



**NORTH
EAST LINK**
PROJECT

COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

MAY - JULY 2017



**NORTH
EAST LINK**
AUTHORITY



VICTORIA
State
Government



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North East Link will finally connect the missing link in Melbourne's freeway network between the M80 Ring Road and the Eastern Freeway or EastLink.

This report includes a summary of what we heard from our first community survey for North East Link from May-July and how this has contributed to the project so far. The survey was opt in and the results represent the views of those who chose to participate.

Community engagement will play an important role in shaping North East Link. This survey was just the start.

We want to hear from as many people as possible throughout each stage of the project. There will be many more opportunities for people to get involved each step of the way.

SURVEY FAST FACTS



7,400+
responses

Online and
by post



350+
postcodes

Inside and outside
the north-east



Over
2 months

26 May to
28 July 2017

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Why we held the survey

We are beginning work on North East Link by examining the benefits and challenges of the link. We will then recommend a preferred option and produce a business case.

Our first community survey asked people to tell us...

- 1 How they travel around and through the north-east.
- 2 What they value about their local neighbourhood.
- 3 Their views on improving transport infrastructure.

We used what we heard to help our early work to identify...

- 1 What transport problems North East Link needs to help solve.
- 2 What we should help protect in Melbourne's north-east.

These helped to inform our project objectives and principles and the criteria to investigate how different corridor options perform.

We are now undertaking further community engagement on the project objectives and principles, together with what our investigations so far have found about four potential corridors.

About the results and our analysis

The survey included multiple choice and open text questions.



We sent the open text responses to computer-aided content analysis specialists.

This process uses purpose-built software to dig deeply into large amounts of text to find common topics and themes.

We've included examples of the comments we received in this report.

Because the survey was opt in, the results represent the values and opinions of those who chose to participate only.

Not everyone completed every question and some questions allowed people to choose more than one answer.

The % values in this report are for the responses we received for the question.

How we told people about the survey



2,800+

Sent an email to our 2,800+ e-newsletter subscribers



35,000+

Talked about it on our Facebook page and reached 35,000+ people



267,855+

Advertised in 6 local papers with a combined readership of 267,855+ people



305,000+

Advertised on news.com.au and The Age Online to reach 305,000+ people



Asked local councils, industry associations, community groups and organisations like the RACV to tell people about it

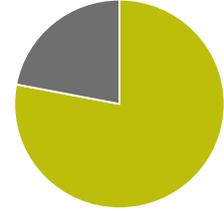
WHO TOOK THE SURVEY

We mostly heard from people who have lived in Melbourne's north-east for 10 years or more and who own their own home.

We also heard from people who live outside the north-east, but who travel through the area.



7,429
people took
the survey



78%
live in the
north-east

Of those of you
who live in the
north-east...

23%
have lived there for
10-20 years

44%
have lived there for
20 years or more

88%
own your own
home



19% of you are 18-35
62% of you are 36-65
18% are 66+

The rest of you chose not to tell us.



82%
live in a household
with two or more
cars

People from more than 350 postcodes responded.
40% of respondents live in these areas.

3095 9%

Eltham, Eltham
North, Research

3084 8%

Banyule, Eaglemont
Heidelberg, Rosanna,
Viewbank

3088 6%

Briar Hill,
Greensborough,
St Helena

3133 6%

Warrandyte,
North Warrandyte

3134 3%

Heathwood, Ringwood,
Ringwood North,
Warranwood,
Warrandyte South

3089 3%

Diamond Creek

3085 3%

Macleod, Macleod
West, Yallambie

3097 3%

Bend of Islands,
Kangaroo Ground,
Watsons Creek

LIVING IN THE NORTH-EAST

We asked what you like about living in Melbourne's north-east.

We heard that you value the green character of the area, its look and feel, local services and the connection to natural wildlife.

From the list we gave you, you told us the top 3 things you like about where you live are...

- 1 **61%** of you like the parks, landscaping and green spaces.
- 2 **60%** of you like the look and feel. For example public open spaces are well cared for, people look after their homes and gardens, buildings have character/charm.
- 3 **51%** of you like the local services such as shops, health care, schools, libraries etc.

When we gave you more space to tell us what you like about the area you told us...

You enjoy living in the Green Wedge because of the connection to natural wildlife, and native fauna and flora.

"Being close to the Yarra flats parklands means we can live in Melbourne with unusually good access to the natural environment."

The open spaces are appealing.

"I love the feeling of living in the bush. I have kangaroos living on my street."

Some see the local area as a **"precious jewel for Melbourne. Not only does the area form a significant**

section of this Green Wedge but it also attracts visitors from elsewhere to relax, enjoy the river and the countryside. This is why we moved here 17 years ago."

Some feel the area has positive wellbeing effects.

"Large open space has always been important to me and my family - the Green Wedge area is vitally important for mental and physical health."

Others are fond of the native plants and wildlife.

"I value the fact that indigenous flora and fauna continue to exist in my area."

Local wildlife also has a high value.

"There are conservation zones with wildlife corridors. The local kangaroo and native animal population is an asset."

"SU22 zoning makes it like living in a National Park."

While some have always lived in the area, many new residents are moving to the area for affordability and for the good services and infrastructure.

TRAVEL IN THE NORTH-EAST

We asked you why, how and how often you travel.

Overall, we heard that you mostly travel on roads by car, and that you make frequent trips.

We heard that you're more likely to ride a bike around your local area than to places outside your neighbourhood.

We also heard that most of you do not regularly use train or bus services.

For those of you who use train services, most of you drive to the station.

For those of you that use bus services, most of you walk to a local stop.

You told us you're travelling on roads because...



A small number of you study in the area, or are visiting family or friends.

You told us the ways and how often you travel by road...

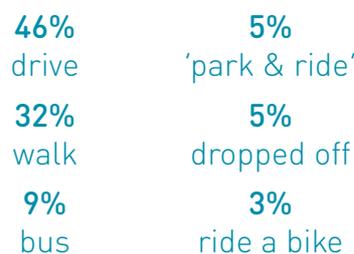
Around your local neighbourhood	90% drive	85% 4-7 days a week
	28% walk	13% 1-3 days a week
	13% bicycle	2% less than once a week
To places outside your local neighbourhood	99% drive	61% 4-7 days a week
	5% walk	33% 1-3 days a week
	9% bicycle	7% less than once a week
To where you work or study <small>Some of you are retired, work from home or don't study.</small>	95% drive	60% 4-7 days a week
	7% walk	17% 1-3 days a week
	6% bicycle	11% less than once a week

You told us how you use public transport...

How often you travel by train



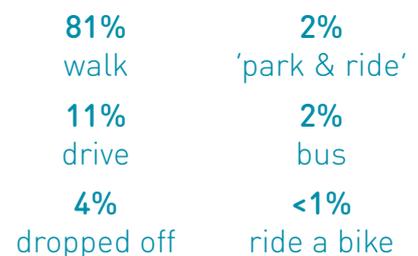
How you get to the station



How often you travel by bus



How you get to the bus stop



TRAVEL IN THE NORTH-EAST

We asked you to tell us about your experience travelling in Melbourne's north-east.

You told us that most of you spend more than one hour travelling to work and that congestion is the main reason your trips take longer than you would like.

You also told us that the number of trucks on the roads make you feel unsafe when driving a car, riding a bike or walking.



How long it takes you to get to work

38%

1 hour or more

26%

30 minutes to 1 hour

12%

less than 30 minutes

68% of you rat-run quite often or when traffic is slow.

You told us the top 5 reasons your trips take longer than you want are...



81% say it's congestion caused by cars.



57% say it's having to travel at peak times.



55% say it's congestion caused by trucks.



51% say it's traffic lights.



40% say it's lack of a direct route.

When we gave you more space to tell us about travelling in the north-east you told us...

About congestion and that certain roads are "car parks".

Words you used to describe the traffic include...

Heavy, nightmare, dangerous, carpark, delays, atrocious.

You told us that local roads are jammed with traffic, with residents commuting up to three hours a day, and others spending 20 minutes to travel 2 kilometres to the local school.

Some of you told us you leave before peak hour begins to avoid the traffic. However you also told us that weekends have similar levels of traffic congestion.

We also heard that you are torn between wanting to keep the unique local natural environment in the north-east and wanting to reduce

traffic congestion.

Some have strong feelings that North East Link should not travel through the Green Wedge. We also heard that you want the road design to reflect the natural landscape without damaging it.

Some say building more roads won't help, even though congestion reduces quality of life for some.

Others called for more extensive public transport networks. A direct link to the airport was also suggested.

You also told us about trucks.

According to some, trucks make the roads dangerous and cause accidents. Some of you suggest re-routing trucks and creating more lanes for cyclists and drivers to better share the road.

TRAVEL IN THE NORTH-EAST

We also asked you how safe you feel travelling on roads in Melbourne's north-east.



What else you told us about trucks

79%

of you strongly agree or agree that there should be a separate route away from shops and houses for trucks that are just travelling through, not making local deliveries.

68%

of you strongly agree or agree it's important to move freight around Melbourne so there have to be trucks travelling through the suburbs.

What you told us about safety from the list we gave you...



85%

of you think it's not safe to ride a bike on busy roads.



81%

of you say some roads are too narrow for the type of traffic they have now.



61%

of you say speed limits aren't right in most areas.



51%

of you say there aren't enough bike paths.



47%

of you think there aren't enough places to safely cross roads.



46%

of you say there seem to be a lot of minor collisions.



27%

of you think truck curfews have made it safer. 22% do not.



25%

of you don't feel safe driving when there is a lot of traffic on the roads.

When we asked you to tell us more about safety, you told us...

Trucks are by far the biggest road safety concern, causing congestion and making it difficult for cars, bikes and pedestrians to share roads. The concern is clear.

"Trucks on Rosanna Road and the Greensborough Highway are OUT OF CONTROL... there are almost as many trucks as there are cars."

"I try to avoid Rosanna Rd at all costs. Way too dangerous... sometimes I feel like I am the only car with 10 trucks surrounding me."

The number of large trucks travelling on Rosanna Rd is not just "a major concern", they are "life threatening... Everyone knows we need to get traffic off this pseudo-link and make a proper ring road."

There are many negative road safety incidents reported.

"The large trucks cannot fit into the lanes, making it very dangerous for cars/commuters."

Some also realise it's not trucks vs. everyone else.

"A lot of it depends upon the drivers

of both cars and trucks and their attitudes/behaviour."

"Stop the negativity towards trucks! This is my workplace."

Some suggest improving road safety by controlling truck movements and enforcing penalties for breaking curfews and rat-running. Others say current curfews aren't working.

"...curfews cause trucks to use alternate routes through the suburbs after 10pm. The roads I see them use are not appropriate for their size and they cause noise in residential areas at a time they are not welcome."

Some say moves to use more public transport for heavy materials could also lessen the load.

"Freight should be transported via rail as much as possible. Where trucks are needed, large trucks such as road trains are preferable over smaller ones (on major freeways and highways), as this would reduce the overall road space taken up by trucks."

PLANNING TRANSPORT PROJECTS

We asked you to tell us how new transport projects should be planned.

We heard that early and strategic planning to consider future needs is very important to you. We also heard that integrating public transport infrastructure, getting value for money rather than keeping overall costs as low as possible and protecting the environment are also important.

What you think new transport projects should achieve...



94%

Strongly agree or agree they should make it easier for people to access jobs and education across the city.



93%

Strongly agree or agree they should make it easier for goods to move around Melbourne and Victoria.



88%

Strongly agree or agree they should make it easier for businesses to access workers.



66%

Strongly agree or agree that economic benefits should always outweigh the costs.

When we asked you to tell us more about how transport projects should be planned you told us...

How important it is to strategically plan for the future of the city and local areas around the north-east.

With Melbourne's population predicted to grow, some feel planning beyond the next phase of growth is often not delivered. There is strong consensus that building for future needs is essential.

"New infrastructure should look further ahead than the next 10 years. Build 4 lanes of roads, not 2! It's more expensive now, but will cost less and be less disruptive when the road needs widening in 8 years."

Many appreciate there is trade-off between cost and quality, and feel infrastructure quality and considerations of the natural environment outweigh costs.

"As cheaply as possible concerns me. Quality is what is needed. 'Cheap'

often costs more in the long run, requiring repairs or modifications."

We also heard you say that the ring road needs to be completed as a priority.

"Stop stuffing around and give Melbourne the ring road completion that it needs... we are years behind other modern cities."

Comments such as **"Build it now!"** highlight the urgency of the situation.

Views such as **"spend less time in planning and actually get onto the building!"** contradict others which claim **"longer term views in planning and business case development need to be taken."**

You also told us that transport infrastructure needs to be designed in an integrated way rather than "in isolation".

"... consider an integration between the different types of transport, e.g. invest in roads and rail simultaneously."

While public transport is high on the list of infrastructure needs, the

discussion is not necessarily only about creating more public transport but also about better utilising current networks and links between transport modes (bus, train, etc.).

"The Hurstbridge train line has too many inner city stops which make train travel unfeasible. More express trains are needed, which isn't due to lack of infrastructure."

"We need more 'Park and Ride' hubs."

"Need to include all forms of transport, especially cost-effective forms like cycling."

You also told us the environment is a priority.

"Environmental costs need to be factored into the price," with some feeling that **"tunnelling is appropriate in some places"** to maintain the pristine natural environment.

Slowing down the population in Victoria is proposed by a few as a solution to congestion.

PLANNING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

We heard that minimising noise and visual impacts are your top priority followed by improving access to public transport, protecting waterways, local flora and fauna and green spaces.

We also heard that you are torn between wanting less traffic congestion and maintaining the appeal of local green spaces.



59%

of you trust Victorian laws to protect the natural environment when new transport projects are being planned or built.

From the list we gave you, you told us the top 5 things you think are important to consider about the environment when planning transport projects are...

- 1 **89%** of you strongly agree or agree that any improvements to roads should limit the traffic noise for local residents.
- 2 **89%** of you strongly agree or agree that changes to road infrastructure must be attractively designed to fit into the local area.
- 3 **87%** of you strongly agree or agree that people in your community should be able to walk or cycle to the local shops and other places.
- 4 **84%** of you strongly agree or agree that improvements to road infrastructure should be designed to improve access to public transport.
- 5 **78%** of you strongly agree or agree that protecting green breaks, green space and any rural parts of your local area is important.

You also told us that you are concerned about protecting waterways and local flora and fauna and about air quality as a result of heavy traffic.

When we asked you to tell us more about the environment and planning...

We heard that you are torn between wanting less traffic congestion and maintaining the local appeal of the flora and fauna and local parks in the Green Wedge.

Some call for wider roads and trucks detoured to the freeway, with others wanting better public transport services. A balance needs to be reached.

“Road infrastructure should take ‘environment’ into consideration but NOT be stopped because of it.”

There is no doubt that there are strong feelings about the beauty of the local area.

“This [the environment] is a top priority. Eltham and surrounds contain significant flora and fauna that needs to be protected, with their habitats being impacted by increasing tree clearance, development, road widening, population numbers, etc. Eltham community does not want more and rapid damage to occur.”

At the end of the survey, we gave you space to write anything else you wanted to tell us about travelling in the north-east

1,553

of you responded.



You also told us you are most interested to know more about...

- 1 Protecting the local natural environment.
- 2 How public transport fits into planning.
- 3 Urban design.

We heard that you greatly enjoy living in the Green Wedge and do not want it to change. Some feel strongly enough to protest if a new freeway disturbs the tranquil natural environment.

"My time is spent mostly on the edge of the Green Wedge. There is great joy in driving past open areas of green space... I choose not to live within urban sprawl for a reason. Nobody would want the sound of birds replaced by the sound of a freeway... The thought horrifies anyone who loves nature."

We also heard you say that congestion is no longer "peak"; it is a constant and was discussed at length in the survey.

"Peak hour traffic doesn't happen for an hour anymore... it runs all day and now even during the day on Saturday."

Some specific examples of common bottleneck experiences were given.

"The release of innumerable 'McMansion' housing estates north of Greensborough and Bundoora... has had a dramatic flow-on impact on traffic esp. on Greensborough Hwy Rosanna Rd/ Heidleberg Road and Burke Rd with traffic conditions unacceptable."

"Main Road Eltham trying to get onto Fitzsimons Lane is atrocious."

"Efficient public transport is an issue due to lack of parking/bike storage

infrastructure at train stations, and efficient connectivity between train lines. This means that travel by car is the only option for many people, which becomes untenable in peak hour(s!) when the road is so congested. Perhaps a park 'n ride would be another useful option—there is no single magic bullet to the transport issue."

Personal safety on the roads is a major concern not only due to trucks and road accidents, but access in and out of the local area in an emergency.

"Travelling in the study area is at best stressful and at worst frightening."

"Currently, Rosanna Road is a safety risk and someone will die. By that stage it will be too late; we must act now...I have been run off the road by trucks and have been witness to such events."

"Eltham, everywhere, gridlock hell, 7 days a week. Not enough lanes across the Yarra River: one at Chandler, one at Bourke Rd (well two but goes to one), two Fitzsimons lane. Lwr Heidelberg Rd gridlock, 7 days a week from 8 till 7. Gburra Rd useless northbound before 9:30 and after 3:30 till 6:30 getting onto Ring Rd. Diamond Ck Rd weekdays. And all areas fire trap with single lanes in and out."

There is a level of desperation evident in many of the responses

to make better road connections between current transport infrastructure, re-route trucks out of local areas onto freeways, and improve public transport efficiency and connections. Many are clearly in favour of the North East Link.

"It is plainly obvious, and well past time to acknowledge, that there is a desperate need for connection between the ring road and eastern freeway or east link".

"I drive from Epping to Dandenong daily for work. The North East link would suit me perfectly. When I move to Wollert...I will need to find a new job because I don't feel I will be able to commute to Dandenong anymore."

Others are clearly frustrated with how long it has taken to identify a solution.

"It has been source of frustration that this process of negotiation without action has continued without sensible resolution for more than 3 decades. Thanks are due to the RACV for trying to drive this project, but the political ill-will with an apparent fear of the NIMBY aspect of the debate has been further evidence of community disenchantment with process. Still living in hope. Just do it."

And a final plea for help.

"Please, save us from this mess."

HOW WE USED WHAT WE HEARD

What we heard the loudest...



Congestion is at chronic levels. Peak periods are lasting for hours and roads are also congested on weekends. You want something done.



Trucks are your number one safety concern. You understand that trucks making local deliveries need to travel locally, but want long-haul trucks off local streets.



Protecting the environment and the look and feel of local areas is very important to you.



You want a transport solution that integrates roads with other options including public transport, walking and cycling connections.



You are frustrated this project has taken so long to build and want something done now. But you also want us to get it right by planning carefully to meet future transport needs.

1 What we did first...

We used what we heard to make sure our early work on the project had identified the right transport outcomes North East Link needs to achieve and what we need to work to protect as we plan and build it. These are our project objectives and principles.

Our project objectives are to...

- Connect more businesses to customers, workers and other businesses.
- Connect more people to jobs and education.
- Make freight move more efficiently.
- Make neighbourhoods in the north-east safer and easier to travel in including by improving public transport, walking and cycling connections and getting trucks off residential roads.

* Reducing congestion is a key element for all four objectives.

Our project principles are to...

- Minimise impacts on communities.
- Minimise impacts on the environment and places with cultural or heritage value.
- Minimise impacts during construction.
- Use resources efficiently.

2 What we're doing now...

In early August we shared what we had found about four corridor options so far using areas of interest important to communities.

We asked communities if our objectives and principles were looking at the right things.

We also asked if our investigations into the four corridor options were looking at what matters to you, and if you thought we'd missed anything important.

We'll be reporting back to communities about what we heard during this stage in our community engagement.

You can find out more at
northeastlink.vic.gov.au



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