

Vision for the Upfield Corridor

Moreland Level Crossings Removal Community Action Group

Background - LXRP Consultation to date

In mid-2018, Moreland residents were consulted on two options for level crossing removal:

- A) removing the crossings at Moreland Rd, Munro St and Bell St by raising the railway line on two sections of viaduct; and
- B) removing the crossings at Moreland Rd, Bell St and O’Hea St by lowering the railway line into two sections of open trench.

Later in the year, the State Government made a pre-election announcement that four crossings (Moreland, Reynard, Munro & Bell) would be removed by raising the railway line on a continuous viaduct. The State Government then announced two, 2.5 hour community ‘Drop-in sessions’ seeking feedback on this decided project design. The first of these was held on 25 May 2019.

At the first of these Drop-In sessions, LXRP information available comprised:

- statistical data about passenger access to stations
- usage of the Upfield Shared Path
- maps and aerial photos with basic information about public and active transport routes
- aerial images with an indicative line for where the elevated railway tracks are likely to run (notably omitting the viaduct sections and ramps at either end south of Moreland Rd and north of Bell St)
- small white squares indicating where the stations might go (without any indication of the placement of platforms, station concourses, access points, lifts, stairs or other facilities)
- Images of completed LXRP projects that used raised railway tracks and stations to illustrate the kinds of places that have so far been created.

Despite the absence of information that would have helped people to understand the project in greater detail (such as cross sections), participants at the Drop-In session were asked to provide ideas about what they would like to see happen in the new public spaces along the corridor.

Members of the public were free to engage with LXRP engineers and communications staff and ask questions. This engagement was welcome, but answers provided were inconsistent, and significant questions remain. For example:

1. Will the trees at Gandolfo Gardens and other significant vegetation along the corridor be retained or not?
2. How will important heritage structures such as Coburg and Moreland Stations, gatekeepers houses and historic signalling be incorporated into the design?
3. How noise, safety, and other amenity impacts be managed for nearby residents and businesses?
4. How will the viaduct be designed? Options for height, structural spacing and layout have not been provided.
5. What are the amenity impacts of viaduct design elements?
6. How will the new stations be designed, including location, access points, and facilities (waiting areas, complementary facilities, stairs, lifts or ramps, myki gate locations, platform positions, weather protection)?
7. How will station location be decided? Some people were given various reasons for why the Moreland Station would have to be north of Moreland Rd, yet others were told by LXRP engineers that there was no reason why the platforms couldn't straddle Moreland Rd or even move to the south side of Moreland Rd.
8. What will happen with the railway ramps and the open space at either end, esp the large parcel of VicTrack land south of Moreland Rd? The community is keen to see the open space benefits extended as far as possible.
9. When will construction begin and how long will it take? The community is concerned about the conflicting timeframes that were provided at the Drop-in session
10. How much of the project design has been decided and what requires further work? This was unclear at the Drop-in session.
11. There were conflicting proposals for managing conflicts between different shared path users, such as bike riders and pedestrians.

Many in the local community have expressed serious concerns about the consultation process outlined above. Local people are keen to see the possible design options and to understand the constraints on them, to ensure the best outcomes are achieved and any potentially negative impacts are managed. The process thus far has not engendered confidence in the community that the potentially positive impacts of the project for the people of Coburg and Brunswick will be fully realised.

While trade-offs will need to be made as part of a project of this scale, members of the community are frustrated that the consultation process has not shed light on how such important decisions will be made.

In light of the above, a coalition of people from Moreland representing sustainable transport, climate action, urban forest and residents' groups organised their own community consultation session to develop their vision for the Upfield Corridor as part of the LXR. P.

Outline of the Community Meeting

On 25 May 2019, 70 members of the local community attended a meeting held at Coburg Library between 1-3pm. The meeting was called in response to the LXR. P. Drop-In sessions and was advertised on social media (a variety of Facebook groups active in Brunswick, Coburg and beyond, email groups and Twitter), council's website, leafleting at stations, the Upfield Shared User Path and other informal channels. The meeting was run as a semi-structured workshop facilitated by members of the local community. In the first hour, in a single large group, participants expressed their main concerns based on what they had seen and heard at the LXR. P. Drop-in session, which was distilled into five broad areas of focus. In the second half of the workshop, participants gathered in five groups to brainstorm solutions to the problems identified earlier. Respectful and robust discussions were held, where all people were encouraged to be heard and listened to. A safe environment was created to allow for creativity, disagreement and dispute resolution.

Table 1 is the outcome of this meeting which collates the top concerns identified by each group. Importantly, this list of requests is supported by the whole group and represents the outcomes the Moreland community want to see as part of the LXR. P. For a list of organisations endorsing this document, see Appendix A. Note, the numbering does indicate the level of priority. All outcomes are sought in equal importance.

Table 1 – the Moreland Community’s list of requests to improve the Upfield corridor as part of the LXRP

No.	Theme	No.	Request	Rationale
1	Heritage	a	Heritage places, buildings, and vegetation, including mature trees, Coburg and Moreland Stations, gates, signals, signal boxes, and pedestrian bridges to be preserved, retained, repurposed, or re-used. Examples include new uses as cafes, community hubs, employment/business opportunities, preserving existing uses such as booking offices.	Much of the Upfield rail corridor is covered in heritage overlays in recognition of the socially and culturally significant buildings and structures celebrating Melbourne’s industrial and rail history. These are treasured, historical relics for the Moreland Community and they should be preserved. Some could be repurposed into community-building hubs to enrich Moreland’s social and cultural life. Also, mature trees have heritage significance and must be preserved.
		b	Improved signage to assist with wayfinding and understanding of local history	New, interpretative signage would inform people of Moreland’s local heritage and stories, identifying and explaining important cultural relics, especially those with indigenous significance.
		c	Land-use diversification	Diverse uses for repurposed buildings/structures will promote diversity and inclusion.

		d	Continued visibility and integrity of heritage assets	Clear sight-lines to heritage stations should be preserved by sensitively locating new stations so as not to dominate or reduce the importance of these heritage features, as well as using heritage surfaces. Also, design and finishes of the new train stations should be in keeping with the heritage finishes and colours of the area. This in itself will ensure that the new stations do not detract from the significance of this heritage area.
2	Public transport	a	<p>Station location and access</p> <p>Coburg and Moreland Stations to be directly accessible from both sides of Moreland Road and Bell Streets, respectively (i.e. removing the need to wait at traffic signals). Achieve this by moving Moreland Station southwards so that it straddles Moreland Road with access points from both sides of Moreland Road. The same should be done for Coburg Station with respect to Bell Street (with or without platforms straddling Bell St).</p>	Improved station access is essential to allow passengers to alight the stations and make transfers to other modes conveniently and safely along this quickly developing urban, transport corridor. Crucially, the stations must be accessible from both sides of Moreland Road and Bell Street to limit the need to cross these busy roads at ground level.

		b	<p>Service integration</p> <p>Integrate all modes at train stations by creating seamless interchanges with buses and trams and increasing service frequencies.</p>	<p>The current transport interchange points at Moreland and Coburg Stations are a mess. At Coburg station, the bus stops are poorly integrated with the station, with passengers needing to cross dangerous Bell Street. Similarly, at Moreland Station, integration with the tram and bus stops is poorly conceived and makes interchanging difficult and dangerous. Services can also be infrequent, especially for the trains and buses, which also do not align.</p>
		c	<p>Accessibility</p> <p>Coburg and Moreland Stations to be accessible by both lifts and ramps.</p>	<p>Lifts on their own are an inadequate mechanism to improve access for people with mobility issues. We urge the incorporation of convenient mobility ramps to improve station access.</p>
		d	<p>Pedestrian priority at traffic lights at Moreland Road, Reynard Street, Munro Street and Bell Street</p>	<p>Traffic light sequencing at Bell Street and Moreland Road does not give any priority to shared path users. The absence of traffic signals at Reynard and Munro Streets make these crossings dangerous for all users.</p>

3	Open space	a	<p>Retain as much as possible of existing highly valued green space and vegetation, especially the significant trees and vegetation in Gandolfo Gardens and sites of Aboriginal significance.</p> <p>Increase the provision of green space and vegetation along the corridor, where possible, to improve biodiversity and tree cover.</p>	<p>The Upfield corridor and its surrounds play a vital role in supporting Moreland's urban biodiversity. In the face of global species and ecological collapse, every effort must be made to maintain and enhance the community's precious urban wildlife and greenery, and help mitigate local urban heat island effect.</p> <p>Public open space should be maximised along the entire corridor where the new tracks are located. The abutments at the ends of railway ramps should be minimised to maximise the usable space beneath the viaduct and connectivity across the corridor.</p> <p>There should be no net increase in station parking within this project. Adding station parking will increase car traffic on local roads that are already congested. Far better to improve bus, tram, bike and pedestrian access.</p>
		b	Maintenance strategy	Ongoing maintenance plan for vegetation and open space management is required to ensure the health and sustainability of these spaces. Without this, these spaces can become neglected and underutilised.

		c	<p>Improve access and useability of public green space, parks and gardens by installing amenities like street furniture (e.g. public seating), playgrounds and barbeques, especially in Gandolfo Gardens.</p>	<p>Pedestrian connectivity across the corridor should be maximised and detours around structures should be avoided by positioning works appropriately. Installation of public amenities surrounded by thriving greenery, will enhance the amenity and useability of public spaces for all. Design and choice of materials is also important, including rain-sensitive, permeable surfaces.</p> <p>New or improved playgrounds could incorporate railway themes in recognition of local history and education of young people.</p>
4	Safety and residential amenity	a	<p>Ensure new, active recreational spaces are located and designed sensitively to minimise impacts on sensitive, residential areas.</p> <p>Sensitively designed, new lighting along the Upfield Corridor to improve safety.</p>	<p>While active spaces such as playgrounds and community facilities are welcomed, they should be located and designed to minimise disturbance to neighbouring residents.</p> <p>New lighting should be installed to improve safety along the corridor, but should be designed so as not to disturb neighbouring residences.</p>

		b	<p>Evidence-based information on the health, safety, noise and other amenity impacts of the design on neighbouring residents, including shade, noise and light modelling (night and day). We also request more detailed design plans to understand other impacts on nearby homes and businesses, such as overlooking and aesthetics.</p>	<p>There has been a distinct absence of detailed information on the project thus far, including at the most recent LXRП drop-in sessions on 25 May 2019, where very little additional information was provided to the community.</p> <p>We reasonably request more information from the LXRП so that the community can better understand the project and its potential impacts. This could help to ease community concerns and to foster more positive relations between the LXRП and the Moreland community.</p>
		c	<p>Ongoing maintenance plan</p> <p>We request the LXRП release an ongoing maintenance plan for the management of new spaces and community infrastructure which provides maintenance budgets for the entire lifecycle of new infrastructure and facilities.</p>	<p>Without a budgeted, ongoing maintenance plan, the new facilities could become underutilised, damaged and unsafe.</p>

5	Cycling and pedestrian access	a	<p>Construct an elevated 'veloway' for commuter cyclists to run alongside the entire length of the new SkyRail structure.</p> <p>A veloway is intended primarily for fast-moving commuter cyclists who don't need frequent access points to the local road network. People making more localised trips will use ground level paths (see 5.b).</p>	<p>Moreland has one of the highest rates of people who commute to work by bike in Victoria. This will become busier with urban development and upgrades to the Cumberland Road bike path linking more bike riders to the Upfield Shared User Path.</p> <p>A fast, direct route via an elevated veloway will help to alleviate congestion along this busy corridor and encourage mode shift towards cycling, thereby reducing the burden on the road and rail transport network.</p> <p>For safety reasons, it is important to separate faster moving cyclists from pedestrians at intersections and station precincts.</p> <p>Given the importance of this corridor to the broader strategic cycling network, we do not support suggestions for the veloway to be added 'at a later date'. This structure must be included as part of the current LXP project.</p>
		b	<p>At ground level, construct two, physically separate paths - one for cyclists, and one for walkers and people with wheelchairs.</p>	<p>We request a ground-level bike path and a ground level pedestrian path, separated physically from each other. A single path 'separated' by a white line is not considered acceptable.</p> <p>The ground-level bike path will serve a different purpose to the veloway, allowing cyclists to make local trips. This must be physically separated from the ground level pedestrian path to minimise conflicts and ensure safety for all users.</p>

		c	<p>Prioritised signalling at each crossroad for Upfield Shared Path users at ground level.</p> <p>For example, at Bell St, the path crossing should be green at the same times that Sydney Rd and Hudson St movements are green (as opposed to the current arrangement with much longer wait times for path users).</p>	<p>The Upfield Shared User Path crosses four major roads within 1.5km in the project area (Moreland Road to Bell Street), with no priority given to these users. This makes the journey slow, inconvenient and dangerous.</p> <p>Given that the primary purpose of the LXR is to improve traffic flow, the lengthy wait times at crossroads for shared path users is likely to deteriorate, unless priority is given to these users.</p> <p>Thus, we request signalised crossings at each road with greater priority given to shared path users to make the journey safer, faster and more convenient.</p>
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Further comment on the consultation process

As identified above, there was pronounced dissatisfaction expressed in the meeting as to the standard and breadth of information supplied to the community in the consultation process. People noted that the scope of the project had increased substantially with no opportunity to give input on the new scope. There was a significant proportion of the community who called for a clear and transparent explanation of project design decisions and the criteria used to make those decisions, so that the community can understand why decisions have been made and how.

In light of the above, we make the following additional requests:

1. Clear information about the decision criteria and trade-offs on:

- The choice between sky-rail and trench options
- Sky-rail structural options and the impacts different options have on factors such as sound levels, shading of adjacent private property, privacy, amenity of new public spaces beneath, viability of vegetated areas beneath.
- The options for the sections of the corridor between Moreland Rd and Albion St, and between Bell St and O’Hea St: We are very keen to understand the possibilities for these areas and to ensure that the potential to extend the benefits of the new linear park are fully utilised by the design.
- The options for station location and design. We are very keen to ensure our new stations make the most of the opportunities for enhanced passenger experience and precinct integration that arise from this significant public investment.

2. We request an informed question and answer session held by LXRP where design decision criteria can be discussed and explained

3. We request timely information and consultation on a range of issues around the management of the disruption that will be caused by construction during the level crossing removal project. This includes:

- How long will services on the Upfield line be shut down? Will there be one long shutdown, or a series of shorter ones?
- How will rail commuters be serviced along the entire Upfield line during the shutdown/s?
- How long will the Upfield Shared Path be closed during construction?
- What alternative, safe routes will be made for cyclists and pedestrians while the Upfield Shared User Path is closed?
- Will there be access across the Upfield line during construction, and if so, where will it be?
- How will local vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians be managed across the line access during the construction period?
- Will construction occur outside of business hours, and how will disruptions to local residents be managed?

4. We request a response from the LXRP to our this submission by **COB 25 June 2019**.

The Moreland community looks forward to improved communication and working constructively with the LXRP going forward.

Appendix A - List of organisations that have endorsed this document

- Moreland City Council
- Moreland Bicycle User Group
- Upfield Urban Forest
- Victorian Transport Action Group (VTAG)
- Climate Action Moreland
- Extend the Upfield Bike Path to Upfield Campaign
- Brunswick Residents Network
- Living Streets Coburg
- Students Linking Melbourne Sustainably (SLiMS)