



Maribyrnong Truck Action Group

**Submission on the East-West
Link Needs Assessment
Final Report**

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Introduction

The Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG) is a community group that exists solely to raise awareness about the negative impacts of trucks on the amenity of Melbourne's inner west and to campaign for solutions. MTAG was pleased to submit its Eddington East-West Links Needs Assessment Study submission earlier this year.

MTAG welcomes the East West Link Needs Assessment (EWLNA) Final Report for broad community discussion across Melbourne and beyond. We support many of its recommendations for dealing with freight movements in and around the Port of Melbourne (POM) as actions which will bring great relief to residents of the inner west. The liveability of the inner west has been declining as the number of heavy trucks using its residential streets has been increasing. This increase in trucks continues to have major pollution and noise implications that impact on the health and well being of residents.

For MTAG the most critical and overarching issue is about moving freight trucks off residential streets, something which has been largely achieved (usually through effective regulation) in comparable large cities in developed countries.

Importantly the EWLNA Final Report recommendations will give the freight industry appropriate road networks away from contentious residential areas, and enable far greater volumes of freight to be moved by rail, allowing for sustainable freight movement through the inner west in the future. Long term, the productivity of this industry will benefit from the implementation of these recommendations.

The EWLNA Final Report acknowledges the negative impacts of heavy transport on residents of the inner west, issues that MTAG has been highlighting and campaigning on for a number of years. The EWLNA Study Team found "the level of truck traffic in Melbourne's inner west is unsustainable from a community amenity and safety point of view, and a solution should be sought to address the problem."¹

MTAG very much supports the report's call for priority to be given to alleviating the severity of the amenity issues along Francis Street. The estimated cost of the Truck Action Plan at \$0.5 billion is one of the most affordable recommendations in the Final Report.

The report calls for the immediate commencement of the planning for procurement and construction of the first elements of the Truck Action Plan. This is a call welcomed and supported by MTAG and the

¹ EWLNA Final Report-Chapter 6 page 165

hundreds of community members that it represents.

MTAG response to the EWLNA Recommendations.

*Please note: Because MTAG exists primarily as a community group focused on truck related issues, our comments on the Reports recommendations will primarily focus on issues related to freight and freight movements. MTAG will not offer comment where the recommendation is not of relevance to the aims of the group.

Recommendation 1: *Planning work should commence for the staged construction of a new 17 km Melbourne Metro rail tunnel linking Melbourne's booming western and south-eastern suburbs and providing a major increase in capacity of the rail network.*

MTAG supports this recommendation

MTAG gives qualified support for this recommendation. MTAG is aware that there is debate about alternatives to this tunnel proposal but gives support for this recommendation on the basis that it would provide for a substantial increase in rail capacity and services which will enable more people to use public transport. MTAG are not rail engineers and do not have a view on what is the most effective way of providing this required increase in capacity of the rail system. What is important for MTAG, is the flow on effect of decreasing congestion on roads which will allow for more capacity for freight. MTAG firmly believes that heavy trucks belong on our freeway systems and any decrease in congestion will encourage more trucks to use these appropriate roads that offer many benefits such as faster journeys, safer travel and reduced fuel consumption.

Recommendation 2: *The Victorian Government should bring forward the construction of a new rail connection from Werribee to Sunshine (the Tarneit link) to significantly improve the frequency and reliability of services from Werribee, Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo. The Government should commit to using the new rail tunnel and Tarneit link as the foundation for extending the metropolitan rail network further to the west within the next 15 years.*

MTAG supports this recommendation

MTAG supports this recommendation as it will also increase the capacity of the rail network, bringing benefits to residents in Melbourne's west. We believe the link should be constructed as an electric suburban service from the outset to enable the maximum numbers of residents in the growth areas to benefit from a rail service.

Recommendation 3: *During the planning and construction of the rail tunnel, the Victorian Government should continue to make better use of the existing*

network to increase capacity, including commencing work on the electrification of the network to Sunbury to boost services on the Sydenham line.

MTAG supports this recommendation

Recommendation 4: *Planning work should commence on the staged construction of a new 18 kilometre cross city road connection extending from the western suburbs to the Eastern Freeway.*

MTAG does not support this recommendation.

MTAG does not see this recommendation as currently necessary in terms of supporting efforts to decrease the impacts of trucks on the amenity of the inner west. MTAG believes that if other recommendations in the report are implemented including the Truck Action Plan and passenger and freight rail initiatives then the cross city road connection will not be necessary.

However if this recommendation proceeds MTAG would have a number of concerns it would like addressed:

- Locations of on/off entry points. The current problems of trucks on Francis Street, Williamstown Roads and Somerville Roads results primarily from the Williamstown Road/Westgate Freeway interchange. Trucks will need to get to on/off entry points and this may just shift trucks onto other inappropriate residential streets. Planning needs to take this into consideration so that another 'Francis Street' situation does not arise.
- MTAG is opposed to elevated freeways in neighbourhoods in the west which would have negative impacts on the amenity of communities through increased pollution, increased noise and visual barriers.
- Previous large road infrastructure including the Western Ring Road and Citylink have only added to the number of trucks in the inner west rather than reducing them. MTAG would not want to see any new large road systems adding to the existing problems of heavy vehicles using residential streets.

Recommendation 5: *Community amenity in the inner west should be restored by implementing a Truck Action Plan to remove truck traffic from local streets in the inner west. The plan should include a series of targeted road improvements that form an effective bypass around residential areas, reinforced by truck bans.*

MTAG supports this recommendation with a number of exceptions

MTAG fully supports the implementation of a Truck Action Plan that restores community amenity in the inner west. However MTAG does not support any recommendations that lead to an increase in trucks on residential streets for

other communities in the inner west of as a result of the implementation of the Truck Action Plan.

MTAG supports the following measures in the Truck Action Plan

- **New link from the Westgate Freeway to the port via Hyde and Whitehall Streets.**

MTAG would want this road to have appropriate noise barriers and for its placement to have minimal impact on existing residents by siting it on industrial land where possible. Of community concern in this area is the impact this new link may have on Stony Creek, the Westgate Golf Club and other public open space. Any loss of open space should be compensated with new open space of equivalent size. MTAG also calls for a new Maribyrnong river crossing (included in our original submission) direct to the port from Whitehall Street in the Somerville Rd area. This new river crossing would remove the current truck numbers and congestion from Footscray Road/Whitehall street intersection area leading to improved amenity for residents, passenger vehicles and cyclists.

- **Upgrade of Paramount Road south of Sunshine Road plus the extension of this road along Cemetery Road to provide a direct link to the Westgate Freeway.**

The upgraded Paramount Rd should be rerouted through industrial land west of its current alignment and west of Dempster St and Sredna St to remove trucks from the residential areas of Tottenham. MTAG would want to ensure appropriate noise barriers and compensation for any loss of public open space with new open space of equivalent size.

- **New road linking Footscray and Dynon Roads with Ballarat Road.**

MTAG supports this road but recommends it is constructed on the east side of the Maribyrnong River so as to not impact on the Newells Paddock Wetland reserve. It should be a truck only link and built as a tunnel under the parkland and where it is close to residential areas of Kensington Banks .

- **Extension of existing truck bans**

MTAG fully supports any extensions to the existing truck bans, including bans on Buckley St, Moore St and Whitehall St between Footscray Rd and Dynon Rd, in addition to bans on Francis St and Somerville Rd . These bans are an integral component of the Truck Action Plan. Without these extended truck bans MTAG does not believe that the Truck Action Plan can achieve its aim to restore the amenity of the inner west community.

The existing truck bans have not been adequately enforced and any extensions to the bans would need to be properly resourced and enforced. The current bans allow exemptions to local trucks but the definition of local is quite broad with trucks originating on the very edge of Yarraville being allowed to drive right across the suburb to access the port. Currently there

is no identification system used for local trucks which means that residents have no way of knowing if a truck is breaking the curfew or has a legitimate right to an exemption. MTAG would like to see state of the art electronic systems that automatically penalise non-exempt local trucks using non approved residential streets.

MTAG does not support the following Truck Action Plan recommendation

- Widening of Ballarat Road and Ashley Street.

MTAG does not recommend the widening of these roads as it believes these roads are residential in nature and does not support measures that will expose other residents to truck traffic and diesel pollution.

MTAG is also not in support of a direct connection between Western Ring Rd and Geelong Rd. MTAG accepts that trucks will continue to use Geelong Rd, but does not want to see large increases in truck numbers along Geelong Rd as it is a residential road. A direct connection from the Western Ring Rd would likely lead to significant increases in non-local truck numbers. These trucks should be using the Westgate freeway.

Recommendation 6: *Public transport to the Doncaster region is best provided by rapid, high quality bus services, additional bus priority measures and a major new bus-rail interchange at Victoria Park. To deliver this standard of services, the DART upgrade announced in the 2006 Meeting Our Transport Challenges plan should be introduced as soon as possible, along with additional service enhancements and bus priority measures undertaken in conjunction with Recommendation 4.*

MTAG has no comment on this recommendation

Recommendation 7: *A number of specific links should be progressively built to improve cross city cycle connections and cater to the growing number of Melbournians cycling to work.*

MTAG supports this recommendation

MTAG supports this recommendation but wants to see separation of trucks from cycle lanes. Current bicycle lanes in the inner west share road space with heavy trucks, which is dangerous from a safety and health perspective. Cyclists are often exposed to high levels of diesel pollution when forced to share roads with trucks. This situation does not encourage more people to use bicycles for commuting.

Recommendation 8: *The Victorian Government should work with local councils and relevant agencies to escalate city-wide implementation and enforcement of priority measures for trams and buses.*

MTAG supports this recommendation

Recommendation 9: *A dedicated fund should be established to facilitate the development of Park & Ride facilities, with priority given to improving access to rail services in Melbourne's west and facilitating public transport patronage in the Doncaster corridor.*

MTAG has no comment on this recommendation

Recommendation 10: *The Victorian Government should re-evaluate its 30/2010 rail target (which aims to move 30 per cent of freight from and to all Victorian ports by rail by 2010), given the clear finding by the EWLNA that it cannot be met. The Government should create a new strategy and work with industry to develop and implement a detailed action plan for moving more freight by rail.*

MTAG supports this recommendation

MTAG supports this recommendation for the Victorian Government to re-evaluate the date by which it can meet its target of 30% of freight on rail. The current target date is unachievable. Currently the amount of freight moved on rail is actually less than what was being achieved at the time the target was announced. Clearly a new strategy is needed and a new target date set, but also a strategy that is achievable with proper resourcing and a real commitment to carry out the necessary work to achieve the new target date.

MTAG supports the establishment of intermodal hubs as part of any strategy to move more freight by rail. Freight would be moved via rail from the port to a number of hubs located around Melbourne before it is transferred to trucks for delivery to individual locations. These hubs would drastically decrease the amount of port related road traffic in the inner west.

Recommendation 11: *The Government should take action to increase rail's share of freight by:*

- *Ensuring the development of a single, common user, interstate, intermodal freight terminal north of the city on the Melbourne to Sydney rail corridor*
- *Developing the standard gauge rail freight network to connect the interstate intermodal terminal with the key metropolitan freight hubs*
- *Making and announcing concrete planning decisions about the future sites for metropolitan freight hubs*

Ensuring that all future transport plans build in the connection of the Port of Hasting to the interstate standard gauge rail network.

MTAG supports this recommendation

MTAG is supportive of any initiatives that will increase the amount of freight moved on rail. Any increase in the movement of freight in this manner will reduce the number of heavy trucks using roads in the inner west which can only benefit communities through less pollution, decreased noise, safer traffic conditions and general improvements to the amenity of neighbourhoods.

MTAG also supports measures to introduce cleaner technology for trains. Currently there are no standards for pollution emissions from locomotives. Diesel pollution is a major health issue and MTAG does not want to see residents who live near rail lines to have their exposure to diesel particulates increased. Also any major increases in rail freight through the inner west should be accompanied with adequate sound barriers to protect local residents from the impact of noise.

Recommendation 12: *The Port of Melbourne Corporation should be given the overall responsibility for implementing an intermodal hub network in Melbourne, including responsibility for achieving the Government's revised rail freight target.*

MTAG does not support this recommendation

MTAG does not believe that the Port of Melbourne Corporation should be given this responsibility. While supportive of having a single agency responsible for intermodal hubs, MTAG strongly recommends that this responsibility be provided by a government agency that is transparent and accountable.

Recommendation 13: *Given the projected increase in the metropolitan freight task, the Government should take further action to improve the efficient movement of road freight by permitting the introduction of high productivity freight vehicles on designated routes.*

MTAG does not support this recommendation

MTAG does not believe that huge freight vehicles have any place using road systems within a city. This will always be an issue for trucks using the Port of Melbourne because of its location adjacent to the City of Melbourne. The only place that MTAG would support these vehicles would be travelling from intermodal hubs to other transport nodes outside of Melbourne and only when appropriate freeway systems are available. Given these constraints, it is likely that most of the freight that would be carried by such vehicles could and should be carried by rail.

The current situation where massive vehicles share the roads in inner city neighbourhoods with regular road users such as passenger vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians is one that has negative impacts on the liveability of our communities.

MTAG believes that if a decent percentage of freight was on rail, plus efficient use was made of existing truck movements such as not running trucks empty or half empty then these huge high productivity vehicles would not be necessary in the city.

Recommendation 14: *The Government should continue to implement Melbourne 2030 and take stronger action to accelerate the development of vibrant suburban hubs in Melbourne’s west, particularly Footscray, Sydenham, Sunshine and Werribee.*

MTAG supports this recommendation

MTAG supports this recommendation and sees moves to reduce truck numbers in the inner west as an important part of increasing the amenity and vibrancy of suburban hubs in Melbourne’s west. In addition to this more truck bans that are properly enforced are needed to improve these suburban areas.

MTAG also supports planning that limits and removes container yards from inappropriate areas that adds to trucks using residential streets. MTAG also supports moves to limit and decrease the number of toxic industries near residential neighbourhoods that require transport of hazardous substances through residential areas.

Recommendation 15: *Through the Council of Australian Governments – and working with the Australian automotive industry – the Victorian Government should pursue measures to bring Australia into line with European CO2 emissions standards for motor vehicles.*

MTAG supports this recommendation

MTAG is supportive of initiatives to reduce the pollution from motor vehicles. MTAG is particularly supportive of moves to make diesel vehicles cleaner by bringing forward the implementation of EURO V standards for trucks and introducing EURO V standards for cars. MTAG also supports any moves to clean up the existing truck fleet through conversions to cleaner fuels such as LPG and CNG.

These measures would see a reduction of diesel related pollution in areas close to major roads in the inner west leading to a reduction in the health risk of residents.

Recommendation 16: *The Government should develop a clear strategy for increasing the proportion of low emission, efficient vehicles operating in Melbourne.*

MTAG supports this recommendation

MTAG supports this recommendation particularly for trucks. MTAG would support moves that gave economical incentives to truck operators to embrace new and cleaner vehicles and for the availability of low interest loans to owner operators who wished to buy new clean vehicles. Other incentives such as lower registration fees and cheaper tolls on roads such as Citylink for clean vehicles would help to increase their up take in the transport industry.

Recommendation 17: *The Victorian Government should seek early discussions with the Commonwealth Government regarding a funding contribution from AusLink towards some or all of the EWLNA recommended projects. The Government should also work with the Commonwealth to extend AusLink to transport projects designed to relieve urban congestion.*

MTAG supports this recommendation

MTAG supports measures that will assist in funding projects that are associated with the Truck Action Plan and improvements to public transport contained in the EWLNA.

Recommendation 18: *The Victorian Government should consider a funding structure for the proposed new Metro rail tunnel that includes contributions by beneficiaries (including public transport users and property owners across Melbourne).*

MTAG has no comment on this recommendation

Recommendation 19: *The Government should re-evaluate its current road tolling policy to ensure that the long term benefits of new road investments can be fully realised (including public transport priority, improved cycling opportunities, road network balance and improved local amenity)*

MTAG supports this recommendation

MTAG is supportive of this recommendation and also encourages other truck related initiatives such as a levy on containers moved by trucks to encourage increased use of rail to create a more level playing field.

We strongly support any measures that would change the existing situation of toll avoidance, where there is a disincentive for trucks to use the tolled routes and so they preferentially use untolled residential streets. Truck bans will be an important part of the solution, but we would not want for example for an untolled Geelong Rd to become a preferential route for trucks compared to a tolled Westgate freeway and Citylink.

Recommendation 20: *A single statutory authority should be created to deliver the EWLNA recommended projects, using a 'corridor approach' to planning, managing and delivering the full suite of projects.*

MTAG has no comment on this recommendation