

7.8 Union Road, Surrey Hills Level Crossing Removal - Long term traffic impacts

Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of proposed changes to the Whitehorse street network which will impact the Boroondara street network and to seek a resolution from Council regarding the management of traffic impacts to the Boroondara street network.

Background

In August 2021 the Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP) released updated designs for the new train station and surrounding area, including a station entry and forecourt on Montrose Street, Surrey Hills with an associated pick-up/drop-off parking area. In previous design releases, the LXRP noted the closure of Beresford Street at Mont Albert Road for the purposes of creating another pick-up/drop-off parking area.

The available road width of Beresford Street will be reduced given the design of the trench solution for the level crossing removal. The narrowing of the street coupled with the closure at Mont Albert Road has seen the LXRP engage with Beresford Street residents only to gather their views on the street becoming one-way eastbound between Wilson Street and Gordon Street. The LXRP has advised Council officers that impacted Beresford Street residents have approved the one-way eastbound proposal and Whitehorse officers have also authorised the change to their local street.

These significant changes to the street network are on Whitehorse streets which are directly connected to Boroondara streets. **Attachment 1** shows the Wilson Street precinct and the proposed changes to the street network.

Key Issues

The LXRP proposed changes to the Whitehorse street network will have impacts on the Boroondara street network. It is expected traffic volumes on Wilson Street, the municipal border, will increase significantly as drivers seek to access the station for parking or pick-up/drop-off purposes. This expected traffic volume increase will result in road safety issues, degrade amenity and make it difficult for residents to safely exit their own properties.

Other Boroondara streets in the precinct will be impacted in similar ways, with Blackburn Street and Bedford Avenue of particular concern.

The LXRP has not engaged with residents in streets other than Beresford Street despite the certainty of changed traffic conditions in the other streets as a result of the LXRP proposed changes to Beresford Street.

A Local Area Traffic Management (LATM) scheme led and funded by the LXRP and completed in accordance with Council's Traffic Management Policy and Procedures, would respond to the changes to the network the LXRP are creating, provide the

residents an opportunity to have input to the design process and reduce the impacts to the streets and precinct.

Next steps

The next steps, should the officer's recommendation be accepted, are to:

- Enact the resolution and request the LXRP fund, design and implement a LATM scheme for the Wilson Street precinct.
- Work with the community and LXRP through the LATM process.

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Officers' recommendation

That Council resolve to:

1. Note the LXRP proposals to:
 - a) Convert Beresford Street to one-way eastbound between Wilson Street and Gordon Street.
 - b) Close Beresford Street at Mont Albert Road.
2. Request the LXRP:
 - a) Fund, design and implement a Local Area Traffic Management (LATM) scheme for the Wilson Street precinct (the area bounded by Mont Albert Road, the train line and Union Road).
 - b) Complete the LATM generally in accordance with Boroondara's Traffic Management Policy and Procedures.
 - c) Complete implementation of the LATM scheme for day one of operations of the new station.
3. Write to the following to advise of this resolution:
 - a) The Hon. Jacinta Allan, MP, Minister for Transport Infrastructure.
 - b) Mr Kevin Devlin, CEO, LXRP.
 - c) Mr Simon McMillan, CEO, Whitehorse Council.
 - d) Mr Greg Buchanan, President Surrey Hills Progress Association.

Responsible director: Daniel Freer, Director Places and Spaces

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of proposed changes to the Whitehorse street network which will impact the Boroondara street network and to seek a resolution from Council regarding the management of traffic impacts to the Boroondara street network.

2. Policy implications and relevance to community plan and council plan

This report is consistent with the Council Plan 2021–2025 and the Boroondara Community Plan 2021-2031, in particular the following themes:

- Getting Around Boroondara.
- Neighbourhood Character and Heritage.

3. Background

In August 2021 the Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP) released updated designs for the new train station and surrounding area, including a station entry and forecourt on Montrose Street, Surrey Hills with an associated pick-up/drop-off (PUDO) parking area. In previous design releases, the LXRP noted the closure of Beresford Street at Mont Albert Road for the purposes of creating another PUDO parking area.

Montrose Street is within Boroondara. Beresford Street is within Whitehorse and is the eastern extension of Montrose Street.

The available road width of Beresford Street will be reduced as a result of the rail trench design. The narrowing, coupled with the closure at Mont Albert Road, has seen the LXRP engage with Beresford Street residents only to gather their views on the street becoming one-way eastbound between Wilson Street and Gordon Street. The LXRP has advised Council officers that the majority of impacted Beresford Street residents have approved the one-way eastbound proposal and officers from Whitehorse have also authorised the change to their local street.

Wilson Street is the north-south border between Whitehorse and Boroondara. Gordon Street is within Whitehorse.

Attachment 1 shows the Wilson Street precinct and the proposed changes to the street network.

As Beresford Street is the eastern extension of Montrose Street, the LXRP is, belatedly, seeking Council's views on their one-way proposal and the impacts to our street network the change has the potential to create.

4. Outline of key issues/options

Key issues

Wilson Street, Surrey Hills

Wilson Street is a residential street with 31 properties. It provides access to residential properties only and is not currently a convenient short-cut to the Surrey Hills train station car park or Union Road shopping precinct. The street provides on-street parking on both sides and is regularly parked at or close to capacity. When cars are parked on both sides the street has only one through lane, with vehicles required to pull over at driveways to allow others to pass. It is narrow and has healthy, large, established street trees. This road geometry and naturestrip planting works well for current traffic conditions as most drivers in the street are local residents or their visitors.

As Council holds no traffic volume records for Wilson Street and the LXRP did not survey the street prior to Covid restrictions, the daily traffic volume is estimated to be approximately 190 vehicles per day. This estimation is based on 6 trips per day per property and is rounded to the nearest '10'.

The design of the station, location of entrances, pick-up/drop-off facilities and Beresford Street one-way eastbound between Wilson Street and Gordon Street will see traffic volumes increase on Wilson Street, Surrey Hills as drivers seek to access the station for parking or pick-up/drop-off purposes.

The anticipated traffic volume increase is yet to be finalised by the LXRP. Council officers anticipate a three or more fold increase on Wilson Street. No matter the scale of the increase, residents may find it difficult to safely exit their properties during peak hours, other road safety issues may arise, and the general amenity of the street will be degraded.

Montrose Street, Surrey Hills

Montrose Street is a residential street providing direct access to 16 residential properties. The street connects with Union Road and is the natural westbound route for traffic using Wilson Street to access the train station. Parking restrictions on Montrose Street are designed to facilitate safe travel along the street and to protect residential access to car parking.

Traffic volumes on Montrose Street are expected to increase as a result of the train station design, location and the Beresford Street one-way eastbound proposal. Montrose Street will suffer similar impacts to Wilson Street, with road safety concerns, residential access issues and a degradation of general amenity.

Other streets

The other streets in the Wilson Street precinct bounded by Mont Albert Road, the train line and Union Road will be impacted by the Beresford Street one-way eastbound between Wilson Street and Gordon Street proposal and closure of Beresford Street at Mont Albert Road. Traffic will seek alternative routes to the train station car parks, with Blackburn Street and Bedford Avenue providing good access to the northern train station car park.

While separate to the changes to the street network, the impact to Blackburn Street and Bedford Avenue become particularly important to consider should the capacity of the northern car park increase as a result of the proposed Federal funding for commuter car parks. The road safety and amenity of the two streets will be impacted as more vehicles use the narrow, local streets to access the northern train station car park.

Options

Any change to a street in the Wilson Street precinct will impact all streets in the precinct. The LXP proposed changes are significant and have the potential to cause road safety, access and amenity issues if left unattended. Officers consider there are two options available for consideration and, along with Whitehorse officers, recommend the first option.

Option 1: Request the LXP fund, design and implement a Local Area Traffic Management scheme for the Wilson Street precinct.

A Local Area Traffic Management (LATM) scheme for the Wilson Street precinct (the area bounded by Mont Albert Road, the train line and Union Road) would respond to the changes to the network the LXP is creating, provide the residents an opportunity to have input to the design process and reduce the impacts to the streets and precinct.

Officers would request the LXP complete the LATM to the satisfaction of residents and Councils, generally in accordance with Boroondara's Traffic Management Policy and Procedures and finish installation of all traffic management devices for day one of operations of the new station.

Council's Traffic Management Policy and Procedures detail the consultation process and the types of traffic management devices considered acceptable in Boroondara.

Option 2: Do nothing.

Council can choose to take no action in response to the LXP proposed street network changes. This option has the risk of residents complaining post level crossing removal works about increased traffic volumes, road safety concerns and degraded amenity. Council would then need to consider funding and complete any works to ameliorate the impacts.

5. Consultation/communication

To date, the LXP has consulted with Beresford Street residents and Whitehorse Council officers only about the proposed one-way eastbound between Wilson Street and Gordon Street. No consultation has been undertaken with the residents of any surrounding street likely to be impacted by the proposal, including Wilson Street, Montrose Street, Bedford Avenue or Blackburn Street. The LXP has effectively ignored residents on other streets impacted by the change.

The Council officer preferred option of completing a LATM scheme for the Wilson Street precinct relies on good quality consultation and engagement with residents of all streets in the precinct.

6. Financial and resource implications

The financial impacts associated with the officer's recommendation can be accommodated within existing operational budgets. It is proposed that the cost associated with investigating, designing and constructing the LATM scheme is met by the LXP.

On-going maintenance costs of any LATM assets would be the responsibility of Councils and would, generally, be accommodated within existing operational budgets.

7. Governance issues

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and responsibilities.

The officers responsible for this report have no direct or indirect interest, or indirect conflicts of interests requiring disclosure.

8. Social and environmental issues

The proposed changes to Beresford Street will have an impact on the amenity of residents of Wilson Street, Montrose Street, Blackburn Street and Bedford Avenue. The recommended LATM process to be undertaken by the LXRP with consultation and engagement with the residents and Councils would ameliorate this loss of amenity and other impacts.

Manager: **Jim Hondrakis, Manager Traffic and Transport**

Report officer: Clare Davey, Senior Coordinator Transport Advocacy
 Andrea Lomdahl, Senior Transport Planner
 Jane Waldock, Senior Transport Planner

