

Trucks queuing at lights in Francis St Yarraville (April '06)

Eddington East-West Link Needs Assessment Study

Submission by Maribyrnong Truck Action Group

Submitted by
Peter Knight
C/O MTAG P.O. BOX 6509 West Footscray 3012
Ph 0409 797 852

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Summary of Submission

This submission focuses on issues around the effects of excessive levels of truck traffic in the inner west. It aims to engage with the statement offered in the forward of the East-West Needs Assessment Study Overview that refers to balancing, “the needs of freight traffic with the needs of residents in areas adjacent to freight movements.”¹

To that end this submission sketches the level of community concern that has arisen in response to excessive numbers of trucks. It outlines the background of MTAG and presents an overview of statistics related to truck traffic, pollution, and noise. It also details some of the relevant international research around health and safety impacts associated with truck traffic, in particular the effects of diesel pollution on health.

The chapters that follow include an overview of the results of the 2007 **Residents’ Truck Impact Study**, commissioned by MTAG, which aims to give an insight into the experience of living with uncontrolled levels of truck traffic. The study also reveals some of the health issues faced by residents living on busy roads such as Francis St and Somerville Rd (two of the transport routes specifically mentioned in East-West Needs Assessment Study Overview.)²

Chapter 5 of this submission discusses possible solutions to the problems described in earlier chapters. Specifically, MTAG proposes the following:

- That immediate action is required to restrict through-trucks (trucks without a local origin or destination) currently using residential streets as a shortcut to the Port of Melbourne and as a means of avoiding CityLink tolls.
- That tunnels will not solve the problems described in this submission and in some areas may in fact exacerbate them.
- That the long-term solution to excessive levels of truck traffic in the inner west lies in a suite of measures including: an exit from the Westgate Freeway before the Westgate Bridge to take trucks directly to the port; a link from Sunshine Road to the Westgate Freeway; measures to get more freight onto rail, and an increased commitment to public transport.

Finally, this submission outlines future directions for MTAG, in particular with regard to its role as an advocate for the communities of the inner west.

¹ East-West Needs Assessment Study Overview Page 2.

² East-West Needs Assessment Study Overview “Improving Urban Amenity.” Page 10.

1. Brief history of Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG)

MTAG was formed in late 2005 out of concern about the negative effects of the growing number of trucks using the streets of Maribyrnong. Its aim is to pressure the State Government to put some real solutions on the table by raising community awareness of the issues faced by residents in the inner west and by providing a focus for the considerable community anger that already exists in relation to truck traffic.

MTAG is not politically aligned; its members represent a spectrum of political views but share a conviction that it is time something is done to address excessive levels truck traffic and to get it off our streets.

Since its formation MTAG has had a significant impact on raising the profile of the issue of excessive truck traffic and the threat it poses to the health and safety of residents of inner west. MTAG's activities and achievements include:

1.1 November 2005: Survey of Local Councils

In the lead up to the 2006 Maribyrnong City Council elections MTAG surveyed each of the candidates asking them to rate the importance of the issue of truck traffic as an issue. Almost all candidates nominated it as the most important issue facing this area. This result was widely reported in local newspapers.

1.2 January 2006: MTAG Goes Online www.mtag.org.au

One of MTAG's important first steps was to design a website; it now receives up to one thousand hits a day and has become a destination for anyone studying the issue of truck traffic anywhere in the world. It has also been included in several university studies of the work of community action groups as a demonstration of how modern communications can be harnessed to aid small NGOs such as MTAG. Through this website MTAG has gathered a large mailing list to which regular email newsletters are sent. It also includes a public forum that now is now a major store of information regarding this issue and which has hosted many a lively debate. The site now features a live webcam revealing the traffic situation on Francis St Yarraville moment by moment for anyone who cares to log in.

1.3 February 2006 (and ongoing): Community Information Stands

MTAG has held regular stalls at local festivals such as Yarraville Festival, Carols by Candlelight and other community events to disseminate information and gather new members for the group. Membership is now in excess of 400.

1.4 March to November 2006: Letter Writing Campaign

MTAG members and other interested parties embarked on a letter writing campaign targeting local newspapers, The Age newspaper, and relevant politicians. Around 30 letters were published.

1.5 April 2006: Francis St Action

MTAG's first protest action was to blockade the intersection of Francis St and Williamstown Rd Yarraville from 8 to 8.30am. This is one of the busiest intersections in Melbourne and carries around 9,000 trucks a day. The blockade was carried out with the approval of, and assistance from Victoria Police, and was attended by around 300 residents who occupied the intersection for a short time and listened to speeches from Mayor Janet Rice, and MTAG Convenor, Peter Knight. The protest action was filmed by helicopters from two major news networks and was featured on each Melbourne television news bulletin that evening. Other media coverage of the event also included stories in The Age and Herald Sun newspapers and interviews on at least five radio stations.



Photo fig. 1 MTAG protest at cnr Francis St and Williamstown Rd April '06

1.6 May 2006 (and ongoing): Media Profile

The Francis St action seemed to kick off a huge surge in media interest in the issue which has led to articles and features including: a 10 minute detailed report on truck traffic in Yarraville on **A Current Affair**, a report on **Today Tonight** on the effect of diesel pollution on Yarraville residents featuring MTAG health spokesperson, paediatrician, Dr Zoë McCallum; a report on similar issues (again featuring Dr McCallum) in **Medical Observer** magazine; two major articles in **The Age** concentrating on different aspects of the issue; and a story on **ABC News**.

1.7 August 2006: Live Francis St Webcam Launched

In August 2006 MTAG's IT specialist set up a live webcam located in Yarraville Community Centre near the corner of Francis and Hyde streets in Yarraville. Images are streamed onto the MTAG website to enable anyone in the world at anytime to see for themselves just how many trucks use this street. The webcam has had hundreds of thousands of hits since it was launched with a flurry of local media interest.

1.8 October 21st 2006: Community Health Forum Held at Maribyrnong Town Hall

The MTAG Community Health Forum was an event that MTAG is particularly proud of. It brought together perhaps the most comprehensive panel of experts yet assembled to discuss the issues around excessive truck traffic in Melbourne's inner west. The panel members were: Dr Tom Beer (CSIRO diesel pollution expert) Horst "Oz" Kayak (RMIT transport expert) and Cr Janet Rice (Chair of the Metropolitan Transport Forum). In addition, Martin Wurt (Oxfam) contributed a brilliant DVD presentation and valuable input also came from Royal Children's Hospital paediatrician, Dr Zoë McCallum. The forum led to the creation of a body of information in PowerPoint form now available for anyone to access from the MTAG website, it was also widely reported in the media particularly on the ABC which carried a feature story. The forum was funded and made possible by the Maribyrnong City Council.

1.9 November 2006: State Election Campaigning – Register a Protest Vote Against Labor

In the run-up to the State Government elections 2006, MTAG was led to believe by government sources that the Transport and Liveability Statement would contain measures to take trucks off the streets of the inner west. However, instead of spending money to alleviate the dangerous situation on Francis St Yarraville, the Transport and Liveability Statement allocated 19.1 million dollars to a truck bypass for Plummer St Port Melbourne; a street that carries about a quarter as many trucks. The politics were not lost on MTAG: Melbourne Ports, the seat in which Plummer St lies, is held by a much lower margin than Footscray and

so it seemed obvious that the money had been spent to shore up local member John Thwaites' electoral position. Angered by this decision MTAG members decided it was time for radical action and embarked on a campaign for a protest vote against Labor. MTAG printed 20,000 flyers and letterboxed most of the electorate.

The election result seems to suggest that the MTAG campaign was effective with a 6% drop in the primary vote for Labor and an average drop of 9% in the booths most affected by trucks. The election also delivered an upper house seat to The Greens' Colleen Hartland who has a long history of supporting the campaign against excessive truck traffic in Yarraville and surrounding suburbs.

1.10 April 2007: Truck Traffic Impact Study

MTAG most recently commissioned an independent study to provide insights into the perceived health impacts on residents of Yarraville and Footscray caused by increased levels of truck traffic in Yarraville and Footscray. The Truck Traffic Impact Survey was designed to measure the effects on residential amenity in areas that experience excessive levels of truck traffic and has had an excellent level of response. The survey results and questionnaire feedback was collated and independently analysed by a high profile firm specialising in the interpretation of qualitative research. The study will provide some measure of the effects of truck traffic as experienced by residents in the inner west in addition to insights into residents' perception of truck traffic impact on their lives. (Results contained in Chapter 5 of this submission).

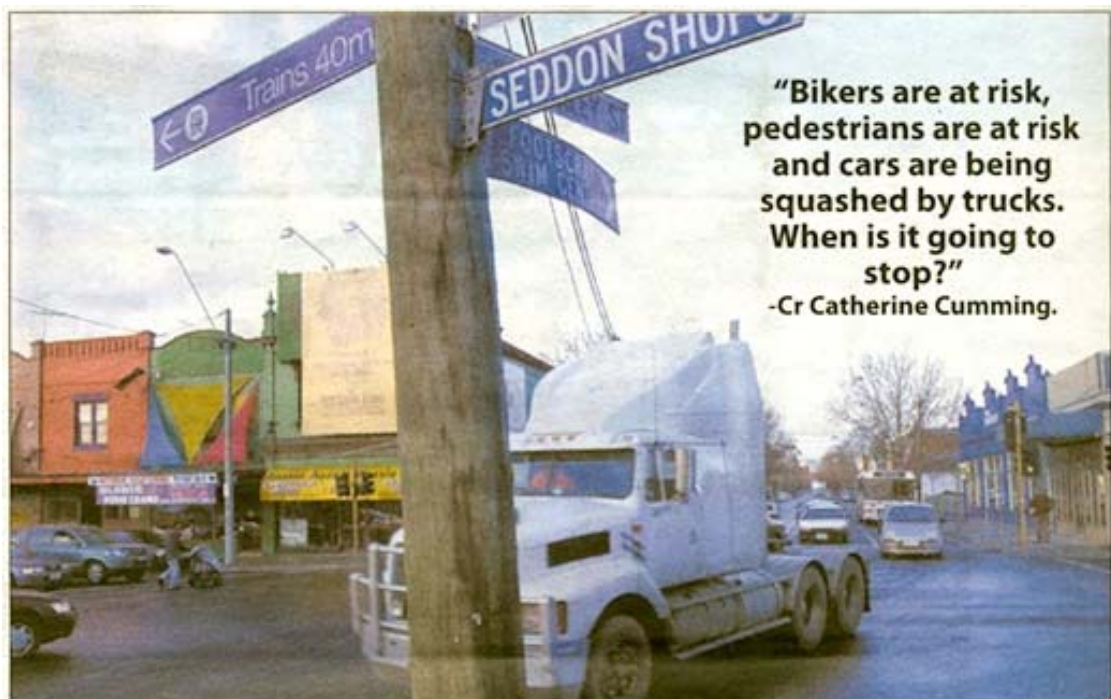


Photo Fig. 2 Article in *Western Times* August '06

2. Statistical Overview: A Summary of Research Detailing Air Quality, Truck Numbers, and Truck Noise Pollution in Yarraville and Surrounds

2.1 Truck Counts in Yarraville

After the completion of the Western Ring Road in 1996 and CityLink in 1999 levels of truck traffic in the inner west increased dramatically. Currently at least 20,000³ heavy trucks a day presently use residential streets in Maribyrnong.

VicRoads conducts an annual traffic count survey on major truck routes in Yarraville and Hobson's Bay. The counts have been taking place since March 2002 and give total vehicle numbers as well a truck numbers. The survey also gives separate figures for weekday curfew hours.

The roads that Vic Roads includes in its survey for Maribyrnong include Buckley St Footscray, Somerville Road, Francis St, Williamstown Rd, and Hyde St Yarraville. Other roads in Maribyrnong that carry significant numbers of trucks, but which are not included in the count are Whitehall St in Yarraville, and Geelong Rd, Moore St and Dynon Rd in Footscray. Without the inclusion of these roads it's impossible to know the actual number of trucks using the streets of the inner west or indeed the full impacts of the curfews: it is suspected that the curfews simply force trucks onto other inappropriate residential streets. MTAG has not been able to obtain a satisfactory explanation as to why these other streets are not included in the truck count.

Total Truck Numbers

Total truck numbers, for the streets included in the count in 2006, was 21798 per day. This number has stayed relatively stable over the five-year history of the counts. However individual numbers on certain streets have increased significantly:

- 15% increase on Buckley St Footscray, east of Victoria St from 2002 – 2007
- 14% increase on Somerville Rd, east of Williamstown Rd from 2002 – 2007
- 10% increase on Francis St, east of Williamstown Rd from 2002 – 2007
- 3% reduction on Francis St, east of Williamstown Rd from 2002 – 2007; The overall number on the length of Francis St has increased slightly
- 22% increase in trucks on Hyde St, south of Francis St from 2005 – 2006

Weekday Curfews

During curfew hours on weekdays the truck counts showed an overall reduction of truck numbers of 22% in 2006. Although this figure indicates the curfews are a success other non-curfew roads carry a big burden during the curfew. For example Buckley Street in 2006 saw an increase of 99% in trucks during curfew hours and Hyde St, south of Francis St saw an increase of 19% from 2002-2006.

Roads that showed a reduction in numbers during weekday curfews are:

- 44% reduction on Williamstown Rd, south of Francis St from 2002 – 2007
- 63% reduction on Francis St west of Williamstown Rd from 2005 – 2007

Noise and air pollution monitoring by EPA have shown the curfews to have almost no impact on particle concentrations or noise levels. The curfews do provide some improvement to residential amenity in some streets but much more needs to be done. (Please see Chapter 6 of this submission for details of MTAG proposal).

³ Figures published by VicRoads. NB The last complete truck count was carried out by VicRoads in 2006. There are some figures from the March 2007 count, which are used where possible in this analysis. The VicRoads count does not include Whitehall St in Yarraville, Geelong Rd, Moore St and Dynon Rd Footscray.

2.2 EPA Monitoring on Francis St Yarraville

The Victorian EPA undertook local air monitoring on Francis Street in June and July 2001. Of major concern to local residents were the findings of high levels of particle concentrations that exceeded the EPA's own intervention levels. The EPA results indicated that the health of local residents was at risk particularly for residents with pre existing health conditions.

The EPA measured for airborne concentration of coarse particles, PM10 and fine particles, PM2.5. On five days the EPA intervention level of 60ug/m³ for PM10 was either reached or exceeded. Measurement of fine particles PM2.5 also showed the intervention level of 36ug/m³ was either reached or exceeded on five days.

As part of this monitoring the EPA compared the results at two other testing stations in Lord Street Richmond and Wingrove Street Alphington. The results showed that Francis Street had concentrations of particles approximately more than 30-40% higher than these other two sites. Significantly these results were also compared to the EPA's particle monitoring site on Hoddle Street in Collingwood. Over a 12-month period the results from Hoddle Street ranged from 6 ug/m³ to 47 ug/m³, well within the intervention level of 60 ug/m³ and significantly lower than Francis Street

These results show that Francis Street, which is a residential road of only four lanes, experiences vastly more particle pollution than Hoddle Street, a non residential road with eight lanes of traffic. The EPA attributes this result to the higher levels of trucks on Francis Street.

The EPA's State Environment Protection Policy for Air Quality Management sets intervention levels, which if exceeded, trigger action to further investigate and improve local air quality. These triggers are risk-based concentrations set for the protection of human health. In response to these triggers VicRoads introduced night curfews on Francis Street and Somerville Rd in April 2002.

The EPA then carried out further testing in 2002 to measure the impact of the curfews on air quality. The overall particle concentrations in 2002 were lower than those previously measured. However, after comparisons with sites in Richmond and Alphington the EPA concluded that this had more to do with prevailing wind directions than the curfews. This was confirmed by checking wind speed measurements during the air quality measurements in both 2001 and 2002, which found greater wind speeds in 2002. Higher wind speeds disperse the particles over a larger area thus giving lower concentration readings.

These results demonstrate that night curfews are completely inadequate in decreasing the airborne particle concentrations for residents on Francis Street. The State Government claims that curfews have had significant positive outcomes for residents, however while noise pollution has reduced during night time hours, the EPA findings reveal that curfews have minimal impact on airborne pollution levels.

The EPA has not returned to Francis Street to monitor air quality since August 8, 2002.

2.3 Truck Noise on Francis Street Yarraville

The Victorian EPA conducted noise monitoring on Francis Street Yarraville in 2001. The monitoring found that residents on Francis Street experience traffic noise that exceeds many traffic noise objectives currently in use in Australia.

As a consequence the EPA then followed up with further noise monitoring in 2002 to measure the impacts of the night truck curfews introduced in the interim. These new measurements showed a slight reduction on weekends but showed similar results for

weekdays. The highest reading taken, averaged over a 24hr period, was 70.5dB (average) measured on Wednesday 25 March 2002.

There are currently no VicRoads noise objectives for ‘arterial’ roads such as Francis Street even when, like Francis Street, they are lined on both sides with residences. VicRoads does, however, have a policy of retrofitting noise barriers on freeways where noise exceeds 65dB (average). Francis Street noise exceeded this level on 18 of the 22 days that VicRoads measured noise following the introduction of the night curfews.

If Francis St were a freeway VicRoads policy would be impelled to ensure that noise barriers were implemented to protect residents from the truck noise. VicRoads, for the past four years, has been developing a State Environment Protection Policy (SEPP) that will set noise objectives for arterial roads. This policy has still not been completed despite being promised years ago.

MTAG’s recent **Residents Truck Impact Study** (Chapter 5 of this submission) found that 55% of respondents reported their sleep was usually affected by truck noise. The impacts of noise on health and wellbeing can be serious. Researchers at Berlin's Charite University Medical Centre have now found new evidence that "chronic exposure" to traffic noise can increase the risk of heart attacks. The researchers, lead by Dr Stefan Millich, say the threshold at which the risk occurs “appears to be around 60 decibels”⁴ – that’s over 10 decibels lower than the average traffic noise measured on Francis St over 24 hours by the Victorian EPA (as outlined above). In addition to the increased risk of heart attack, other physical health problems associated with chronic exposure to traffic noise include hearing loss and raised blood pressure. There are also well-documented psychological effects that stem from annoyance and sleep deprivation such as depression and anxiety. In 1999, research at the University of Chicago also showed a very clear link to sleep deprivation and diabetes.⁵



Photo Fig. 3 Truck running a red light, Francis St Yarraville Sept ‘06

⁴ http://www.transscan.com/highlights/2006/2006-02_traffic-noise.asp

⁵ Spiegel, Leproult, Van Cauton. 1999. “The Impact of Sleep Debt on Metabolic and Endocrine Function.” *The Lancet* vol. 354 October 23rd

3. Review of Research on the Effects of Diesel Pollution on Health

After the completion of the Western Ring Road in 1996 and CityLink in 1999 levels of truck traffic in the inner west increased dramatically. Currently in excess of 17,000⁶ heavy trucks a day presently use residential streets in Maribyrnong.

Francis Street Yarraville carries a great deal of this truck traffic (around 7000⁷ trucks a day), it is a residential street lined on both sides with houses, it is also fronted by a community centre and a childcare centre, in addition there is a primary school less than 100 meters from the street. Francis Street has the dubious claim to fame of the highest levels of diesel pollution recorded in any residential street in this country and is probably the unhealthiest street in Australia. Even in global terms it appears that Francis Street is among the worst streets in the world in terms of pollution and truck traffic, and is comparable with one of the most controversial pollution issues in the USA, which is the area around the Port of Oakland near San Francisco California. The notorious Richmond Parkway has recorded pollution levels 40 times higher than the Californian average, it carries 7000 trucks a day (a similar level to that of Francis St Yarraville) and the deleterious effects of pollution on residents' health are well documented in a recent **Pacific Institute** report⁸ which states, "there are 40 toxic components in diesel exhaust including formaldehyde, benzene, acrolein and diesel particulate matter. These toxic air contaminants are **dangerous to health even at extremely low levels**, and there is no level at which these pollutants are considered safe."⁹

While Francis St may be one of the most polluted streets in the world, and certainly carries the highest volumes of truck traffic in Maribyrnong it is, unfortunately, not the only street in our municipality blighted by excessive numbers of trucks. Some of the other streets with major problems caused by trucks include: Somerville Rd and Hyde St Yarraville, Paramount Rd, Dempster St and Sredna St Brooklyn, Williamstown Rd Kingsville, Buckley St, and Moore St Footscray.

Scientific evidence shows that people living, working, going to school, or attending childcare centres and kindergartens in these streets and surrounding areas are in real danger. According to the **Sydney Morning Herald**, it appears that children living close to pollution hotspots are "12 times more likely to die of cancer than those who don't."¹⁰ **The Herald Sun** also published an article headed 'Cancer Link to Fumes', which quoted the **Cancer Council of Victoria's** Professor Mark Elwood: "Chemicals in diesel emissions are cancer causing agents, we know that."¹¹ Another study completed in 2006 at **Birmingham University** by renowned researcher, **Professor E G Knox**, studied the birth and death addresses of all children in Britain born between 1955 and 1980 in Great Britain who died from leukaemia or other cancer during those years. The study concluded, "**Child cancer initiations are strongly determined by prenatal or early postnatal exposures to engine exhaust gases**, probably through maternal inhalation and accumulation of carcinogens over many months. The main active substance is probably 1,3-butadiene."¹² 1,3-butadiene is one of the main pollutants in diesel emissions.

⁶ Figure supplied by VicRoads truck count March 2007

⁷ Figure supplied by VicRoads truck count March 2007

⁸ http://www.pacinst.org/reports/west_county_diesel/west_county_report.pdf

⁹ CARB. "The Toxic Air Contaminant Identification Process: Toxic Air Contaminant Emissions from Diesel-Fueled Engines". www.arb.ca.gov/toxics/dieseltac/factsht1.pdf

¹⁰ Sydney Morning Herald. August 12th 2005

¹¹ Herald Sun. 11th September 2005

¹² Knox, E.G. 2006 "Roads, Railways and Childhood Cancers." *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. 60:136-141

In addition to the findings quoted above:

- The **US Environmental Protection Agency** in 2002 concluded that diesel exhaust is a "likely human carcinogen", and a "chronic respiratory hazard to humans."¹³
- In 2003 **Dr Lyn Denison**, Principal Scientist on Air Quality at the **Victorian Environment Protection Authority** told the ABC, "Diesel is considered to be a carcinogen."¹⁴ Acute myeloid leukaemia (cancer of the bone marrow), for example, is linked to benzene, a component of diesel exhaust.
- Adverse effects of exhaust pollutants now reported to include: increased infant mortality (**New Scientist July 3, 2004**); chronic deficits in lung development of children aged 10-18 years (**New England Journal of Medicine, September 9, 2004**); acute heart attacks (**New England Journal of Medicine, October 20, 2004**); and an association between ovarian cancer and exposure to diesel exhaust fumes (**International Journal of Cancer, August 20, 2004**).
- A compound found in diesel exhaust fumes may be the most carcinogenic agent ever analysed according to Japanese researchers (**New Scientist, October, 1997**). They warn that heavily loaded diesel engines are a major source of the chemical and that it could be partly responsible for the large number of lung cancers in cities, in tandem with tobacco smoking.
- Even the **World Health Organisation** recently reported¹⁵ its serious concern about the health effects of vehicle pollutants and of the cancer-causing polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which can coat fine exhaust particles or exist as vapours. Diesel exhaust is around 40 times more carcinogenic than cigarette smoke on a weight/volume basis (**Gong and Waring, 1998**). Up to a fifth of lung cancer deaths are attributed to exposure to fine particles of vehicle exhausts.
- **A UK study**¹⁶ looked at 24,458 children dying of leukaemia and cancer in the UK over a 25-year period. It found that these children were 35 per cent more likely than chance to have lived within 4km of a major motorway.

The planned expansion of the Port of Melbourne will result in even more trucks on our streets. The Port of Melbourne's own studies predict a doubling of truck traffic in the next ten years if channel deepening and port expansion go ahead as planned. The State Government's proposal to increase the amount of freight carried by rail will only take a fraction of the extra traffic.

This could make a situation, which is already completely unsustainable even more extreme. It is obvious from the research quoted above, that diesel pollution levels recorded in the inner west are dangerous to the health of residents. Given this growing body of evidence, it is incredible that the State Government has allowed this situation to worsen so dramatically in the last ten years, and even more disturbing that it has given the green light to port expansion without any firm plans in place for how to manage the extra traffic this expansion will generate.

The following map shows the proximity of current truck traffic routes to the many schools,

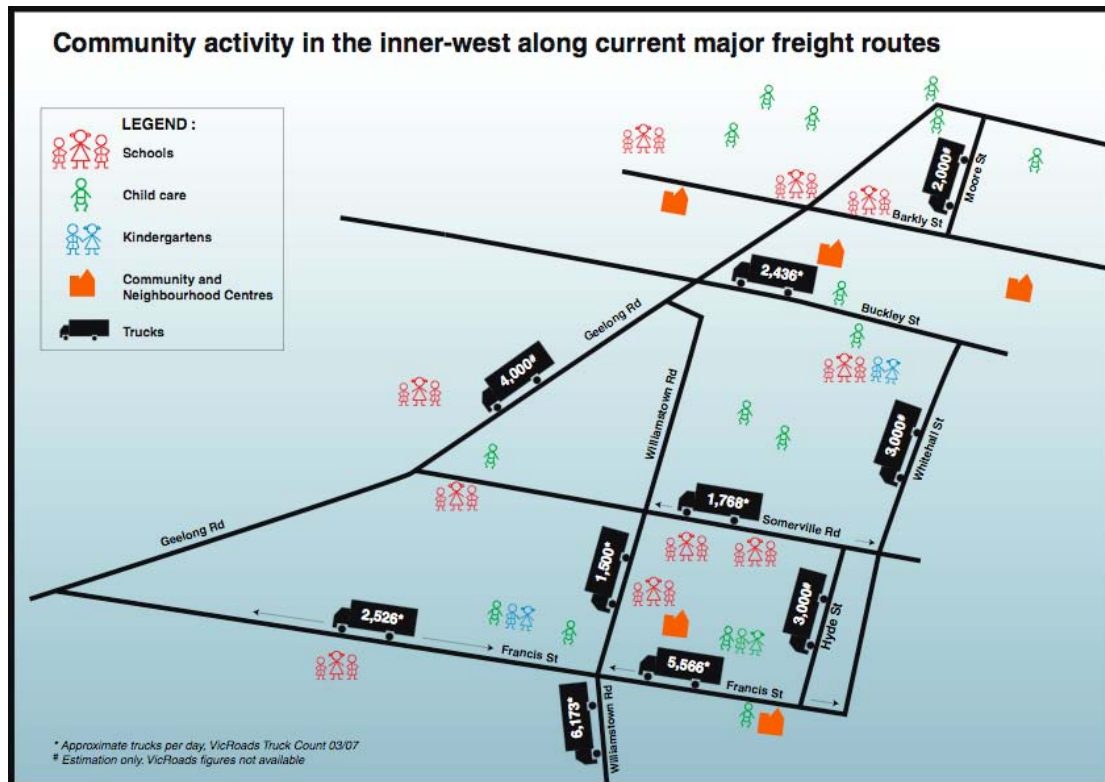
¹³ <http://www.epa.gov/>

¹⁴ <http://www.abc.net.au/health/regions/features/diesel/default.htm>

¹⁵ <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=3861>

¹⁶ Alexander, Freda E. 1999. "Clusters and Clustering of Childhood Cancer: A Review". *European Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol. 15, No. 9 pp. 847-852

childcare centres and kindergartens that cater for the large number of children who live in Yarraville and Footscray. This is a fast growing area and most of the people moving in are young families or couples wishing to start a family. The **ABC Health Report**, in a major investigation of the health hazards faced by the residents of Yarraville, stated that the, **“high hazard zone for health is considered to be 150 metres either side of busy roads - particularly within 50 metres.”**¹⁷ Most of these centres fall within that high hazard zone:

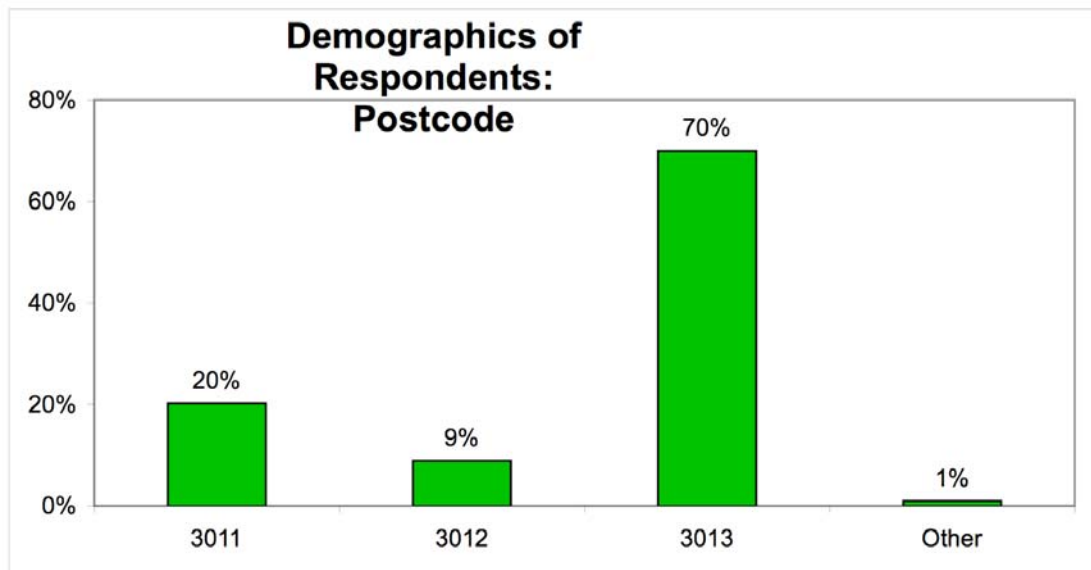


Map Fig. 1

¹⁷ Horstman, Mark “Dirty Diesel.” *ABC Radio National* 3rd July 2003
<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/helthrpt/stories/s838424.htm>

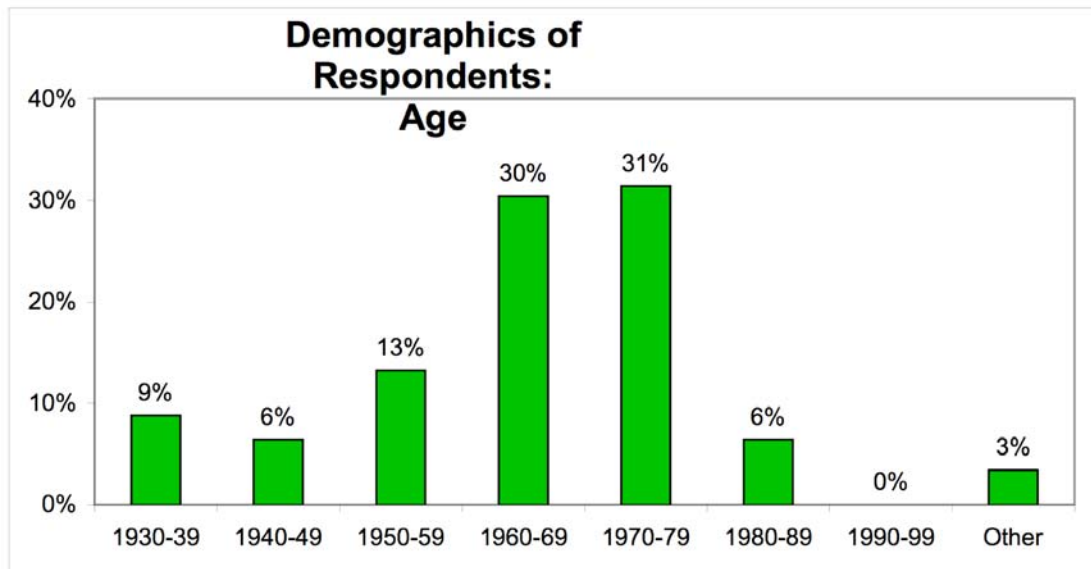
4. 2007 Truck Traffic Impact Study: Overview of Results

In April of this year MTAG commissioned a study into the impact of truck traffic on residents of the inner west. Approximately 1000 surveys were distributed throughout Yarraville, Kingsville, Seddon, and Footscray. Of these 500 were placed in letterboxes on the major freight routes of Francis St, Somerville Rd, Williamstown Rd and Buckley St. The remaining surveys were distributed through childcare centres, schools and via the MTAG website. (Refer Survey Fig. 1). Around 300 of these surveys were completed and returned; a number of other surveys came from respondents through the MTAG website. (Please refer MTAG website for copy of survey questions¹⁸)



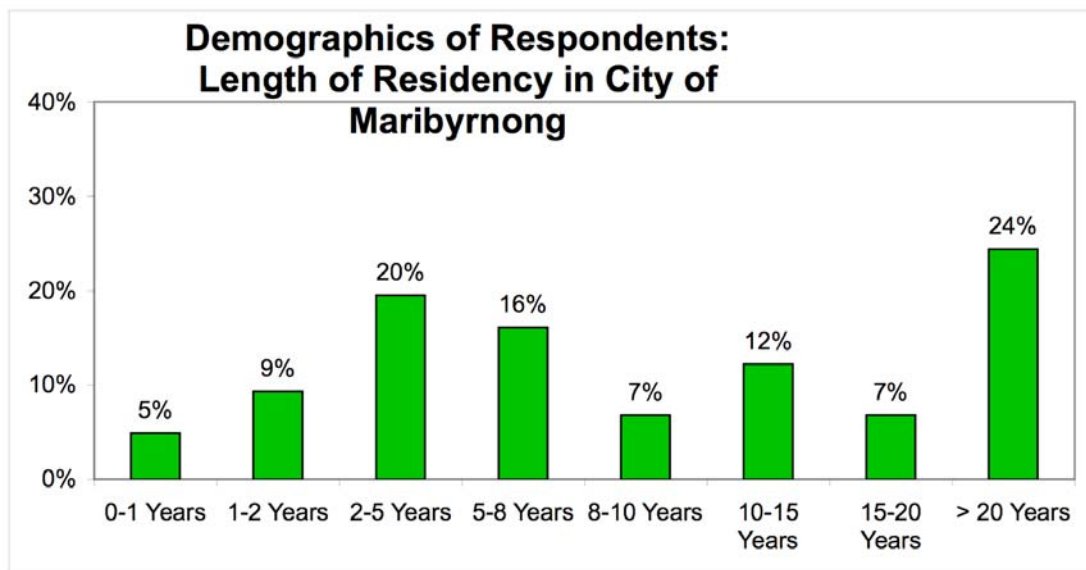
Survey Fig. 1

The birthdates of respondents and the length of time living in area are shown in Survey Figs. 2 and 3



Survey Fig. 2

¹⁸ <http://mtag.org.au/NEWS/2007/04/30/yarraville-and-footscray-residents-perception-survey/>



Survey Fig. 3

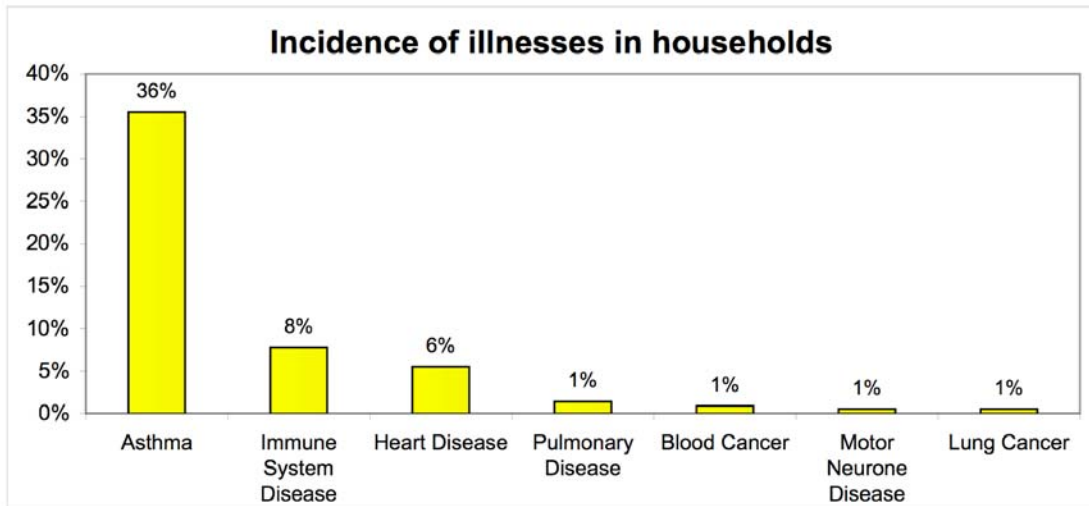
The MTAG Residents' Truck Impact Study was undertaken to gain some insight into how residents experience the effects of excessive truck traffic. Residents were asked to record the incidence of physical ailments that are often associated with airborne pollution such as asthma, and to record the perceived effects of truck traffic on sleep patterns and the like. In addition, residents were asked to record their feelings and thoughts about the issue of truck traffic in their own words. Some of these accounts are quoted in the following paragraphs as they give perhaps the most vivid picture of the situation faced by residents living in Melbourne's inner western suburbs:

"The intensity of the truck traffic on Francis Street is simply unbelievable. I honestly just didn't believe that it would be allowed to be this bad as there are HOUSES on both sides of the street. People actually LIVE here, it's not like it's just a freeway, where pedestrians and cyclists aren't allowed. And these truck drivers seem to show little or no respect for other drivers as they noisily speed down this street at all times of the day and night, pumping out their noxious diesel fumes. I find it quite astonishing, as a recent arrival here, that the curfew means nothing and that the Government is prepared to sit by and allow the residents of Yarraville to be poisoned by the diesel fumes from the thousands of trucks that use this street daily. This is no longer a crisis about traffic but one about people's health."

Survey Fig. 4 (below) shows the occurrence among respondents of a number of diseases that have been associated with airborne pollution. The incidence of asthma is of particular interest as it is nearly triple the Australian average which, according to the Asthma Foundation Victoria (2007) is 14 to 16% for children and 10 to 12% for adults. These figures are extremely alarming even given the relatively small size of the sample. Also disturbing are the qualitative observations of residents:

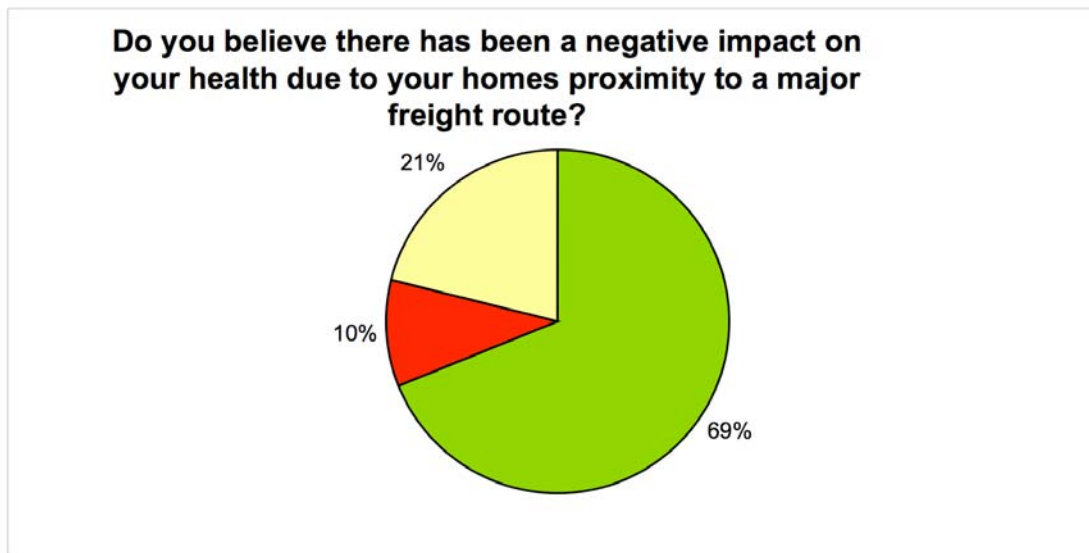
"My elderly parents suffer badly at least six to ten times a year with coughs, flu and recurring respiratory infections. This has led to depression."

"I notice that my allergies decrease when I am away from this area (i.e. coughs, eye/nose/throat infections, respiratory infections)."



Survey Fig. 4

Survey Fig. 5 and 6 (below) give an insight into residents’ perception of the impact of truck traffic and associated pollution on their health and the health of their children:



Survey Fig. 5 (green: yes, red: no, yellow: don’t know)

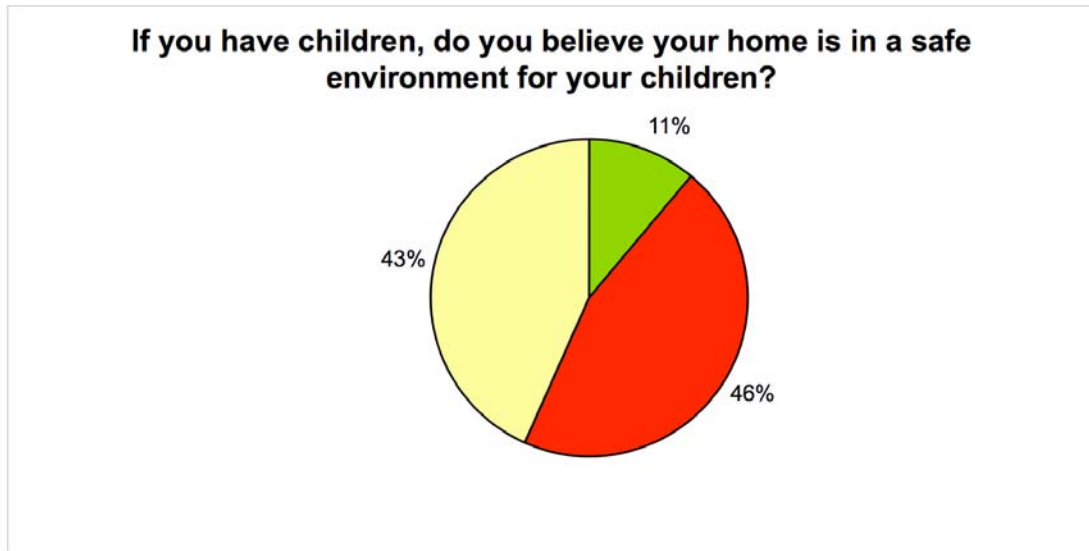
This figure (69%) paints a disturbing picture of a population where most people are living in fear for their health because of excessive levels of truck traffic.

“Living on Somerville Rd, we are constantly faced with all the dangers associated with having trucks drive past every second. We are certain that our health and living conditions would improve vastly with a significant reduction in truck volume.”

This fear is, unfortunately, not irrational and is based on a growing body of evidence. Of most concern to residents is the suggestion, contained in many recent articles, news reports, and documentaries, that it is children and the elderly who suffer most from exposure to excessive levels such as those found on residential streets in Yarraville. This research has been getting widespread publicity through the media on shows such as ABC’s Catalyst program¹⁹ and in

¹⁹ <http://www.abc.net.au/catalyst/stories/s1630007.htm>

publications including Medical Observer²⁰ and the corresponding growth in awareness about the dangers of diesel pollution is creating genuine alarm among the residents of the inner west. Our study suggests that, in areas affected by high levels of truck traffic that nearly half of all households fear for their children's health in their own homes:



Survey Fig. 6



Photo Fig. 4 Children at MTAG protest. Corner Francis St and Williamstown Rd April '06

²⁰<http://www.medicalobserver.com.au/displayarticle/index.asp?articleID=7332&templateID=105&sl=1>

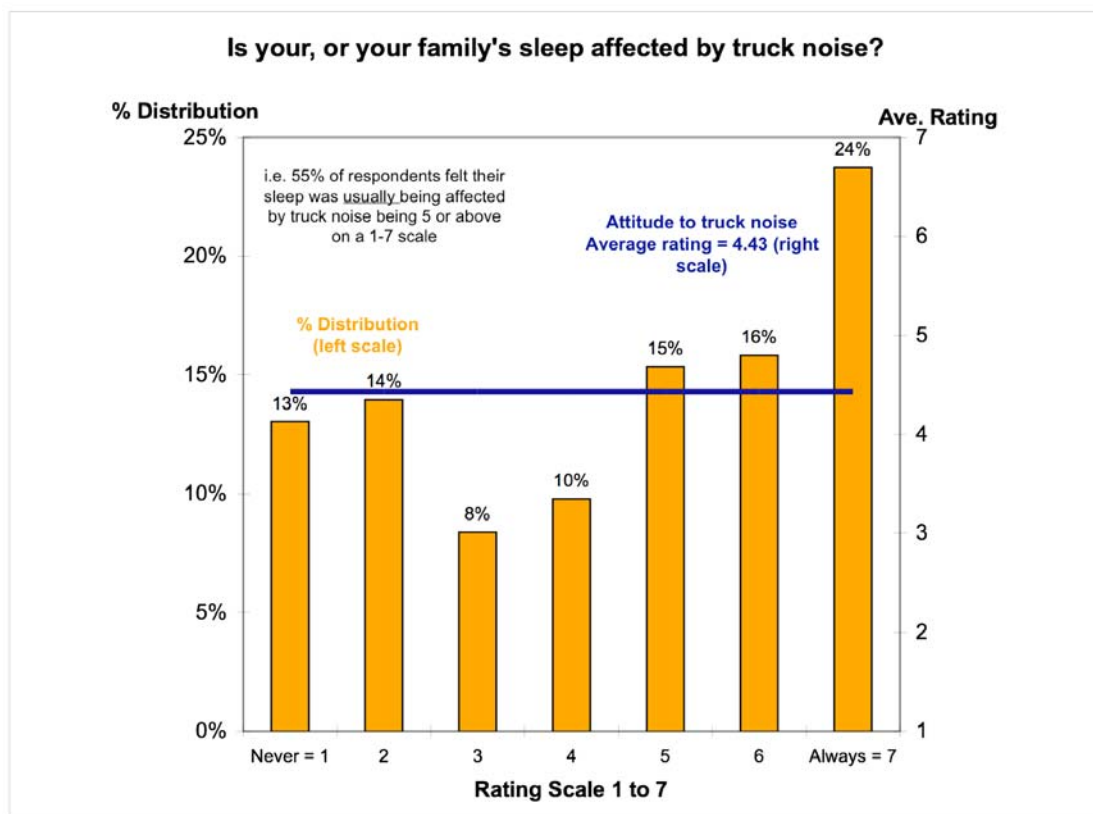
“My son and I both have an increased occurrence of bronchial/chest infections; since living here my son has developed asthma. He is the first person in both my husband’s and my family to be diagnosed with it.”

“My youngest daughter has had a series of chest infections from about two months old. My eldest daughter has been rushed to hospital by ambulance in the last year with respiratory problems. My husband has a constant cough and chest infections.”

“There is not a day that passes that I don’t worry about my son’s health. If I had more money I would not choose to live in this area. I constantly wonder if I should sacrifice economic security for the health of my son.”

“It’s always at the back of my mind that diesel fumes are falling where the children play. Almost all the local schools are on major trucks routes.”

While naturally people appear to be most alarmed by the long-term health effects of high levels of pollution, issues around sleep and general residential amenity also rated highly as among those that concerned people in relation to truck traffic. As Survey Fig. 7 (below) shows, 55% of those surveyed felt their sleep was ‘usually’ being affected by truck noise. The comments that follow suggest that this becomes a real problem when lack of sleep due to disturbance becomes chronic. And it is not just residents living right on truck routes that are affected; many complain that truck noise carries a long way, especially when inconsiderate drivers use engine brakes to slow down for lights.



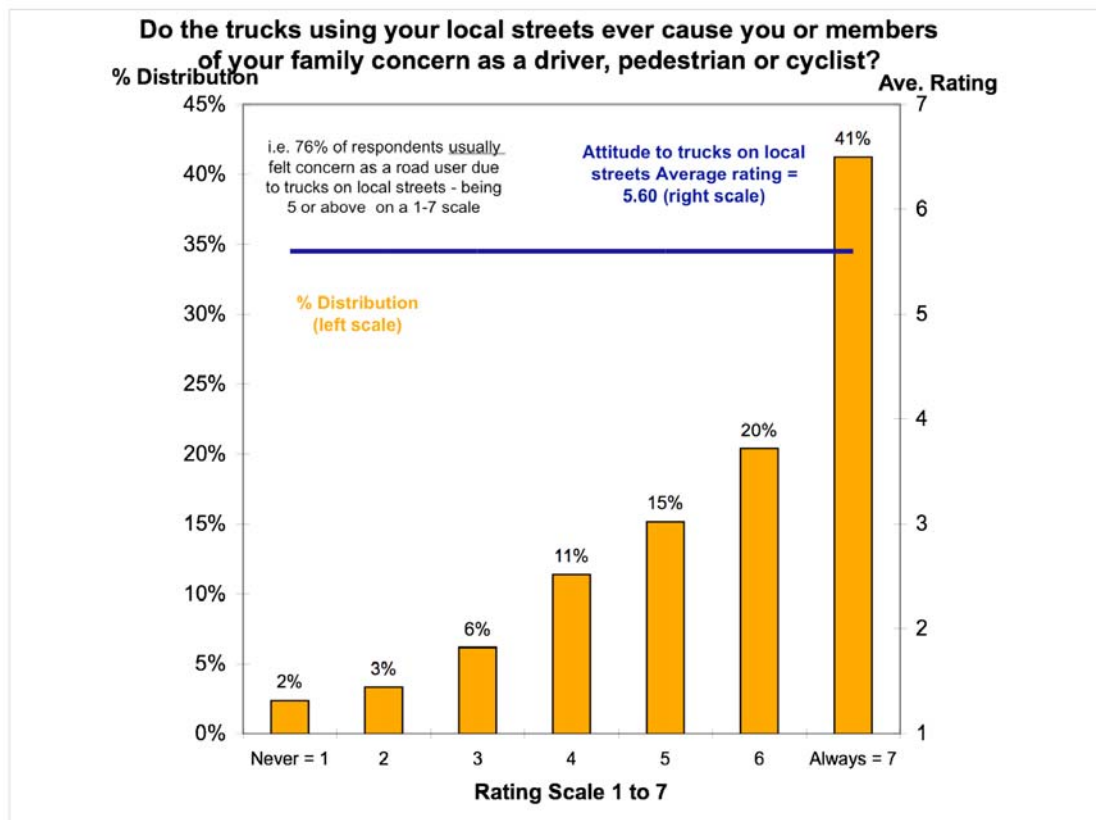
Survey Fig. 7

“When you are affected by fatigue your mind doesn’t function properly which affects you at work and home.”

“Sleep deprivation means I cannot function adequately in all areas of my life in terms of physical, emotional psychological wellbeing, in my work, relationships etc.”

“To get a good night’s sleep, I need my window open for fresh air but then it is too noisy and polluted so I have to close it. I get used to the noise, but I go away for a few nights I then find I can’t sleep because of the truck noise and their brakes wake me up. I have to wear earplugs to sleep because of the truck noise and the brakes.”

The other issue that is highlighted in the results of the survey is that people are scared of the trucks when using the streets. Indeed as Survey Fig. 8 (below) shows, a massive 78% of those surveyed ‘usually’ felt concern about trucks when using the roads in the inner west. This is borne out by anecdotal accounts told to MTAG members who find it is one of the things residents mention most often on street stalls and the like. It is also borne out by the small sample of many comments on road safety that we received in the surveys returned.



Survey Fig. 8

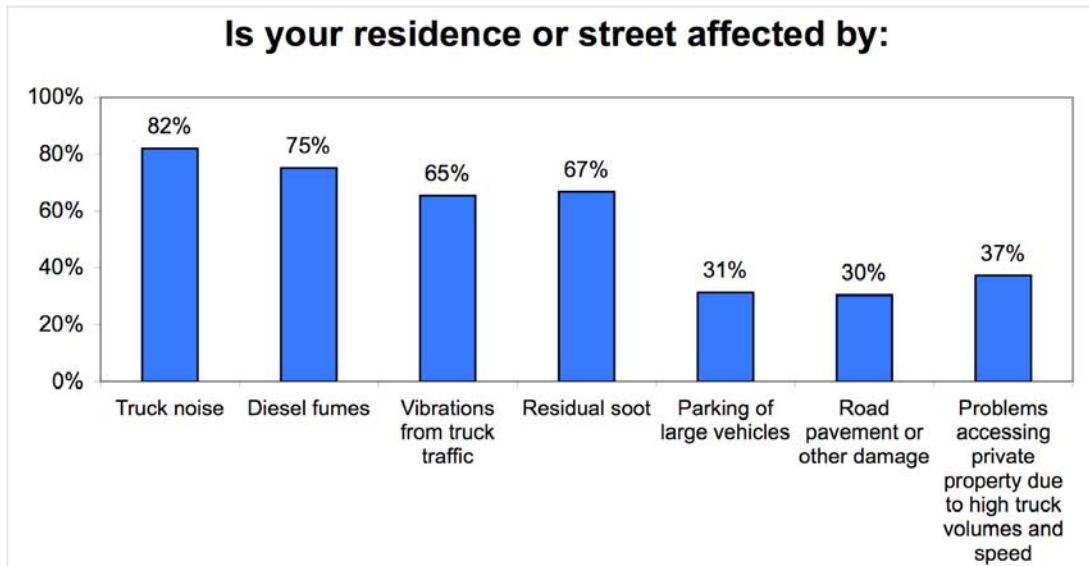
“Noise and non-compliance of road rules are a major concern. I often hear trucks slamming on brakes to stop at Hyde St lights because they are speeding.”

“I live off Francis St and when I put my indicator on to turn [the trucks] start to tailgate. If I need to make a complete stop to give way to another motorist they stop inches behind me – it’s like a deathtrap.”

“I’ve had numerous scary encounters with aggressive and angry truck drivers.”

“I can no longer enjoy time outside in my yard, even on the weekend it is oppressively noisy and big volumes of fumes. It’s distressing to drive, as the truck drivers are so arrogant. I have been driven off the road by a truck.”

Survey Fig. 9 (below) gives a summary of issues affecting residents’ homes and streets and the percentage of respondents that are affected by them:



Survey Fig. 9

“It has become so bad that we are looking at moving. The children are always sick and the truck traffic is dangerous. We love living in Yarraville but we have to put our children first.”

“My washing can’t be forgotten on the line, it gets filthy very quickly.”

“The house is always gritty due to the pollution. I can smell the petrol and diesel fumes inside my house.”

“I can’t leave the door or window open for fresh air, this is a serious problem in summer.”

“I used to live on Hoddle St, Collingwood – the reason I bought a house here was it was quieter but it is NOT and there is more residual soot than Hoddle St!”

“Some days I feel like a prisoner in my own home. I can’t open windows, spend time in my own garden, nor take the dogs for a walk.”

5. Suggested Solutions

MTAG understands that this is not a simple issue and holds that the solution lies in developing strategies for the short, medium and long term. To date the government has offered only band-aids, which have had little effect. This submission proposes adoption of specific staged measures that will solve many of the current problems created by excessive trucks on our roads, without compromising the function of the port, or the ability of industry to continue to function efficiently.

MTAG submits that while road infrastructure development is essential (as detailed below) short-term measures are also essential, because even in the best case scenario an infrastructure solution is between five and ten years away. In the meantime, without measures to prevent trucks using our streets as short cuts or as a means of avoiding CityLink tolls, thousands of children will have their health compromised by the dangerous levels of diesel pollution alluded to in other parts of this submission.

5.1 Measures for the Short Term:

MTAG recommends that these measures be adopted within twelve to eighteen months:

- **Extension of curfews on Francis St and Somerville Rd** in Yarraville to force through truck traffic to use the Westgate and City Link and at all times. MTAG is aware that during peak hours the Westgate Bridge is presently at peak capacity in one direction (inbound in the morning and outbound in the afternoons). To deal with this constraint MTAG proposes that the Westgate is re-configured to include a reversible lane adding extra capacity for peak hours in the direction of most traffic. VicRoads has already canvassed this measure, and we note that it is alluded to in the East-West Needs Assessment Study Overview²¹; it needs to be expedited to allow for immediate relief from excessive truck traffic in Yarraville.

Although truck origin and destination figures taken by the State Government during their studies have not been made public, various sources conservatively estimate that the fraction of through truck traffic (i.e. trucks without a local origin or destination) using Francis St and Somerville Rd is in excess of 40% of the total volume of truck traffic. Daytime bans on these trucks, while not eliminating the traffic problems described herein, would make a huge difference to the health, safety and residential amenity of those living in this area during the interim five to ten years between planning and development of road infrastructure.

- **Freeing up Westgate Bridge Capacity:**
Toll Avoidance by Trucks with Origins/Destinations East of the Westgate: As mentioned above, one of the difficulties faced in any analysis of this issue is that the State Government has consistently not revealed its origin/destination analysis of truck traffic. However, MTAG members have spent considerable time informally observing truck traffic in order to get some idea of where trucks are coming from and going to. An unexpected discovery was made: there is a significant amount of truck traffic with origins and destinations *east* of the Westgate Bridge using Francis St to avoid tolls on the Bolte Bridge. These trucks are travelling from the east, over the bridge and then taking the Williamstown Rd exit and using Francis St to get to the Port of Melbourne; many trucks also use the reverse route. Presumably operators believe this longer route saves them money but effectively, at present, this cost is being borne by the residents of Yarraville with the negative health and safety impacts that are detailed in this submission. MTAG submits that a ban on through truck traffic on Francis St will not only remove these trucks from Francis St but also the Westgate

²¹ East-West Needs Assessment Study Overview “Providing a Connected Road Network” Page 10

Bridge freeing up capacity on the bridge in both directions.

- **Night curfews on Buckley St Footscray:**

Buckley St Footscray has in the last few years become a major truck route. This is despite the fact that Buckley St is a narrow, winding two-lane street that cuts through the heart of Footscray's CBD and is totally inappropriate for heavy vehicles. At present there is no curfew or any other limitation on truck traffic in place on this road. This is completely inconsistent with other residential/commercial streets in Melbourne and needs to be addressed immediately with night curfews to address the most urgent concerns of residents.

5.2 Road Infrastructure Measures for the Medium and Long Term:

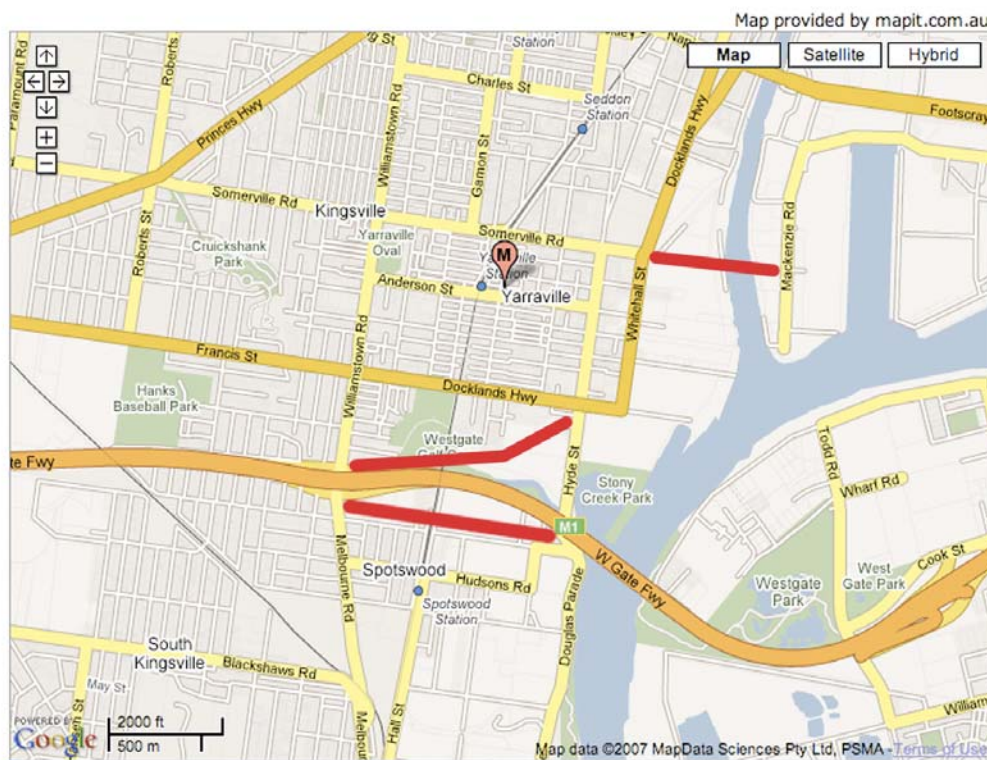
There are three main problem areas with regard to truck traffic in the inner west that require road infrastructure development as part of any solution:

- Francis St and Somerville Rd Yarraville
- Buckley St Footscray
- Paramount Rd, Dempster St and Sredna St Tottenham

Each of these situations needs to be discussed separately:

Francis St and Somerville Rd Yarraville:

The solution for the vast majority of truck traffic using these residential streets involves creating an exit from the Westgate Freeway just before the Westgate Bridge allowing trucks to access the Mobil Terminal, and the Whitehall St container yards West of the Maribyrnong without having to travel along Francis St or Somerville Rd. (See appendix Map 1 for detail). In addition, a new bridge (exclusively for trucks) should be built across the Maribyrnong near the ex-Pivot site, now owned by Port of Melbourne. This bridge would need to have an opening section to allow large boats to access the Footscray wharves area and Flemington Racecourse and could be funded by the Port of Melbourne (See map Fig. 2 below for detail, proposed route in red).



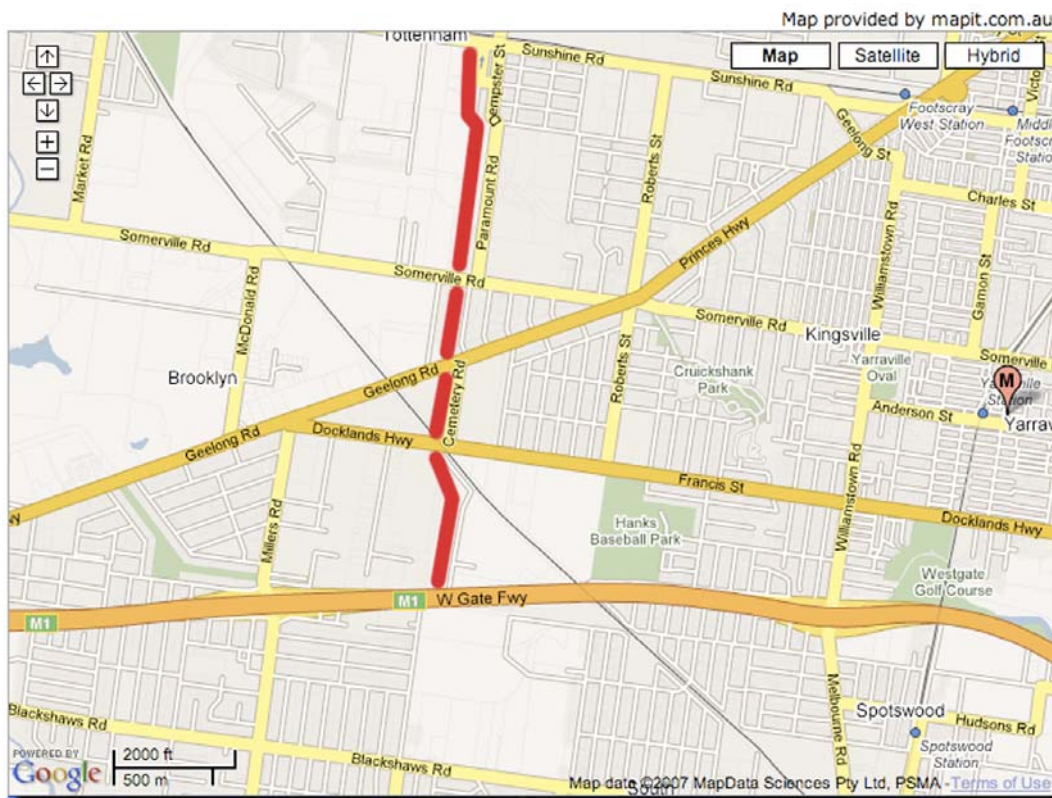
Map Fig. 2 (proposed routes in red)

Buckley St Footscray:

Container terminals and other industry in Tottenham, Brooklyn, Braybrook, and Sunshine generate much of the truck traffic using Buckley St. The most efficient solution to this problem is to create a truck route from Sunshine Rd west of Paramount Rd in Tottenham, to the West Gate Freeway. Much of the land for this route is currently unused or abuts industry. This route would also provide a convenient alternative for most of the trucks currently using Somerville Rd as a quick way to the port (See Map fig. 2 below for detail).

Paramount Rd, Dempster St and Sredna St Tottenham:

The north-south link between Sunshine Rd and the Westgate Freeway described above would also solve the conflict that currently exists in Tottenham, where B Doubles are using tiny one-way residential streets (Dempster and Sredna streets) as major truck routes creating an appalling situation for residents.



Map Fig. 3 (proposed routes in red)

5.3 Other Measures

Rail Freight:

It has long been accepted by the State Government and by most observers that we should be moving more freight by rail and less by road. Indeed it appears that the only people who diverge from this view are those with a vested interest in maintaining the present situation, which was recently described by Federal Transport and Regional Services Minister Mark Vaile as, "inefficient and Third World"²². Unfortunately however, those with vested interests form an extremely powerful lobby group. Recently, despite its stated commitment to rail freight, the State Government refused to provide subsidies to CRT, a rail company that transports containers from Port of Melbourne to Altona, to prevent it from ceasing operations. CRT complained that the Port of Melbourne failed to provide operating conditions that would allow CRT to operate on an equal footing with road access to the port facilities thereby

²² The Australian 1st May 2007

making its operation uneconomic, despite massive investment by the group. MTAG calls for a greater commitment to the development of rail infrastructure and for the dismantling of the economic impediments that port rail companies such as CRT face. These include stevedoring charges that are more than ten times higher for loading containers onto trains than onto trucks.

Stevedoring Charges that Favour Trucks over Trains:

MTAG sources have revealed that, under the current system of stevedoring charges, a truck going to the port to pick up or drop off a container pays only **\$4** to use the 'Vehicle Booking System'. On the other hand, train companies are charged an average of **\$51** per container by the stevedores to have port trains serviced. The importer/exporter directing their freight to or from the port is also **separately levied** about **\$300** in charges for the handling and management of their freight by the stevedore.

There are reasonable arguments as to why it is more difficult/expensive to service trains rather than trucks at the wharves, including the fact that a truck can drive straight to the container stack for ship loading whereas a container delivered by train must be lifted onto a truck at the wharf before transiting to the stack. However, the true value of these costs is not reflected in the differential between the charges currently laid for rail and those for road transport. MTAG proposes that the *actual* cost differential that exists between road and rail should be absorbed by the stevedores and passed directly back to the importer/exporter on a modally neutral basis. MTAG believes this proposal should also be considered in the context of Australia's two stevedores making a minimum 23% return on investment over the last five years: a better performance than any ASX200 company. There needs to be some weight given to public as well as shareholder good in this matter especially given the health and safety concerns of residents in the inner west as a result of the excessive levels of port generated truck traffic discussed in this submission.

Road Transport Container Levy:

In addition to the dismantling of economic impediments to the development of rail freight services, MTAG believes the Victorian State Government should consider putting incentives in place to encourage freight from road onto rail. The NSW State Government commissioned a report from Laurie Brereton on behalf of the Freight Infrastructure Advisory Board in 2005 in which Mr Brereton stated, "What is now needed is support for a transport strategy that delivers a significant shift in favour of rail."²³ He concluded, "A \$30 container levy would be needed to encourage the move." The Iemma Government is currently considering Mr Brereton's report; surely strategies should also be considered in Victoria if the Bracks Government is really serious about rail freight.

Public Transport:

MTAG supports the calls from many quarters for measures to move commuters from cars onto public transport, especially in growth corridors in the outer west where public transport infrastructure has been neglected. This makes sense in terms of truck traffic problems in the inner west as it will open up capacity on the Westgate Freeway for the increases in traffic associated with port expansion. Having a greater percentage of commuters using public transport will also make Melbourne a more liveable city in broader terms and, as has been widely observed, is a much more environmentally friendly solution to traffic problems facing Melbourne than the building of ever more roads for cars.

5.4 The Problems with Tunnel Solutions

MTAG is well aware that there are several proposals for tunnel solutions proposed including a multi billion-dollar link East West link under Footscray. MTAG has a number of misgivings about tunnels:

²³ The Australian June 1st 2007 "Dropped truck charges not off the rails: Iemma."

- A tunnel will create a major area of traffic convergence and new problems in neighborhoods around this convergence. Trucks wishing to use the tunnel will find new short cuts through residential streets shorten their route to/from the tunnel entrance. Many of the current truck traffic problems in the inner west worsened considerably with the completion of the Western Ring Road and CityLink, both of which were supposed to solve traffic problems. MTAG submits that if a tunnel is a part of the recommendations of this study then it is important that it is implemented with rigorously enforced truck bans on the residential streets in surrounding neighborhoods.
- A tunnel solution would almost certainly involve a toll. There are there are a number of well documented and much discussed issues around the creation of a new toll road, however, for the purposes of this submission we will concentrate on those which have relevance to truck traffic impacts in the inner west. A tunnel with a toll will in fact create extra motivation for truck drivers to find other routes to the port or sites of industry that do not involve paying a toll. As mentioned previously many of the problems in the inner west have worsened since the opening of the Bolte Bridge toll road. This is despite it being promoted as a solution to our truck traffic woes and being promoted by DOI and by the trucking industry to its *own members* as, “The Easy Way”²⁴
Truck drivers ignore these recommendations and take the stop-start routes along Francis St and Somerville Rd rather than pay a small toll. MTAG’s fear is that they would do exactly the same thing if a new toll tunnel were built.
- In addition, tunnels don’t allow for the transport of hazardous goods, which would leave a large number of trucks carrying dangerous loads using residential streets.

For these reasons MTAG is strongly recommending against the creation of a tunnel to solve problems of truck traffic in the inner west. In addition, MTAG submits that not only will the infrastructure proposals contained herein lead to better outcomes in terms of managing truck traffic, they will also cost a fraction what it would cost to build a tunnel and could be completed in half the time.



Photo Fig. 5 MTAG protest April '06

²⁴ <http://www.taxi.vic.gov.au/Doi/Internet/Freight.nsf>

6. Future Directions for MTAG

As detailed in the body of this submission, MTAG has worked hard to bring the serious issues around excessive truck traffic in the inner west to the attention of the relevant authorities and to the broader community. It is gratifying to see these problems included in the terms of reference of this study and we are pleased to acknowledge also that truck bans in central Footscray have recently been implemented.

These are the first steps towards this study's aim (mentioned in the Study Overview Forward) of, "balancing the needs of freight traffic with the needs of residents in areas adjacent to freight movements." However, while MTAG supports and applauds this objective, we reiterate just how badly imbalanced the consideration of these needs has been historically in this municipality. We also note the qualifying language employed later in the Study Overview, which states, "Heavy vehicles can reduce their use of such roads as Somerville Road and Francis Street, and the amenity of the Footscray/Yarraville area, including the Footscray Transit City, can be enhanced so that residents' needs can be balanced against the needs of heavy vehicles on such roads; environmental impacts of noise, diesel fumes and vibrations can be reduced."²⁵ In the context of this sentence it seems important to again emphasise that these roads are, in reality, residential streets.

In fact on Somerville Rd there is virtually no industry, but there are two primary schools and a childcare centre, and the street is lined with houses on both sides. The nearly 2000 trucks a day that currently use Somerville Rd do not do so out of 'need'; they do so because it is cheaper and quicker. But at what cost to the long-term health of the children and teachers that spend five days a week in those schools and the families that live in the houses?

MTAG has no desire to prevent trucks with local business to go about their business, but the 'needs of heavy vehicles' are too often confused with the 'desire' of business to use the route they think is cheapest. MTAG submits that it is time this changed and that the evidence presented herein puts a strong case that this situation is urgent.

MTAG is committed to pursuing whatever action is necessary to bring about change including researching, lobbying, and protesting. It is also presently taking legal advice as to whether the State Government may be in breach of its duty of care to the residents of Francis St Yarraville for allowing dangerous levels of diesel pollution, as a result of uncontrolled numbers of heavy trucks, to persist without remedy.



Photo Fig. 6 MTAG protest April '06

²⁵ East-West Needs Assessment Study Overview "Improving Urban Amenity." Page 10.