



BELL TO MORELAND

OPEN SPACE CONSULTATION REPORT

AUGUST 2019



levelcrossings.vic.gov.au

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Project overview

The Bell to Moreland Level Crossing Removal Project will remove the level crossings at Bell, Reynard and Munro streets in Coburg and Moreland Road in Brunswick. These level crossings are located on the Upfield rail line.

Removing these level crossings will make communities safer, more connected and get commuters in Melbourne's north home sooner.

The four level crossings will be removed by raising the rail line over the road onto a rail bridge. The project will create new community open space, improve east-west connections and deliver upgrades to sections of the Upfield Bike Path.

The new open space could be used for recreational and sporting activities, rest and relaxation, or community activities. There are many possibilities below the 2.5 kilometres of elevated rail between Bell Street and Moreland Road.

This project will also deliver two new train stations at Coburg and Moreland. The existing heritage stations will be preserved in their current positions and incorporated into the new station precincts.

The project is currently in the planning phase and the early designs of the open space and elevated rail will be available soon.

Construction will begin in late 2019 and the level crossings will be gone in 2020. The project will be fully complete in 2021.



Current level crossing at Moreland Road

Introduction

Between 25 May and 15 June 2019, Brunswick and Coburg locals gave feedback and ideas on the new open space as part of the Bell to Moreland Level Crossing Removal Project.

This report outlines the key themes raised in the feedback from the community, businesses and stakeholders during this consultation period. Feedback will be used to shape the design of the new open space along the rail corridor and areas around the stations.

The key themes that emerged from the feedback are:

- Walking and cycling
- Trees and vegetation
- Placemaking
- Public art
- Car parking and traffic
- Safety and maintenance
- Station precincts.

This report includes quantitative and qualitative feedback received as part of the open space consultation.

Feedback will be considered along with local constraints, including:

- the narrow rail corridor and properties in close proximity to the rail line
- drainage basins required along the rail corridor to manage flooding
- how the facilities will be maintained
- heritage considerations.

By engaging the community to provide feedback on the new open spaces, this project will deliver places that Brunswick and Coburg residents can enjoy for generations to come.

Guiding principles

The Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP) has developed a series of principles to guide urban design on all level crossing removal projects.

In addition to community feedback and consultation with Moreland City Council, these principles will help shape the design of the open space in the Bell to Moreland project.

Network of public spaces

Create new community public spaces, including upgraded streetscapes, new civic plazas and green spaces to connect the existing street network.



Active transport connections

Deliver a network of cycling and walking paths that run next to the rail corridor and link to other modes of transport, shops, houses and community facilities.



Celebrating heritage

Reuse the existing station buildings in a way that complements the rich heritage of the Upfield line.



Sustainability and innovation

Develop a precinct with a focus on sustainability, innovation and biodiversity along the rail corridor.



Intermodal transport

Build new stations that offer a high-quality customer experience, are accessible for all users, and include facilities for commuters.



Liveability and economic development

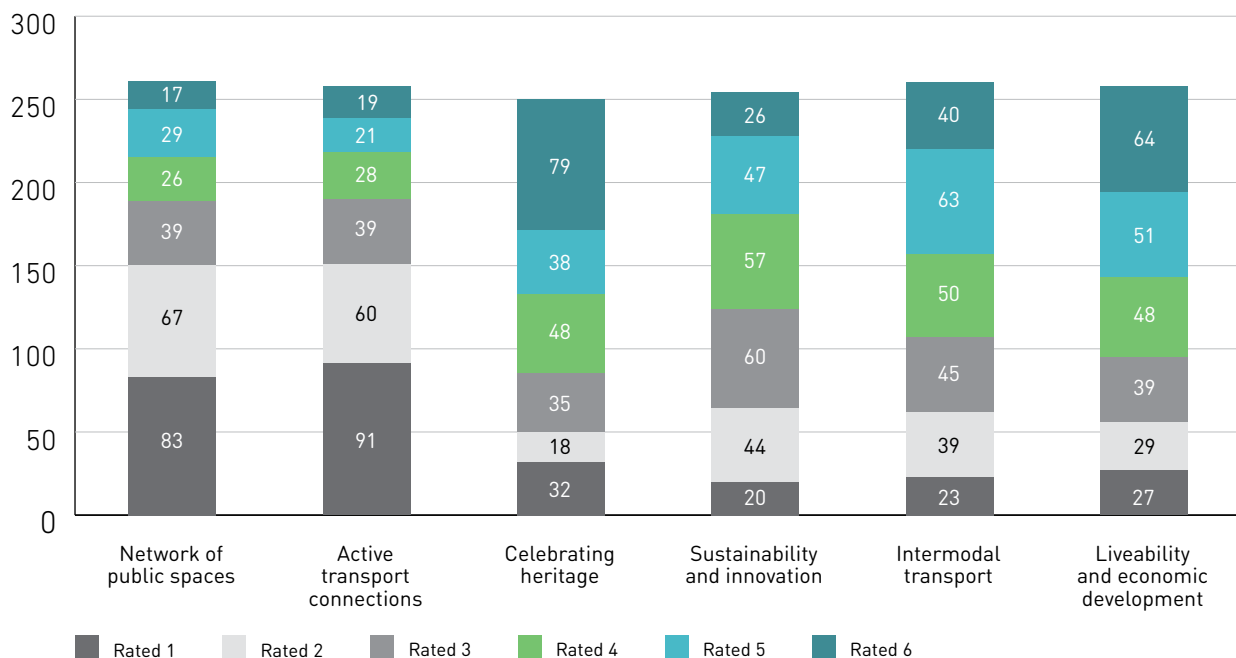
Develop a thriving, engaging and activated precinct that complements existing retailers and supports the growth of new retail opportunities.



How you rated these design principles

Respondents rated **active transport connections** as the most important design principle for the project, closely followed by **network of open spaces**.

How important are these principles to you? Order from 1 to 6, with 1 being most important





Community drop-in sessions held in May 2019

Consultation objectives

- Conduct meaningful community engagement on use of the new open space
- Ask the local community to contribute their own creative ideas to deliver attractive, useable and safe spaces
- Communicate considerations and constraints in developing the design of the open space
- Stimulate ideas and suggestions for what is possible in the open space using inspiration from other level crossing removal projects
- Report back to the local community with key findings from the consultation
- Use community feedback to help shape the design of new open space

Open space consultation overview

Elevating the rail line between Coburg and Moreland stations will create new community open space that can be used for various purposes.

To help shape the design of the open space, LXRP sought feedback and ideas from the local community about what they would like to see delivered in the new open space.

Between 25 May and 15 June 2019, LXRP undertook community consultation on the open space underneath the elevated structure and areas around the stations. The community was invited to share their ideas in person at drop-in sessions and through an online survey.

A series of meetings also took place between LXRP and Moreland City Council to seek feedback on a range of topics and understand council's priorities to be considered as part of the project.



OPEN SPACE CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES



Community drop-in sessions held in May 2019

Community drop-in sessions

Two community drop-in sessions were held on Saturday 25 and 28 May at the Batman Royale, in Coburg North.

A total of 258 people attended these two sessions.

The drop-in sessions were set up with the following stations:

1. Project overview
2. Project benefits
3. Technical rationale for the design solution
4. Examples of open space design from other LXP projects
5. Open space feedback
6. Stakeholder Liaison Group (SLG) nominations
7. Trader information
8. Feedback survey

Each station was staffed by project team members and relevant information was available, including factsheets, roll plots, maps and photographs. People were able to engage and ask questions.

Feedback collection

At the drop-in sessions, community members had the opportunity to write their open space ideas and stick them onto a map at different geographical locations along the rail corridor.

Community members were encouraged to look at photo examples of other level crossing removal projects, and contribute their ideas of what they would like to see delivered as part of the project.

Following the drop-in sessions, each note was analysed and categorised into key themes.

At the drop-in sessions, people were also able to complete a survey to give further feedback on the open space and areas around the stations. A total of 70 hard-copy surveys were collected at the sessions.



Locals provided open space ideas at drop-in sessions held in May 2019

Online engagement

The feedback survey from the community drop-in sessions was also available online throughout the consultation period.

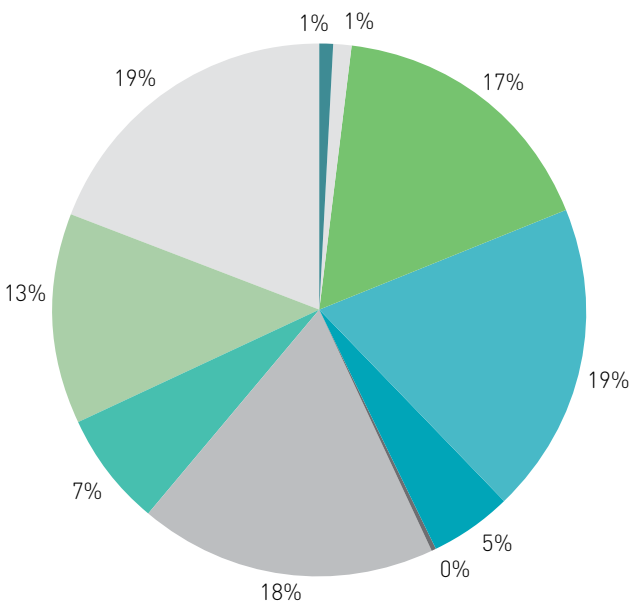
A total of 227 people completed the online survey providing valuable feedback and ideas on use of the open space and areas around the stations.



Profile of respondents

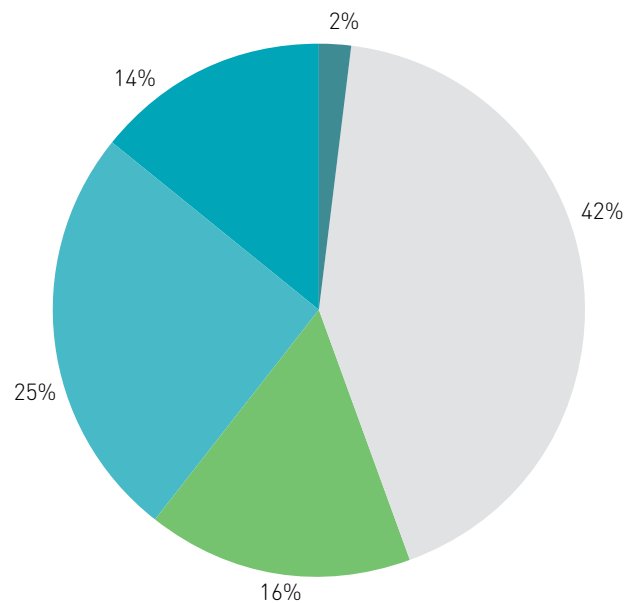
The majority of people who provided feedback were residents from Coburg or Brunswick, pedestrians or cyclists using nearby paths or roads, and rail passengers. Forty two per cent of respondents live within 200 metres of the rail corridor.

What's your interest in the Bell to Moreland Level Crossing Removal Project?



- Local land owner or property owner
- Local bus user
- Local resident, live in same suburb as project
- Motorist that drives by the level crossing site
- Local resident, live in nearby suburb
- Pedestrian or cyclist who uses nearby paths or roads
- Local trader or business owner
- Person who works near the level crossing site
- Rail passenger
- Other

How far do you live from the rail corridor?



- 0 to 200 metres
- 201 metres to 500 metres
- 501 metres to one kilometre
- More than one kilometre
- I don't live near the rail corridor

KEY THEMES



Current Upfield Bike Path, between Coburg and Moreland stations

After analysing the feedback surveys, Post-it notes and other written submissions regarding the use of new open space, seven key themes emerged.

- Walking and cycling
- Trees and vegetation
- Placemaking
- Public art
- Car parking and traffic
- Safety and maintenance
- Station precincts



Walking and cycling

Improving walking and cycling connections was identified as a major priority for Brunswick and Coburg locals. This is unsurprising, given 66 per cent of respondents said they access Coburg and Moreland stations by walking or cycling.

While 67 per cent of respondents reported using the Upfield Bike Path regularly or very regularly, these people often commented that the current path was overcrowded, too narrow and in poor condition.

Many people suggested that separating cyclists from pedestrians, widening the path, and realigning the path would reduce conflict between users and improve overall safety.

A large portion of respondents cited traffic flow in the area as a key concern. Respondents commented that the design would need to carefully consider the signalling used at north-south crossings to prevent excessive wait times for path users.

A smaller number of respondents suggested that an elevated bike path for commuter cyclists, in addition to a ground-level path, would further reduce conflict between users and reduce travel times.

'Do not make walkers and cyclists share the path. Separate please! Too dangerous for both.'

~ drop-in session participant

'Better lighting for night riding and walking is essential along the path. Wider paths to allow pedestrians to walk side by side without blocking the path would also be great. Separate bike lanes from road and pedestrians where possible.'

~ drop-in session participant

Trees and vegetation

Many respondents felt more trees and vegetation were important in the new open space to enhance the visual amenity and enrich the biodiversity in the local area.

Among the feedback comments, minimising impacts to existing trees and vegetation was a recurring theme.

A preference for the planting of native plant species along the corridor also stood out among the feedback.

'Think biophilic design, not concrete. A table tennis table might be nice, or a climbing wall or swing – but not so much hard surfaces please. The main thing is really making it green and attractive, creating a new 'green lung' for Coburg central.'

~ survey respondent

Placemaking

We heard that the creation of active, community-centred places was important to the local community. Many people wanted to see places that could cater to all ages and provide opportunities for people to socialise with others in the local community.

About 65 per cent of people indicated that they would use the new open space underneath the rail bridge, either regularly or very regularly, once completed.

Many families expressed a need for new play equipment that integrated natural materials and could be enjoyed by children and teenagers.

Suggestions for placemaking included community gardens, cafes, markets, public art, nature-based playgrounds, outdoor exercise equipment, barbecues, exhibition spaces and dog parks.

'No plastic playgrounds. Use timber or natural materials please. The community deeply cares for the natural environment.'

~ drop-in session participant

'I would like to see lots of seating to encourage social interaction, places for slow walking and landscaped areas that encourage activation such as BBQs, skate parks, play equipment, nature play, basketball rings and areas for public art.'

~ survey respondent

Off-leash dog park at Noble Park



Bayswater Station Mural designed by Aboriginal artists, Graffix Creative, and Bayswater Secondary College



Public art

Many people wanted to see integrated art in the new open space that reflected the multicultural and creative community of Brunswick and Coburg.

Some suggested using the pylons of the elevated rail structure for public art. Others suggested creating exhibition and event spaces to host local artists.

The project team will work with the community and stakeholders to create a precinct that reflects the vibrancy of the community and provides a legacy they can take pride in.

'There needs to be green space and integrated art – high quality purpose designed artworks, not off the shelf architectural monuments. There should also be a clear opportunity for street artists to create a living outdoor gallery, as already happens further down the Upfield cycle path.'

~ *survey respondent*

Car parking and traffic

There was a strong desire for improving the current car parking conditions in the area, such as upgrading the informal car park at Coburg Station.

Many people also said they wanted to improve traffic flow at key level crossings, particularly at Moreland Road in Brunswick and at Munro Street and Bell Street in Coburg. People cited these areas as high-conflict zones between pedestrians, cyclists and motorists that encouraged risk-taking behaviour from all road users.

About two-thirds of survey respondents said they access their local station by walking or cycling.

'Keep car park capacity at Coburg Station, but do not increase car parking.'

~ *drop-in session participant*

'Cycle priority at Reynard St intersection, similar to Victoria St, Brunswick. Raised zebra crossing with give way sign for cars.'

~ *drop-in session participant*

Safety and maintenance

The provision of safety measures to make these spaces user friendly and inviting, was often raised in community feedback. Respondents highlighted the importance of preventing graffiti and anti-social behaviour.

We heard some great ideas to increase safety such as more lighting, more Protective Services Officers and incorporating design principles that discourage graffiti.

While almost all respondents welcomed the creation of new open space under the rail bridge, they also emphasised the importance of ongoing maintenance. It was suggested that

maintaining new facilities and keeping the area clean would help deter vandals and prevent the new spaces from becoming neglected.

'Ensure for proper illumination or lighting around pillars for safety.'

~ *drop-in session participant*

Station precincts

The Bell to Moreland Level Crossing Removal Project will deliver two new stations at Coburg and Moreland.



A large number of respondents commented on the importance of retaining the existing heritage stations at Coburg and Moreland, and creating safer, more modern station precincts with better connections to other modes of transport.

For Coburg Station, we heard many commuters experience congestion around the station and difficulty accessing the station from north of Bell Street.

For Moreland Station, we heard many commuters experience similar issues, especially from south of Moreland Road. People also commented on the significance of the heritage-listed Moreland Station building.

'Need to maximise station access points... need to have pedestrian access to the station from both sides of Bell Street.'

~ drop-in session participant

'Don't completely hide Moreland Station – celebrate its history and beauty.'

~ drop-in session participant



The new stations will be safer, more accessible and user friendly.



Existing Coburg Station

FUTURE USE OF COBURG STATION

The existing heritage station at Coburg will be retained and repurposed in its current position and integrated into the new station precincts.

When asked what was missing in the Coburg area, responses included a need for a community-centred space that brought locals together for recreation, information and greater connection.

Some of the most popular ideas for repurposing Coburg Station included an arts space, community garden, community meeting rooms, bike shop library, cinema, museum and cafe.

The project will consider the community's feedback and work with relevant stakeholders on how best to repurpose the heritage-listed station.

'The station could be repurposed into a cafe and museum showcasing the local area's rich history.'

~ survey respondent

'High quality design, warm lighting, landscaping, hospitality facilities and community amenities, such as toilets, cafes, shops, or restaurants would make the precinct more of a safe destination worthy of enjoying, rather than a place to pass through.'

~ survey respondent

Conclusion and next steps

We thank the community, businesses and stakeholders who have shared their feedback and ideas on open space through community drop-in sessions and online. The feedback we have received will play an integral role in shaping the open space and ensuring it meets the needs of the local community, within the constraints of the project.

As evidenced in the feedback, greener open spaces with improved pedestrian and cycling infrastructure are key priorities for the community.

Community-centred places, for people of all ages to gather and connect, also emerged as important to the Coburg and Brunswick communities.

We will incorporate this community feedback and much more, as the design of the open space progresses. We will continue to work with the community and stakeholders to refine ideas for the new open space to ensure we deliver positive outcomes for the area.

We will soon share more information about how community feedback has been used in the open space design.

By unlocking new open space under the rail line, we aim to create community-led places that are enjoyed by locals and visitors to Coburg and Brunswick for generations to come.



Community space at Noble Park



Community space at Mernda Station



Seating areas beneath the rail line at Carnegie Station

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