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1. Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the North East Link (NEL) project. The comments below have been prepared by Council officers and this submission was endorsed by Council at its Services Special Committee meeting of 18 September 2017.

For reasons outlined in this submission, the City of Boroondara strongly opposes the North East Link corridor Option A as presented by the North East Link Authority.

Should the North East Link proceed, the City of Boroondara prefers North East Link corridor Option C as presented by the North East Link Authority. Corridor option C is considered to best meet the broader objectives of the NEL project.

Our assessment is based on the limited public release of information about the four NEL project corridors. Of the four corridor Options, A, B, C and D, corridor Option A is considered to impact directly and most significantly on the City of Boroondara (Boroondara).

It is recognised and acknowledged that the NEL is a project that is seeking to serve a regional purpose. In this context, we offer our comments, requests and criticisms.

The Boroondara community has voiced significant concerns about the NEL, specifically corridor Option A. The concerns are shared by Council and can be themed as follows:

1. Potential impacts on parkland, reserves and green open space.
2. Potential impacts on recreational areas and community facilities.
3. Increased traffic volumes on the Eastern Freeway, arterial roads and the local road network.
4. Increased traffic noise on the Eastern Freeway, arterial roads and the local road network.
5. Parking and the potential for 'Clearways' to be installed.
6. Potential loss of school sporting facilities.
7. Compulsory acquisition of both private and public land.

Council has prepared this submission to detail the issues and concerns held, to provide these issues and concerns to the North East Link Authority and to detail several requests from the City of Boroondara should the North East Link project proceed. The latter is provided below and also contained within the body of the submission in the relevant sections.

What is Boroondara asking for?

Parkland, reserves and green open spaces

The City of Boroondara requests the land on which the 12 reserves, parks and parklands, the Greenacres Golf Course, the Kew Golf Course and the Freeway Golf Course and the Bolin Bolin Integrated Water Facility are sited, is:

- Not used for NEL purposes.
- Protected from development and construction associated with NEL.
- Kept fully intact and not divided to facilitate NEL.
- Kept free of all NEL related works.

The City of Boroondara requests an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) be completed for all four corridor options before a decision is made as to the preferred NEL corridor.

The City of Boroondara requests NELA acknowledge and preserve the national, state and local significance of the land near to Bulleen Road and along the Eastern Freeway and Yarra River corridors.

Recreational areas and community facilities

The City of Boroondara requests that the land on which the Boroondara Tennis Centre, Koonung Creek Trail and Main Yarra Trail are sited is:

- Not used for NEL purposes.
- Protected from development and construction associated with NEL.
- Kept fully intact and not divided to facilitate NEL.
- Kept free of all NEL related works.

Traffic volume

The City of Boroondara requests that:

- NELA release the traffic model and associated reports.
- The NEL and any associated works do not give rise to a significant increase in traffic volumes on Bulleen Road.
- The NEL and any associated works do not give rise to an increase in traffic volumes on the Boroondara local road network that would impact on the amenity, liveability and accessibility for residents and community facilities.

- The Eastern Freeway is kept toll free along its entire length.
- Regional public transport service uplift opportunities are investigated, planned and funded by NELA.
- Freight and other heavy vehicle traffic is not transferred to the Boroondara road network, including both arterial and local roads.

Traffic noise

The City of Boroondara requests:

- The acceptable traffic noise level be capped at a maximum of 63 dB(A) for all roads impacted by or altered as a result of the NEL, including the Eastern Freeway.
- Traffic noise levels are measured at first floor level as well as ground floor level.
- Traffic noise levels are measured and considered at any time, day or night.

Parking

The City of Boroondara requests:

- Council and the community is consulted about any and all proposed parking restriction changes in the municipality associated with the NEL and that the feedback from the community and Council is considered in any decision to implement parking restrictions.

Schools and school sporting facilities

The City of Boroondara requests that the land on which Belle Vue Primary School, Carey Baptist Grammar School Bulleen Sports Complex and Trinity Grammar School Marles Playing Fields are sited is:

- Not used for NEL purposes.
- Protected from development and construction associated with NEL.
- Kept fully intact and not divided to facilitate NEL.
- Kept free of all NEL related works.

Compulsory acquisition of land

The City of Boroondara requests:

No private residential properties are acquired in Boroondara for the purposes of constructing the NEL and any associated works.

The land on which the 12 reserves, parks and parklands, the Freeway Golf Course, the Boroondara Tennis Centre, Koonung Creek Trail and Main Yarra Trail are sited is:

- Not used for NEL purposes.
- Protected from development and construction associated with NEL.
- Kept fully intact and not divided to facilitate NEL.
- Kept free of all NEL related works.
- Kept under the ownership of City of Boroondara.

The land on which the Kew Golf Course and Greenacres Golf Course are sited is:

- Not used for NEL purposes.
- Protected from development and construction associated with NEL.
- Kept fully intact and not divided to facilitate NEL.
- Kept free of all NEL related works.

2. Introduction

Boroondara Council has reviewed the information released by the North East Link Authority (NELA) about the four North East Link (NEL) project corridor options. We have also engaged strongly with the Boroondara community to understand the community's views on the project.

Of the four corridor options, A, B, C and D, corridor Option A is considered to impact directly and most significantly on the City of Boroondara (Boroondara).

We have reviewed the project objectives and guiding principles for the NEL project outlined in the technical summary document released by NELA. We are able to see the objectives and principles have considered both the *Transport Integration Act 2010* and *Plan Melbourne*. The overarching objectives of improving access, growth opportunities, efficiency, amenity and safety are positive objectives for the NEL. The common guiding principles of minimising impacts on communities, the environment and during construction are commendable.

Council has, however, significant concerns about Option A specifically and the lack of available data and information about each corridor Option more generally. The lack of information has made a proper and fully informed assessment of the options very difficult for both Council and the community.

The lack of transparency and clear process by NELA has created significant concern in the community. In accordance with a Council resolution dated 14 August 2017, Council has requested more and detailed information from NELA several times. Council is yet to receive any information from NELA in response to this request and continued follow-up. This is extremely disappointing to say the least and in our view has compromised the community engagement process run by NELA.

Council again requests the public release by NELA of further information about the four NEL corridor options.

Based on the limited information that does exist, Council has identified a number of concerns regarding the impact of Option A on the Boroondara community. These are set out in detail in section 5 of this submission.

3. Our understanding of the North East Link

3.1 Regional context and recognition

Boroondara recognises the NEL is a project that is seeking to serve a regional purpose and respond to network wide transport and access issues.

We also recognise the NEL project has been identified as the priority road project for Victoria by Infrastructure Victoria (IV) in their *30-year Infrastructure Strategy*. We note IV is an independent statutory authority that provides expert advice and guides decision-making on Victoria's infrastructure needs and priorities.

In this context, we offer our comments and requests in our desire to be an active and constructive participant in the planning of the NEL and in representing our community.

3.2 Project criteria

From early community engagement activities undertaken by NELA in early 2017 with local government, community groups, industry and various Victorian Government agencies and authorities, the following have been identified by NELA as important issues for the project:

1. Reducing congestion on key roads in Melbourne's north-east.
2. Removing trucks that don't need to be on roads in Melbourne's north-east.
3. Providing better connectivity for people to access existing and new jobs and education opportunities.
4. Helping businesses better connect to each other and to workers across Melbourne.
5. Making freight journeys more efficient.
6. Improving public transport connections and travel times.
7. Improving connections for pedestrians and cyclists.
8. Protecting the environment, culture, heritage and open spaces.
9. Minimising the impacts from construction-related traffic as the project is being built.

These nine issues have formed the basis of the NELA assessment of each of the four corridor options and are considered to be the project criteria.

In general, the criteria are thought to be appropriate for the NEL. They have been developed based on community engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

The criteria are representative of the issues experienced on the transport network across Melbourne and seek to respond to the ever present pressures of increasing population and housing needs in the growth areas.

By seeking to improve public transport connection and travel times, as well as connections for pedestrians and cyclists, the NEL is establishing the need from the outset to consider and provide for sustainable and active transport modes and the aim to reduce traffic congestion. Not only does this assist in achieving health and wellbeing outcomes for the community by providing opportunities to walk and cycle for commuting purposes, it also helps to reduce air pollution associated with traffic by removing some of the traffic from the roads.

Traffic congestion is a significant issue in the urban environment as it can have damaging effects on public health and wellbeing. It can lead to prolonged travel times, which impact on our physical and mental health, by increasing the risk of high blood pressure, obesity, stress and fatigue. Idling vehicles also contribute to air pollution, higher fuel costs and lower productivity.

The project criteria appear to be consistent with the objectives of the *Transport Integration Act (2010)* (the Act). The objectives of the Act include:

- Social and economic inclusion: The transport system should minimise barriers to access and provide a means by which persons can access social and economic opportunities to support individual and community wellbeing.
- Economic prosperity: The transport system should enable efficient and effective access to places of employment.
- Environmental sustainability: The transport system should promote forms of transport which have the least impact on the natural environment.
- Efficiency, coordination and reliability: The transport system should facilitate network wide efficient, coordinated and reliable movement of persons and goods.
- Safety, health and wellbeing: The transport system should be safe and support health and wellbeing.

The project criteria also seem consistent with the principles of *Plan Melbourne* (the Plan). The nine principles of the Plan include:

- A globally connected and competitive community.
- Infrastructure investment that supports balanced city growth.
- Social and economic participation.

The NEL criteria seek to improve access, growth opportunities, efficiency, amenity and safety, as well as minimise impacts on communities and the environment.

It is unclear how the nine criteria have and will be weighted by NELA in undertaking its assessment of the corridor options. The criteria weighting will heavily influence the preferred corridor for the NEL as each corridor option has its particular strengths and weaknesses when compared with the criteria.

Without knowing whether the criteria carry an equal weighting or one is more important than the other, no clear conclusions can be drawn from the very limited available information. There is speculation amongst the community about the criteria and weighting, with many considering the freight criteria carrying the greatest importance. This view has been formed based on the high prominence given to freight in the NEL documents and in discussions with NELA representatives at different information sessions. This speculation is leading to uncertainty and is generating significant concern within the Boroondara community.

3.3 Project process

We note the NEL is unusual in terms of major transport projects in Victoria in that it is a project without a road reservation. The most recent freeway standard roads constructed in Melbourne, namely EastLink and Peninsula Link, had documented road reservations. Residents and businesses were able to purchase properties with the full and complete knowledge that, at some point in the future, a freeway standard road would be constructed nearby. Those that live and own property along the four NEL corridors do not have this foreknowledge.

When a road project of this scale has a defined road reservation the government can commence the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) immediately. Through the EES process, the relevant technical, environmental and social studies are completed in order to inform the project and design. This process enables the community to have meaningful input into the project and can influence the ultimate design and alignment within the specified road reservation.

It is possible to conduct an EES for each of the four corridor options provided by NELA, albeit at some cost. Conducting an EES on each corridor option would better inform the decision making process and enable the community to be meaningfully engaged. This is particularly important given the potential impact of the NEL on environmentally sensitive areas, for example in Option A along the Eastern Freeway and Yarra River corridors. It would also assist in alleviating concerns and uncertainty the lack of road reservation has generated about the project.

There are many elements of the current project plan and process that are of significant concern.

The primary concern of Council and the community is the extremely limited release of information about the project and the four corridor options by NELA.

This lack of information has severely limited how the community and Council can respond to NELA about the corridors and likely benefits and impacts of each.

In recognition of the lack of information and in order to better inform Council's response to the NEL, a motion was passed at the 14 August 2017 Council meeting seeking the following information from NELA.

- Designs for the interchange at Bulleen Road with the Eastern Freeway and the upgrade to the Eastern Freeway.
- Impacts on Koonung Creek Reserve and other reserves/parks abutting the Eastern Freeway extending to Chandler Highway as a result of upgrades to the Eastern Freeway including possible additional lanes.
- Impacts to the Freeway Golf Course and Boroondara Tennis Centre.
- Impacts on traffic levels on the Eastern Freeway including truck traffic.
- Impacts on traffic levels on the arterial and local road network in Boroondara, including truck traffic and possible changes to these roads.
- Impacts on noise levels along the Eastern Freeway corridor due to an increase in traffic and notably truck traffic.
- Noise attenuation measures that would be applied in any widening of the Eastern Freeway and specifically whether noise would be attenuated to a standard of 63 dB(A) or 68 dB(A).
- Impacts on the future provision of the Doncaster Rail.
- Public transport initiatives associated with the NEL project.

Despite several requests, both written and verbal, this information has not been provided by NELA. From conversations with NELA staff, the information requested is known to either exist or have been considered by NELA project officers such that some information could surely be provided.

The lack of transparency created by the very limited release of information and reluctance to respond formally to Council's request is generating a climate of doubt and uncertainty around the project and NELA's intentions.

The lack of information from NELA about project costs is also concerning. The cost estimates in the media are understood to have been developed by parties other than NELA and are based on a cost per kilometre of tunnel and road construction. Council requests NELA share information about project costs with the community.

While acknowledging the process and cost associated with an Environmental Effects Statement (EES), Council requests NELA complete an EES for each of the four corridor options prior to selecting a preferred corridor. This approach would enable NELA to compare each route fully and properly and allow for

community input into the process. Further comments on specific areas of environmental concern with Option A are included in section 5.1 of this submission.

3.4 Four corridor options

The four NEL corridor options presented by the NELA have some common elements.

It is recognised the NEL will most probably be listed as a major transport project under the *Major Transport Project Facilitation Act 2009* (the Act) on behalf of the Minister for Planning.

Giving regard to the Act, the NEL is thought to meet the requirements for a Comprehensive Impact Statement (CIS) rather than an Impact Management Plan (IMP). Should a CIS be required and the documented process followed, Council welcomes the opportunity to participate in the public exhibition and review period.

From discussion with NELA staff it is known NEL will be a toll road. It is not known, however, whether the toll will be a direct toll or a shadow toll. A direct toll is an arrangement where the driver pays a fee directly to the private company that operates, maintains and manages the road. A shadow toll is an arrangement where the road owner pays the private company that operates, maintains and manages the road a fee per vehicle using the road. The shadow toll contract period varies, however it is typically 20-30 years and the arrangement results in no direct payment from road users.

It is reasonable to expect that a series of managed freeway measures, or Intelligent Transport System (ITS) measures, will be introduced along the NEL to ensure smooth traffic operations on the road and the wider freeway standard road network.

NELA has advised limited volumes of traffic using NEL will travel towards the Melbourne CBD. The majority of trip origins and destinations are expected within the north and south-east of Melbourne.

The construction impact of the NEL will be substantial. Based on information provided by NELA staff, the construction period can reasonably be expected to extend along the length of the preferred corridor for up to 7 years. The disruption will include access, noise pollution and environmental pollution.

To maintain consistency with other major road projects such as EastLink and Peninsula Link, a substantial public art program is expected to form part of the NEL, no matter the preferred corridor.

We understand NELA is considering complementary projects in the corridor area with these projects focussed on improving walking, cycling and public transport in the area and region.

The discussion in sections 3.5 and 3.6 below is focussed on corridor options A and C.

It is thought that Boroondara will be directly and most significantly impacted by Option A for reasons detailed in section 5. Option A is considered by Boroondara to inadequately meet the broader and regional project objectives. The transport network improvements associated with Option A do not meet the needs of the region and ignore important regional issues such as inland freight terminals and major road upgrades required in the north-east.

When reviewing the available information about the alternative routes, it is apparent Option C provides greater regional benefits, meets the project criteria as discussed in section 3.2 and responds to the issues and concerns of the Boroondara community.

Options B and D were found to be less beneficial to the region and did not meet the project criteria as well as Option C.

3.5 Corridor Option A

It is understood corridor Option A connects the M80 to the Eastern Freeway near Bulleen Road. The NEL is likely to be a 6 lane freeway standard road and may involve approximately 3km of tunnel structure along the 11km long corridor.

When Option A is considered with the trip origin of the M80 and destination of EastLink near Canterbury Road, the travel distance is approximately 26km. This is more than double the NELA published 11km long corridor and comparable in both destination and distance with Option C.

The NELA published information about the length of Option A has been misleading and does not reflect the true travel distance of the option.

NELA maps indicate the tunnel element will connect from an interchange at Lower Plenty Road to Manningham Road and travel under the environmentally sensitive areas of the Banyule Flats and the Yarra River.

Option A provides interchanges at the M80, Grimshaw Street, Lower Plenty Road, Manningham Road and the Eastern Freeway near Bulleen Road. The interchange of NEL, the Eastern Freeway and Bulleen Road will be complex and large, impacting on the surrounding area to the north and south of the freeway.

We anticipate full access to the Eastern Freeway will be retained for Bulleen Road traffic. Additionally, we anticipate full access will be provided to the NEL from both Bulleen Road and the Eastern Freeway.

Corridor Option A provides for widening of the Eastern Freeway between Chandler Highway and Springvale Road. NELA has advised all widening of the Eastern Freeway will be fully accommodated within the existing road reserve, although the existing road reserve also extends into reserves and parkland that is used by the community. Despite the potential costly widening works associated with the NEL, NELA has advised the Eastern Freeway will remain toll free.

From discussions with North East Link Authority (NELA) officers at the public information sessions, the widening of the eastern Freeway is understood to consist of two lanes in each direction from the Chandler Highway to Doncaster Road, and one lane in each direction from Doncaster Road to Springvale Road. The EastLink tunnels are an obvious network constraint point in the east, as is the narrow and effectively fully built out Eastern Freeway road reserve to the east of Bulleen Road.

It is not clear whether the cost of the proposed Eastern Freeway widening has been included in the total cost of Option A as detailed in the media. In the interests of transparency, Boroondara requests that the cost of Option A is published and the cost of all ancillary works, including but not limited to the Eastern Freeway widening, is included.

Under Option A, a series of managed freeway measures, or Intelligent Transport System (ITS) measures, are expected on the Eastern Freeway as well as NEL to ensure smooth traffic operations on the road and the wider freeway standard road network.

The NEL itself is expected to carry approximately 100,000 - 120,000 vehicles per day, with a significant proportion, greater than 10%, likely to be heavy vehicles. The tunnel element of the project precludes placarded loads from using the full length of the NEL. This traffic can be expected to continue to use the arterial and local road network to reach their destinations.

While NELA has stated the Option A corridor provides the best grades for heavy vehicle operations along the route, the EastLink tunnels are a known existing grade issue for heavy vehicles. The information released about Option A omits this significant issue and the impacts on traffic flow on EastLink, even outside of peak periods.

The NEL concept relies on significant increases in truck flows between EastLink and the M80, meaning increase in truck demands through the EastLink tunnels.

In addition to the issue of grades in the EastLink tunnels, it is thought the anticipated extra traffic will necessitate the upgrade or duplication of the tunnels at some point in the future. Other upgrade works may be required along the EastLink corridor as well.

NELA has advised the Doncaster Rail corridor that currently runs along the central median of the freeway will be preserved under Option A. Improvements to the Doncaster Area Rapid Transit (DART) are thought to be probable inclusions considered under NEL Option A. The DART improvements would effectively preserve the rail corridor by using the same corridor and may take the form of a true bus rapid transit (BRT) system. The preservation of the proposed train station at Bulleen Road is an additional factor that will need to be taken into account.

Despite numerous requests, no information has been made available by NELA as to the impact of corridor Option A on the arterial and local road network and area to the south of the Eastern Freeway. This is a major concern for Council and the Boroondara community.

In accordance with current Victorian Government traffic noise policy, the NEL route would qualify for noise attenuation measures to ensure traffic noise levels are no higher than 63db(A). It is not clear whether all structures associated with NEL, such as on and off ramps, would qualify. Under the same policy the Eastern Freeway, despite significant upgrade works associated with Option A, would not qualify for new or upgraded noise attenuation measures.

3.6 Corridor Option C

It is understood corridor Option C connects the M80 to EastLink south of Canterbury Road. The NEL is likely to be a 6 lane freeway standard road and may involve approximately 14km of tunnel structure along the 26km long corridor. Option C provides a true circumferential function and provides for greatly improved connectivity between the north, north-east and south-east areas. This is particularly important as it provides improved connections between the Monash, Dandenong and La Trobe National Employment and Innovation (NEIC) clusters.

The NEICs provide significant employment and education opportunities and are recognised by the Victorian Government and the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA).

NELA maps indicate the two tunnel elements will connect from east of Diamond Creek to near Heidelberg-Warrandyte Road (northern tunnel) and from Reynolds Road to near the Ringwood Bypass (southern tunnel). Based on the corridor

alignment maps provided by NELA, the northern tunnel being approximately 9km long and the southern approximately 5km.

Option C provides interchanges at the M80, Diamond Creek Road, Ryans Road and Reynolds Road. It provides for upgrades to Ryans Road, Springvale Road north of the Eastern Freeway and an extension to Reynolds Road to provide operational connectivity to the existing road network.

The NEL Option C is expected to carry approximately 50,000 - 110,000 vehicles per day, with a significant proportion, greater than 10%, likely to be heavy vehicles. The tunnel element of the project precludes placarded loads from using the full length of the NEL. This traffic can be expected to continue to use the arterial and local road network to reach their destinations.

Under Option C, general traffic and truck volumes on the Eastern Freeway are expected to be lower than current levels west of EastLink. This is expected as traffic diverts onto the more direct NEL alignment.

3.7 Corridor Option A versus corridor Option C

Option C is considered to better serve the project criteria and region by providing a high-quality and high-speed freeway standard road link between the growth areas in the north and the south-east. This includes improved access for freight, despite the potential grade issues associated with Option C.

The known and existing grade issues within the EastLink tunnels in Option A are avoided in Option C, as is the very expensive likelihood of the need to duplicate the Melba and Mullum Mullum tunnels at some point in the future.

The grade issues in the EastLink tunnels cannot easily be fixed, however the grade issues present in Option C are not insurmountable. Good and innovative road design can be employed to reduce the impact of the grades in Option C.

Option C presents constructability benefits, particularly at the interchanges when compared with Option A. It is thought that the interchanges at Ryans Road and Reynolds Road would be easier and less disruptive during construction than those along the Option A alignment, particularly the Eastern Freeway, Bulleen Road and NEL interchange.

When analysed with the travel time saving calculation trip origin and destination, being the M1 and the M80, in mind, the information presented in Option A is considered to be misleading. To enable a fair comparison, the travel distance between the M80 and the EastLink connection point for options A and C have been reviewed.

Option A results in a total travel distance of approximately 26km, with 11km being the NEL and 15km being the Eastern Freeway and EastLink. Option C offers a 26km travel distance for the same origin and destination. Both options have almost exactly the same travel distance when compared side by side.

The travel time savings under both options are significant. The nominated travel time saving of 10-12 minutes under Option C is considered to be significant and not just modest as noted by NELA. While it is less than that of Option A (16-19 minutes), it is a considerable time saving for all road users. It is not clear whether the existing steep grades in the EastLink tunnels were modelled to arrive at this travel time saving for Option A.

Over dimensional (OD) vehicles and placarded loads will be prohibited in the tunnel elements, no matter the preferred corridor. Under both Option A and Option C, OD vehicles and placarded loads will use the local road network at some point in their journey. Neither option appears more advantageous than the other regarding this element.

The public transport, walking and cycling project criteria all nominate Option A as the better performing option of the two. We would contest this view however as the public transport, walking and cycling benefits can be achieved no matter the preferred corridor.

NELA noted publically, at the Boroondara community forum, the NEL would facilitate but not fund or implement any public transport service uplift. That is, any improvements made to public transport services in the region would be subject to the usual Victorian Government budget processes. This further supports the suggestion that the public transport, walking and cycling benefits can be achieved no matter the preferred corridor.

4. Community consultation and engagement

In representing its community, Council has actively been working to inform residents about North East Link corridor Option A and the potential impacts to Boroondara. Information has been sent out in the form of letters, advertisements in the Leader newspaper, social media posts and via the Boroondara website.

On Tuesday 12 September, Council hosted a community forum to listen to residents' concerns about North East Link corridor Option A. Over 400 people attended the forum at the Renaissance Theatre, Kew.

In order to reach a wide audience, the forum was live streamed on Council's Facebook page. An audience of more than 5000 people was reached with many people posting comments and providing feedback during the session.

Feedback collated from the forum and through online comments highlighted a resounding objection to corridor Option A, with residents saying they feared NELA had already decided to go ahead with this option. There was a call for transparency around budgeting of the four corridors and requests that traffic data reports are shared with the community.

Residents felt there was a limited amount of information provided by NELA and little detail had been released. They also expressed concerns that the consultation time was too short and felt they were not being listened to by NELA. Many of the community concerns were about increased traffic, trucks on roads and noise. Residents felt it was important to protect community assets and the overall amenity of their suburbs from corridor Option A.

Questions focused on the impact to residents' homes and their families; particularly in relation to schools and recreational areas. Many people were concerned about the need to protect the Boroondara environment including Koonung Creek Reserve, surrounding parklands and the Yarra River. Questions were asked about additional pollution and potential widening of the Eastern Freeway.

The management and leaders at the Boroondara Tennis Centre, Green Acres Golf Course, Kew Golf Club, Freeway Golf Course, Belle Vue Primary School, Trinity Grammar School and Carey Baptist Grammar School have been engaged through the preparation of this submission.

5. Key issues

The issues, discussed in this section, have been determined through consultation with the Boroondara community and from analysis of the very limited information made available by NELA.

Seven key issues have been raised by the Boroondara community, namely:

1. Potential impacts on parkland, reserves and green open space.
2. Potential impacts on recreational areas and community facilities.
3. Increased traffic volumes on the Eastern Freeway, arterial roads and the local road network.
4. Increased traffic noise on the Eastern Freeway, arterial roads and the local road network.
5. Parking and the potential for 'Clearways' to be installed.
6. Potential loss of school sporting facilities.
7. Compulsory acquisition of both private and public land.

5.1 Parkland, reserves and green open space

The parkland, reserves and green open space adjacent to Bulleen Road and the Eastern freeway are highly valued and valuable parcels of land. The community holds them in high regard and they are significant from a biodiversity and environmental perspective.

These important areas are considered to be under threat due to the interchange of the Eastern Freeway, Bulleen Road and NEL, as well as the widening of the Eastern Freeway.

Boroondara Urban Biodiversity Strategy (2013-2023)

The *Boroondara Urban Biodiversity Strategy (2013-2023)* (the Strategy) provides valuable information about the parkland, reserves and open space in the municipality, as well as the significance of these areas at a national, state, regional and local level. The Strategy seeks to ensure local natural habitats are protected and enhanced for future generations.

The Strategy has four objectives, with the lead objective being:

"To protect and enhance biodiversity in Boroondara on public land."

The northern boundary of Boroondara is, for the most part, the Yarra River. In places it runs directly adjacent to the Eastern Freeway and in others it traverses the landscape some distance from the road. The Yarra River through Kew, the

western edge of the Eastern Freeway and area of potential widening, is listed as a site of *National significance* in the Strategy.

The Eastern Freeway between Chandler Highway and Boroondara’s eastern boundary near Doncaster Road provides a home to the following 12 reserves, parks and parkland areas, with their associated biodiversity and biological significance as detailed in the Strategy noted.

1	Winfield Road Reserve	Regional significance
2	Koonung Creek Reserve	Local significance
3	Leonis Avenue Reserve	No significance
4	Columba Street Reserve	No significance
5	Musca Street Reserve	No significance
6	Yarra Flats Reserve	State significance
7	Hays Paddock	State significance
8	Burke Road Land, including the Burke Road Billabong	State significance
9	Willsmere Park, including the Willsmere Billabong	State significance
10	Hyde Park	No significance
11	Chandler Park	State significance
12	Kate Campbell Reserve	No significance

In addition to the list above, three 18-hole golf courses border the Eastern Freeway. Their associated biodiversity and biological significance is noted below.

1. Freeway Golf Course (public) - State significance.
2. Kew Golf Course (private) - State significance.
3. Greenacres Golf Course (private) - State significance.

There is an almost unbroken corridor of vegetation extending along the Yarra River from Yarra Bend Park, on the west side of the Chandler Highway, to the Freeway Golf Course at Bulleen Road and beyond. This vegetation includes many rare and endangered plant species and eight of the 12 threatened habitat types of Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) found in Boroondara.

The Burke Road Billabong and Willsmere Billabong areas are home to some centuries old River Red Gums. These trees are hollow-bearing and provide a whole range of environmental and habitat benefits for many species of flora and fauna.

The Freeway Golf Course has extensive wetlands and billabongs that provide habitat for threatened species including Striped Marsh Frog, Spotted Marsh Frog and Glossy Black Skink. The Kew Golf Course is considered the most zoologically significant site in Boroondara because of the rare fauna found in its wetlands, particularly breeding colonies of waterbirds, and is also highly significant for rare plants.

The Koonung Creek joins the Yarra River at the Freeway Golf Course. Where the creek runs underground in the Koonung Creek Reserve, the network of open spaces serves as an ecological corridor. The constructed wetlands in the reserve are important for herons, cormorants and frogs.

Bolin Bolin Integrated Water Management project

The City of Boroondara, in partnership with Manningham Council and Carey Baptist Grammar School, and with the support of Melbourne Water, the Victorian Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Federal Government, are nearing completion of the \$2.8 million construction of the Bolin Bolin Integrated Water Facility.

The purpose of the project is to sustainably capture and treat storm water for reuse for the irrigation of several separately managed sports grounds located at Bulleen Park, the Carey Baptist Grammar School Sports Complex and the Freeway Golf Course.

The project will harvest approximately 35 megalitres (ML) of stormwater per annum, relieving demand for potable water consumption, reducing pollutant loads to the Yarra River, minimising the demand for extraction from the river for irrigation purposes and ensuring sustainable environmental flows within the Yarra River. The project will also minimise the existing local flooding issues, by enhancing the drainage outlet from the local catchment.

The proposed infrastructure is forecast to meet 95.5% of the irrigation demand in an average rainfall year.

The facilities will be located on three separate land parcels:

1. The Crown land site adjacent to the Bolin Bolin Billabong managed by Parks Victoria (and in part by Manningham Council in its role as Committee of Management).
2. Bulleen Park which is managed by Manningham Council.
3. The Freeway Golf Course which is owned by the City of Boroondara.

The project involves:

- The construction of a 1.5ML combined wetland and storage lake at the Crown Land site.
- A secondary 3.3ML (minimum) storage is to be constructed within the Freeway Golf Course.
- Two 214.7 kilolitre (kL) storage tanks will be constructed within Bulleen Park.

The two storage facilities and the tanks will all be connected by a distribution pipe line which will run through the Crown Land site, Bulleen Park and the Freeway Golf Course. Pumps and a control system will be installed to manage the water supply to the three sites.

The project has been assisted by the Victorian Government through Melbourne Water Corporation as part of the Living Rivers Storm Water Program and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. The project has also been assisted with funding from the Federal Government.

Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Bill 2017

The Yarra River is of great importance to Melbourne and Victoria. Through the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Bill 2017* (the Bill), the Victorian Government has signalled its intention to keep the Yarra River alive and healthy for the benefit of future generations.

The Bill recognises the intrinsic connection of the traditional owners to the Yarra River and its Country and further recognises them as the custodians of the land and waterway which they call Birrarung. In the Woi-wurrung language of the traditional owners, Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong means "keep the Birrarung alive".

The Yarra River and the many hundreds of parcels of public land it flows through are recognised by the Bill as one living, integrated natural entity for protection and improvement.

The Bill will strengthen the protection and management of the Yarra River by:

- Developing a Yarra Strategic Plan to coordinate 14 public entities that operate along the river corridor.
- Establishing a new statutory body, the Birrarung Council, to act as an independent voice for the river.
- Requiring regular reporting by the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability on the environmental condition of the river and its parklands.
- Designating the parklands and open space along the river as the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands.
- Ensuring future governments protect the Yarra River.

Boroondara is a member of the Yarra Strategic Plan Collaboration Committee, along with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority and 7 other local governments.

Boroondara Planning Scheme

The land occupied by the private Kew Golf Course between Burke Road and the City of Yarra boundary in the west is covered by a Design and Development Overlay (DDO) of the Boroondara Planning Scheme. The area is covered by schedule 31 to the DDO titled *Yarra (Birrarung) River Corridor Protection*. The schedule seeks, amongst other items, to:

“...protect and enhance the natural landscape character of the Yarra River corridor where the waterway, its topography, adjacent public open space and a continuous corridor of vegetation and canopy trees are the dominant features.”

Social considerations

The parkland, reserves and green open spaces provide important benefits to residents. Australian based research demonstrates urban green space contributes to reduced morbidity, improved physical health outcomes, improved mental wellbeing and increased social cohesion. Additionally, it provides important ecosystem services such as cooling and air pollution reduction.

Researchers at the Australian National University found, from a global literature review, adults who live in areas where there is urban green space are more likely to participate in leisure time physical activity than those living in areas lacking urban green spaces. The same researchers determined that the provision of green space is particularly important in encouraging children, adolescents and the elderly to exercise.

The health outcomes for our residents are improved by living near green open space. Across the general population, those living near green open space tend to enjoy lower obesity levels, reduced prevalence of some diseases, including chronic heart disease and improved mental health.

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests access to green open space improves social cohesion, including community and neighbourhood connection and plays a role in reducing levels of crime. People living near green open space tend to feel less lonely and more willing to help their neighbours. Green open spaces are considered to be inclusive spaces that promote social interaction.

The parklands, reserves and green open space along the Eastern Freeway corridor and near the site of the potential Bulleen Road, Eastern Freeway and NEL interchange provide significant benefits to the community. The shared paths, parks and golf course are well used by the community and provide important recreational and social opportunities.

The construction of the NEL, expected to take up to 7 years, will significantly impact on access to and usability of Boroondara's parkland, reserves and green open spaces.

What is Boroondara asking for?

The City of Boroondara requests the land on which the 12 reserves, parks and parklands, the Greenacres Golf Course, the Kew Golf Course and the Freeway Golf Course and the Bolin Bolin Integrated Water Facility are sited, is:

- Not used for NEL purposes.
- Protected from development and construction associated with NEL.
- Kept fully intact and not divided to facilitate NEL.
- Kept free of all NEL related works.

The City of Boroondara requests an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) be completed for all four corridor options before a decision is made as to the preferred NEL corridor.

The City of Boroondara requests NELA acknowledge and preserve the national, state and local significance of the land near to Bulleen Road and along the Eastern Freeway and Yarra River corridors.

5.2 Recreational areas and community facilities

In addition to the Freeway Golf Course noted in section 5.1 above, three main recreational areas and community facilities are likely to be impacted by Option A and the associated widening of the Eastern Freeway, namely:

1. The Boroondara Tennis Centre.
2. Koonung Creek Trail.
3. Main Yarra Trail.

These areas and facilities provide for recreational opportunities that are otherwise limited in built-up, suburban areas such as Balwyn and Kew. As noted previously, the social benefits gained from these areas and facilities are significant and contribute to the health and wellbeing of Boroondara residents.

Boroondara Tennis Centre

The Boroondara Tennis Centre (BTC) is one of Melbourne's premier public access tennis facilities, with 23 floodlit courts available for public use and hire.

The BTC and land is owned by Boroondara City Council, with the facility managed and operated under contract on behalf of Council.

The BTC is well used by members of the community for casual hire and coaching programs, schools for inter-school sports and large scale tournaments. It has the capacity to cater for large groups and includes a number of ancillary services such as a café, childcare and allied health services.

All levels of players use the BTC, from community level beginners to semi-professionals. Players come not only from Boroondara, but surrounding municipalities to use the centre as it is the largest of its kind in the area and offers a range of court surfaces. It is one of the only publically available tennis centres in the region. Approximately 60,000 users attend the BTC each year, highlighting its status as a regional facility and the quality of the service the centre provides to users.

When developing the 2017/18 budget, Council had planned to fund renewal works at the BTC to a total of \$705,000. The investment was to ensure the increasing demands on the centre could be met and the BTC would remain functional into the future.

At the 11 September 2017 Services Special Committee meeting of Council, it was resolved the bulk of this planned expenditure be put on hold because of the uncertain future of the BTC generated by the NEL.

Council will reconsider the BTC renewal works and investment as part of the 2018/19 budget. It is expected the preferred corridor for NEL will be known by this time and the future of the BTC may be more certain.

Koonung Creek Trail and Main Yarra Trail

The Koonung Creek Trail (KCT) and Main Yarra Trail (MYT) provide an off-road shared path connection from the east of Boroondara, and beyond, to the Fairfield Pipe Bridge and goods, jobs and services in the Cities of Yarra, Banyule, Darebin, Manningham and Melbourne. The trail services the needs of recreational walkers and cyclists, as well as commuters. The trail traverses through some of Boroondara's premier parkland and offers a high quality experience for path users.

The trail serves a regional purpose and provides a significant connection with and through municipalities to the east and south. The KCT/MYT connects with the EastLink trail and the Peninsula Link trail. This off-road connection between Moorooduc near Mornington to the CBD is unique and demonstrates the Victorian Government commitment to walking and cycling infrastructure for recreational and commuter purposes.

Both trails are very well used and highly valued by the Boroondara and wider community.

Boroondara conducts a trail safety audit every three years and undertakes path safety, upgrade and improvement works on a regular basis. Significant investment has been made to the KCT/MYT corridor by Boroondara and other authorities, including VicRoads and Melbourne Water.

The construction of the NEL, expected to take up to 7 years, will significantly impact on access to and usability of the Boroondara Tennis Centre, Koonung Creek Trail and Main Yarra Trail.

What is Boroondara asking for?

The City of Boroondara requests that the land on which the Boroondara Tennis Centre, Koonung Creek Trail and Main Yarra Trail are sited is:

- Not used for NEL purposes.
- Protected from development and construction associated with NEL.
- Kept fully intact and not divided to facilitate NEL.
- Kept free of all NEL related works.

5.3 Traffic volume

The NEL is expected to carry between 100,000 and 120,000 vehicles per day. To put this in context, the Eastern Freeway currently carries in the order of 140,000 vehicles per day. The confluence of the two large volumes of traffic introduces the potential for extended delays and queues on the NEL, Eastern Freeway and local road network during peak periods.

Without access to the traffic modelling and input information, the impact of the projected traffic volumes on the arterial and local road network in Boroondara is unknown and unquantifiable. No understanding of the modelling inputs and assumptions on which the modelling and outputs are based can be achieved with the extremely limited information provided by NELA.

Analysis of the very limited traffic information indicates the NEL could draw traffic onto Bulleen Road in order to access the NEL, the Eastern Freeway, M80 and areas to the north and south. The impact of this on the Boroondara road network is great, with additional traffic using the arterial and road network in the municipality and impacting on the amenity, liveability and accessibility for the Boroondara community.

Concerns are held about the potential for toll avoidance with traffic using local streets if the Eastern Freeway is tolled. Concerns are also held about the potential for mode shift towards private vehicles if the road traffic conditions for trips bound for the CBD are greatly improved.

What is Boroondara asking for?

The City of Boroondara requests that:

- NELA release the traffic model and associated reports.
- The NEL and any associated works do not give rise to a significant increase in traffic volumes on Bulleen Road.
- The NEL and any associated works do not give rise to an increase in traffic volumes on the Boroondara local road network that would impact on the amenity, liveability and accessibility for residents and community facilities.
- The Eastern Freeway is kept toll free along its entire length.
- Regional public transport service uplift opportunities are investigated, planned and funded by NELA.
- Freight and other heavy vehicle traffic is not transferred to the Boroondara road network, including both arterial and local roads.

5.4 Traffic noise

The Boroondara community is very concerned about increased traffic noise arising from NEL Option A, particularly abutting a widened Eastern Freeway.

Council made formal submissions to the review of the VicRoads Traffic Noise Policy on 27 April 2015 and 15 September 2015. The information below is based on these submissions and feedback from the community.

Freeway traffic noise is a major issue of concern for residents of Boroondara. In particular residents and properties abutting the Eastern Freeway experience ongoing environmental noise pollution which directly impacts on the liveability and usability of their neighbourhoods.

We continue to advocate for a consistent standard that seeks to overcome the discrepancy between new or improved roads and existing roads and takes into

account the time periods of specific concern. We continue to advocate for the upgrade of existing and construction of new noise attenuation measures.

Specifically we continue to raise the need for traffic noise levels:

- To be capped at a maximum of 63 dB(A).
- Measured at first floor level as well as ground floor.
- Measured at any time, day or night.

What is Boroondara asking for?

The City of Boroondara requests:

- The acceptable traffic noise level be capped at a maximum of 63 dB(A) for all roads impacted by or altered as a result of the NEL, including the Eastern Freeway.
- Traffic noise levels are measured at first floor level as well as ground floor level.
- Traffic noise levels are measured and considered at any time, day or night.

5.5 Parking

Parking restrictions are traffic control devices delegated to Council for implementation. As with traffic volume concerns, without access to the traffic modelling and input data that NELA has not released, a fully informed opinion about parking restrictions cannot be determined by Council officers.

Based on experience with other major transport projects in the municipality and Melbourne area, it is considered the introduction of parking restrictions on key NEL and Eastern Freeway access routes, such as Bulleen Road and Burke Road, is very likely.

What is Boroondara asking for?

The City of Boroondara requests:

- Council and the community is consulted about any and all proposed parking restriction changes in the municipality associated with the NEL and that the feedback from the community and Council is considered in any decision to implement parking restrictions.

5.6 Schools and school sport facilities

Schools

Belle Vue Primary School (Belle Vue) is located on the south-east corner of the existing Bulleen Road and Eastern Freeway interchange. Belle Vue was established in the late 1950's and has a current student population of approximately 200.

The school grounds directly abuts the Eastern Freeway inbound off-ramp, with significant and established vegetation providing screening, noise attenuation and pollution reduction for the school and their sports oval. Given this proximity to the Eastern Freeway, any freeway widening works or interchange works may impact on the school grounds.

School sport facilities

Immediately to the north of the Freeway Golf Course and Boroondara Tennis Centre, outside of the City of Boroondara, lies the Carey Baptist Grammar School and Trinity Grammar School sporting facilities. The main campuses of both of these independent schools are within Boroondara.

Both schools encourage sport and host Saturday morning competitions. Encouraging students to be active is consistent with Boroondara's Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

The Carey Baptist Grammar School (Carey) Bulleen Sports Complex (BSC) is located on the west side of Bulleen Road, immediately to the north of the Freeway Golf Course.

The BSC incorporate football and cricket ovals, rectangular grassed pitches, cricket practice nets, multi-purpose synthetic courts, an indoor swimming pool, a multi-purpose stadium and a range of pavilions. The facilities are used by the school for training and competition purposes through the week and on the weekend.

The area of land the BSC sits on is significant in size and forms a critical connection in the Bolin Bolin Integrated Water Management Plan and associated project. It would not be possible to rehouse the facility in Boroondara or at a location nearby.

The Trinity Grammar School (Trinity) Marles Playing Fields is located on the east side of Bulleen Road to the north of the Boroondara Tennis Centre and Marcellin College.

The facility incorporates football and cricket ovals, soccer, rugby and hockey fields, tennis courts and recreational areas. As with Carey, the facilities are used by the school for training and competition purposes through the week and on the weekend. The school, Old Boys clubs and community groups use the sporting fields.

Stormwater from the site is captured and used by the Bolin Bolin Integrated Water Management project for irrigation purposes. Similar to Carey, the area of land the Marles Playing Fields uses is significant in size and it would not be possible to rehouse the facility in Boroondara or at a nearby location.

While the schools are concerned about the loss of land and associated loss of playing surfaces, they are also concerned about the impact of the project on the wetlands and construction impacts on access to the facilities. The construction of the NEL, expected to take up to 10j years, will significantly impact on access to and usability of the school sporting facilities.

What is Boroondara asking for?

The City of Boroondara requests that the land on which Belle Vue Primary School, Carey Baptist Grammar School Bulleen Sports Complex and Trinity Grammar School Marles Playing Fields are sited is:

- Not used for NEL purposes.
- Protected from development and construction associated with NEL.
- Kept fully intact and not divided to facilitate NEL.
- Kept free of all NEL related works.

5.7 Compulsory acquisition of land

Without knowledge of the design of the corridor Option A, a full and properly informed opinion about the likely compulsory acquisition of land cannot be developed.

The impact this lack of information has had on the community is significant in that it has generated high levels of anxiety, uncertainty and concern.

Significant concerns are held by Council and the community about any potential compulsory land acquisition of both public and private land. The scope of the potential acquisitions is not known, however the interchange of the Eastern Freeway, Bulleen Road and the NEL will require a large amount of land and will need to be constructed within a densely developed area.

Council owns the land containing the overwhelming majority of reserves, parks and parklands adjacent to the Eastern Freeway and Yarra River. According to Council records, only a section of the Winfield Road Reserve is in separate ownership being the Roads Corporation (VicRoads).

In addition to the reserves, parks and parkland, the Freeway Golf Course, Boroondara Tennis Centre and majority of the Koonung Creek Trail and Main Yarra Trail are sited on land owned by Boroondara. Both the Kew Golf Course and Greenacres Golf Course are private property.

The Kew Golf Course CEO has advised Council that the widening of the Eastern Freeway could impact their facilities, including the golf course, maintenance facility and Simpsons Lake.

In addition to the concerns about compulsory land acquisition from both private property owners and Council, there is a growing concern within the community about compensation associated with property acquisition.

What is Boroondara asking for?

The City of Boroondara requests:

No private residential properties are acquired in Boroondara for the purposes of constructing the NEL and any associated works.

The land on which the 12 reserves, parks and parklands, the Freeway Golf Course, the Boroondara Tennis Centre, Koonung Creek Trail and Main Yarra Trail are sited is:

- Not used for NEL purposes.
- Protected from development and construction associated with NEL.
- Kept fully intact and not divided to facilitate NEL.
- Kept free of all NEL related works.
- Kept under the ownership of City of Boroondara.

The land on which the Kew Golf Course and Greenacres Golf Course are sited is:

- Not used for NEL purposes.
- Protected from development and construction associated with NEL.
- Kept fully intact and not divided to facilitate NEL.
- Kept free of all NEL related works.

6. Complementary projects

When considering the scale and potential cost of the NEL and the project objectives, a suite of complementary projects that provide for improved walking, cycling and public transport connections and trips is necessary. The cost of the complementary projects is insignificant when compared with the total project cost.

The projects outlined below, in no particular order, are thought to be appropriate for the NELA to undertake no matter the NEL corridor selected. Some of the projects are of regional significance, others are very localised and a handful are relatively general.

6.1 Regional projects

Doncaster Rail

The provision of heavy rail to Doncaster has been an idea in the public realm for some time. The Eastern Transport Coalition and the City of Boroondara are active advocates for the project.

The project itself is listed within Public Transport Victoria's *Network Development Plan - Metropolitan Rail* (the Plan). Doncaster Rail is included in stage 3 of the Plan with a time frame of "within 15 years". A train station at Bulleen Road is included in the current design for the project and the Plan notes upgrades to the Clifton Hill corridor are required before Doncaster Rail can proceed.

Upgrade of the Doncaster Area Rapid Transit (DART) to a true Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Recognising that Doncaster Rail is a multi-million dollar investment and reliant upon other heavy rail projects, the upgrade of the DART to a true BRT style system is thought to be an appropriate stepping stone project. If done properly, it could deliver a very high quality customer experience and effectively remove traffic from the already congested Eastern Freeway in the AM and PM peak periods.

North East Bicycle Corridor

The North East Bicycle Corridor (NEBC) was developed as part of the East-West Link project. The NEBC essentially travels adjacent to the Eastern Freeway on the north side from Chandler Highway to Alexander Parade. It provides a direct walking and cycling route into the Melbourne CBD. The NEBC removes several steep gradients on the current path alignment and has the potential to reduce travel time by up to 10 minutes for cyclists. When constructed, the NEBC would

connect through to Moorooduc via the Peninsula Link Trail, EastLink Trail, Koonung Creek Train and Main Yarra Trail.

Off-road shared path upgrades

To complement the NEBC and to further encourage people to walk and cycle for recreational and transport purposes, improvements such as mode separation could be made to the Main Yarra Trail and the Koonung Creek Trail where possible.

Belford Road underpass

The realignment of the Main Yarra Trail (MYT) and associated construction of the Belford Road underpass could also be considered as an off-road shared path upgrade.

Council has prepared and costed a design which is ready for construction. The existing grade issues are removed under the proposal, as is the road crossing of Belford Road for trail users. The MYT at this point is located on VicRoads land and the safety audits demonstrate it is in dire need of reconstruction.

Tram route extensions

The extension of tram routes 72 and 48 could improve north-south and east-west access for public transport and other users. By extending route 72 south to Caulfield and north to the Eastern Freeway, the potential catchment is greatly increased and the important direct connection to the Monash University Caulfield campus for Boroondara residents is provided.

Tram route 48 extension to the east would enable access to the DART and local shopping centre for a larger number of people.

Level crossing removals at all existing level crossings in the region:

Including those on the list of 50 planned for removal and others. Level crossings are a source of congestion on the arterial and local road network, as well as a safety issue for road and rail network users. The benefits of removing level crossings are well documented and meet the objectives of the NEL. Motorist, pedestrian, train passenger and train driver safety is generally improved by the removal of level crossings.

Bus network improvements:

Buses are often overlooked in major transport projects, however they offer a very flexible and relatively cheap public transport option. The upgrade of existing

routes in the region and delivery of new routes in the region would support the objectives of the NEL.

6.2 Boroondara specific projects

Within Boroondara there are projects that would improve walking, cycling and road safety. These improvements would attract more people to walk and cycle, essentially freeing up road capacity for those that need to travel on the road.

Balwyn Road pedestrian operated signals (POS) at Gordon Barnard Reserve (GBR)

Balwyn Road runs north-south and separates Gordon Barnard Reserve and Hislop Reserve. Balwyn High School and Balwyn North Primary School are located nearby.

Council officers have prepared a detailed design for the construction of a POS on Balwyn Road, with VicRoads providing in principle support for the proposal. The funding of the POS would greatly improve pedestrian access and safety across Balwyn Road.

Yarra Boulevard road safety improvements

The Yarra Boulevard, Kew has a poor road safety record and suffers from anti-social driving behaviour by motorists and motorcyclists. VicRoads, Council, Victoria Police and Parks Victoria are working together to improve road safety and stop the antisocial behaviour. The funding of road and other improvements would be welcomed.

Earl Street and Willsmere Road roundabout improvements for pedestrians and cyclists

Currently Earl Street at Willsmere Road is a physical barrier and road safety issue for pedestrians attempting to cross the road. The funding of improvements to the intersection to improve pedestrian access would be welcomed.

Asquith Street, Belford Road and Valerie Street roundabout improvements for pedestrians and cyclists

The roundabout at Asquith Street, Belford Road and Valerie Street is also a physical barrier and road safety issue for pedestrians and cyclists attempting to cross the roads using the Outer Circle Trail shared path. Council has developed an innovative solution to the issues at this location. The funding and implementation of the solution would be welcomed to improve pedestrian and cyclist access and safety.

7. Conclusion

Boroondara recognises the NEL is a project that is seeking to serve a regional purpose and respond to network wide transport and access issues. We also recognise the NEL project has been identified as the priority road project for Victoria by Infrastructure Victoria (IV) in their *30-year Infrastructure Strategy*.

In this context, this submission is offered to reflect our desire to be an active and constructive participant in the planning of the NEL and in representing our community.

We have engaged strongly with our community and have documented their concerns in this submission regarding the impact of Option A. These are set out in detail in section 5 of this submission. Community concerns raised at the Boroondara hosted community forum are included as Attachment A.

The Boroondara community is acutely concerned about the NEL and potential impact of corridor option A. Loss of green open space, community facilities, traffic noise and volume are major concerns. Additionally land acquisition and lack of transparency in the NELA processes have been cited as issues.

Option C is considered to provide greater regional benefits and better meet the NEL project criteria.

The lack of transparency and clear process by NELA has created significant concern in the community.

In accordance with a Council resolution dated 14 August 2017, Council has requested more and detailed information from NELA several times. Council is yet to receive any information from NELA in response to this request and continued follow-up. This is extremely disappointing to say the least and, in our view, has compromised the community engagement process run by NELA.

When considering the scale and potential cost of the NEL and the project objectives, a suite of complementary projects that provide for improved walking, cycling and public transport connections and trips is necessary. Section 6 details the complementary projects in the region and Boroondara that would serve the NEL project criteria.

I trust the above comments clearly detail the basis of Council's strong opposition to corridor Option A, preference for corridor Option C and assists in the selection of a preferred corridor for the North East Link project.

Please contact Mr Bruce Dobson, Director Environment and Infrastructure, on 9278 4500 should you have any questions regarding the above.

Attachment A - Community feedback from the Boroondara hosted community forum

Direct quotes from attendees:

- What will happen to our children's sports grounds, swimming, soccer and footy ovals?
- What will happen to suburbs and land house values?
- Why plan such a hugely important project so quickly?
- How can we voice our concerns if there no information to know exactly what we should be concerned about?
- The real 'costs' will be the medical and health costs to our community.
- I am concerned this will bring increased traffic flow into Boroondra.
- What will happen to our schools, especially Marcellin?
- Who will tell my 91 year old war veteran father that he has to move?
- The interchange will be ugly and destroy parkland.
- Will this option be tolled?
- We need to include public transport and build the Doncaster Rail.
- How will the government afford to buy out land and properties?
- Does the cost of option A include the price of upgrading the freeway?
- How will Koonung Creek be protected?

Questions from the attendees to the panel:

Trust in the process

- How can you expect us to take seriously that you will decide on a preferred corridor and then undertake environmental impacts?
- We need information. How can the government and community decide which is the best option for the State, not just for now, but into the future?
- What are you hiding?
- The documentation showing 4 options is biased towards option A, showing it as the cheapest and shortest. How can you call this a fair and consultative process when you have unequally biased towards option A as the cheapest and shortest option?
- Are we just putting out dummy options for B, C and D? I'm concerned option A has already been selected.
- Has any marketing being done to let residents know about the plans? Give the community a chance to speak to ourselves? The material you are talking about seems contradictory and I haven't seen anything advertised on radio / social media.

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Information Vacuum

- Why can't we have that information out there now?
- What happens if I have a freeway in front of my house instead of a park when it comes time to sell?
- Will cost be the overriding consideration for what option is selected?

Environmental

- The Yarra River protection plan restricts development within 1km of the Yarra River. How will the NE link facilitate this?
- Has the NE link project received an exemption or has something to exempt it from these legislative protections?
- How is it possible for corridor A to receive a neutral environmental performance?
- Pollution and its impacts – what pollution impact studies have been done in relation to option A?

Land and Housing Acquisition and Impact on Business

- I am concerned about environment near Bulleen Road. Noise and the sight of what you propose will be enough to make that area ugly. I stand to lose my home and my business. How are you going to compensate me and my family for losing my home and losing my business? This very process has already devalued my house – who's paying for that?

Connectivity

- How does option A (the only option of four options which involves widening the Eastern Fwy) improve that connectivity especially the sections between Bulleen Road and Chandler Highway which seem to be designed to funnel more traffic into the city or to Princess Street in Kew?

Traffic Volumes on other roads

- There are ever increasing volumes of cars travelling north and south along Burke Road up to Doncaster Road. If you put option a in, how is that traffic volume going to be dealt with?
- Why do you always include in your presentation that the ring road will fix traffic problems? It doesn't make any sense.