

1.3 SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CITY OF MONASH

(SMC: File No. F19-4382)

Responsible Director: Peter Panagakos

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Writes to the Ministers for Transport Infrastructure, Priority Precincts and Planning and provide its support to the Suburban Rail Loop project in particular the designation of the Clayton Station and Activity Centre as a 'Super Hub', the opportunities to further implement the vision in the Glen Waverley Structure Plan through the undergrounding of the station and requests that the City of Monash be engaged in the planning of the South-East connection to the Suburban Rail Loop.*
- 2. Writes to Transport Victoria, Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions and Rail Projects Victoria and requests a briefing on the status of the proposed South-East connection to the Suburban Rail Loop.*

INTRODUCTION

There are currently 3 major transport infrastructure projects proposed for the Monash NEIC that have been publically announced which have the potential to transform the Clayton, Glen Waverley and Huntingdale Activity Centres:

- Rowville Rail Extension: The Rowville Rail Extension is a heavy rail train line that would connect Rowville and Monash University to the Cranbourne Pakenham Train Line via Huntingdale Station.
- Caulfield to Rowville Light Rail: Currently under investigation, it is understood stage one would link Caulfield Station to Monash University's Clayton campus via Chadstone Shopping Centre, then Stage 2 would continue to Rowville via Waverley Park
- Suburban Rail Loop: an orbital rail loop proposed by the state government including a heavy rail connection from Clayton to Monash University to Glen Waverley.

This report deals specifically with the implications to the City of Monash by the proposed Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) which is scheduled to commence construction in 2022, and the need for Council to clearly articulate its aspirations and key asks in order to ensure that the project delivers the opportunities, benefits and broad based uplift as a result of this significant investment, particularly for the proposed Clayton Super Hub and Glen Waverley Activity Centre.

The SRL provides the opportunity to underground the rail line at Glen Waverley. This has long been identified as critical to the evolution of the Activity Centre, its functionality and future development potential.

BACKGROUND

On 28 August 2018 the Andrews Government announced the Suburban Rail Loop project, with a promise that if re-elected, construction of project would commence within the next term of Government.

The Suburban Rail Loop is a new underground rail network connecting Melbourne's Suburbs

The proposed underground network would circle Melbourne, connecting every major railway line from the Frankston line to the Werribee line via Melbourne Airport.

With at least 12 new underground stations, the SRL would connect the Monash, La Trobe, Sunshine and Werribee National Employment and Innovation Clusters (NEIC) with key precincts such as Box Hill, Burwood, Broadmeadows and the Airport.

For the City of Monash the current proposal for the South-Eastern alignment of the SRL sees a new rail line running from Cheltenham to Clayton (designated as a Super Hub), connecting to a new Station at (or near) Monash University and a new line connecting to Glen Waverley before making its way to Burwood.

Three new regional super hubs will connect regional passengers into the Suburban Rail Loop to access a range of health, education and employment opportunities along the project corridor.

Sunshine super hub

Passengers from Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo would enjoy new and easy access by rail to services including Melbourne Airport, the Sunshine, Werribee and La Trobe employment precincts, La Trobe University and the Austin Hospital.

Broadmeadows super hub

Providing extensive new access into the metropolitan rail network connecting Shepparton and Albury/Wodonga passengers to services including Melbourne Airport, the Sunshine, Monash, Werribee and La Trobe employment precincts, La Trobe University, the Austin Hospital and Box Hill Hospital and TAFE.

Clayton super hub

Passengers from Bairnsdale and Traralgon would enjoy new access by rail to services including Melbourne Airport, Monash University, Monash Hospital, Box Hill Hospital, Box Hill TAFE, the Austin Hospital, the Monash and La Trobe employment precincts, Deakin University and La Trobe University.

The delivery of the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) is being coordinated by Rail Project Victoria (RPV), Department of Transport (DoT) and the newly created Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR).

Council Officers are of the understanding that it is the Governments' objective to commence construction of the SRL with the delivery of the Western Rail Plan,

particularly the Sunshine Super Hub (SSH) and the Melbourne Airport Rail Link (MARL). Construction is scheduled to commence in September 2022.

It is also understood that the commencement of construction on the South-Eastern alignment (i.e. Cheltenham to Clayton Super Hub, connecting to a new station at or near Monash University and a new line to Glen Waverley) is also expected to commence in September 2022.

Not since the construction of the Monash Freeway has the City of Monash seen such significant city-shaping investment from either the State or Federal Governments, with the legacy of this investment set to benefit the city for a long time to come.

It is the importance and scale of these investments that requires Council to clearly articulate its aspirations and key asks in order to ensure that the projects deliver the opportunities, benefits and broad based uplift as a result of this investment.

These investments also have significant positive implications for the Monash National Employment and Innovation Cluster (MNEIC), not to mention the economic and social benefits derived from the investment in the Clayton and Glen Waverley Activity Centres.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

The State Government commitment should not just stop at infrastructure provision. Government has been very clear about the need for 'value creation' and 'value capture' with the investment they provide to these projects. Given this, the city is expected to benefit from other forms of investment as a consequence of these projects.

This investment is expected to result in considerable economic, social, cultural and environmental uplift, for the City of Monash

While the major infrastructure will occur in and around the Clayton and Glen Waverley Activity Centres and the Monash University, benefits of this project will extend along and around the rail corridor, major transport routes and other commercial precincts and activity centres across the City of Monash and the broader south eastern region, bringing greater employment, access and amenity outcomes.

It is therefore important that Council publicly commits its support to this project, particularly with respect to the creation of the Clayton Super Hub with its links to Monash University, Monash Medical Precinct and the MNEIC more broadly.

Council would also advocate for further improvements in the Glen Waverley Activity Centre as identified in the Structure Plan. The Structure Plan identifies the opportunity for the existing rail line and station to be underground. This would provide for further development opportunity as well as completion of the identified ring road around the centre, meaning that Kingsway could become a lesser relied upon through route and further developed as a key food and drink destination.

State Government agencies including the Major Transport Infrastructure Authority, Rail Projects Victoria (RPV), the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, together with the Victorian Planning Authority, all have a commitment to deliver community benefit.

From a Council perspective, the City of Monash should confirm its commitment to working with State Government to ensure sound planning and effective and timely delivery of project and associated investment, for the benefit of the City of Monash community and key stakeholders.

It is essential Council engages with the State Government to develop a vision for the projects and provide guidance at identified stages throughout the investment lifecycle. This is particularly important given Councillors are the central conduit and voice of the Monash community.

CONSULTATION

To date there has been no consultation by the State Government or relevant agencies with respect to the SRL and its implications for the City of Monash.

With planning for the SRL having already commenced, it is important that Council begins to engage with the State Government and relevant agencies to ensure there will be meaningful engagement with Council and the community, sound planning is undertaken with Council's involvement and the associated investment results in benefits for the City of Monash community and key stakeholders.

The State Government will be coordinating the various aspects of the project across a number of key State Government Departments and Agencies.

The responsible Ministers for delivery of the SRL are:

- The Hon. Jacinta Allan Minister for Transport Infrastructure
- The Hon. Gavin Jennings – Minister for Priority Precincts
- The Hon. Richard Wynne– Minister for Planning

The Department of Transport is a key Department which commenced operation on 1 January 2019, and is responsible for ongoing operation and coordination of the State's transport networks, as well as the delivery of new and upgraded transport infrastructure. It includes a range of agencies including Transport for Victoria and Rail Projects Victoria, which have key roles in the planning and delivery of the projects, along with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, and the Victorian Planning Authority.

The high level roles of these Departments and Agencies is indicated below, however, given the preliminary nature of the projects and the recent changes to State Government Departments, further refinement of roles is anticipated in coming months:

Transport for Victoria (TfV)

TfV is responsible for the planning and coordination of all transport systems in Victoria.

Rail Projects Victoria (RPV)

RPV is responsible for the delivery of major rail projects including planning and development of a project reference design, site investigations, stakeholder engagement, planning approvals and procurement, through to construction delivery and project commissioning.

Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions (DJPR)

Recently formed on 1 January 2019, DJPR is focused on ensuring Victoria's strong economic performance by growing industries and regions by creating more jobs for more people, building thriving places and regions and nurturing inclusive communities.

Victorian Planning Authority (VPA)

The VPA works closely with councils and local communities, other government agencies, landowners and developers to plan for strategically important precincts in inner and middle ring Melbourne, the growth areas and regional cities.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

Consistency with Council Strategies and Policies

Monash 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:

- Enhancing the Monash Planning Scheme by reviewing the scheme and by undertaking structure plans for Huntingdale and Mount Waverley. (Related strategic indicator: number of structure plans completed)
- Advocacy for the Rowville Rail and Huntingdale Station redevelopment.
- Improve our activity centres and pedestrian movements therein.

Other relevant Draft Strategies

The following adopted strategies are also relevant to the Clayton and Huntingdale Precinct Plans. Recommendations within these strategies should align with future precinct plans:

- Monash Integrated Transport Strategy
- Monash Economic Development Strategy
- Monash Open Space Strategy
- Monash Urban Landscape and Canopy Vegetation 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”

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications with this report.

CONCLUSION

Not since the construction of the Monash Freeway has the City of Monash seen such significant city-shaping investment from the State or Federal Governments, with the legacy of this investment set to benefit the city for a long time to come.

It is the importance and scale of these investments that requires Council to clearly articulate its aspirations and key asks in order to ensure that the projects deliver the opportunities, benefits and broad based uplift as a result of this investment.