian signals has received in-principle support from all key stakeholders including the DoT, VicTrack, Yarra Trams and Public Transport Victoria.
  - o Council has also undertaken detailed consultation with traders and the local community who are also strongly supportive of the proposal.
  - o Council has been advocating for and continues to seek funding to deliver this key project.

Further, examples within the City of Whitehorse are detailed below.

- Box Hill to Ringwood Shared User Path:
  - o A shared user path (SUP) which runs from Box Hill to Ringwood has recently been completed. Predominately the majority of this 10km SUP has been constructed within the rail corridor.
- Cochrane Street Bridge, Mitcham:
  - o A shared user path (SUP) bridge was constructed over Cochrane Street as part of the Box Hill to Ringwood SUP. This was constructed as part of the Heatherdale Road Rail Removal Project.
- Purches Street Bridge:
  - o A bridge was constructed at the end of Purches Street to link the SUP, within the rail corridor and over the rail corridor, to link the SUP from the south side to the north side. This was also constructed as part of the Heatherdale Road Rail Removal Project.

We recognise that most of the examples listed above, particularly those within Whitehorse are contained typically within roads and the rail reserve and within Boroondara, are all located on arterial roads under the care and management of the DoT and carry a larger volume of traffic and on-road public transport services than Union Road does.

Additionally, we acknowledge Union Road and most of the Box Hill to Ringwood SUP within Whitehorse are local roads under the care and management of Council.

### **Extension of the pedestrian and cycling path along Churchill Street to extend all the way to Elgar Road**

A key opportunity exists to deliver a high quality off-road pedestrian and cycling link within the LXR project boundary east of Mont Albert Station. That is extending the shared path east all the way to Elgar Road. This will ensure an integrated solution is achieved throughout the LXR project area which can be extended in the future all the way to Box Hill Station. The proposal includes opportunities to construct the shared use path between Box Hill to Hawthorn (through Mont Albert), forming part of the State Government Strategic Cycling Corridor for Box Hill to Hawthorn (BH2H SCC). Consideration is to be given to the safe crossing (grade separated) of Elgar Rd providing a safe connection for cyclist and pedestrians between Churchill St west of Elgar Rd and Hopetoun St east of Elgar Rd to the Box Hill MAC.

A key opportunity also exists to deliver a high quality off-road pedestrian and cycling link within the LXR project boundary west of Union Road. That is extending the shared path west to Robinson Road from Union Road. This will ensure an integrated solution is achieved throughout the LXR project area which can be extended in the future for construction of the BH2H SCC.

It is critical that these opportunities are captured now while there is scope to include it within the design of the level crossing removal works. Opportunities to retrofit a shared use pedestrian and cycling path through this section at a later date will be limited or far more costly, likely cost prohibitive, to achieve.

### **The proposed pedestrian operated signals on Union Road**

Both Council's supports the proposed pedestrian operated signals at Union Road near the existing boom gates. These signals will integrate both sides of the road and provide important access to nearby bus stops and shops.

### **Making Bedford Avenue safer for pedestrians.**

The Surrey Hills neighbourhood house is located on Bedford Street and Boroondara Council wants the LXR to make this street crossing safer by investigating traffic calming measures, providing a safe place for drop off area and working with Council to provide a better experience for pedestrians which is easy, accessible and is safe for all users.

### **Design a more direct route alignment for the pedestrian and cycling shared path**

The proposed route alignment for the pedestrian and cycling path is indirect and requires users to cross multiple car park access points and perform a sharp turning manoeuvre at the corner of Union Road and Windsor Crescent. This introduces significant safety hazards for path users by introducing conflict points with vehicles particularly where right of way may be ambiguous or misunderstood, as well as increasing the risk of a collision between path users due to limited sight distance and less proficient path users who may not be able to safely negotiate the tight bend. High volumes of path users may also significantly delay vehicular traffic entering and exiting the car park.

Instead - the path through the project boundary should be made more direct to follow the rail alignment and remove all potential conflict points.

### **Ensuring school students are catered for in the station zones**

School students catch the school buses on Union Road and regularly transfer to Surrey Hills train station, they use the station forecourt and seats to wait and socialise. As regular users of the train station and infrastructure the 12 - 18 year old school student demographic must be considered as part of the proposed design. This includes ensuring they can cross Union Road safely and easily.

### **The ask**

The LXR:

- Ensure the new train station prioritises pedestrians and cyclists.

- Engage and work with Councils, Bicycle Advocacy and User Groups, DoT and other stakeholders to design, fund and deliver walking and cycling infrastructure which:
  - o Connects and seamlessly integrates with SCC and other projects and plans of the DoT.
  - o Provides a grade separated pedestrian and cycling crossing at Union Road.
  - o Extends the pedestrian and cycling path from the existing Mont Albert Station east all the way Elgar Road.
  - o Provides a grade separated pedestrian and cycling crossing at Elgar Rd.
  - o Extends the pedestrian and cycling path from Mont Albert to Box Hill.
  - o Extends the pedestrian and cycling path from Union Road west to Robinson Road.
  - o Provides a more direct route alignment for the pedestrian and cycling path along the rail corridor, through the station and through the project area.
  - o Includes wayfinding signage for all pedestrian and cycling paths.
- Provide secure bicycle parking at the train station.
- Provide bicycle parking within the public realm to Council's satisfaction.
- Install a bicycle repair station<sup>12</sup> in the public realm to Council's satisfaction.
- Ensure pedestrian access from the train station to the existing signalised pedestrian crossing is safe, efficient and comfortable (via neighbourhood house / lane).
- Work with property owners in Lorne Parade to ensure the best outcome for pedestrian access is achieved.
  - o Connect and make accessible all local streets to the new path network to new train station.

## Traffic and transport

There is a risk with any road and rail project the outcome focusses only on the road and rail benefits, without considering and including other transport modes. In the case of the Union Road and Mont Albert Road level crossing removal projects, opportunities exist to improve conditions for and experiences of all transport modes.

The kiss and ride proposal at the end of Beresford Street and Mont Albert Road requires further detail and consultation with Whitehorse City Council is paramount. There is also some concerns with residents that the closure of Beresford Street from Gordon Street to Mont Albert Road is going to cause traffic issues in the area.

Council also has concerns with the proposed conversion of Lorne Parade to a one way street and the potential loss of resident amenities and commuter on-street car parking in the street. Further discussions with council and its community is required.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.all4cycling.com.au/shop/deluxe-bicycle-repair-stand/>

## **Provision for car parking**

The expanse of off-street car parking at the Surrey Hills station, which will likely to be retained and perhaps expanded by the LXP, creates a significant heat island effect in the area. The trees on the edges of and within the car park go some way to reducing this impacts, however they are at risk of removal.

The provision of adequate commuter and shopping centre car parking is important to Council and the community, however it must not be at the expense of the wellbeing of the community and their experience of the improved Surrey Hills shopping centre and station precinct. While the off-street car parks will be rebuilt and redesigned to provide a more efficient layout - how pedestrians and cyclists safely move through the car parks and the provision of shade and landscaping will be critical to the success of the project.

Further, there should be no net loss of the current quantity of commuter parking, both on-street as well as off-street parking.

The 'new space' on Union Road will likely be connected with the northern off-street car park, if not the trench cap and its civic space. This connection must be seamless and enable to 'new space', car park and trench cap to be used and transformed for a range of local and community events. The seamless integration of infrastructure to enable public events will be integral to the success of the car park design and public use and experience of the space.

On-street parking is a critical element that has enabled the Union Road shopping centre to thrive through 2020. Safe and easy access to this parking for shoppers and visitors is essential throughout the construction period, including the early works starting in mid-2021.

In residential streets surrounding the project and within the project boundary, on-street parking is important in ensuring residents every day can continue through the construction period. On-street parking enables Council services, such as meals on wheels and Maternal and Child Health service visits, and social events. Parking in residential streets by LXP associated workers will not be tolerated.

The loss of on-street commuter parking, such as was mentioned above within Lorne Parade is a major issue for Whitehorse City Council. Council expects any losses of on-street commuter carparking to be supplemented elsewhere. There must be no nett loss of on-street commuter carparking from surrounding residential streets. Car parking in close proximity to the new station is to be considered and provided where possible in consultation with Whitehorse Council and its community, which include the drop off and pick up facility (kiss and ride).

### **The ask**

The LXP must:

- Replace trees lost from the off-street car parks in consultation with Council's Urban Tree officers.
- Provide irrigation to all new trees planted in the new civic spaces.
- Review the need for a large amount of parking and see if potentially some parking could be given back to parklands or community use, given the Surrey Hills communities preference to walk or ride.
- Retain and provide safe and easy access to all on-street parking on Union Road.
- Not allow any LXP associated worker to park on any residential street.
- There must be no net loss of on-street commuter carparking from surrounding residential streets.
- Consider a deck extension at Surrey Hills station connecting the south of Bedford Avenue towards Windsor Crescent.
- Engage and work with Council to design, fund and deliver an excellent car park layout that includes:
  - o Trees and vegetation.
  - o WSUD elements.
  - o Safe and sensible pedestrian and cyclist access through the car park.
  - o Seamless integration of the 'new space' on Union Road and, if provided, the trench cap.
  - o Amenities and infrastructure for events and public activations.
  - o Look to Franklin Wharf Hobart <sup>13</sup> for inspiration.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://landezine.com/index.php/2011/02/franklin-wharf-project-stage-1-by-oculus-landscape-architecture/>

## **Clause 52.03 - Level Crossing Removal Project of the Whitehorse Planning Scheme**

Council recognises the right of the LXRP to seek planning approval for the Union Road and Mont Albert Road level crossing removals directly from the Minister for Planning via Clause 52.03 of the Whitehorse Planning Scheme (WPS). We understand all feedback received will be summarised and included in a consultation report which will inform the Minister for Planning's assessment of the project under Clause 52.03.

We welcome the opportunity to provide input to this critical element of project planning and trust our feedback and recommendations will be seriously considered and implemented.

### **Other pre-commencement requirements**

**Clause 52.03-6 of the BPS** notes several requirements which must be satisfied prior to the commencement of works and these requirements may be varied or waived by the Minister for Planning.

### **Environmental Management Framework**

An environmental management framework (EMF), prepared in consultation with each relevant municipal council is required and should include:

- "A summary of key construction methodologies.
- An overarching framework of measures to reduce and manage environmental and amenity effects during construction.
- A summary of performance monitoring and reporting processes, including auditing, to ensure environmental and amenity effects are reduced and managed during construction.
- A summary of how each relevant municipal council, the community and other stakeholders will be engaged during construction, including enquiries and complaints management."

A summary of the consultation with each Council that informed the EMF is also required to be presented to the Minister for his assessment.

We welcome this requirement of Clause 52.03 and look forward to working with the LXRP in the development of the EMF. It is not appropriate, in our opinion, to vary or waive this requirement given the proximity of works to private residential properties and a busy shopping centre, as well as the natural environment surrounding the project area.

### **Heritage**

Several locations of the project area are subject to heritage overlays in both Boroondara and Whitehorse.

The Mont Albert area – given its rich heritage history is held highly by the local community. It would be a lost opportunity for the LXP to develop the proposal without integrating heritage elements into it, and adversely affecting heritage places within the project area.

The potentially affected places in the Heritage Overlay of the Whitehorse Planning Scheme apart from the Mont Albert Station (HO27), include:

The Windsor Park Estate Precinct (HO243) and a number of individual places in the precinct:

- 8 Windsor Cr (HO163),
- 10 Windsor Cr (HO164)
- 12 Windsor Cr (HO199)
- 16 Windsor Cr (HO165)
- 22 Windsor Cr (HO169)
- 2-8 Albany Cr (HO120)

The Hamilton Street Shopping Centre (HO103)

The Mont Albert Residential Precinct (HO102), and

The Churchill Street Precinct (HO100), which also includes the following individual places:

- 36 Churchill St (HO137)
- 40 Churchill St (HO138)
- 42 Churchill St (HO139)
- 50 Churchill St (HO28)
- 64-66 Churchill St (HO29)
- 72 Churchill Street (HO140)

Further sites noted, and due diligence should be applied to ensure no detrimental effects as a result of the project occur include:

- Surrey Dive and open space (HO217)
- Box Hill (original) swimming pool (HO257)
- The former Brickworks site – noted on the Victorian Heritage Register (HO3)

## **The Ask**

We ask the Minister to require the LXP to develop and submit an EMF, heritage report and environmental assessment for any new open space for his assessment.

## **Native vegetation requirements**

The requirements placed on the LXP by Clause 52.03-7 regarding the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation are noted and welcomed by Council. The information the LXP is required to gather and submit to the Minister for Planning

and Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning about the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation is detailed and extensive.

The requirement to detail the biodiversity impacts is appreciated noting the work the community and Council has undertaken to enhance the biodiversity values of the both municipalities. The provision of offsets is welcomed, however it is welcomed with some caution. Any and all offsets must be provided as close to the site of loss as possible. It is not appropriate to offset native vegetation lost to the Union Road, Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert level crossing removal project in, for example, the You Yangs.

We acknowledge the LXP's stated approach of tree and vegetation removal, being to avoid and minimise impacts to trees and vegetation where practicable. However, we have concerns regarding tree and vegetation removal to facilitate the level crossing removal works.

The community and Council hold the landscaping of the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert areas in high regard. The established, healthy street tree canopies are a respected and needed part of our communities. The more formal landscaping through the shopping centre adds to their Village "feel" and, as the street trees do for residential streets, helps to create a shady, cool environment that invites people to linger longer.

The removal of any tree and any vegetation will cause disappointment and distrust for the local community. The commitment to minimise impacts to trees and vegetation must be strictly adhered to by the LXP and their contractors.

We welcome the opportunity to work hand in hand with the LXP to protect our trees and vegetation so that they survive the construction works and continue to grow and provide the community with their shady place long into the future.

### **The Ask**

The Minister for Planning and the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning:

- Critically assess and analyse the reports and information provided by the LXP in response to Clause 52.03-7 of the BPS.
- Require any and all offsets be located as close as possible to the site of loss.
- Ensure any and all offsets are not located in the You Yangs or other location – far removed from the project site.

The Minister for Planning direct the LXP and their contractors to:

- Minimise the tree removal, destruction and lopping to facilitate the project.
- Strictly adhere to the written commitment to minimise impacts to trees and vegetation throughout the life of project.
- Engage and work with Council to ensure our trees and vegetation is protected, survives the construction works and thrives post-construction.
- Develop a tree removal plan which:

- Clearly identifies trees to be removed for works and trees that do not need to be removed.
  - Provides an assessment of the condition, arboriculture value and canopy spread of all trees in the Major Transport Project Facilitation Act declared project area.
- Engage and work with Council to develop and implement a tree, canopy and vegetation replacement plan that sets out how trees and other vegetation to be removed will be replaced to provide shade, urban character, habitat and amenity values.

## **Project boundary requirement**

We note the project boundary has been developed to satisfy Clause 52.03-5 which simply states “...a plan that shows the boundary of the land on which the use or development will be undertaken must be prepared to the satisfaction of the Minister for Planning.”.

We note also the LXP’s suggested question to consider when examining the project boundary, being “do you have any feedback on the land required for the project?” There is no evidence or information provided by the LXP for consideration and analysis which demonstrates why much of the proposed project boundary and land within is required for the project.

The question appears to be designed to make the responder think there is no opportunity to alter the proposed project boundary whatsoever and suggests the LXP has a full design ready to go when the Minister for Planning issues his approval.

The draft Planning Project Boundary (PPB)<sup>14</sup> extends over 10 pages and is considered to be excessively large, land and road hungry.

## **Local streets**

The inclusion of so many local streets in the PPB is concerning, particularly when the geometry of these streets and the limited vertical height clearances on some is considered. The local streets identified as being in the PPB are generally narrow, asphalt roads with bluestone kerb and channel and on-street parking on both sides. The streets contain many traffic management devices which aim to slow vehicles speeds, reduce cut through traffic and enhance the neighbourhood amenity. Some streets are essentially impassable by heavy vehicles without significant tree trimming, traffic management device removal (or damage) and banning of all on-street parking.

None of the three measures will not be tolerated by Council or the community.

Where we have identified specific queries or concerns about specific streets, we have detailed these below. Not all street specific concerns have been identified as

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<sup>14</sup> [https://engage.vic.gov.au/download\\_file/39479/4937](https://engage.vic.gov.au/download_file/39479/4937)

the PPB is so large and we welcome detailed discussions with the LXP so they may explain the seemingly excessive use of the local Whitehorse street network for project purposes.

## **Open Space**

The PPB proposes the inclusion of the Surrey Park (SP) for an unspecified purpose. It is assumed the SP is proposed to be used as a construction laydown area, site compound and/or material stockpile location for the duration of the works, potentially starting in mid-2021. This proposed occupation is not acceptable to the community, Council and the users at the SP.

City of Whitehorse Open Space Strategy identifies Surrey Park, Box Hill as a municipal sized open space. The Strategy outlines that Surrey Park is approximately 134,142m<sup>2</sup> with a primary character classification of Sporting and secondary character classification of Informal.

The strategy outlines that Municipal open spaces cater primarily to residents of Whitehorse but also provides facilities which are used by residents from other municipalities. Municipal open spaces may also have a role in nature conservation including protection and improving biodiversity values. Generally, these open spaces are large enough in area to provide for a range of activities or adequate reservation of biodiversity values and include the major sporting and bushland reserves in the Municipality.

The SP is a highly utilised sporting precinct and open space. The car parks within Surrey Park service both the sportsground and Aqualink Box Hill and are in premium demand.

Summer users at Surrey Park include Surrey Hills Cricket Club, Melbourne Cricket Club Baseball Club, Mont Albert Cricket Club and Kerrimuir United Cricket Club.

Winter users at Surrey Park include Surrey Park Football Club, Surrey Park Junior Football Club

The Surrey Park Swimming Club, Surrey Park Model Boat Club and Victorian Dog Obedience Club use Surrey Park all year round.

Surrey Park is also home to the Aqualink Box Hill leisure facility. This facility is owned and operated by City of Whitehorse. This leisure facility provides services including aquatic, gym and fitness, sports stadium, tennis and soccer courts. Aqualink Box Hill also hosts many competitive clubs, including Respect Sports Basketball, Basketball 613, Box Hill Jiu Jitsu, DSR Wheelchair Rugby, ESBNA Netball, Futsal Super 5's and Renyi Kungfu.

The Aqualink Box Hill leisure facility also provides school holiday activities and parties.

All users of Surrey Park would be adversely impacted by, for example, noise, dust and tree removals that would accompany the occupation of the SPS by the LXP.

Surrey Park is an important community asset which provides a green, relaxing space as well as opportunities for a casual kick-to-kick. It is, for a large proportion of Surrey Hills residents, their closest park and reserve. The well-established and healthy trees that surround the sportsground provide critical cooling and shade services.

## **The ask**

The Minister for Planning direct the LXP to:

- Alter the PPB to:
  - o Remove the Surrey Park from the “land required for the project”.
- Meet with Council to:
  - o Discuss the PPB.
  - o Negotiate roads and land actually required for the project to be included in the PPB.
  - o Negotiate any occupation of Council land.
  - o Share information and evidence the PPB is based on.
- Respond to the concerns and questions raised in this submission in relation to the PPB.

## **Construction related impacts**

The construction related impacts which will be experienced by the community will be significant.

The nearby residents and traders will be subject to 24/7 air, noise and light pollution, as well as vibration and constant heavy vehicle traffic. The impacts will vary in scale, with some experiencing a minor inconvenience to their every day and others experiencing significantly negative health and wellbeing outcomes as a direct result of the construction works.

Users of open space areas, if occupied by the LXP for project purposes, will be displaced for the duration of the works. Effectively rendered homeless for anywhere between 18 and 30 months. This would be a devastating outcome for established sports clubs as they would lose members, not be able to train and may not be able to compete.

The construction related traffic, particularly heavy vehicles used for haulage of spoil from the trench, will cause stress, sleeplessness and congestion in the local road network. It will also adversely impact the Hamilton Street shopping centre.

From lived experience of other trenched level crossing removals, the construction related traffic is one of the most consistent, intrusive and distressing components of

the works. It will be a seemingly never ending procession of noisy, dusty and unsightly dog and trailers in the local streets as they haul the spoil from the trench through 24/7 operations in a bid to get the project done quickly.

In addition to the truck traffic travelling on local streets, noting the geometry concerns of all of the local Whitehorse streets included in the PPB, there will be a need to ban parking on one or both sides of residential streets to facilitate heavy vehicle movements. Banning of on-street parking for project purposes will not be tolerated by the community or Council.

### **Lorne Parade Reserve: 11 Windsor Crescent, Mont Albert**

It is Council's opinion that Whitehorse City Council has a claimable interest and is therefore entitled compensation in accordance with the Land Acquisition & Compensation Act 1986 if this land forms part of the project. Council is seeking legal advice from a specialist compensation lawyer.

### **1G Hamilton Street, Mont Albert**

Sealed Council owned car park that provides car parking supporting the Hamilton Street retail strip. The use of this carpark by the LXR is a concern to Council.

### **381 Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert**

Sealed Council owned car park that provides all day parking for the Hamilton Street traders only.

### **Wolseley Crescent Reserve: 14 Beresford Street, Mont Albert**

Established Council owned "pocket" park which provides open space and provides pedestrian access to properties north of Mont Albert Road.

## **The ask**

The Minister for Planning direct the LXR to:

- Remove the Surrey Park from the "land required for the project".
- Remove 1G Hamilton Street council carpark from the "land required for the project".
- Discuss possible compensation claims with Whitehorse City Council regarding Lorne Parade Reserve - 11 Windsor Crescent, Mont Albert.
- Use only arterial roads under the care and management of the Victorian government for all heavy vehicle and haulage operations associated with the project.
- Engage and work with each and every community member impacted by the project to listen and respond to their concerns, to the satisfaction of the community member.

- Assign a dedicated contact person for each community member and that LXR officer must listen and respond and do so empathetically, responsibly and in the best interests of the community member and not the LXR.
- Provide relocation options for residents and traders during the duration of construction.
- Maintain the community's access to Council services, including but not limited to rubbish, recycling, garden and green waste (current) and the anticipated Whitehorse FOGO collection service, meals on wheels, Maternal and Child Health services, and on-street parking.
- Provide support to each business, to the satisfaction of each business, throughout the level crossing removal works to ensure each business remains open and viable.
- Establish a traders only 'Trader Community Reference Group' to bring the traders together in one forum, to consult with the group and to deliver support that meets their collective and individual needs.
- Maintain access for deliveries to businesses and collection of rubbish, recycling, food waste, waste oil and the like throughout the construction period, including the early works.
- Maintain access to on-street parking along the length of Hamilton Street throughout the construction period, including the early works.
- Work with Council and traders to create, fund and deliver a marketing strategy for the shopping centre which showcases the *Mont Albert Village feel*.

## Environmental Impacts

The environmental impacts have been detailed in *Trees, biodiversity and Water Sensitive Urban Design* section of this submission.

## The ask

The Minister for Planning direct the LXR to:

- Develop a tree removal plan which:
  - o Clearly identifies trees to be removed for works and trees that do not need to be removed.
  - o Provides an assessment of the condition, arboriculture value and canopy spread of all trees in the Major Transport Project Facilitation Act declared project area.
- Assess and document all non-tree vegetation to be removed.
- Engage and work with Council to develop and implement a Tree Protection Plan, which complies with the relevant Australian Standards, to protect trees and their root systems from damage during the works.
- Engage and work with Council to develop and implement a tree, canopy and vegetation replacement plan that sets out how trees and other vegetation to be removed will be replaced to provide shade, urban character, habitat and amenity values.

- Engage and work with Council to reuse and repurpose all trees felled by the LXP in the project area.
- Engage and work with Council and the community to design and implement the biodiversity integration suggestions detailed in this submission.
- Design and deliver permeable or semi-permeable surfaces to the car parks and improve drainage through the installation of vegetated swales or bio retention swales to convey runoff.
- Design and deliver WSUD treatments, in conjunction with Council, for any 'new space'.
- Include engagement and education opportunities in the WSUD design.
- Include passive irrigation elements throughout the project.
- Integrate rainwater tanks into the design of the train station.
  - o Connect the tanks to the public and staff toilets and, if water volume and quality allows, irrigation and cleaning operations also.

### **Resident submissions and proposals**

It has been noted by Council that residents, traders and Community Associations have submitted their own submissions regarding this project. It is paramount that these submissions are responded to and Council be advised of these outcomes and responses to all submissions.

A list of the submissions which Council is aware of have been included in the Appendix's of this document.