



City of Whitehorse

MINUTES

Ordinary Council Meeting

Held in the
Council Chamber
Whitehorse Civic Centre

379 Whitehorse Road Nunawading
on

Monday 15 July 2019

at 7:00pm

Members: Cr Bill Bennett (Mayor), Cr Blair Barker, Cr Raylene Carr,
Cr Prue Cutts, Cr Andrew Davenport, Cr Sharon Ellis, Cr Tina Liu,
Cr Denise Massoud, Cr Andrew Munroe, Cr Ben Stennett

Ms Noelene Duff
Chief Executive Officer

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Engineering and Environmental

9.1.4 North East Link Environmental Effects Statement

ATTACHMENT

SUMMARY

The State Government recently released the North East Link Environmental Effects Statement (EES) for public comment. The EES outlines the project's construction and operational impacts on the environment and how these impacts will be managed.

This report summarises Council's submission regarding the EES and notes the process for Council's submission to be considered at the upcoming Inquiry and Advisory Committee hearing.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

Moved by Cr Liu, Seconded by Cr Barker

That Council:

- 1. Endorse Council's written submission regarding the North East Link Environmental Effects Statement.**
- 2. Continue to strongly advocate through the North East Link Inquiry and Advisory Committee hearing for improved community outcomes as a result of the project.**

CARRIED

BACKGROUND

The State Government has committed to constructing the North East Link (NEL), which will connect the M80 Ring Road in Greensborough to the Eastern Freeway at Bulleen Road. The project includes the widening of the Eastern Freeway between Bulleen Road and Springvale Road.

A number of Council resolutions have been made regarding NEL:

1. Council resolved on 11 December 2017 to oppose the State Government's decision to adopt the alignment of the project (Corridor A).
2. At its meeting on 19 March 2018, Council resolved to host a public forum to hear community views regarding NEL.
3. On 15 October 2018, Council resolved to advocate strongly for improved outcomes for the Whitehorse community as a result of the project.
4. Council resolved on 18 March 2018 to approve budget expenditure to ensure Council has appropriate legal and technical representation at the Inquiry and Advisory Committee (IAC) hearing.

As part of the planning approval process for the project, the project team within the State Government (the North East Link Project (NELP)) prepared the Environmental Effects Statement (EES). The EES outlines the project's construction and operational impacts on the environment and how these impacts will be managed.

DISCUSSION

The North East Link EES was placed on public exhibition from 10 April to 7 June 2019 and written submissions were invited from community members and professional stakeholders.

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Council officers, consultants and legal advisors considered the EES and briefed Councillors regarding matters that impact Whitehorse City Council. A joint written submission was lodged on 7 June 2019 on behalf of Whitehorse City Council, Boroondara City Council and Banyule City Council. The submission covered issues of joint relevance to the three municipalities as well as issues specific to Whitehorse. The Whitehorse specific issues covered matters of concern to Councillors, Council officers and matters that have been raised by community members.

Council's submission recommends that the IAC find that the North East Link project is not justified and should not be approved for a variety of reasons including the reasons summarised below, which are of particular relevance to Whitehorse Council.

1. The EES does not include an adequate assessment of the environmental effects of the project.
2. The benefits which are said to flow from the project are not proven and even if proven are not sufficient to justify the environmental and other costs of the project. The project benefits as stated in the EES, are largely regional and vague and don't address the direct impacts to the Whitehorse community. For example, the EES does not provide an adequate assessment of the social and health impacts of removing vegetation, overshadowing, traffic, air quality and noise in Whitehorse.
3. The Reference Design is a theoretical design and therefore stakeholders are not given the opportunity to comment and debate the actual design.
4. There are deficiencies in the traffic modelling relied upon by the NELP, including a failure to adequately account for queues, delays, congestion, toll avoidance as well as to adequately account for the estimated increase in traffic volumes.
5. Based on the traffic figures in the EES, the proposed Eastern Freeway widening is considered to be overdesigned. The Freeway does not need to be widened to the extent shown in the Reference Design.
6. The aims of project can be achieved with less intrusion into open space, resulting in fewer impacts to vegetation, the Koonung Creek, sports fields, shared use paths, amenity, noise and air quality.
7. The projected increased traffic volumes from the project will impact the EastLink tunnels and it is an error to not consider this impact (including the possible need to duplicate the EastLink tunnels) as part of this project.
8. Traffic volumes are predicted to increase on arterial roads within Whitehorse, particularly north-south roads in the northern half of the municipality. It is unacceptable that there are no proposals to mitigate this situation with intersection upgrades, measures to prioritise buses, and improved walking and cycling infrastructure.
9. The lack of new walking and cycling projects proposed within Whitehorse is disappointing and represents poor transport planning. Council strongly advocates for a significant number of walking and cycling projects to be funded and delivered as part of NEL.
10. There is a lack of complimentary projects identified and committed to in the EES. A number of complimentary projects listed in the Urban Design Strategy are identified for the successful tenderer to 'consider' implementing, rather than mandating their inclusion.
11. Sections of the Koonung Creek are proposed to be enclosed underground which is not supported by Council. The EES fails to adequately assess the value that Council and community members place on having creek environments alongside the Eastern Freeway.

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12. Over 25,000 trees are planned to be removed or at risk of being removed throughout the project corridor. Approximately 5,500 of these trees are along the Eastern Freeway between Doncaster Road and Springvale Road.
13. In addition to the permanent acquisition of Council land, other parcels of Council land are proposed for stormwater treatments. This will further decrease usable public open spaces, eg wetlands are proposed for Eram Park.
14. There are significant community impacts from the temporary occupation of open space during the construction phase of the project, eg displacement of sporting clubs, loss of dog-off-lead areas, construction noise, decreased air quality, and visual and amenity impacts.
15. Detailed drainage modelling has not been provided to Council therefore it is unclear if there will be any flooding impact/ adverse effects within Whitehorse (on Council or private land). This data has repeatedly been requested however not provided.
16. The visual impact of freeway interfaces is a concern, particularly for residents who will have their back fences within metres of noise walls.

Council's full submission regarding the EES is contained in Attachment 1.

The IAC has been appointed to consider the written submissions regarding the EES and hear from interested community and professional stakeholders. The hearing is scheduled to commence on 25 July 2019. Council will be represented at the IAC hearing to strongly advocate for improved community outcomes as a result of the North East Link project.

CONSULTATION

Council hosted a public forum and arranged surveys to gauge community views regarding the North East Link project. Approximately 150 community members attended the forum on 11 September 2018, and Council received 172 survey responses. The results of the engagement activities directly influenced Council's position on the project and guided further advocacy activities to local politicians, the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, the Minister for Transport and State Government officers.

Council arranged advertising through print media, social media and web information to inform the community regarding important stages of the project. Community members were encouraged to consider information on the North East Link website and participate in various community engagement activities arranged by the State Government.

Council officers have participated in the following activities and committees to advocate for improved community outcomes for Whitehorse:

- North East Link Technical Reference Group
- North East Link Community Liaison Group
- North East Link Community Technical Design Group – Walking and Cycling
- North East Link Community Technical Design Group – Engineering
- North East Link Business Liaison Group
- Meetings with sporting clubs impacted by the project
- Fortnightly meetings with State Government officers

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

At its meeting on 18 March 2019, Council approved the budget allocation of \$550,000 to be expended across 2018/19 and 2019/20. The funding is to ensure Council has appropriate legal and technical advice to prepare the EES written submission and is well represented at the North East Link Inquiry and Advisory Committee.

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POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The North East Link project has implications for a wide range of Council strategies, including:

- Council Plan
- Open Space Strategy
- Sport and Recreation Strategy
- Sustainability Strategy
- Integrated Transport Strategy
- Cycling Strategy
- Urban Forest Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Whitehorse Planning Scheme

ATTACHMENT

- 1 Submission regarding North East Link Environmental Effects Statement 