



Whitehorse Ratepayers and Residents Association

Presentation to the Suburban Rail Loop East IAC Hearing 21 April 2022

# SRL EAST: NET COMMUNITY BENEFIT OR HARM TO HEALTH & WELLBEING?

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# Introduction

Although we agree in principle with the concept of a suburban rail loop, we find many areas of concern that raise significant doubts about whether the net community benefit of building Suburban Rail Loop East will outweigh the disbenefits both during construction and operation.

As the Suburban Rail Loop Project is the largest infrastructure project ever in Victoria, there should have been extensive community and stakeholder engagement and consultation from the project's inception. Unfortunately this has been sadly lacking and there are still a significant number of residents, ratepayers and business owners along SRL East who have little or no idea how the Suburban Rail Loop will affect them now and into the future.

Whitehorse residents, ratepayers and small business owners are feeling stressed and anxious about the SRL impact on themselves and their families, especially with the loss of green open space, traffic and noise chaos and feared devaluation of their property.

The Business and Investment Case is based on pre-COVID lockdown estimations of population and job growth by 2035 and beyond. It requires the completion of SRL North as well as SRL East to even be barely viable. The figures simply don't stack up. The 'new normal' also sees many people working or studying from home with less reliance on public transport, a trend that is likely to continue.



With a starting price of \$34.5 billion for SRL East alone, people still need to be convinced that this monumental spend is justified when that money could be used instead to fund more emergency services, more mental health services, to build more hospitals and better schools and to develop improved transport connectivity across a wider area where it is really needed, to name just a few options.

These are potential cost-effective benefits for the broader community that could be being enjoyed well before 2035.

No-one can predict other variables that can have a big impact on the cost of SRL East or even whether it is ever finished, let alone whether construction on SRL North starts:

- Recent Big Build projects cost overruns about 30%
- Worldwide shortage of building materials pushing prices up
- Multiple changes of State Government between now and 2035

# Key Considerations

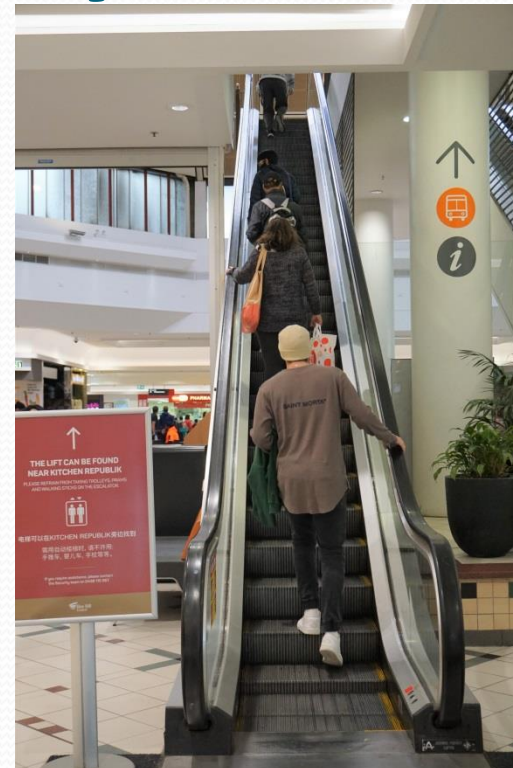
- EES predictive desktop application modelling seems to have been commonly preferred over site visits, local knowledge and proper consultation with Community and Council.
- The EPRs are not absolute with regard to performance if only 'reasonably practicable'.
- We note welcome progress in IAC Hearing conclaves in tightening up EPRs and adding place-specific ones.
- The SRL reference design will be handed over to contractors, so the final appearance and footprint of station boxes is unknown and may look nothing like the concept drawings.
- Can the station ground level footprints be smaller to save trees, reduce compulsory acquisition numbers and reduce community distress?
- In our opinion, the proposed 1.6 km radius areas (= 8 square km) around SRL stations seems like an overkill SRLA value capture land grab and is unlikely to benefit the general community.
- There is cognitive dissonance between climate change mitigation by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and destroying mature trees.
- Box Hill is already becoming saturated with high-rise mixed use buildings and is already an established MAC.

# Transport Connectivity - Box Hill

*"If people are going to use it (SRL) en masse, the experience needs to be quick, easy, seamless, and as close to convenient as possible to hopping in the car."*

(Daniel Bowen, spokesperson for the Public Transport Users Association)

- Golden opportunity to develop a world class integrated transport centre
- Poor co-ordination of existing Box Hill rail, bus and tram connections
- SRL Box Hill design lacks sophistication for its lack of integration and long walks between the modes.
- Essential to have direct **paid-to-paid underground link** between the existing Box Hill railway station and SRL Box Hill
- Other improvements would be relocating the very outdated bus interchange to be closer to both rail and tram.



Single file escalator to bus deck  
(photo M. Mayur)

# Compulsory Acquisition of Residential & Retail Property Box Hill & Burwood



*Elland Avenue Heritage Home Box Hill*



*Market Street Shops Box Hill  
(photos M. Mayur)*



*2-4 Elland Ave Apartment Block*

# Compulsory Acquisition

Residents, ratepayers, business owners and renters need to be treated with Respect and Dignity by SRLA

- Affected people will need SRLA case managers and *individualised* support
- Box Hill: 108 residential and 60 - 70 commercial properties, including heritage buildings
- Burwood: 13 residential properties on the west side of McComas Grove. (*Home owners on east side of McComas Grove also need option of Voluntary Acquisition.*)
- State Government Valuer General will appoint an 'independent' valuer
- Timing of market value calculation critical
- Business and Residential Support Guidelines don't go far enough – need greater mitigation measures (*Glenn Weston –expert witness*)
- Financial compensation *also* needs to be paid to affected property owners to **include all other costs associated with moving house**, such as conveyancing fees, other solicitor's fees, stamp duty, removalist costs and *also* a monetary amount specified in advance for **intangible impacts** like stress and anxiety caused by the compulsory acquisition.
- Revisit consideration of Box SRL Station Options 4 and 5 as may have less residential compulsory acquisition than Option 3



# Arboriculture and Loss of Green Open Space

## Box Hill Gardens

Higher density living requires access to more nearby green open space - not less - for mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

- 102 mature trees to be destroyed in Box Hill Linear Reserve and popular Box Hill Gardens
- SRL construction zone in 1.6 hectares or 1/3 of Box Hill Gardens for at least six years, possibly 10 years or more
- Tree replacement elsewhere must commence *prior* to removal of existing trees.
- Lack of comparable open space near proposed SRL station for passive and active recreation, and overall amenity
- Federation Street brickworks site?



Box Hill Gardens looking south  
(photo M. Mayur)

# Arboriculture and Loss of Green Space

## Box Hill Linear Reserve

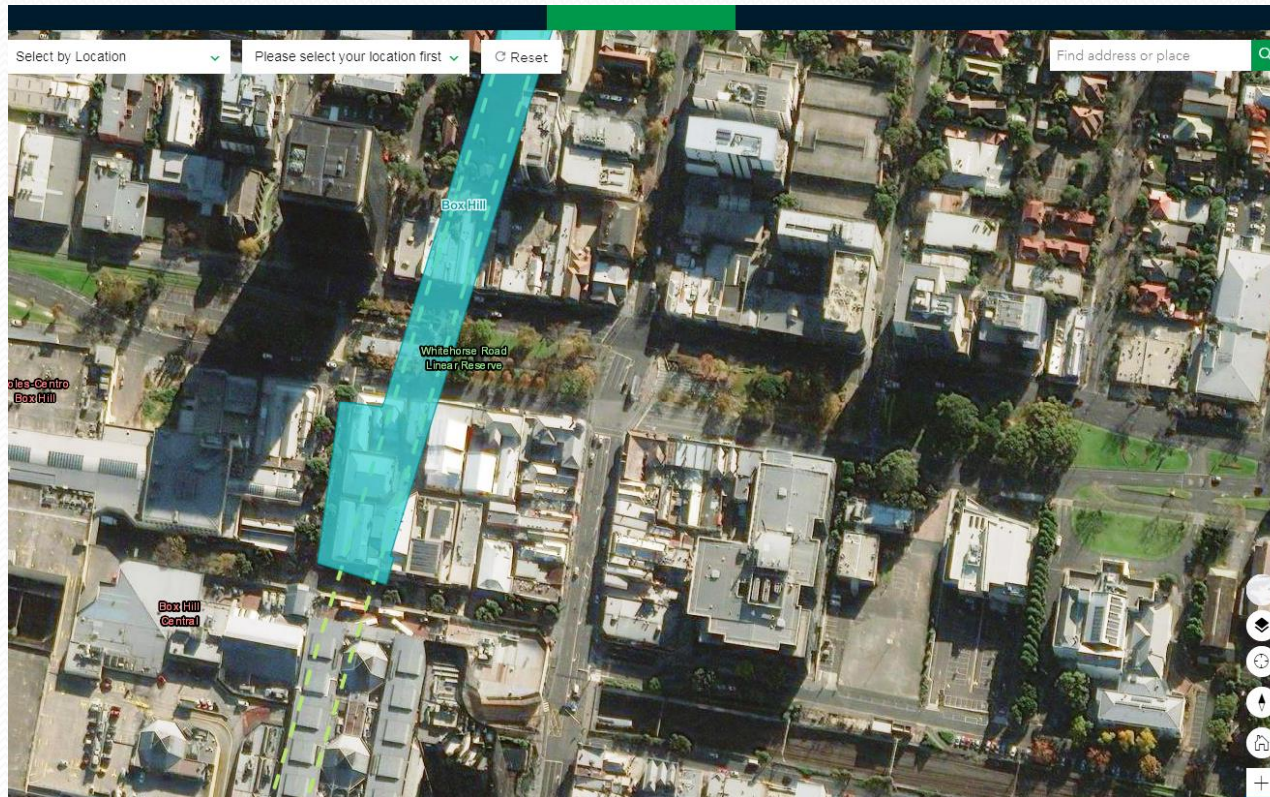
### IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY AND COUNCIL CONSULTATION

- SRL plans to reduce **Whitehorse Road - a major east-west arterial road** - to two lanes between Clisby and Station Streets and move the westbound lanes further north to encourage active transport. (*\*Contradicted in SRL diagram opposite, showing road realignment from Linsley Street as well.*)
- Need upgrade of existing Box Hill Linear Reserve, **maintaining existing trees** rather than destroying them.
- Important function of existing Linear Reserve re **carbon sequestration (storing)** and **mitigating urban heat island effect** from high density high-rise buildings now and into the future.
- **Visual amenity of existing green Linear Reserve brings welcome relief from high density buildings.**



Figure DSC12.2 Surface Plan of the SRL station at Box Hill

Leave existing Whitehorse Road alignment alone. Modernise existing Linear Reserve!





# Burwood Tree Loss

- Removal of 340 high and moderate value trees with an estimated canopy of 13,084m<sup>2</sup>
- Another possible 260 trees likely to go to create Burwood Station
- Minimum Burwood station footprint required at ground level should be reassessed to minimize tree canopy loss
- Community and Whitehorse Council sentiment is to **replace these trees in local areas *as soon as the station construction is due to start.***
- EES indicates these trees will be replaced in about 2030 at the conclusion of the Burwood Station build.
- **Strong community objection** to SRLA maintaining part of Sinnott Street Reserve for unspecified 'Future Planning'
- Naturalisation of Gardiner's Creek should be from Burwood Highway to Highbury Road.

# Contaminated Spoil

- Burwood: 158,000m<sup>3</sup> spoil to be excavated from the station box, plus
- 837,000m<sup>3</sup> back through the tunnels from Box Hill and Glen Waverley
- Known and suspected contamination risks from the former Bennettswood Landfill (now Bennettswood Reserve), the Zinfra site and areas in Box Hill including a former petrol station
- How will contaminated spoil be stored safely on site temporarily so it doesn't leach into groundwater prior to transport?
- Where will the contaminated spoil be disposed of?

*West Gate Tunnel contaminated spoil debacle*

SATURDAY, APRIL 2, 2022

heraldsun.com.au NEWS 03

## Tunnel works soiled

Police called in new standoff over danger dirt at \$10.9bn project

**EXCLUSIVE**  
**MATT JOHNSTON**

THE crisis-plagued West Gate Tunnel project faces further delays amid a fresh dispute over contaminated soil.

Police were called to the tunnel worksite on Friday after militant union the CFMEU demanded that work stop at the \$10.9bn project's soil storage site.

WorkSafe was also called to investigate complaints about how the soil – which could be

contaminated with toxic chemicals such as PFAS – has been handled.

The industrial flare-up occurred just weeks after the project's first tunnel-boring machine cranked up, after more than two years of legal brawling over cost blowouts.

Those delays have pushed the tunnel opening date back from 2022 to 2025 and caused \$3.9bn in budget overruns.

Part of the settlement that allowed works to finally get going was a deal to dispose of

the soil at a specially-built tip in Sunbury.

To get the material to Sunbury, tunnel spoil is loaded on to a 15km covered conveyor system and transported to a shed in Yarraville, where it is then stored before being loaded on to trucks.

Project sources said repeated clashes between project builders John Holland/CPB and the CFMEU at the shed has led to capacity constraints, and caused chaos on the site.

WorkSafe confirmed on

Friday that it was "making inquiries" into issues raised by the union.

A police spokeswoman said officers were called to the Yarraville worksite about 1pm on Friday, but there were "no arrests or complaints made".

"Police remained on site while WorkSafe attended," she said.

Last month a dispute over shifting concrete structures led to overnight works next to the West Gate Freeway being halted, spilling into the morning

peak when motorists were stalled for hours.

The union said its actions were due to safety concerns.

A West Gate Tunnel project spokeswoman said on Friday that 300m of the first tunnel had been dug.

"We work closely with all our industrial partners on the project and we encourage all parties to continue to work productively to deliver this vital piece of infrastructure," she said.

There will be 1.5 million

cubic metres of rock and soil removed as part of the massive operation, and the tunnelling is expected to take 18 months.

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# Traffic & Transport Chaos Burwood

- 370 heavy trucks per day peak, 190 on average
- 240 SRL staff peak requiring at least 180 extra car parking spaces
- Major disruption to local residents and traffic in both Burwood Highway and Highbury Road

# Traffic and Transport Chaos – Box Hill

- Multiple high-rise projects being built concurrently with SRL
- 120-230 SRL heavy vehicles per day plus vehicles from other builds and parking issues
- Reducing Whitehorse Road lanes down to two lanes each side will slow through traffic and deflect traffic onto other main roads.
- Canterbury Road residents already have heavy traffic during peak.
- Resulting rat runs by people trying to avoid Box Hill traffic snarls

***The traffic chaos from heavy haulage trucks will not be confined locally to just the eleven access gates to the construction site on Whitehorse Road and Station Street, but will affect drivers on any of the main roads such as Elgar Road and Middleborough Road that lead to and from the Eastern Freeway, Eastlink and the Monash Freeway.***

Desktop modelling and assurances that construction traffic and transport impacts would be managed with implementation of mitigation measures in accordance with the EPRs (EPR T1, EPR T2, EPR T3, EPR T4 and EPR T5) are simply unbelievable.

**Box Hill is likely to become a no-go zone for those wishing to travel by car for shopping.**



# Noise, Air Quality and Vibration

## Box Hill and Burwood

- EES impacts have largely been assessed with predictive desktop application modelling in isolation from each other, rather than taking into account the **cumulative effects** of noise, ground-borne vibration, dust and poor air quality for the health and wellbeing of 'sensitive receivers' i.e. people.
- With multiple non-SRL construction projects being built concurrently with SRL in Box Hill the effects of noise, dust and vibration can easily mean existing EPRs are insufficient.
- The SRL EES impacts are often described as being 'negligible' after the EPRs (EPR NV1, NV2, NV3, NV4, NV6, NV7 and NV8) are in place. One gets the feeling this is a case of 'She'll be right Mate!'
- Mental and physical health of residents will suffer with at least six years of SRL construction work.
- EPRs need to be tightened up beyond 'reasonably practicable' for residents' health and wellbeing.
- Need **real-time technical monitoring** of noise, dust, vibration and air quality wherever possible.
- The Independent Environmental Auditor (IEA) needs to do regular inspections of the construction zones.
- Repeated failure of contractors to meet EPRs should incur **hefty predetermined fines written into the contracts** for the contractors as a disincentive to being slack.
- Advance notification by SMS, email or worksite notification board advising residents of periods of excessive noise, dust or vibration
- Ongoing SRLA respectful communication with affected people is essential as well as **easy access to a clear, transparent complaints process**.
- Offers of acoustic treatment will be based on pre-construction modelling of air-borne noise emissions from construction activities, not measured noise, so this will not reflect the circumstances during station construction.
- Daytime noise mitigation measures required for people working night shift, raising young children, suffering life-threatening illness or disability or working/studying from home
- Alternatives to the use of the hydraulic hammer should be used wherever possible.

# Business and Retail Impacts – Box Hill

- Multiple high-rise developments will almost certainly be under construction concurrently with the SRL Station construction.
- Many remaining small businesses not compulsorily acquired will suffer from ongoing effects of noise, dust, lack of amenity and difficult customer access.
- **No amount of business coaching and signage or free coffee vouchers will make up for the lack of amenity for potential customers.**
- **Need SRLA Voluntary Relocation Packages for badly affected remaining businesses.**
- Discussion of alternative business locations for the small businesses - such as a popup mall - should only be considered if that is what the business owners *actually* want.

*Even though the Box Hill retail precinct has a distinctly Asian influence and has been a hub for Asian restaurants and shops, there are plenty more surrounding suburbs that have also developed a strong Asian influence and dining culture, so people are likely to simply shop and dine in those areas rather than struggle with reduced parking, construction work, noise and dust for the next six or more years.*

**Effectively the soul of the current Box Hill Town Centre will die.**



# Uniting AgeWell

It is critical for SRLA to work directly with Uniting AgeWell management and staff and Whitehorse Council to develop one or more EPRs that are specific to the special needs of the residents.

- Aged care facility with mainly high-care dementia and end-of-life residents
- Large area backs onto northeast section of Box Hill Gardens
- Management and staff were not directly contacted by SRLA, even though construction impacts will be huge.
- Predicted aggressive noise levels above 75 dB  $L_{Aeq,30min}$  during site establishment phase for 2.5 years
- Suggested construction setback 6-10 metres from boundary (Dr Judith Stubbs)
- Hoarding or other noise attenuation mitigations should be in place **before** construction commences in Box Hill Gardens.

Section of Uniting AgeWell southern boundary  
(photo M. Mayur)



# Burwood Overpass and Disability

- **Underpass** to link Burwood Station to north side of Burwood Highway rather than proposed overpass
- Convenient direct undercover connection to underpass from station
- Underpass with less steep gradients more user-friendly for those with mobility issues

