

1.6 SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP PROJECT

Responsible Director: Peter Panagakos

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes the outcomes of the community consultation that Council undertook with Glen Waverley traders and residents on the SRL East Project proposal in the Glen Waverley Activity Centre.
 - 723 submissions were received during the consultation period.
 - Approximately 150 people attended the Community Information session held at the Civic Centre, Glen Waverley and via Zoom on Wednesday 13 July 2022.
 - The overwhelming majority of participants supported Council's position. More than 95% supported the undergrounding of the existing Glen Waverley station to create a connection between the new SRL station and the existing one. 82% supported an extension of Myrtle Street to address traffic on Kingsway, being a part of the project. 80% supported replacement parking being south of the existing Glen Waverley Railway line and over 86% supported Council's vision for Kingsway.
2. Provides a copy of the summary of stakeholder responses contained in Appendix 1 of this report to the SRLA for their information, consideration and response.
3. Notes the update on Minister's Assessment on the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) East Environment Effects Statement (EES).
 - The Minister's Assessment on the SRL East EES supports the project, finding the effects on the environment will be acceptable, subject to various recommendations.
 - Reviews are required on the proposed road closures at Coleman Parade and Carinish Road, the Pick up Drop off (PuDo) parking at all stations, the location of the bus interchange at Monash, and the replacement car parking location at Glen Waverley.
 - Council representation on the Urban Design Advisory Panel (UDAP) and Public Open Space Advisory Panel (POSAP) is supported, as is a voluntary purchase scheme, further business and employee assistance, noise, air quality and arboriculture improvements.
 - The lowering of Glen Waverley Station to enable superior interchange between stations and the extension of Myrtle Street as part of a ring road; or even that a direct 'paid area connection' is provided between the existing Glen Waverley MMRN station and proposed SRL station were not recommended by the Minister to be delivered by the project.

- The Minister expects the future lowering of Glen Waverley MMRN Station will be considered as part of the Precinct Planning component of SRL East and notes that DoT advised that it intends to deliver a 'paid area connection' between the two stations in due course, subject to funding and approvals.
4. Notes and endorses the Council position and officers comments in response to the Inquiry and Advisory Committee recommendation and Ministers assessment at Appendix 2 of this report.
 5. Writes to the Glen Waverley community to provide a summary of the feedback received as part of Council's consultation, the link to this report as well as the relevant aspects of the Minister's Assessment on the SRL East EES, Council's thoughts on these and next steps.
 6. Endorses further advocacy arising from the Glen Waverley community consultation outcomes and Minister's Assessment on the SRL East EES by way of a community campaign focussing on the upgrade/lowering of existing Glen Waverley Melbourne Metro Rail Network (MMRN) station, keeping Coleman Parade open to traffic and the provision of a direct 'paid area connection' between it and the proposed SRL station. The community campaign will be developed and may include:
 - Website updates;
 - Community videos;
 - Social media; and
 - Other advocacy as required.
 7. Resolves to reaffirm its qualified support for the SRL East project and the benefits it may bring, and to advocate and call whoever is in Government to proceed with this transformative project, and to think about and implement beneficial change across the three station locations within the City of Monash that will deliver not only deliver the SRL project but will improve outcomes around the station locations such as those that Council is advocating for, particularly in Glen Waverley.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) East Project since the last update at the 31 May Council meeting (Previous Report) and in particular, to provide an update with regards to:

1. Council's community consultation on the process and outcomes proposed by the SRL project at the Glen Waverley Activity Centre (GWAC); and
2. The Minister's Assessment of the in the SRL East Environment Effects Statement (EES) following the Inquiry and Advisory Committee (IAC) report.

BACKGROUND

Council has considered a number of reports on the SRLA project since its inception. Most recently, Council resolved on the 31 May 2022 as follows:

Part A

That Council:

1. *Notes the update on Council's involvement in the Suburban Rail Loop East Environment Effects Statement (EES) Inquiry and Advisory Committee (IAC) hearing.*
 2. *Notes that the IAC will generate a report and make recommendations to the Minister for Planning by 23 June 2022, and that the Minister's assessment, which is expected in August, will inform other Government decision makers on the approvals required for SRL East to proceed.*
 3. *Notes the submission and position of Department of Transport (DoT) being:*
 - a) *DoT has no plans to lower the Glen Waverley railway station and does not agree that the Project should be expanded to accommodate the Council's plans in respect of the Ring Road.*
 - b) *DoT agrees that lowering of the Glen Waverley railway station and development of the Ring Road would be significant undertakings. It further notes that the feasibility of these projects has not been assessed and that the projects are not funded.*
 - c) *DoT considers that the precinct planning process for Glen Waverley represents an obvious and appropriate opportunity to consider the future urban structure of the Glen Waverley Activity Centre, including what changes, if any, should be made to associated transport infrastructure.*
 4. *Notes the submission of the SRLA that:*
 - a) *The site nominated by the SRLA for the replacement of carparking spaces resulting from its acquisition of the Council owned car parks at Montclair Avenue is the existing Euneva West car park, immediately north of Railway Parade North.*
 - b) *While there may not be an ideal location to replace those spaces, the site nominated by SRLA is within a comfortable walking distance of the Kingsway traders, and customers will still have the option of parking on-street or in the Bogong Avenue or Coleman Parade car parks. Whilst this is not seen as an adequate permanent solution, it can be secured and developed in a timely manner.*
 - c) *little if any weight should be given to MCC's vision for a ring road requiring grade separation of the existing rail line whether this be on the basis of the 2014 Activity Centre Structure Plan or having regard to Council's aspirations*
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over some years. There is a point where local structure planning must align with the plans of key agencies. DoT has yet again made it clear that it has no plan to provide grade separation at this location.

- d) Notes that the SRLA submission has disregard for Council's aspirations and vision for the future of the Activity Centre and ignores the comprehensive strategic planning work of Council, in consultation with the traders and community.*
- e) Notes that Council's current car parking obligation to provide additional and replacement car spaces in the GWAC has been reduced from 706 car parking spaces to 704 car parking spaces not including any additional car spaces that may be displaced as a result of the project.*
- f) Notes that Council will receive a report and further update on design work that is being undertaken for provision of additional carparking at the Bogong Avenue Multi-Deck Carpark.*

Part B

That Council:

- 1. Endorses the following recommendations from the Glen Waverley Activity Centre Steering Committee to:*
 - a) Undertake community consultation and engages, updates and informs traders and residents on the process and outcomes proposed by the SRLA project in the Glen Waverley Activity Centre (GWAC), through Council's website, media, direct mail and where appropriate information sessions.*
 - b) Writes to all traders and residents within the 3150 post code and provide information on Council's discussions with the SRLA to date, including the matters and submissions made during the EES process across the whole GWAC, (understanding that the report of the IAC is yet to be delivered to the Minister for Planning, but that when this is public it may provide further clarity on matters and outcomes proposed in the GWAC);*
 - c) Notes that relevant considerations to the points above, including, but not limited to:*
 - i. proposed road closures;*
 - ii. replacement and additional provision of parking;*
 - iii. opportunities for significant improvement in the GWAC that are not supported, being considered or within the scope of the SRLA project (as detailed by both SRLA and the Department of Transport) such as the proposed ring road and enhancements/improvements to the existing railway station and its relationship to the SRLA station; and*
 - iv. parking and traffic management.*

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- d) *Detailing the outcomes that Council believes should be considered as part of the SRLA project whether they are delivered as part of it, or that at a minimum are not compromised from being delivered in the future as a result of the SRLA project.*
 2. *Maintains it qualified support for the SRLA project and the benefits it may bring but that the consultation/advocacy proposed is intended to create awareness of the limitations of the SRLA project scope and the benefits that could be delivered or planned for as part of this transformative project being a catalyst for change in the GWAC.*
 3. *Agrees that:*
 - a. *this consultation/advocacy process will enable traders and the community to provide feedback to Council on what is being proposed as well as feedback on Council's aspirations for the GWAC, including the identified improvements/benefits it believes should be provided for as a result of the SRLA project; and*
 - b. *the community's feedback will assist Council in considering matters affecting the GWAC further as well as informing any advocacy that may be considered to ensure a shared vision to the benefit and improvement of the GWAC with the SRLA project as a catalyst for change.*
 4. *Notes that:*
 - a. *Council has received an undertaking from the CEO of the SRLA that the SRLA have not commenced any precinct planning work and that no work will commence without the involvement of Council and further, that the precinct planning work by the SRLA is not due to commence until 2023.*
 - b. *Given a range of unresolved issues such as the location for replacement/additional car parking and improvements across the GWAC that Council is reliant on the outcome of this planning process.*
 - c. *Supports the recommendation of the Glen Waverley Activity Centre Steering committee for Council to request that the State Government and the SRLA commence the precinct planning work immediately (recognising that the outcome of the EES process may provide further guidance), and in particular it is not understood why project scoping, initial work and community engagement could not commence understanding the importance of this work which will identify and provide solutions to important outcomes, directions and enhancements for the activity centre.*
 5. *Notes that it will consider at a future Council meeting any further advocacy to both the Federal and State Government that may be needed arising from the consultation/advocacy with traders and residents as outlined in this recommendation.*
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6. *Agrees to allocate resources and a financial contribution to facilitate this outcome.*

DISCUSSION

1) Community Consultation on the SRL East Project in the Glen Waverley Activity Centre

Following the decision of Council, members of the Glen Waverley Activity Centre Steering Committee and officers undertook community consultation that engaged, updated and informed traders and residents on the process and outcomes proposed by the SRL East Project in the GWAC.

a) Summary of Engagement

Council sent out a letter and brochure to 22,543 owners and occupiers in the Glen Waverley 3150 postcode, inviting feedback on Council's concerns with the SRL East Project at Glen Waverley and also inviting their attendance at a Community Information session held at the Civic Centre, Glen Waverley and via Zoom at 6pm on Wednesday 13 July 2022.

The Community Information session was also promoted in the July Edition of the Monash Bulletin, which was published on 15 June 2022.

The Community Information session held at the Civic Centre, Glen Waverley (and via Zoom) was chaired by Mayor Stuart James, with Glen Waverley Ward Councillors Geoff Lake and Nicky Luo, and Council officers also in attendance. Representatives from the SRLA also attended.

Council Officers presented Council's main concerns with the proposal at Glen Waverley: being the lack of interchange between the existing Glen Waverley station, bus interchange and the proposed SRL station; the permanent closure of Coleman Parade; and the impact on parking. Participants were then invited to share their views on the project.

The consultation period was open from 15 June to 31 July 2022.

b) Engagement Results

723 submissions were received during the consultation period on Council's concerns with the SRL East Project at Glen Waverley.

Approximately 150 people attended the Community Information session held at the Civic Centre, Glen Waverley and via Zoom on Wednesday 13 July 2022.

The overwhelming majority of participants supported Council's position. More than 95% supported the undergrounding of the existing Glen Waverley station to create a connection between the new SRL station and the existing one. 82% supported an

extension of Myrtle Street to address traffic on Kingsway, being a part of the project. 80% supported replacement parking being south of the existing Glen Waverley Railway line and over 86% supported Council's vision for Kingsway.

The following word cloud provides a summary of the themes that emerged from the open text responses of the questionnaire.



Figure 1 Word Cloud showing themes from open text responses of the questionnaire

The Feedback Report is attached at Appendix 1.

2) **Minister's Assessment on the SRL East Environment Effects Statement**

The Minister for Environment and Climate Action (as Minister jointly administering the Environment Effects Act) released her decision on 10 August 2022 regarding the environmental effects of the Suburban Rail Loop East project. The report from the Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) was released by the Minister at the same time.

The IAC report and Minister's Assessment can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/suburban-rail-loop-east>

The overall project findings of the Minister are:

1. *that the environmental effects have been properly identified and considered. I am also satisfied that my assessment provides a proper basis for the consideration of the approvals required by the project under other legislation, including under the Planning and Environment Act.*
2. *The project will involve environmental effects, including significant environmental effects, commensurate with a project of this scale and intent. The assessment reveals that those effects can be mitigated to some extent, and that even where the effects of the project cause significant disruption, there remain options to lessen the burden on those most affected.*
3. *In general terms, the project has obvious merit. I consider that none of the matters raised could or should result in the project not proceeding, but I do consider that the governance framework for the implementation of the project needs to properly address and mitigate the environmental effects, in the manner set out in the body of my assessment.*

The Minister's Assessment on the SRL East supports the project, finding the effects on the environment will be acceptable, subject to various recommendations. These include reviewing the proposed road closures at Coleman Parade and Carinish Road, the PuDo parking at all stations, the location of the bus interchange at Monash, reviewing and consulting on the replacement car parking location at Glen Waverley.

Other positive recommendations also include Council representation on the Urban Design Advisory Panel (UDAP) and Public Open Space Advisory Panel (POSAP), a voluntary purchase scheme, further business and employee assistance, noise, air quality and arboriculture improvements.

Disappointingly, Council's position on the lowering of Glen Waverley Station to enable superior interchange between stations and the extension of Myrtle Street as part of a ring road; or even that a direct 'paid area connection' be provided between the existing Glen Waverley MMRN station and proposed SRL station were not recommended by the Minister to be delivered by the project.

The Minister expects the future lowering of Glen Waverley MMRN Station will be considered as part of the Precinct Planning component of SRL East and notes that DoT advised that it intends to deliver a 'paid area connection' between the two stations in due course, subject to funding and approvals.

These matters relating to Glen Waverley will be the subject of future processes and others including replacement parking, road closures and PuDo will need to be reviewed as part of this project. Noting this and that the majority of the community support Council's position on these matters, as evidenced by the recent Glen Waverley consultation, Council officers will continue to work proactively with SRLA and other parties to achieve satisfactory outcomes for the community.

Council's position on the lowering of Glen Waverley Station and provision of a ring road remains unchanged despite the recommendation of the IAC and the Minister's Assessment. It remains difficult to understand how the opportunity to improve the Activity Centre and ensure its ongoing viability and functionality is restricted by the current SRL project. There is no argument that the existing station needs much investment and improvement, and the opportunity to incorporate it and deliver an outcome that truly transforms the Activity Centre is surely too important to be lost simply because the scope of the project is too narrow, and the outcomes perhaps too short sighted.

A summary of Council's key positions, along with the recommendations of the IAC, the Minister's assessment and Council officer comments on each of these are attached at Appendix 2, and it is recommended that Council endorses the officers responses so that they then form part of Council's ongoing advocacy position to the SRLA.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**Consultancy Costs for Community Campaign**

There has been no budgetary allowance made for further advocacy. An operational budget of \$500,000 is in the 2022/23 budget for the SRLA project and could be used for this process. With additional work and advocacy, it is likely that additional expenditure will be required and officers will provide a report to Council on this at the appropriate time.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The SRL East project and the social, economic and environmental benefits that will come from the anticipated level of investment is consistent with Council and State Government Policies.

Consistency with Council Strategies and PoliciesMonash 2021: A Thriving Community (2010)

This long-term strategy states (as relevant) that our community values convenience (we are in walking distance to all we need); a balance between residential, commercial and industrial development; good connections to bus and train services, and easy access by train/freeway; we have a friendly, community-based atmosphere in shopping strips; and a safe place to live and bring up a family.

Monash Council Plan (2017-2021)

The following are relevant strategic objectives and strategies from the Council Plan:

A liveable sustainable city

- Strengthening our strategic policy and local planning framework
- Advocacy for enhancement of the National Employment Cluster
- Increasing our community engagement and education about town planning

Inviting open and urban spaces

- Ensuring the walkability of our city
- Improving our green open spaces and linking up our bicycle trails
- Enhancing our activity centres with an increased focus on the moveability and prioritisation of pedestrians

An inclusive community

- Delivering integrated planning and community strengthening

Responsive and efficient services

- Enhancing community consultation and involvement in our decision-making

The Council Plan identified the following relevant priority projects:

- Improve our activity centres and pedestrian movements therein.

Other relevant Strategies

- Glen Waverley Activity Centre Structure Plan
- Monash Integrated Transport Strategy
- Monash Economic Development Strategy

Monash Planning Scheme

Clauses from the Monash Planning Scheme that are relevant to Clayton include:

- Clause 11.06 – Metropolitan Melbourne
- Clause 17 – Economic Development
- Clause 21.05 (MSS) – Economic Development
- Clause 21.06 (MSS) – Activity Centres
- Clause 22.03 – Industry and Business Development and Character Policy

State Government Policy Context

Plan Melbourne

There are numerous references and policy directions throughout Plan Melbourne that highlight the importance of the MNEIC, specifically.

“Direction 1.1 Create a city structure that strengthens Melbourne’s competitiveness for jobs and investment”

“Policy 1.1.4 Support the significant employment and servicing role of Health and Education Precincts across Melbourne”

“Policy 1.17 Plan for adequate commercial land across Melbourne”

“Direction 2.2 Deliver more housing closer to jobs and public transport”

“Direction 2.4 Facilitate decision-making processes for housing in the right locations”

“Direction 3.1 Transform Melbourne’s transport system to support a productive city”

“Policy 3.1.2 Provide high quality public transport access to job rich areas”

The three projects are a result of the Glen Waverley Activity Centre Structure Plan and / or are consistent with themes of the Monash Council Plan (2017-2021) as follows:

Monash Council Plan (2017-2021)

The following are relevant strategic objectives and strategies from the Council Plan:

A liveable sustainable city

- Strengthening our strategic policy and local planning framework
- Increasing our community engagement and education about town planning

Inviting open and urban spaces

- Ensuring the walkability of our city
- Enhancing our activity centres with an increased focus on the moveability and prioritisation of pedestrians

An inclusive community

- Delivering integrated planning and community strengthening

Responsive and efficient services

- Enhancing community consultation and involvement in our decision-making

CONCLUSION

The consultation process undertaken with the Glen Waverley community updated traders and residents on the process and outcomes proposed by the SRL Project in the GWAC. There was the opportunity to hear from and discuss with the community concerns and missed opportunities resulting from the project.

Overwhelmingly the community agreed with Council's position on the undergrounding of the existing Glen Waverley station, an extension of Myrtle Street, replacement parking being south of the existing Glen Waverley Railway line and Council's vision for Kingsway.

Whilst there are some positives from the Minister's Assessment on the SRL East project, a decision much more closely aligned to that recommended by the IAC would have undoubtedly delivered better outcomes. With the Ministers Assessment, some of these matters such as the possible closure of Coleman Parade remain uncertain. Unfortunately, we continue to see a reluctance to transform and future proof the Glen Waverley Activity Centre and deliver a much superior outcome than that currently proposed.

Finally, it is recommended that Council continue its advocacy on this issue, and write to the Glen Waverley community, providing a summary of the feedback received, relevant aspects of the Minister's Assessment on the SRL East EES and next steps.