West Gate Tunnel: Another Case of Tunnel Vision?

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December 2017

Published by:
Centre for Urban Research (CUR) RMIT University, City campus
Building 15, Level 4, 124 La Trobe Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Layout and design:
Chanel Bearder

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Acknowledgement of country

RMIT University acknowledges the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations as the traditional owners of the land on which the University stands. RMIT University respectfully recognises Elders both past and present. We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of lands across Australia where we conduct business, their Elders, Ancestors, cultures and heritage.
An open letter to Victorian State MPs from internationally renowned academic leaders in transport planning, engineering and safety

Dear Mr Andrews and all Victorian State MPs,

This letter raises concerns held by internationally renowned academic leaders in transport planning, urban planning, engineering and safety about the direction of transport planning in Victoria. The signatories are deeply concerned that transport planning in Victoria currently suffers from two key deficits. First, current practice lacks a regard for good quality evidence-based planning, that is rigorous, transparent and supported by independent peer review. Second, recent decisions to proceed with proposed major road projects have not considered public transport and active transport alternatives. These inadequacies in state government transport planning stand in contrast to the transport and urban planning approaches that we teach in our classrooms and that are supported by our research findings.

Recent decisions by the State Government to pursue the North East Link and West Gate Tunnel represent a regrettable retreat from at least two decades of Metropolitan and State planning strategies which have contained strong in-principle commitments to public transport over road-based solutions.

This retreat begs the vital question at the heart of the planning process: What kind of city-region do we want to be? Cities around the world have responded to that same question by committing to expanding public transport, and in some cases, even decommissioning existing inner-city motorways. Few cities in western countries continue to build motorways that bring car-based traffic into the inner city; Melbourne appears to be one exception.

While we are equally concerned about recent announcements to build the North East Link, and the interest of some members in reviving the East West Link, the accompanying report focuses on the proposed West Gate Tunnel Project. In supporting this report, we join its authors in asking the State Government to reconsider constructing the West Gate Tunnel Project due to key concerns related to the following:

- Inability of the West Gate Tunnel Project to meet its objectives
- Project overreach and overstatement of benefits
- Adequacy of planning processes and planning strategies
- Opacity of the market-led process

Recognising the unique challenges facing Melbourne’s western suburbs, we strongly recommend that the Parliament limits its support for strategic road investment in Melbourne's inner west to building the $500 million West Gate Distributor as proposed in 2014 by the Labor Party. That project addresses the problem of access into the Port and removal of trucks from city streets in the west, without requiring large spending to move the truck noise and pollution to other residential streets.

We also ask Parliament to support urgent action for the preparation of an integrated Victorian Transport Plan, as required by the Transport Integration Act 2010. The academic community are prepared to assist in this process and look forward to future meetings. Preparation of this plan, based on long-established planning principles and processes, should occur before any further commitments are made on new large-scale transport infrastructure projects. This can be done through transparent, strategic and vision-led infrastructure planning, based on an appropriate evidence-based assessment process that considers all alternatives in terms of how well they serve to create the city in which its residents wish to live.
Signed By:

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Professor Billie Giles-Corti, RMIT University
Professor Robin Goodman, RMIT University
Professor Michael Buxton, RMIT University
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Aims of our report

This report examines our deep concerns with planning and governance for the proposed West Gate Tunnel Project (WGTP) and, by extension, with the wider context for transport planning in Victoria. We are a group of transport and urban planning academics based at RMIT University, the University of Melbourne, and other globally respected institutions. All authors of this report have extensive expertise in Victorian transport and land use planning as well as knowledge of international transport planning trends and trajectories. We have written this report to examine serious questions specific to the WGTP, but these questions can also be asked of other Victorian projects including the North East Link, and further afield with Westconnex in Sydney. These projects threaten to lock-in the serious problems of car dependency for another generation and their massive budgets will severely limit options available to governments to create better public transport, and to meet demands for investment in health, education and regional development.

This report adds to previous work in Tunnel Vision Or World Class Public Transport? How Cancelling The East West Link Can Fund Better Transport Alternatives For Melbourne? led by Professor Jago Dodson (2014). This report was critical of the East West Link, while offering alternative solutions. We argue that the WGTP should be scaled back to the original West Gate Distributor truck road, promised at the 2014 state election. Further, better long-term solutions to transport problems in the West – and across Melbourne and Victoria – need to be identified through a proper integrated Transport Plan as required by the Victorian Transport Integration Act.

We applaud the Andrews government for its decision to cancel the East West Link (EWL). The Victorian Auditor General confirmed that the business case for the EWL was extremely weak and highly compromised (Victorian Auditor-General, 2015), such that proceeding with its construction would have led to induced demand further reinforcing Melbourne’s dependency on the car, which we argued in our 2014 report (Dodson et al, 2014). In place of the EWL, the government’s key 2014 election platform Project 10,000 incorporated a suite of transport projects of great benefit to Melbourne: the removal of 50 level crossings at the fastest rate in Victoria’s history, the 9km Melbourne Metro Rail tunnel with five new city stations and enhanced capacity for the rail network, and the West Gate Distributor (WGD), a $500 million project designed to remove trucks from inner west streets with a direct route between the Port and the West Gate Freeway (Australian Labor Party, 2014).

While we acknowledge the congestion issues on the West Gate Bridge, international and local evidence overwhelmingly shows that building new or expanded roads are only ever short-term solutions. The purported travel time savings and reductions in congestion will not materialise because of induced demand, which attracts users to new road capacity and away from other modes, and we will very soon be stuck in traffic once more. Instead what is needed in an increasingly automobile-saturated city are significant and continuous improvements to public transport integration that draws travellers away from cars - both in Melbourne’s west, and across the entire metropolitan area. The WGTP thus constitutes an expensive strategic mistake.
What is the West Gate Tunnel Project?

Following the final cancellation of the EWL in March 2015, the state government announced that the Western Distributor, a $5.5 billion proposal by Transurban, would replace the West Gate Distributor (WGD) and was being assessed under the newly established market-led proposal guidelines. By December 2015, it was confirmed the project would proceed. By early 2016 the government had established the Western Distributor Authority (WDA) to oversee the project. In April 2017, the name of the project had changed to the West Gate Tunnel Project (WGTP). From May to June 2017, the community were invited to provide formal submissions as part of an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) assessment process as set out under the Environmental Effects Act 1978. This was followed by a five-week period of public hearings between August and September 2017.

On Monday 27 November 2017 the Minister for Planning gave the WGTP environmental approval.

We believe that the WGTP, being many times greater in scale than the WGD taken to the 2014 election, is an unwarranted overreach of the original aim to improve access to the Port of Melbourne and to reduce truck traffic on local streets in the inner west. The WGTP significantly expands the scope of the 2014 WGD proposal beyond anything contemplated by past state and local transport and land use policies. By building extensive new road capacity, which simply entrenches car-based transport, the WGTP will introduce new transport complexity to both the West and the remainder of Melbourne and it will compromise many decades of carefully developed aspirations for the central, inner west and north of Melbourne.

Like the EWL, the WGTP raises several issues we believe need to be addressed before further work proceeds. Our concerns relate to transport planning more generally and how infrastructure projects like the EWL, the WGT, and now the North East Link (although not the subject this report) are being proposed, assessed and procured in the absence of an overarching integrated Victorian Transport Plan.

All aspects of the WGTP design were assessed during the five-week EES panel hearing. Some of the concerns related to traffic modelling, urban design, freeway design, air pollution, noise and vehicle emission impacts have been reported in the print media (Heffernan & Lucas, 2017; Jacks, 2017; Jefferson, 2017ab) (The Age and the Herald Sun). Powerful critiques of these aspects of the WGTP can also be found in the detailed expert witness statements and many of the 500+ submissions available on the Planning Panels Victoria website (please see https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/panels-and-committees/current-panels/west-gate-tunnel).

Building on these criticisms made of the WGTP, this report has four main aims:

1. To consider the primary strategic land use, planning and governance issues associated with the WGTP,
2. To provide arguments to justify significant scaling back of the West Gate Tunnel Project,
3. To advocate strongly to bring forward construction of the Port Rail Shuttle and Melbourne Metro 2 projects as alternatives,
4. To support calls from Melbourne’s civic and community groups for an integrated Victorian Transport Plan, which conceptualises the integration of different transport modes in Victoria and is integrated with strategic land use planning and a vision for how Victorians wish to live in the future.
We address these four aims by examining four key areas of concern:

1. Ability of WGTP to meet its objectives,
2. Project overreach and overstatement of benefits,
3. Adequacy of planning processes and planning strategies,
4. Opacity of the market-led process and governance.

The only reasonable response to the EES Panel process is for the Minister for Planning to scale back the $5.5 billion West Gate Tunnel to the $500 million West Gate Distributor in tandem with truck bans on inner western suburban streets – the projects and policies the ALP was elected in 2014 to build and implement.

We also call on the Victorian Government to begin work on a consultative and integrated Victorian Transport Plan immediately.
Melbourne does not have a clear and comprehensive metropolitan strategic transport planning document – yet it is legally required by the Transport Integration Act 2010.

To the extent that Melbourne is guided by a transportation ‘strategy’ this is cobbled together from various fragmented schemes and projects. This mix includes legislation, technical reports and standards, various current and proposed transport projects, the metropolitan land use strategy Plan Melbourne 2017, and local planning statute, among other things. The lack of a strategic logic for these schemes limits the evaluation of their purpose and contribution. We are not the only observers to raise this concern – Federal agencies such as Infrastructure Australia, speaking at a recent Senate Hearing (Minear, 2017), and the Productivity Commission (2017, 2014) have expressed similar disquiet about the strategic basis for transport project decisions, as have State agencies such as the Victorian Auditor General (2015) and Infrastructure Victoria (2016).

The Transport Integration Act 2010 (TIA) is the primary legal framework within which metropolitan transportation planning occurs in Victoria. This legislation sets out several bold objectives for our transport system. This includes Part 2 which outlines being socially and economically inclusive and prosperous, while contributing to environmental sustainability, as well as for the need for transportation decisions to be considered at the same time as land use decisions, and that these decisions should lead to improved accessibility, and a reduced need for private car usage. Section 63 of the Act compels the government to produce a transport plan with these system objectives in mind to guide decision-making.

The primary technical study informing transport infrastructure planning and investment prioritisation in the last decade is Investing in Transport – East West Link Needs Assessment (Eddington, 2008). This study emerged out of Meeting Our Transport Challenges, the 2002 metropolitan transportation plan, and informed the Victorian Transport Plan (State of Victoria, 2008). The latter became the official transport plan under the Act when it was first passed in 2010.

The Eddington Report had a narrowly-defined east-west corridor remit and was not fully metropolitan or state-based in scope. It focused on infrastructure solutions (rather than policy or behaviour change solutions) to the rising mobility challenges experienced between the west and east of Melbourne. A fundamental principle of Eddington’s thinking was that while east-west connections needed improvement, any new freeways should bypass the central city, with improvements in access to the city provided by rail (Eddington, 2008). Thus, Eddington’s main recommendations were the following: two major railway projects (now known as the Regional Rail Link (RRL) and the Melbourne Metro, both designed to improve access to the city); and two major road projects - an 18 kilometre East West Link project connecting the Eastern Freeway to the Western Ring Road and the Truck Action Plan. Alternatives such as improved use of existing infrastructure or travel demand management, were not considered. The Truck Action Plan provided the basis for the $500 million West Gate Distributor (WGD) project that formed part of the Labor Party’s Project 10,000 platform leading into the 2014 Victorian state election - along with the Melbourne Metro and 50 level crossing removals. Yet the Eddington report is not the only document that has active proposals.

In the absence of a current Victorian Transport Plan, there are five strategies and long term plans of relevance listed on Victorian Government websites: The Victorian Infrastructure Plan (2017a) Plan Melbourne (2017b), Principal Public Transport Network (2017c), Cycling Strategy (2012a), and Network Development Plan - Metropolitan Rail (2012b). However, even if these plans were combined into a single document, they would not satisfy the requirements of the Act. None of these has a broad enough remit in terms of transportation mode or triple-bottom-line sustainability to meet the objectives of the Transport Integration Act, although the government might argue that there is a transportation chapter in Plan Melbourne.
Nor is an overarching set of consistent and coherent strategic objectives discernible across these schemes. Moreover these various plans have never been subject to the degree of joint stakeholder consultation expected by the Transport Integration Act 2010. This incoherence means that Melbourne has not had a co-ordinated and coherent integrated transport plan since 2011.

From the East West Link...

The full East West Link proposed by Eddington was an 18km road project, treated as three separate stages. Stage 1 was a short tunnel underneath Footscray or Yarraville to the Port of Melbourne; Stage 2 was the eastern section between CityLink and the Eastern Freeway terminus; and Stage 3 was to connect Stage 1 to either the Western Ring Road or the Westgate Freeway. In the 2008 Victorian Transport Plan, a longer western section that combined Stages 1 & 3 was proposed (referred to as Westlink). Initial economic analysis showed that the main net benefits of the combined 18km project were in the Westlink section rather than the Eastern Section (Victorian Auditor General 2015: 28). To the extent that the EWL project was estimated to generate net economic benefits it was by bundling the project with arguably separate and unrelated plans to widen the Monash and Tullamarine tollways. Despite this weak economic foundation, the former Napthine State Government signed contracts to build the eastern section first. This decision was highly controversial and Labor eventually committed to cancelling the contract prior to the 2014 election, in favour of its Project 10,000 package and the West Gate Distributor.

... to the West Gate Distributor (WGD)...

The Victorian ALP’s Project 10,000 proposed that instead of building the EWL toll road between Clifton Hill and Kensington, there would be a focus on public transport in the Melbourne Metro Rail Tunnel (MMRT1), the removal of 50 level crossings (LXRP), and the removal of trucks to and from inner west streets via a $500 million West Gate Distributor (WGD). The WGD involved ramps from the West Gate Freeway to allow trucks to bypass sensitive areas of Yarraville, and an upgraded Shepherd Bridge over the Maribyrnong River to provide better access to port facilities at Swanson and Victoria Docks and to Dynon Rail Yards (north of Footscray Road).

...to the West Gate Tunnel Project

The WGTP emerged shortly after the 2014 Victorian State election as an unsolicited bid under the provisions for private sector proposals to the Victorian Government, subsuming the WGD project that formed a key element of Victorian ALP Election Policy. This project was renamed the WGTP in early 2017. Its capital cost is eleven times the original WGD, at $5.5 billion, and was an unsolicited bid from Australia’s largest toll road operator, Transurban. The WGTP incorporates the infrastructure upgrades from the WGD (the ramps and the Shepherd Bridge upgrade) but has caused the deferral by several years of the ramps from the West Gate Freeway. To the WGD project, the WGTP adds tunnels, viaducts, elevated road interchanges, road widenings, interchange upgrades and extensions that will extend Transurban’s customers (users of the CityLink project) use of Transurban’s infrastructure when they are travelling west of Melbourne.

These additions have resulted in a private toll road that will nominally cost $5.5 billion, including a direct upfront $1.6 billion public subsidy. However, a much larger aspect of the funding proposed is Transurban’s requirement for the extension of the CityLink tolling concession to Transurban for 12 years. This extension is equivalent to a loss to the public purse (or an impost on Victorian motorists) that has been estimated to be between “$20-30 billion (nominal) or between $3.8 billion and $5.7 billion discounted to 2022 dollars” (Ian Bell, cited in Schneiders and Millar, 2016).

We now turn to the major planning and governance concerns that we have about this project, but which the Terms of Reference for the EES provided little scope to address. Firstly, we are concerned that the WGTP overreaches and misrepresents what the project can achieve.
According to the EES Documentation, the WGTP has five main objectives, which we briefly outline below. Having attended the EES IAC Hearings and having reviewed key expert witness statements and observed the cross examinations, it is our opinion that it is far from clear that the project will achieve its stated objectives.

**Improve transport capacity in the M1 corridor**

The M1 road corridor extends from the Monash Freeway in Melbourne’s south east, via the existing CityLink toll roads through South Melbourne, over the inner-west Westgate Bridge and through to Geelong in the metropolitan south west. The M1 joins the Tullamarine Freeway at the Bolte Bridge near the Docklands and the M80 Western Ring Road at Laverton. The WGTP project proposes to provide a parallel tollway deviating north from the M1 in South Melbourne and connecting via Docklands to the Tullamarine tollway north of the Bolte Bridge and continuing below Yarraville to reconnect to the M1 west of the Westgate Bridge. The project further includes local entry and exit ramps in Yarraville, Docklands and North Melbourne.

The WGTP project documentation estimates that with or without the WGTP, the capacity of the M1 corridor to carry traffic from east to west and to bypass the CBD will not be increased. This is because the main determinant of east – west capacity of the M1 corridor will remain the CityLink Tunnels. The WGTP increases capacity for traffic to the east of Melbourne to flow into the CBD via an upgrade over 44km of the Monash freeway (starting 14km south east the CBD). It increases the capacity west of the West Gate Bridge via the WGTP that creates an alternative flow into the CBD and northwest of Melbourne. But it does not increase the capacity of the full trip because the CityLink tunnels will remain the only freeway grade connection east-west.

It has been argued by the proponent that the WGTP provides a ‘bypass’ function, but one does not have to be a traffic modeller to see that this cannot be the case in reality. The WGTP will allow current west-east traffic to divert away from the West Gate Bridge on the west side, but will funnel this traffic back to the M1 corridor and the current CityLink tunnels on the eastern side of the Bridge. Further there is only one freeway-standard route back to the M1 corridor – the Bolte Bridge, which has lower traffic volume capacity than the combination of the new tunnel/flyover section of the WGTP and the Tullamarine freeway that already flows onto the bridge. The Bolte Bridge thus constitutes a constriction on continued flow of this traffic. Thus by design, eastbound traffic that is diverted away from the West Gate Freeway, must run back into the restriction point, or onto the many new off ramps which provide possible alternative destinations (such as improved access to travel via Hyde street, through Spotswood, and Footscray to the Port).

The proponent’s own modelling shows that either with or without the WGTP, traffic volumes on the West Gate Bridge will be larger than they are today, just by differing amounts. Therefore, if the currently configured M1 corridor capacity is inadequate today, it will still be inadequate once the WGTP is complete. Therefore, we argue that the objective of the project of relieving congestion on the M1 corridor will not be met. Neither the WGTP nor the previously proposed EWL projects will adequately and effectively address the capacity issues along this corridor. Rather, investment into public transport including the construction of MM2 in addition to MM1 will provide the needed alternatives to private vehicle travel along this corridor. By reducing the number of passenger vehicles travelling across the city, the existing roads can better accommodate freight movement.

1 Although there are no assessments of the impacts of WGTP relative to any of the 137 projects in Infrastructure Victoria’s Draft 30-year strategy, it is extremely likely that it competes directly with the catchment for Melbourne Metro 2 (MM2) as well as the RRL and MM1. MM2 would ultimately connect Werribee to Mernda via a tunnel from Newport to Clifton Hill, with stations at Fishermans Bend, Southern Cross, Flagstaff, Parkville and Fitzroy. Compared to WGTP, MM2 would deal more directly, sustainably, and efficiently with many of the transport needs of people in the Western suburbs who work in the central or inner city and many other suburbs, due to the ease of making connections to many other public transport services from it.
Reduce reliance on the West Gate Bridge

The failure of the WGTP to meet its second objective is a corollary of its failure to meet the first. The M1 corridor is the only freeway standard connection from east to west for Melbourne and more broadly, Victoria. Because the WGTP does not actually increase capacity on the M1 corridor, and provides only a tortuous, and lower capacity diversion around the West Gate Bridge, the extent to which it reduces reliance on the West Gate Bridge under normal conditions would be minimal.

There is a suggestion by the proponent that should the West Gate Bridge be closed for any reason, then the WGTP provides ‘redundancy’ (i.e. space capacity). However, as we have seen, the capacity of the Bolte Bridge is too low to create an uncongested alternative route and it is likely that traffic chaos would ensue with routes such as Dynon Rd, Footscray Rd, Wurundjeri Way and Charles Grimes Bridge becoming congested, if not gridlocked, depending on the time of day.

Furthermore, the WGTP does nothing at all to deal with the potential for disruption created by the other ‘pinch point’ on the M1 – closure of the Burnley and Domain Tunnels. It is also true to say that $5.5 billion upfront, and a loss of $8 -20 billion in future earnings is a lot to pay for a contingency which might never be used and which could be dealt with in other ways.

This objective will not be met, if it is a valid one in the first place.

Improve freight access to the Port of Melbourne and greater Melbourne

The Port of Melbourne includes Swanson Dock and Webb Dock. Increasingly large container ships will favour Webb Dock due to navigation constraints on the Yarra. By 2031, Webb Dock is expected to cater to most container movements. While the WGTP will improve access to Swanston Dock, it does nothing to improve access to Webb Dock. Furthermore, the improvement in access to Swanson Dock is of a similar order to that which could be achieved from the original WGD. Because the WGTP fails to improve freight access to Webb Dock, it is only a partial solution to the problem of improving freight access to the Port of Melbourne and to greater Melbourne.

We assert that this objective of the project is only partially met.

Improve community amenity on local streets in the inner west

The WGTP includes truck bans in addition to the ramps, bridges and tunnels between the West Gate Freeway and the Port of Melbourne. While this combination of policies and infrastructure will likely result in improved amenity for local streets in parts of the inner west, it appears that some of the problems will be shifted onto local streets further south of the currently worst affected areas (O’Brien, 2017).

It is not demonstrated that the WGTP will provide a superior outcome in this regard than the original WGD proposal, and the ‘Truck Action Plan’. Additionally, since the WGTP does little to improve freight access to Webb Dock, then as container traffic to the latter grows, amenity in local streets in Fishermans Bend, Port Melbourne and South Melbourne will worsen. The project does nothing to address these issues.

Thus, we assert that the WGTP only partially addresses the issue of improving community amenity in the inner west and is likely to result in reduced amenity elsewhere.

Reduce mismatch between land use and transport

The project documentation suggests there will be an improvement in access by car. The project documentation suggests there will be an improvement in access to employment located in the CBD and in the Parkville precinct for people living in the inner west. But there will not be any improvement for people currently living further out, and those yet to arrive in Melbourne’s fastest growing metropolitan region. For those in the inner west, their ‘improved’ access to work in the central city will be through the WGTP (WDA, 2017, p.32), but this runs counter to established Local and State Government policy which
support a mode shift towards public and active transport (State of Victoria, 2017b, 2012ab, City of Melbourne, 2016).

The Transport Integration Act (TIA) has a fundamental aim of reducing reliance on private motor car travel, and on the need for long journeys. These two variables are one way of defining what the mismatch between transport and land use means – reliance on cars for long commuter journeys to work and study. The TIA aims to reduce the mismatch between transport and land use by better integrating the way people move. Improvements in public transport would be more sustainable and preferable. A fully integrated approach would connect improvements to public transport with planning zone changes that facilitate employment-generating land uses closer to where the population centres of the west will be in the future. This would reduce reliance on private motor cars and the need for long commutes. Rather by focusing solely on car transport alone, the WGTP directly contradicts the aims of the TIA: the project modelling shows that it will increase the number of people reliant on private motor car travel. Being a private, for-profit toll road, this is only as would be expected, but it is counter to current policy.

As an integrated approach with land use and centred around public transport is not what is proposed, we conclude that the WGTP will not reduce the mismatch between transport and land use.

**Concern #2 – Project overreach and overstatement of benefits**

As a greatly oversized alternative version of the WGD, the WGTP is premised on removing trucks from local streets, but its scale and layout indicate that it will function as a funnel for commuter and other car traffic and freight from Melbourne’s Western suburbs to the central city and many inner suburbs. The traffic modelling within the EES (which has been subject to significant contestation from many experts in this area regarding its accuracy) confirms that this will be the predominant function of the Project. Indeed, social media promotions of the WGTP characterise it as a faster route for driving from the west to key destinations in the city’s inner north such as Melbourne University and the Parkville hospital precinct, regardless of car parking difficulties (Figure 1).

![Image Source: Facebook.](https://www.facebook.com/pg/WestGateTunnelProject/videos/)

**Figure 1: Social media promotion of the benefits of the WGTP showing how it will improve car access to the CBD and health and education precincts Parkville and Fitzroy.**
The WGTP also proposes an additional ‘city bypass’ via an extension of Wurundjeri Way. But as was shown in expert witness statements from Dr Ian Woodcock (2017), the extension ceases at Flinders Street, and therefore does not function as a bypass as purported by the WDA. In fact, Wurundjeri Way provides access to the CBD at Dudley St, La Trobe St and Flinders St, and to Docklands at these points as well as Bourke and Collins St. (Figure 2)

Over and above the improvements in freight access to the port (which would also be provided by the original WGD proposal), and the connections to CityLink, the bulk of the WGTP infrastructure is aimed at providing a freeway standard connection direct to the edges of the city – to West and North Melbourne via Dynon Rd, and to Docklands and the western and southern side of the CBD via the extended Wurundjeri Way (Figure 2). This will be a tolled connection and will therefore provide a ‘higher level of service’ (i.e. less congested driving conditions) than the current access paths that are free of charge. This, we believe, is one of the main, but unstated objectives of the WGTP: to extract tolls from drivers, primarily coming from the west into the city, who are currently able to bypass the tolled sections of CityLink. The other primary objective is to secure the extremely lucrative revenue stream that will flow to Transurban if their CityLink concession is extended. Given that the WGTP performs so poorly in relation to its stated public interest objectives, we believe a far more robust critique of the project’s procurement, governance and funding is warranted.

**Problematic traffic modelling and misrepresentation of project benefits**

Projects like the WGTP typically use four-step models of travel demand forecasting to present an image of transportation in the future, and it is from these forecasts that an understanding of potential costs and benefits can be derived. These are detailed and complex econometric comparisons of the city both with and without the proposed project. Internationally, researchers have consistently observed forecasting inaccuracies in both road and rail project assessments where four step models are used (Nicolaisen, 2012; Parthasarathi & Levinson, 2010; Welde & Odeck, 2011). Forecasts are typically more favourable to the project than later reality, and there are suggestions that the no build cases can be misleading and pessimistic (Naess, 2011; Pittman et al, 2017).

These inaccuracies have costs, and serious disputes over forecasts for transport projects are common. Modelling
consultants AECOM were forced to an out-of-court settlement of $121 million in 2016 for a class action alleging that investors suffered loss because of misleading traffic forecasts for the Clem7 tunnel in Brisbane (Maurice Blackburn, 2017; Wiggins, 2016). In a similar case, Parsons Brinckerhoff and Booz Allen settled out of court for over $50 million over forecasts for traffic volumes in Sydney’s Lane Cove Tunnel. Evidence in this case had shown that modellers had:

worked backwards from their commercial objectives and inflated the forecasts ... (and that financiers) had encouraged the forecasters to adopt aggressive forecasts. (Papadakis, 2014)

In both examples, the traffic predicted to use each of the tunnels did not eventuate to the levels indicated in the models. Several explanations for these inaccuracies have been suggested. Unexpected events between forecast and construction may be a factor, but if this was the most significant issue then one would expect forecasts to form a normal distribution around actual outcomes. In fact, the forecasts are skewed in an ‘optimistic’ direction. Technical problems with the models would also be a more convincing explanation if the evidence showed steady improvement over time. This is not the case.

Other explanations are found in the behaviour of the forecasters themselves. First, there is the possibility of what is called “optimism bias” (Kahneman, 2014). This is the human psychological propensity to downplay problems and over-emphasise opportunities in a project. Then, there is possibility of deliberate distortion for political or financial gain: a phenomenon for which incentives clearly exist and for which researchers have coined the phrase ‘strategic misrepresentation’ (Flyvbjerg, 2008; Naess et al, 2006). This is most likely to occur when a project is being developed under political and organisational pressure. This is quite possibly the case for the WGT.

How seriously should the WGT traffic modelling be taken?

The WGT traffic forecasts indicate that the future of Melbourne is endless traffic. The modelling has been one of the most contentious aspects of the WGT. On one hand, this is due to the secrecy with which it has been carried out, and the lack of transparency around peer review. On the other, criticisms by experts in traffic modelling have drawn attention to the known limitations of the modelling used. One of these is its inability to accurately model impacts on complex, small-scale road networks, such as those most negatively affected by the WGT in West and North Melbourne that have been deemed outside the project scope.

Little of the detail of the traffic modelling used to justify the project in the business case and the EES is in the public domain. Being a proprietary model owned by a private company, the modelling cannot be subject to public scrutiny or fully independent peer review. However, the forecasts have been subject to criticism from an independent expert: one of the few who has seen the uncensored documents. William McDougall gave detailed evidence on his concerns about the modelling to a Senate Inquiry into the operations of existing and proposed toll roads in Australia. To quote from the transcript:

Senator RICE: So, in summary, your evidence is that there were quite unusual and unjustified mechanisms that were used which ended up increasing the case for building the road?

Mr McDougall: That’s right ... (Parliament of Australia, 2017, p. 23)

Mr McDougall called on the government to release the peer review of the traffic forecasting undertaken by John Allard for the project team, as they had done with an internal peer review of justification for the Melbourne Metro Rail project, but the government refused. Lacking any sense of irony, to justify this refusal, they cited the precedent from a reversed scenario in
which the previous Coalition government successfully defended their decision not to release similar documents on the EWL project to ALP figures in 2014 (Lucas, 2017).

During cross-examination at the EES IAC on Tues 19 Sept, Counsel for the City of Melbourne asked the WGT’s traffic forecaster, Tim Veitch, if there was an “active misrepresentation” of the modelling approach undertaken by his company. The question was asked because of the difference between the actual modelling used (which came to light under cross examination) and the modelling processes described on the company website.

Other serious questions that have been raised relate to the accuracy of the predictions and the assumptions in use. In many cases, forecasts of both increased traffic and reductions in traffic caused by the project have been called into question. The difficulty here is that if the predictions are overly-optimistic, and traffic volumes are lower than forecast, then the project is an even bigger waste of the $1.6Bn + lost revenue of public subsidy than so far estimated. If this turns out to be the case, the public would be entitled to ask: What protections are in place for our investment in this project? Will there be compensation from Transurban to the Government as the representative of the community?

On the other hand, if the traffic forecasts turn out to be under-estimates, then the predicted negative impacts will be far worse, yet the need for a public subsidy would prove unfounded. In this scenario, will the government ensure that the $1.6Bn public investment pays back a dividend to the Victorian community commensurate with its share in the project cost? And will Transurban be required to pay compensation for the negative impacts that turn out to be far worse than predicted in its EES assessments?

The travel demand models also present a ‘no build’ case, and some researchers have called the accuracy of these into question. There is evidence of ‘pessimism bias’, in which the case not to build the project is presented in a more negative light (Næss, 2011). At its basest levels, the only main difference in the models between the ‘build’ and the ‘no build’ scenario is the inclusion of the project or not; the models do not account for induced or generated demand particularly well, and do not account for the dynamic behavioural changes that arise because of congestion (Pittman et al, 2017).

As a practice, however, travel demand models and traffic micro-simulation produce forecasts of future conditions that we believe are not necessarily reliable, and most certainly not inevitable. There are very serious governance issues raised here that have yet to be addressed by any of the discussion at the EES IAC hearings. We call upon the Government of Victoria, Transurban, and any associated agencies to make public the full detail of the forecasts, so that they can be publicly assessed.

**Concern #3 – Poor planning process and lack of overall strategy**

**Is the West Gate Tunnel ‘Good Planning’?**

As outlined in an earlier section, transportation planning for metropolitan Melbourne is a loosely woven tapestry of technical reports, strategic land use plans, local transportation plans, statutory instruments, and a legislative framework provided by the Transport Integration Act (2010). The TIA requires the government to produce and regularly update a Transport Plan. However, since the 2008 Victorian Transport Plan was excised from the TIA in 2011, the State has had no plan to provide guidance. From this perspective, there is great difficulty in assessing the merits of the WGTP because there is no Victorian Transport Plan. Ultimately though, the aims of the TIA are not being met by the WGTP. We do not consider it ‘good planning’ in a legal sense, because it is not planning in the sense of the aims of and instruments set out by the TIA.

Nonetheless, the fundamental aims of the TIA provide some sense of the appropriateness of the WGTP. Even without a Transport Plan, the WGTP does not accord with fundamental planning aims of the TIA. Every land use and transport planning decision is to be integrated, and is to promote integration of public and active (i.e. walking and cycling) transport with land use and development. A core aim of the TIA is to reduce reliance on the private motor car for travel, and the need for extended travel in general. The WGTP has been designed to maintain reliance on private car transport during its
construction (a time when it would be good planning practice to encourage mode shift towards more sustainable forms of travel), and to then encourage car travel when in operation by providing a higher level of service than that offered by existing non-car-based routes to the central and inner city. While this is an effective strategy to induce the payment of tolls for trips that would otherwise be free, it raises insufficient revenue to make the WGTP a self-sustaining project. From a planning point of view, there are no justifications for using public funds to subsidise a private tollway that runs counter to so many established policies – for transport and land use in general and the parts of the city that it will serve.

How else, then, are we to assess ‘good planning’? The following sections will consider the impact that the WGTP will and might have on public transport provision in the affected areas, and potentially across the whole metropolitan area. After this, we engage with the limitations present in the urban design process, and ask whether tollway construction is compatible with quality urban design outcomes. Finally, we present other potential opportunity costs.

What effects will the West Gate Tunnel Project have on public transport?

The traffic congestion in the northern parts of Melbourne CBD caused by the WGTP will also have adverse effects on existing public transport between the central city and the northern suburbs, which runs directly counter to the aims of the Transport Integration Act. At the WGTP EES IAC hearings, the proponent offered the argument that the WGTP should be seen as part of a suite of complementary transport projects noting that the WGTP does not hamper public transport (WDA, 2017b, p. 30). This argument was made, despite the project boundary for the WGTP being so tightly drawn that it excluded everything beyond the immediate construction access zone, and thus excluded any finer analysis of environmental impacts arising from the project. Putting to one side the lack of rigour or consistency with this argument, we will take on board the idea that the WGTP, RRL and MM1 projects can be considered together, while also considering other modes of public transport.

MM1 and RRL account for some $15Bn of public investment to improve access to the city for people living in the west and align with long-standing public policy and with the TIA aim of reducing reliance on private motor car transport. The WGTP flies directly in the face of this enormous public investment, but adds to the problem by being itself publicly funded (the $1.6Bn project subsidy and the 12-year toll extension). There is much evidence internationally that this uncoordinated approach to transport policy has negative results that favour the dominant mode, in this case, roads, that ultimately reduce the benefit-cost ratio of the massive public investment in rail (Vuchic, 2017).

The impacts of WGTP on the Melbourne Metro are contradictory and perverse. The Arden urban renewal area, premised on the large public investment in the Melbourne Metro station there, is envisioned as a walkable and vibrant inner urban environment. This will be compromised by the WGTP (Figure 3). Arden was chosen as a station location because of the large parcel of publicly owned land presenting a value capture opportunity for transit-oriented urban renewal. The value capture offer won out over the opportunity to create a much-needed and more practical interchange station at Kensington or Macaulay (which would have improved the functionality and accessibility of public transport for residents across the entire metropolitan area). Therefore, having made the choice to focus on value capture at Arden, to reduce the viability of the site by flooding the area with extra traffic can only be regarded as perverse and counterproductive.

The traffic micro-simulations (GHD 2017) indicate increased numbers of cars in North and West Melbourne, many of which will conflict with existing train, tram, and bus services – and this will have impacts across the entire city. Increased road traffic will make it difficult to increase services on the Upfield railway, which has engineering constraints to being raised or lowered. Tram routes in the area will also be affected, including Routes 19, 57, 58, & 59, all of which service the north and north-western suburbs. The situation is likely to be more dire for buses, the oft-forgotten workhorse of cross-town public transportation in Melbourne. There are numerous bus routes through this area, many of which serve non-radial travel or act as feeders for trains and trams.

As a thought experiment, it is worth considering how these impacts on public transport might compound each other. Increased delays and reduced reliability on local tram or train lines might lead commuters to decide to drive to their
destination, which will, bit by bit, add to further delays. Congestion affecting Route 19, however, might lead passengers to consider using the train. Unfortunately, the nearest alternative is the Upfield line, which now has added capacity constraints due to increased road traffic in the area.

The WGTP Business Case goes some way to answering many of these queries, and a full analysis is beyond the scope of this report. It is worth noting, however, that despite the relative instability of travel demand forecasting, the WGTP Business Case indicates a 100% increase in public transport patronage by 2031, and a 48% increase in road traffic. It is significantly troubling that the WGTP will act to potentially hinder public transport usage and accessibility.

Integration with Urban Design Concepts

In the EES report (Development and Urban Design Plans and Appendix A), there is much made of the ‘urban design concept’ in terms of what it will ‘demonstrate’, ‘generate’, and ‘deliver’, however, it is difficult to find any clear statement of what the urban design concept actually is. There is no description of the concept itself, only what it will do and its intended effects. Urban design is fundamentally about shaping urban space and development, through designing the ways people will move, forming around these flows sites for development and land use activity. In this way, urban design opens potentials for social interaction, economic, cultural development and greater active transport (Koohsari et al, 2013). Other layers may be added over this to reinforce and express the underlying intentions of the concept, usually to be interpreted by others at the level of architecture and landscape.

In the case of the WGTP, the urban design concept is essentially the same as the engineering design concept. The project seeks to shape urban space and the way people will move via a series of roads, ramps, tunnels, bridges, viaducts and elevated interchanges. These transport infrastructure elements create a series of conditions at different sites along the WGTP, around which various future land uses have been proposed or assumed. The viability of some of these uses has had more consideration put into them than others by the proponents, but in all, these assessments have been judged to be wholly inadequate by independent experts at the EES IAC hearings.

For example, the proposed public open spaces have been foregrounded in all of the project imagery. Where there are proposed noise attenuation walls, these have been highlighted. The appearance of viaduct structures, including the undercrofts has been picked out for attention at places where their impact is likely to be minimal, and the main users of the spaces will be motorists (and in some cases, purportedly cyclists). What is missing however is any consideration for the way in which the urban design concept (that is, the transport infrastructure) will impact on the potential of adjacent sites that have long been earmarked for urban renewal or parkland.

Many of the reports within the EES acknowledge that future development along the WGTP corridor from e-Gate in Docklands through the Dynon Precinct is expected to occur (Figure 3). The Landscape and Visual Impact report (Technical Report N) suggests that visual impact is likely to be ‘medium’, though this is only for the industrial land uses that currently exist. No impact assessment has been made for future land use development and urban renewal, for which the visual impacts will be of a different order. Within the urban design report, there is no evidence that any examination has been done of what the interfaces would be like in relation to future developments along this corridor. However, as noted, a fundamental element of urban design is the potential for future urban development and renewal, and the creation of value through social, economic, and cultural activity. The urban design concept is silent on this and it is a fundamental flaw.

Large roads with high volumes of traffic are anathema to integrating and connecting the neighbourhoods they pass through. There has been much research that has found the deleterious effects on social connectedness and economic activity in their immediate vicinity. The negative impact of the Project on existing mixed use and residential neighbourhoods in North and West Melbourne, other suburbs with CityLink entry and exit ramps (such as Brunswick, Flemington, South Melbourne, Port Melbourne) the Urban Innovation District (Carlton/Parkville), the Biomedical Precinct and Queen Victoria Market precinct due to dramatically increased traffic will be significant. Similarly, the potential for extending Melbourne’s central area westwards as a series of mixed use, commercially and culturally vibrant higher density neighbourhoods will be
Figure 3: WGTP (Yellow) has a conflictual relationship with planned urban renewal sites in the inner west (light and dark purple – esp. Dynon and e-Gate) and with Melbourne Metro 1 (red), especially the Arden Station precinct.

*Image Source: Plan Melbourne 2017-2050, p.26*
severely compromised.

To achieve ‘urban integration’, ‘positive connections’ and ‘positive contributions’ for local communities, the project would need to have been conceived as a suite of public and active (walking and cycling) transport connections designed to enhance pedestrian activity around origins and destinations. Thus, the majority of effort that passes for urban design in the WGTP is associated with surface treatments and managing visual appearance. This is one layer of urban design, but visual appearance is the most superficial form of design consideration within this area of built environment thinking.

Much has been said by various submitters throughout the EES process about the way traffic flows will be captured and induced by the Project to create significant congestion conditions in North and West Melbourne and the inner north west of the city (City of Melbourne, 2017, Keys, 2017, p. 48). These are highly sensitive heritage precincts prized for their walkability on the one hand, and for their contribution to the nationally significant cultural, commercial and academic dynamism of the ‘Innovation District’ that forms this part of Melbourne.

This sensitive urban ecosystem has been nurtured by at least 30 years of committed and careful planning by state and local government. Key to this planning has been the recognition that high public amenity with walkable streets are the key to a vibrant public realm that encourages investment in a synergistic mix of higher density residential, commercial, retail and academic development. This planning effort has recognized that public and active transport are the most efficient and effective way to move the very large flows of people into and around central and inner Melbourne. Walkability, public and active transport are part of this synergy.

The WGTP therefore runs counter to several decades of established policies, particularly those of the City of Melbourne (City of Melbourne, 2016). It will undo investments that have been made in urban design and will compromise long-planned future urban renewal to extend the centre of Melbourne westwards eventually to join up with Footscray. The WGTP will create significant damage to existing urban ecosystems and seriously hamper their planned extension.

**Concern #4 – Opacity of the market-led proposal process**

The governance dimensions surrounding and supporting the development of the WGTP as an infrastructure proposal are truly alarming. The WGTP has introduced several significant and worrying factors that compromise transparency, openness and legibility, which inhibits stakeholders - such as the transport planning academic community which we form part of - from truly understanding why this project was able to progress to the stage of an EES without public scrutiny and open assessment against alternatives. The paragraphs below present key governance issues related to the WGTP proposal. Not only do these issues compromise this project, they also call into question the state of transport planning in Victoria where for too long transport planning and infrastructure investment has occurred in a policy and planning vacuum.

**Monopolistic tendencies in market-led proposals**

Government has a long-standing role in regulating the activities of private companies to ensure public benefit, or at least minimise public harm from their actions. We suggest that in the absence of a clear understanding of what is the ambition of the State’s land use and transport planning, it is not possible to effectively carry out this role. This proposal is one of a handful of mega transport projects to be openly considered under the market-led proposal guidelines, and many do not make it into the public arena. The first was the Metro Trains Dandenong Corridor Project (ultimately unsuccessful), the second was the Tullamarine Freeway widening (now nearing completion). It is not clear how these guidelines engage with transport planning and align with existing strategic plans. These guidelines need to be linked to the state’s land use and transport ambition. We are seeing market-led proposals in the form of rapid transit (proposed bus rapid transit to Doncaster, rail to Melbourne airport and even high speed rail connecting Melbourne with Sydney and Canberra), as well as tollway infrastructure. While the private sector plays a role in the procurement of infrastructure it is now time for Victoria to pause
and consider carefully this relationship. With the defeat of the EWL in Victoria and more recently the cancellation of Roe8 following the Western Australian state election in early 2017, the public is demanding greater transparency in transport project investment decisions (Williams, 2017).

**Relationship between state, agency, and company**

The WDA is an administrative office within the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources responsible for the management of the WGTP on behalf of the Victorian Government. It is reported on the WDA website that it is working in ‘partnership’ with Transurban to deliver the project. This suggests that a core part of government, presumably working under direction of the Minister, had decided the project will happen before official approval was announced (on 27 November 2017) and had taken up the cause of a private proponent to see the project delivered. This presents a problem for governance which has not been well managed. The project was already ‘owned’ by the government, Ministers had already invested themselves in it, and thus like many mega projects before it, ‘go ahead’ was granted. This has precluded judgement by any process which might have been designed to question whether the project is necessary, needed or wanted (Sturup, 2015; Sturup et al, 2015). Everyone other than a small cadre of experts (most of whom are within Transurban, but also state officials within Treasury and DEDJTR) were shut out of the process of asking whether this project should be undertaken. A mid-August media release from the Premier’s office states that the government was “Getting on with the West Gate Tunnel” with major construction to “start early next year” (Premier of Victoria, 2017). This suggests that in addition to the Minister having already determined the project will happen, the Premier had also done so. The EES process has thus been bypassed as the WGTP was being considered as a ‘done deal’ in the similar fashion to the EWL which compromised the intent of an EES.

According to the DELWP website titled “What is the EES process in Victoria” (State of Victoria, 2017d) the EES is described as follows:

“*The process under this Act is not an approval process itself, rather it enables statutory decision-makers (Ministers, local government and statutory authorities) to make decisions about whether a project with potentially significant environmental effects should proceed. If the Minister for Planning decides that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required, the project proponent is responsible for preparing the EES and undertaking the necessary investigations.*” (emphasis added by the authors of this report).

Transurban is a private toll road operator whose business is to provide roads for motorists to use. Thus, the WGTP is a project designed to support a toll road operator and provide profits to that business. In other words, it is designed to encourage the maximum use by private motorists possible – that is, to induce further traffic in the west of Melbourne.

**Questions over tolling practices**

The Senate Enquiry into tolling practices has raised significant questions about the practice of tolling of existing roads, the findings of which are of importance to the proposed WGTP. We advise the government, at the very least, to delay the construction of the West Gate Tunnel until all recommendations from this Enquiry are responded to, and acted upon. There is considerable concern that current tolling practices are inequitable, as evidenced by recent stories in the media (WESTjustice, 2017). Civil offences have been criminalised and fines have quickly escalated to such an extent that the public court system has become clogged with people being pursued for exorbitant amounts of money in the tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars (Preiss & Butt, 2017).
Let the community vote on it

The initially proposed West Gate Distributor project emerged out of the Truck Action Plan and had considerable support from long-standing local campaigners including the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG) (2013), and was an election promise of this Government, as discussed earlier. The much larger $5.5 billion WGTP is a significant departure from the initially proposed project, and therefore lacks the political legitimacy that is obtained in the wake of an election. Research on major infrastructure projects has demonstrated that projects are much more likely to proceed on budget and on time, and to produce positive outcomes when the community fully supports the project and understands its purpose (Dimitriou et al 2012). Given this evidence, we strongly advise that this government halt the construction of the WGTP until Melburnians also have had a chance to vote on its desirability.

It might have been reasonable for the community to expect that the ALP, who found itself in a position of cancelling the EWL for similar reasons, might have been more immune to this feature of mega projects. However, it would appear not.
Conclusion & Alternative Transport Visions

Building on the arguments presented during the EES hearing, we conclude this report by highlighting our key arguments in opposition to this project. These are as follows:

The WGTP in its current form…

a. Is oversized, and does not meet most of its stated objectives.

b. Has been planned without reference to a strategic framework for transportation in Victoria.

c. Is premised upon a transport modelling process that has been secretive.

d. Will hinder public transport service provision which, we argue, is against the stated objectives of the Transport Integration Act.

e. Has a poorly considered urban design dimension, and will devastate potential for urban renewal in the brownfields areas to the north and west of Melbourne CBD.

f. Emerges from a market-led process for infrastructure procurement that is opaque and raises serious governance questions.

g. Includes an up-front public contribution of 1/3 the project cost plus a 12-year extension of the right to toll CityLink which is a very poor use of public funds and deprives Victoria of significant future revenue. These costs far outweigh any reasonable or credible assessment of the benefits.

Therefore, we call on the Victorian Government to immediately stop work on the WGTP. The original West Gate Distributor proposal is a more appropriately scaled, reasonably priced, and strategically suitable solution. The fact that Transurban is willing to invest in a capital project at this time must not be used as a justification for ignoring the need for an integrated Victorian Transport Plan, or the long stated strategic objectives of the Victorian community.

The State Government should immediately begin work on an integrated Victorian Transport Plan, through a coordinated public engagement process, before any further public and private sector monies are directed into transport infrastructure programs. This planning process would ask the residents of greater Melbourne and Victoria: what should be the future of transport planning in Victoria? This would include alternatives for the West that meet the ambitions of Plan Melbourne for reduced travel needs and mode shifts to public and active transport modes.

In the short-term, while such a plan is under development we challenge all political parties to present platforms for the 2018 election of short-term transport priorities for the state that reflect key objectives of sustainability, equity and productivity.

Transport in the west

We recognise that the transport issues affecting the west of Melbourne are pressing and require immediate attention. These issues also require creativity and forward thinking to meet the demands of this quickly growing region of Victoria. Drawing on our observations from the EES hearings, academic and design work undertaken in this region, as well as our collective expertise in transport and land use planning, we believe the following issues need to be addressed:

• The Truck Action Plan, in direct negotiation with the community in the west as well as with the freight and logistics
sector, should be implemented as a matter of priority. This should be accompanied by 24 hour truck bans on all local streets;

- A Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) approach to growth area development be devised that addresses both local and regional scale public transport challenges;

- Strengthen the connection between population growth and the development of regional scale services such as health and education to ensure the needs for extended travel are minimised;

- Presently there are few alternatives to the private car for travel to and between major employment centres in the west (especially Werribee, Sunshine, Highpoint, Footscray, Essendon) as well as the designated National Employment and Innovation Cluster (NEIC) at Werribee. Therefore, the State government, in collaboration with relevant local government bodies, needs to build greater access to Melbourne Airport as a regional jobs node of comparable stature to the declared NEICs at Sunshine and Werribee East; as well as broader consideration of public transport access to the airport, beyond the perennial debates about a new city-airport rail line;

- Projected growth in freight volumes in and out of the Port means that, no matter what new road infrastructure is built, there will be an increase in truck traffic on residential streets unless the mode split is shifted significantly towards rail;

- Among a range of improvements needed for public transport in the west, planning for Melbourne Metro 2 (MM2) needs to be prioritised to provide high capacity public transport access to the CBD and the inner north for residents of Melbourne’s south west. MM2 is an east-west rail connection between Newport and Clifton Hill via Fishermens Bend, Southern Cross, Parkville and Fitzroy, ultimately connecting Wyndham Vale to Mernda in a similar manner to the way MM1 connects Melbourne’s south-east with the north-west. MM2 will meet far more of the transport needs of people in the west than the WGTP in the long term and reduce their reliance on the private car. If MM2 were made a priority from 2018, it could be operational by 2028.
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