

Community Consultation Report

Eastern Freeway Upgrades: Hoddle to Burke

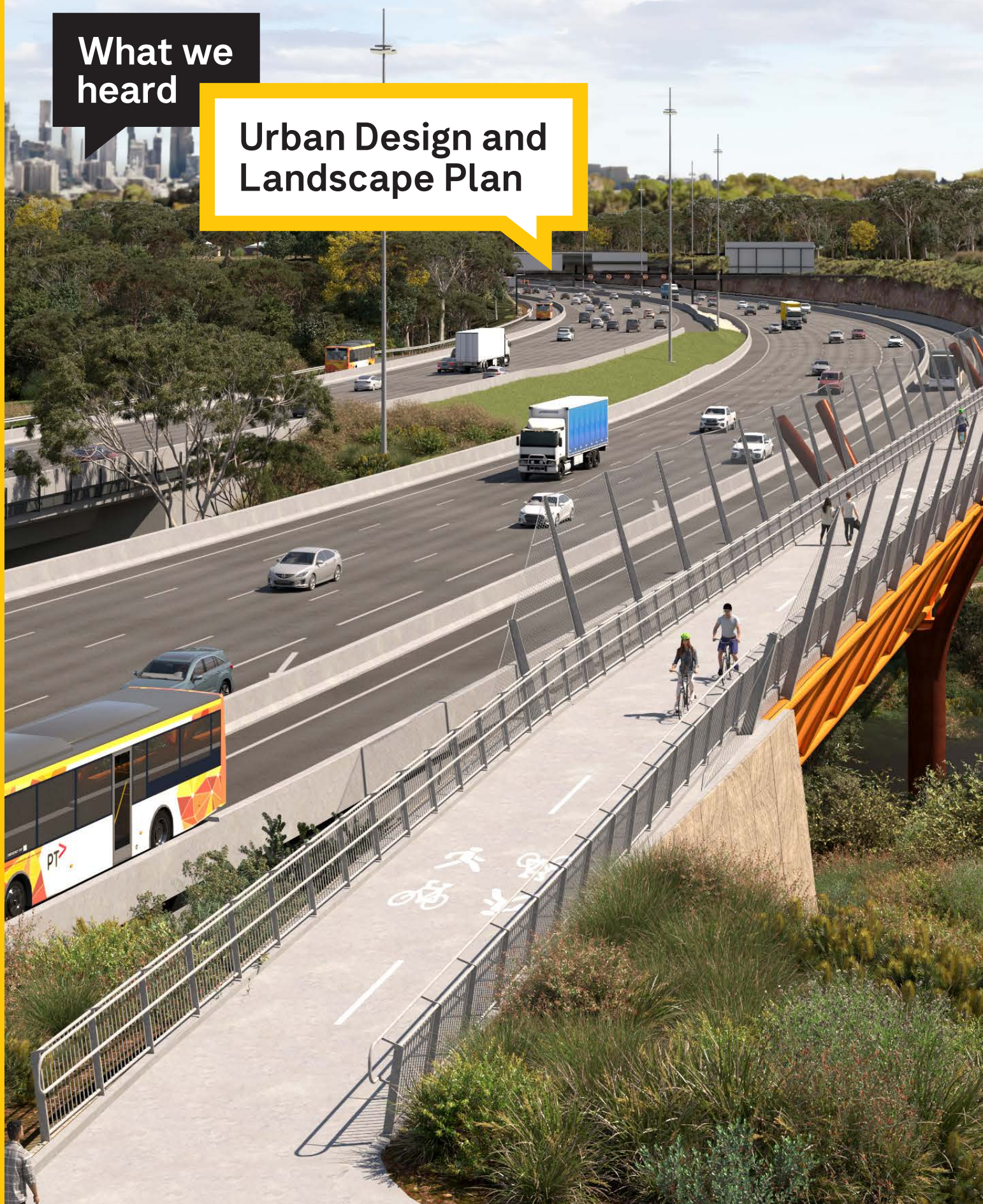
July 2026

BIG BUILD

EASTERN FREEWAY

**What we
heard**

**Urban Design and
Landscape Plan**



About this report

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We’re upgrading the Eastern Freeway with new express lanes, new traffic management technology and Melbourne’s first dedicated busway. These changes will cut travel times and improve public transport in Melbourne’s east.

The upgraded Eastern Freeway will connect with the new 6.5 kilometre North East Link tunnels from Bulleen to the M80 Ring Road in Greensborough – cutting travel times by up to 35 minutes and taking 15,000 trucks a day off local roads.

From 27 October to 16 November 2025, we asked the local community to share their thoughts on the Urban Design and Landscape Plan (UDLP) for the Eastern Freeway Upgrades from Hoddle Street to Burke Road.

We asked for feedback to help refine the design for key local elements including 4.7 kilometres of new and upgraded walking and cycling connections, the type and locations for new trees and plants, and the look and feel of new noise walls.

This report includes a summary of what we heard and how it helped further refine the UDLP, ready for more detailed design work and major construction to start.

You can see the final Urban Design and Landscape Plan at bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/roads/eastern-freeway-upgrades

Community consultation timeline

2017

Strategic planning

Understanding the traffic and transport problems North East Link needs to solve, including overhauling the Eastern Freeway and improving public transport, walking and cycling.

10,000+
pieces of feedback

2018/2019

Environment Effects Statement (EES)

Developing a reference design and setting requirements the final project design must meet for the Eastern Freeway Upgrades, North East Link and M80 Ring Road Completion.

3500+
pieces of feedback
870+
submissions

2025

Urban Design and Landscape Plan (UDLP)

Showing how the project design for the Eastern Freeway Upgrades from Hoddle Street to Burke Road meets the requirements community helped develop through the EES and refining key elements ready for detailed design and major construction to start.

366
submissions

Other Eastern Freeway Upgrades UDLPs

Urban Design and Landscape Plans have also been prepared, exhibited for community feedback and updated in response to submissions received for:

- Eastern Freeway Upgrades from Burke Road to Tram Road
- Eastern Freeway Upgrades from Tram Road to Springvale Road
- New and upgraded park and rides in Bulleen and Doncaster for the new Eastern Busway.

You can see these plans and read the community consultation reports on our website bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/roads/eastern-freeway-upgrades



Cover image: Artist's impression of new Eastern Busway and Yarra River walking and cycling bridge, Kew
This page: Artist's impression of new walking and cycling path at Yarra Bend Park, Fairfield

Engagement

Communication

How we let people know the Eastern Freeway Upgrades Hoddle Street to Burke Road UDLP was on exhibition.

1+ million
people reached through social media and online advertising

12,370+
postcards sent to residents and businesses in the local area

3000+
letters sent to residents and businesses close to where works will be happening

1900+
project subscribers emailed

280+
residents visited at home

2
newspaper advertisements

Engagement

Who was interested to know more about the project design and the UDLP

8685+
visits to the UDLP online

100+
people came to 4 information drop-ins and spoke with our team

20+
community group and organisation meetings

Feedback

Who made a submission

344
local residents

15
community groups and organisations

3
local councils

4
government agencies

Top five submitter suburbs

24%
Kew

11%
Alphington

10%
Kew East

5%
Balwyn North

5%
Clifton Hill

Key changes made

In response to submissions received, the UDLP now includes



A better route for the new walking and cycling path at Yarra Bend Park and an improved connection with the Main Yarra Trail



Improved locations for rest stops along walking and cycling paths, and an extra stop at Yarra Bend Park



More separation between the new cycle path and re-built River Circuit walking trail near Fairlea Ovals



Additional trees and plants to help screen and filter views of noise walls



Buffer planting for the Main Yarra Trail in key areas along the Eastern Freeway



Grass instead of trees and shrubs to better support the Westfield Grasslands rehabilitation and park maintenance at Yarra Bend Park



“
Some vegetation and screening between the path and freeway is needed.
Balwyn North resident

Artist's impression of new buffer planting along the upgraded Main Yarra Trail, Kew East

Your feedback

People could give feedback on the Urban Design and Landscape Plan with a short survey or use their own format. Of the 344 community member submissions received, 312 (90%) used the short survey.

Overall, you felt the upgraded Main Yarra Trail will be easier for pedestrians and cyclists to use, and that the bridge over the Yarra River and new path at Yarra Bend Park will make it easier to walk or cycle to other paths, trails and green spaces.

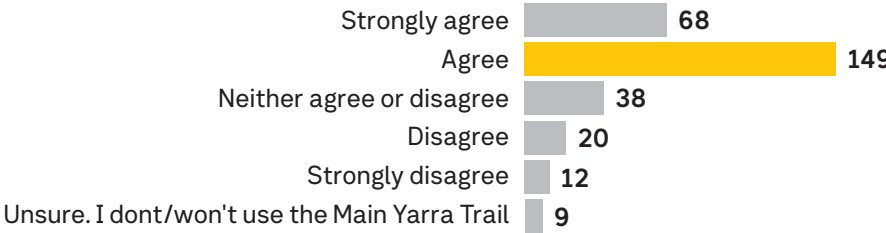
We also heard you felt the locations and types of new trees and plants are a good fit for the local area.

Overall, you also felt that the look and feel of the new noise walls is a good fit for the local area. Around half of the people who were undecided or disagreed and told us more about why raised concerns that new noise walls would not be built in all areas. More information about how we considered this feedback is on Page 17 of this report.

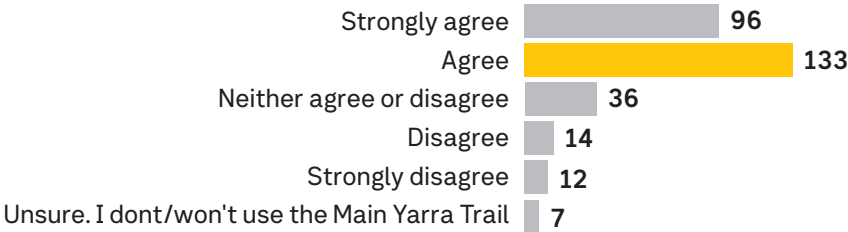
A note about numbers

Not all survey questions were compulsory. Numbers shown are for responses received.

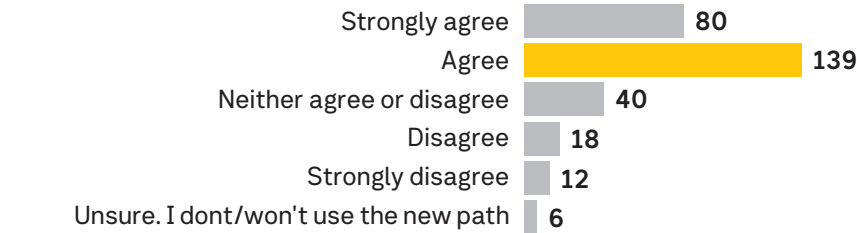
The upgraded Main Yarra Trail will be easier for pedestrians to use



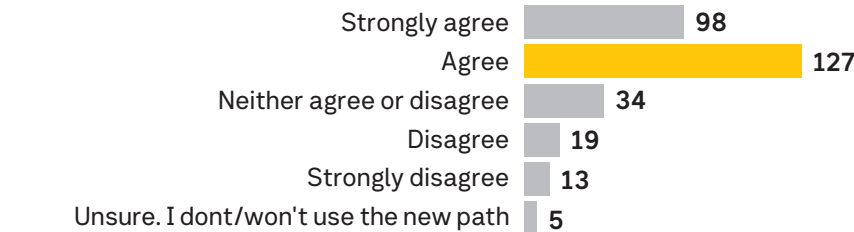
The upgraded Main Yarra Trail will be easier for cyclists to use



The new path at Yarra Bend Park and bridge over the Yarra River will make it easier to walk to other paths, trails and green spaces



The new path at Yarra Bend Park and bridge over the Yarra River will make it easier to cycle to other paths, trails and green spaces

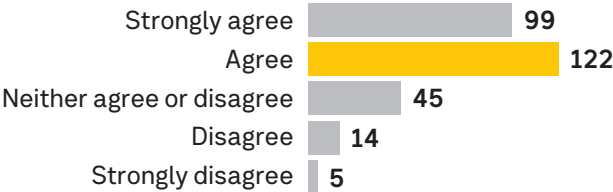


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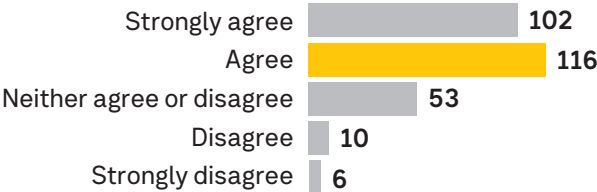
The wider paths and improved road and river crossings and access are positives.

Kew resident

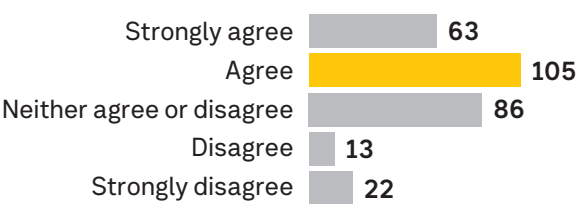
The locations for new trees and plants are a good fit for the local area



The types of new trees and plants are a good fit for the local area



The architectural design for new noise walls is a good fit for the local area



Artist's impression of new walking and cycling bridge over the Yarra River, Kew

Walking and cycling

In response to community feedback received through the EES, the UDLP exhibited for feedback included 4.7 km of new and upgraded walking and cycling connections to give people more trip choices and better access to inner city parks and trails.

The Eastern Freeway Upgrades from Hoddle Street to Burke Road will build 2.9 km of new paths from Fairfield to Kew at Yarra Bend Park and a new bridge over the Yarra River. We'll also upgrade and widen 1.8 km of the Main Yarra Trail where it runs next to the freeway from Willsmere Park in Kew to Burke Road in Kew East.

Overall, you told us these improvements will make it easier to move, walk or ride about the local area and to commute to key destinations.

Elements of the design you felt most positive about were:

- The direct route along the freeway and faster trip times
- The new connections under Chandler Highway, Belford Road and Burke Road separated from traffic
- Widening the Main Yarra Trail
- The separate path for walkers using the River Circuit Trail near Fairlea Ovals

We also heard you wanted more separation between the upgraded Main Yarra Trail and the freeway using trees and plants or a noise wall, greater separation between pedestrians and cyclists, lighting for safety at night, and more places to stop and rest.

Community groups who use Yarra Bend Park also raised concerns the new paths were too close to Westfield Grasslands, Fairlea Ovals and the fly-fishing casting pool.

“
I think there should be two very separate cycle/ pedestrian paths.
Balwyn North resident



Artist's impression of new walking and cycling bridge over the Yarra River, Kew



Some submissions asked for separate paths for pedestrians and cyclists to be built in other locations, or for wider paths.

We also heard requests to reduce vegetation removal and to maximise space for new trees and plants. We've worked hard to balance this feedback.

The new shared use path at Yarra Bend Park will be 3 metres wide, and 4 metres wide where there isn't a separate walking path. The upgraded Main Yarra Trail along the freeway is being widened from 1.8 metres to 3 metres with additional pull over bays for stopping and passing. This provides space for pedestrians and cyclists to safely use the paths while also avoiding removing additional trees or reducing the area available for new trees and plants.

The final UDLP now includes:

- 1 A better route for the new walking and cycling path at Yarra Bend Park**
Moved south to avoid the Westfield Grasslands and increase the amount of brightness from freeway lighting for safety at night.
- 2 An improved connection with the Main Yarra Trail**
A simpler, easier to use T intersection with clear path markings and signs.
- 3 More separation between the new cycle path and re-built River Circuit walking trail near Fairlea Ovals**
The new cycle path will be built further south to increase the amount of space between the

two paths and keep more existing trees in between. The River Circuit Trail will also be moved slightly further south than its existing location for more space between the trail and the sports ovals and casting pool.

- 4 Improved locations for rest nodes, and an extra stop at Yarra Bend Park**
We're working closely with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders to design places for pedestrians and cyclists to stop, sit, rest and connect with Country. Four nodes will now be located along the new path at Yarra Bend Park, including a larger rest stop near the Main Yarra Trail. A fifth node will be located along the River Circuit Trail near the Yarra River.

- 5 Buffer planting for the Main Yarra Trail along the Eastern Freeway**

Where there is space between the trail and new safety barriers, low-lying planting has been added along a 290-metre section on the approach to Burke Road.

We investigated replacing the safety barriers and fence between the Main Yarra Trail and the busway lanes with a wall.

A fence is a better design outcome as it allows light, keeps an open feeling for people using the path, and reduces surfaces that could attract graffiti.



Artist's impression of new buffer planting along the upgraded Main Yarra Trail, Kew East

Other upgrades you asked us to consider

1 Upgrades to the Merri Creek bridge at Roseneath Street, Clifton Hill and Eastern Freeway underpass, Fairfield

Merri Creek is a sensitive environmental area. Any upgrades to the bridge or underpass would need extensive strategic planning, technical and environmental assessments, community input, and planning approvals. Because this step of work for the Eastern Freeway Upgrades is already complete, and design and construction is well underway, it's not possible to add these upgrades at this late stage.

We've shared your feedback about upgrades being needed here with the Department of Transport and Planning. They'll consider your suggestions as part of ongoing work to identify future opportunities and priorities for walking and cycling improvements across Melbourne.

2 Anniversary Trail connection upgrades at Chandler Highway, Kew

Ideas included a separate bridge for pedestrians and cyclists or bollards for the on-road cycle lanes. We investigated both.

A dedicated bridge would need steep ramps over the freeway entry and exit and be difficult to use. Chandler Highway is not wide enough to install bollards on the road without creating safety risks for drivers or cyclists.

The upgrades to the Eastern Freeway will make it easier to use the Anniversary Trail by upgrading lighting at the Willsmere Park underpass and building a new connection with the Main Yarra Trail at Chandler Highway.

3 Additional links from Kew to the north side of the freeway.

Suggestions included a path from Yarra Boulevard to the new bridge over the Yarra River and green bridges over the freeway. We looked at these options.

Yarra Boulevard is around 14 to 15 metres higher than the new bridge over the river – equivalent to a three or four storey building. A connection here would either be short and steep and inaccessible for many users or need long ramps and extensive construction impacts in an environmentally sensitive location.

Green bridges over the freeway are not possible due to the significant structural supports that would be needed as well as the lack of suitable ground levels, clearances and access points.

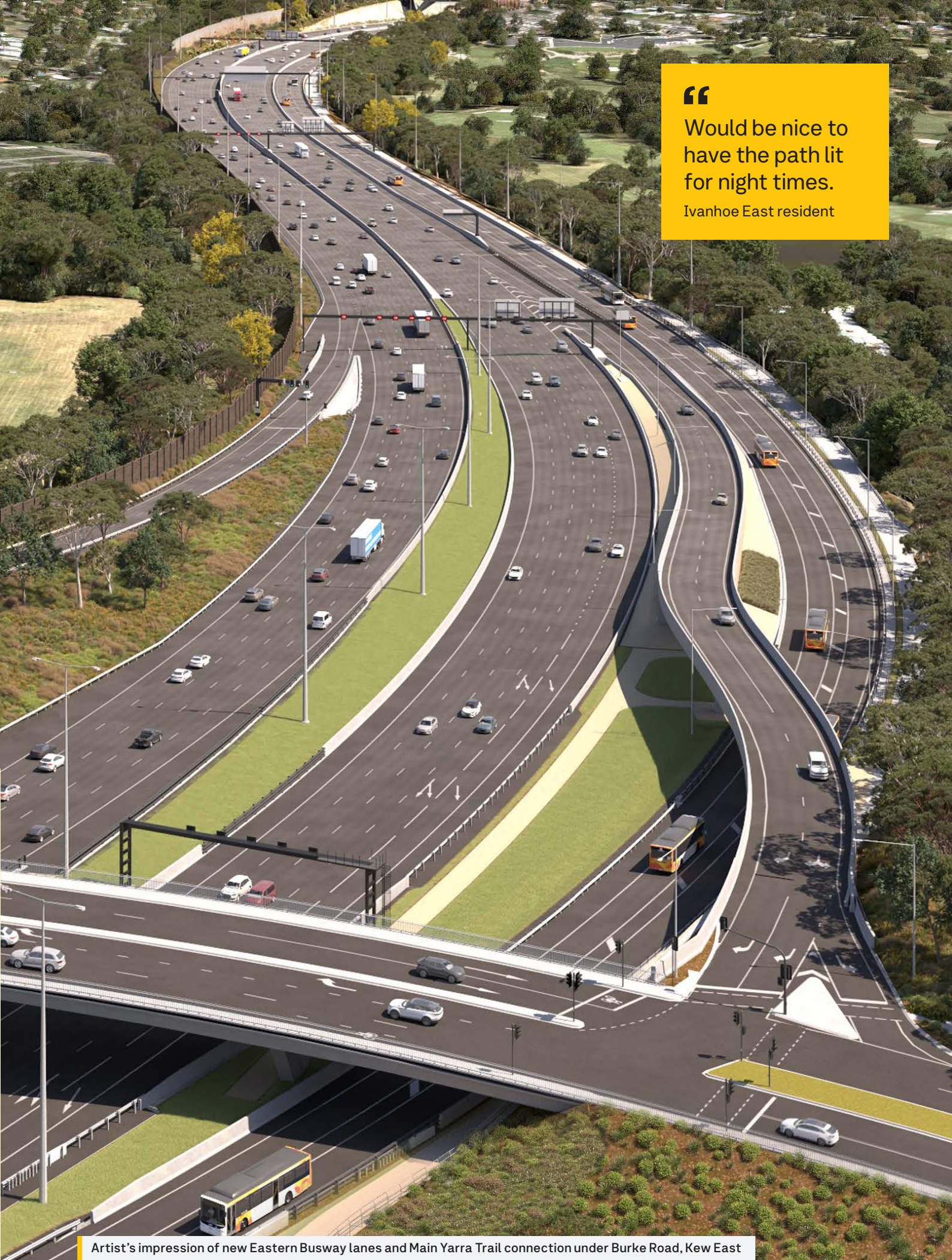
How we decided on the walking and cycling upgrades for the Eastern Freeway

The walking and cycling improvements being delivered with the Eastern Freeway Upgrades were planned and developed through three years of strategic assessments, community feedback and technical studies for the project's Business Case and EES.

- Along this section of the Eastern Freeway, new and upgraded connections will:
-  Fix missing links in Melbourne's Strategic Cycling Corridor network
 -  Make trips shorter and more direct
 -  Separate pedestrians and cyclists from traffic with new crossings under roads.

They will also connect with more than 13 kilometres of improvements to Koonung Creek Trail from Burke Road to Springvale Road, including new bridges and underpasses, so you can walk or ride a bicycle from one end of the Eastern Freeway to the other without having to stop at a single set of lights.

“
Would be nice to have the path lit for night times.
Ivanhoe East resident



Artist's impression of new Eastern Busway lanes and Main Yarra Trail connection under Burke Road, Kew East

Trees, plants and the environment

In response to community feedback received through the EES, the UDLP exhibited for feedback included extensive planting of new trees, shrubs, groundcovers and grasses to help return areas where construction is needed with improvements.

This included native and indigenous species along new and upgraded walking and cycling paths, at entries to the new walking and cycling bridge over the Yarra River and to help green interchanges at Chandler Highway and Burke Road.

Overall, you told us the locations for the new trees and plants, and using native and indigenous species are a good fit for the local area.

We also heard you wanted more existing trees and plants to be kept, greener spaces to be created, and more information about how we will manage works near the Grey-headed Flying-fox colony at Yarra Bend Park. Community groups who care for environmentally significant grasslands at Yarra Bend Park also requested different types of plants be used near this area.

The final UDLP now includes:



Plants better suited to Westfields Grasslands at Yarra Bend Park

Grass will be planted along the new walking and cycling path instead of trees and shrubs to better support rehabilitation work of the Westfield Grasslands by local community volunteers and ongoing maintenance of the park.



More existing trees kept

Using additional site investigations and more detailed construction planning.

The improved route for the walking and cycling path at Yarra Bend Park, the rebuilt River Circuit trail and new path at Fairlea Ovals have also been designed to keep more existing trees.



Yarra Bend Road Parks Victoria depot moved

To create room for the improved path route at Yarra Bend Park and increase green space for new trees and plants. A new location for the depot at Yarra Bend Park will be agreed with Parks Victoria.



More green screening at Chandler Park

Along the new walking and cycling path at Chandler Park that connects through to the new crossing under Chandler Highway.



An improved design for the Jack O'Toole Reserve bio-retention basin

A smaller, rounder shape for improved alignment with a main Melbourne Water drain.

“

Please preserve as many native trees and plants as possible.

Kew resident



Artist's impression of River Circuit Trail under new walking and cycling bridge over the Yarra River, Fairfield

Working near the Grey-headed Flying-fox colony

In response to community feedback received through the project's EES, the Grey-headed Flying-fox colony at Yarra Bend Park is a no-go area for project works.

Project works on the south side of the freeway will be done from inside the road reserve in this area and are unlikely to cause disturbance significant enough to impact the colony. This section of the Eastern Freeway is already busy and well-lit, and construction is not expected to markedly increase noise or light levels or disturb the camp.

We're working closely with ecologists to plan and manage works and monitor the colony. This includes timing the most intensive works during seasons when numbers in the camps are lowest and avoiding dawn and dusk when the flying foxes are most active.

Noise and noise wall designs

In response to community feedback received through the EES, the UDLP exhibited for feedback included quieter road surfaces to better manage traffic noise at the source, existing walls kept and refurbished to keep more existing trees and reduce construction disruption and new noise walls built where needed.

The architectural design for the new noise walls proposed using recycled plastic panels moulded into colours, textures and patterns inspired by the surrounding environment, including the rock escarpments along the freeway.

While many of you felt positive about the look and feel of the new noise walls and using recycled materials, others felt the design could do more to reflect the character of the local area, including more subtle patterns and shapes or more screen planting. We also heard concerns that the new walls may attract graffiti or that recycled plastic may not look attractive, last well over time, or could be harmful to the environment.

Sustainable noise wall design

Recycled plastic is a highly dense material with excellent sound absorption qualities.

The noise wall panels will be manufactured locally in Melbourne, specifically designed for outdoor use and chemically inert. Additives such as antioxidants will make the walls durable, provide weather resistance and longevity.

As well as saving plastic from landfill, recycled plastic:

-  Can be textured on both sides to provide a high-quality finish
-  Is a less adhesive surface for paint or graffiti and easier to clean and maintain than concrete or other porous materials.

- The final UDLP now includes:
-  **Additional screen planting for new noise walls**
Including at Wiltshire Drive and Princess Street, Kew and Kilby Road, Kew East. Native and indigenous trees and plants will be used to help screen noise walls and make them harder to access to discourage graffiti.
 -  **Opportunities to further refine architectural designs**
Including more detailed patterns with subtler references to the existing rock escarpments. We'll provide the community with more information ahead of construction starting.
 -  **A section of new noise wall at Alexandra Parade East in Clifton Hill**
Where more detailed noise modelling showed this is needed between Stan Street and Gray Street Reserve. The existing noise walls further west meet the project noise standard, and will be kept.



Other things you asked us to consider

- Replacing more existing noise walls**
We heard you are concerned that existing noise walls being kept will not be sufficient to manage noise now or in the future, particularly in Kew and Kew East. We heard you want the walls replaced rather than refurbished.

Where existing noise walls are being kept, extensive noise modelling has confirmed the project's stringent noise standard will be met and new noise walls are not needed. The noise model assesses a future year of 2046 and applies the maximum projected future traffic volumes, including for cars and trucks.

Using a quieter road surface to better manage noise at the source and keeping existing walls where possible avoids unnecessary works, significantly reduces construction disruption, and keeps more existing trees.

Keeping existing noise walls that do not need to be replaced is also consistent with other areas of the Eastern Freeway Upgrades from Burke Road to Springvale Road.

Where existing noise walls are being kept, they will be refurbished and refreshed to further extend their life.

- Building additional noise walls**
Some submissions asked for noise walls to be built in more locations to manage traffic noise, particularly for residents on the north side of the freeway in Alphington.

Noise modelling has confirmed the extent of new noise walls in the UDLP will meet the project's stringent noise standard, including for all residential properties in Alphington, and additional noise walls are not required. The noise model considers the area surrounding the freeway including topography such as hills, valleys and escarpments.
- The quieter road surface installed for the upgraded Eastern Freeway will be monitored every 12 months and maintained as needed to ensure it continues to reduce traffic noise to the required levels.

About the project noise standard

From talking with communities along the Eastern Freeway, we understand that traffic noise is a key focus for residents.

The upgraded Eastern Freeway will meet the most stringent traffic noise standard in Victoria:

-  **63 decibel**
protection during the day
-  **58 decibel**
protection at night

We heard we can provide people with more information about the noise standard, including how ongoing monitoring will ensure compliance.

More information about the project noise standard is now available at bigbuild.vic.gov.au/nel/managing-traffic-noise

Freeway and Busway

From Hoddle Street to Burke Road we'll build dedicated bus lanes to complete the final piece of the 11 kilometre Eastern Busway along the Eastern Freeway. We'll also add one additional freeway lane in each direction from Burke Road to Chandler Highway.

You asked us to consider

Congestion at Chandler Highway

Traffic studies for the project's EES looked at the causes of congestion around the Chandler Highway ramps. The upgrades to the Eastern Freeway have been designed to address these.

Extra entry and exit ramp lanes, smart electronic signals to better manage how traffic merges onto the freeway, and the new freeway lanes from Chandler Highway to Burke Road, will work together to keep traffic moving.

Eastern Busway stops at Chandler Highway and Burke Road

Bus routes for Alphington, Kew and Balwyn North will be able to get on and off the busway

at Chandler Highway for faster travel times to and from the city.

This means locals can benefit from the busway using stops and routes close to homes.

Eastern Busway stops on the freeway close to Willsmere estate, Kew

Bus stops here are not feasible due to the steep and high rock escarpments on both sides of the freeway and the narrow width of the cutting. There is not enough space for passenger access using lifts, stairs or ramps, or for buses to safely stop.



Artist's impression of new Eastern Busway and path under Burke Road, Kew East



Artist's impression of new Eastern Busway at Chandler Highway with access for local routes, Kew

Construction

The Urban Design and Landscape Plan was approved by the Minister for Planning in July 2026, ready for major construction to begin.

Find out more

For more information about how we're upgrading the Eastern Freeway, or to sign up for construction updates visit bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/roads/eastern-freeway-upgrades

To talk to us

Drop in to our Project Information Centre

Chandler Highway
Construction Compound
Wiltshire Drive, Kew

Tuesday to Thursday,
9am to 3pm.

contact@bigbuild.vic.gov.au

Call us on **1800 105 105**

Our phone line is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Artist's impression of new noise walls at Willsmere Park, Kew East

bigbuild.vic.gov.au/roads

1800 105 105 (call anytime)

contact@bigbuild.vic.gov.au



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