KNOX CITY COUNCIL

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORTS

ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL

to be held

on

Monday 23 July 2018

13.1 Public Transport Advocacy

ALL WARDS

13.1 PUBLIC TRANSPORT ADVOCACY

SUMMARY: Manager – Sustainable Infrastructure

(Matt Hanrahan)

This report provides Council with an opportunity to review its current advocacy public transport position in the lead up to the state election and in view of recent public transport announcements by both the State and Federal Government. The report proposes key advocacy themes and presents a public transport network vision to inform advocacy approaches.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Note the funding of \$3m in the State Government budget funding for the delivery of a feasibility study for a light rail option from Caulfield to Rowville, via Dandenong Road and Wellington Road and passing Monash University;
- 2. Note the State Government study is currently proposing that the light rail project be delivered in two stages, the first terminating at Blackburn Road and the second at Rowville;
- 3. Note \$475m funding in Federal budget allocated towards a 'Rowville Rail' project connecting Huntingdale station, Monash University and Rowville, with \$23m to be allocated over the four year forward estimates period;
- 4. Endorse the attached advocacy brochure (Appendix A) as the basis of a future vision for transport in Knox;
- 5. Writes to the Premier of Victoria and Member for Mulgrave, Hon Daniel Andrews MP supporting any proposed investment in public transport in Knox and stating:
 - Council's desire for the Rowville Rail project to be delivered as a heavy rail solution in line with Council's long standing advocacy position;
 - That any proposed delivery approach should ensure that the project is delivered in one stage to Rowville to achieve maximum patronage and fully realise economic growth potential in Melbourne's east; and
 - That Rowville Rail represents one of many public transport priorities across Knox and neighbouring municipalities to support delivery of a sustainable transport network in Melbourne's east;

- 6. Writes to the Hon. Paul Fletcher, Minister for Urban Infrastructure and Cities, acknowledging the funding commitment for Rowville Rail and calling for the immediate establishment of a cross Government working group to deliver on requirements of heavy rail solution to Rowville; and
- 7. Continues to work with State Government departments and bus operators to advocate for bus service improvements across Knox.

1. INTRODUCTION

Knox Council has a strong history in public transport advocacy and a well regarded reputation for its public transport advocacy approaches, noting that the desire to have better public transport offerings in Melbourne's East is stronger than ever. Council has also played a strong leadership role for public transport advocacy through the Eastern Transport Coalition, recognising that significant public transport initiatives cross municipal boundaries and therefore require a strategic regional approach.

A key challenge for Knox when determining advocacy priorities is to filter through the numerous suitable projects in order to determine priority. This in part is informed by two strategic positions of Council:

- Public Transport advocacy remains a key objective in Council's Community and Council Plan, identifying key initiatives such as Knox Tram, Rowville Rail and improved bus services, in addition to a more general call for improved sustainable transport infrastructure and services.
- 2. Council also considers annually a report on Major Transport, which assess and ranks Council priorities, noting that the most recently endorsed list includes Rowville Rail, Knox Tram and the Dorset Road extension as the top priorities.

With a State Government election looming, there also exists an opportunity to escalate and align Council's Public Transport advocacy to priorities articulated by Government.

Transport Infrastructure spending is clearly on the agenda of both political parties including recent announcements regarding provision of additional commuter parking around train stations and a \$3m investment to explore the feasibility of delivering a light rail link from Caulfield Station to Rowville via Dandenong and Wellington Roads. Through the Eastern Transport Coalition, the Government has also expressed an interest in smaller scale programs including rail station upgrades incorporating minor works and bus service enhancements, which may incorporate new routes, the extension of operating hours and the provision of innovative bus services.

Given the above, it is proposed that near term advocacy efforts give immediate focus to delivery of a strategic transport vision for the east of Melbourne, supported by Rowville Rail and the Knox Tram as key east-west transport spines, Springvale Road and Stud Road as the key north-south spines accompanied by better bus services. This strategic transport vision is outlined in the attached advocacy document (Appendix A).

2. **DISCUSSION**

2.1 Current Government Priorities

As the Victorian State Government has essentially operated without a formal transport plan to guide investment across the last ten years, the only true gauge of Government's position on Rowville Rail has been through direct approaches with elected representatives through both Council and the ETC. Over the last 4-5 years, the Government response when pressed on Rowville Rail has remained consistent, namely that at best, it represents a longer term aspiration of Government, noting that delivery of the Melbourne Metro project and the Level Crossing Removal Program remain the top priorities.

When the current Government established Infrastructure Victoria to assess infrastructure priorities across both metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria, the Rowville Rail project was considered, however ultimately disregarded. It was again seen as a longer term priority, noting that a lower order transit solution, namely bus rapid transit or light rail might be deemed more appropriate. It's to be noted that growth areas remained a higher strategic priority in the current Infrastructure Victoria landscape, directly influencing the priority of projects. Recent work completed by the Victorian Planning Authority around the Monash Employment Cluster, identified the need for Wellington Road to support a higher order transit solution, but stopped short of suggesting a heavy rail solution.

The ETC has broadened its advocacy approach in recent times, having spent many years giving focus to higher order transport solutions such as Rowville Rail and Doncaster Rail, with only limited success. The most recent ETC strategy document calls for a more holistic approach to sustainable transport initiatives, giving a strong focus to better buses, highlighting gaps in service provision, frequency and duration of services, as well as supporting infrastructure.

It also targets better transport interchanges, some priority strategic road improvement projects in addition to road space allocation and a range of active transport (walking, cycling and shared paths) initiatives.

State Government has been generally welcoming of this broader approach to advocacy as it typically provides them with a wider platform from which they can align projects to programs. In recent dialogue with ETC, the Minister of Public Transport's office have conveyed an interest in pursuing the following themed opportunities:

- Station upgrades incorporating typically minor scale works which may incorporate upgraded for passengers, lighting and security, enhancement to station environs and provision of bicycle cages.
- Bus enhancements noting that there is currently no appetite from Government to deliver a bus review for Melbourne. This is due in part to the time and expense in achieving such an outcome. There is interest in innovation in the field of bus servicing, noting that this may include the utilisation of smaller bus fleets and/or on demand services.

- The Government has expressed a desire to not lose or change existing bus routes or services and have indicated that if a new route was to be proposed, there would need to be a valid business case to support its justification. It has been stated that enhanced frequency and duration of services in the off peak/weekend period is easier to respond to compared with the provision of entirely new services, which require significant capital expenditure.
- Use of technology to achieve transport outcomes.

2.2 Rowville Rail

Knox Council was instrumental in getting the Rowville Rail project on the Victorian State Government radar. Two studies were originally commissioned by Knox. The first in 2004, a prefeasibility study, co-written by Professor Peter Newman and Bill Russell, explored at strategic level the relative merit of bringing a heavy rail solution to Rowville. Included in the study was a review of the relative merits of various light and heavy rail routes to Rowville. Two heavy rail options were originally examined, one along the Wellington Road corridor from Huntingdale Station to Stud Park via Monash University along the Wellington Road corridor and a second being the extension of the Glen Waverley Rail line. The study concluded that a heavy rail along the Wellington Road corridor was feasible.

Following extensive lobbying from Council and the community, the State Government, in 2011, commissioned a feasibility study. Known as the Rowville Rail Stage 1 study. This study was released in March 2012 for public consultation and specifically concentrated on the feasibility of a heavy rail service along the Wellington Road corridor.

At the same time as the State Government was undertaking the Rowville Rail Stage 1 study, Council commissioned a complementary study, known as The Rowville Rail Project Economic Impact Study. This study provided advice on the likely economic and employment impacts that could be expected for the City of Knox if the proposed Rowville Rail Project was constructed.

The work considerably raised the profile of Rowville Rail as a concept, and provided a strong foundation for the subsequent advocacy efforts undertaken by Council.

Both directly through Council and as part of the Eastern Transport Coalition (ETC), there have been repeated calls for Government to progress design development for the Rowville Rail project, with only limited success in recent times.

To this end, considerable advocacy work was undertaken, seeking that Government progress via a Stage 2 report for detailed design development to be led by the Department of Transport. However when it was ultimately delivered in 2015, led by PTV, the work essentially re-packaged previous analysis undertaken through earlier reports.

In April 2018, the Victorian State Government announced a \$3m investment for design and planning works to examine alignments, park and ride options, stop locations, cost and travel time benefits in delivering a light rail connection between Caulfield Station and Rowville via Dandenong Road and Wellington Road. Under this proposal, Stage 1 would link Caulfield Station to Monash University's Clayton campus via Chadstone Shopping Centre with Stage 2 connecting Monash University at Blackburn Road to Rowville via Waverley Park.

In an ETC meeting held at Monash Council on April 19, Transport for Victoria (TfV) representatives provided an overview of the work undertaken to date and near term works expected to be completed. The TfV representatives indicated strongly that the incorporation of both planning and design works are to be expedited, which provides a strong indication of the desire of Government to progress the project. They also indicated that delivery of a light rail solution would not preclude delivery of a heavy rail solution into the future.

In delivering its proposed 2018/19 budget, the Federal Government announced \$475m towards the Monash rail link. Of the funds committed, only \$23m will be spent in the next 4 years for planning and pre-construction work associated for the project. The Federal Urban Cities and Infrastructure Minister has identified that the proposed contribution should consider supporting a heavy rail, rather than light rail solution.

Recent announcements dictate that it is timely that Council formalise its advocacy position in relation to recent announcements regarding Rowville Rail. The current context provides opportunity for Council to consider Rowville Rail as part of a whole of network approach, incorporating other key priority public transport corridors, including light rail proposals and the identification of supporting bus servicing improvements. This network approach responds to both the existing and the proposed land use context within Knox and surrounding municipalities.

2.3 Knox Tram

The original Burwood Highway tram line was constructed to Warrigal Road in 1916 and has had three extensions since that time. It was extended to Middleborough Road in 1978, to Blackburn Road in 1993 and then to Vermont South in 2005.

The extension of the tram line to Knox was first examined as part of the Scoresby Corridor Environmental Effects Statement in 1998. One of the recommendations from this study was for the tram line to be extended to Knox City Shopping Centre.

The route 75 tram was extended from Blackburn Road to Vermont South Shopping Centre in July 2005. As part of this project, the Knox Transit Link was launched. This is a bus service to and from Westfield Knox which meets every tram at the Vermont South interchange.

A tram to Knox would be beneficial in providing a seamless trip for commuters between Westfield Knox and other key destinations along Burwood Highway including Deakin University, Tally Ho Business Park and numerous schools and retirement villages. Children and older residents are often reliant on public transport for their independence so this connection is important.

The Knox Tram continues to be a priority for Council in its advocacy work.

2.4 Better Buses – Bus servicing priorities

Council Officers have identified a number of bus route improvements/new services which would form the basis for advocacy with the State Government in the run-up to the State Election. Initial conversations have been held with Ventura Buses, who operate the majority of current services within Knox. To date, Ventura have been generally supportive of the proposals, noting that discussions are generally conceptual in nature.

It is important to ensure that our public transport network can keep up with the demand but also provide alternative forms of transport that uses less road space to minimise the need for future road upgrades. To provide a viable alternative option, Knox is seeking to advocate for the following bus improvements:

- a) Improve the span of hours and frequency of all bus services to at least meet a consistent service level being a maximum frequency of every 40 minutes for all routes, with operational hours of:
 - 6:00 am 9:00 pm on Weekdays
 - 8:00 am 9:00 pm on Saturday
 - 9:00 am 9:00 pm on Sunday

Some of Knox's bus routes with poor frequency or hours of service are underutilised with some services having one or two passengers per trip. The poor usage is largely due to commuter frustration of bus services being infrequent and unreliable. A number of bus routes within Knox fail to meet minimum service aspirations as prescribed by the State. Commuter feedback received by Ventura Buses highlighted that commuters are willing to walk further distances in order to catch more reliable and frequent services (maximum 15 minute wait between services) with longer hours of services.

It is clear that providing a bus route through a residential area to provide network coverage is insufficient. Services must be competitive against private vehicle use. As a start, underperforming or bus services that do not meet the minimum level of service should be assessed. Some routes to be assessed include the 740, 745, 757, 758 and 768 services, with opportunity to explore different servicing models.

b) Route Proposal 1 - Glen Waverley to Stud Park via Eastlink - Establish a new bus service to improve employee access to key industrial/commercial hubs in the Scoresby, Knoxfield and Rowville Precinct.

This incorporates establishing a new route to improve employee access to key industrial/commercial hubs in the Scoresby, Knoxfield and Rowville Precinct by linking to a train line and reducing travel time along Wellington Road during peak hour.

The route aims to provide a connection from the Glen Waverley train station to Stud Park Shopping Centre via High Street Road, Eastlink and Wellington Road. The service can provide public transport access to Caribbean Business Park and potentially provide an alternative option via Stud Road to provide a connection to the Knoxfield industrial precinct in the afternoon supporting Glen Waverley bound trips.

c) Route Proposal 2 - Stud Park to Bayswater Station via Henderson Road & Scoresby Road - Establish a new route - between Bayswater Station and Stud Park via Henderson Road - utilising the proposed bridge construction, improving access between Bayswater Activity Centre, the Bayswater Business precinct and Rowville.

This route aims to address the service gap along Scoresby Road which services industrial, commercial and residential uses. The route provides an alternative north south connection to support Knox's Public Transport network. The route proposes to connect Bayswater and the Stud Park Shopping Centre via Scoresby Road, Ferntree Gully Road, Henderson Road, Kelletts Road and Stud Road. This will improve access for employees in the Bayswater Business Precinct and the Rowville/Knoxfield Industrial Precincts as well as improving off peak access for the elderly within our community to services and facilities.

d) Route Proposal 3 - The Bayswater Shuttle Trial a Bayswater shuttle service to reduce 2-5km trips between the activity centre and the surrounding residential area/Bayswater Business Precinct.

This incorporates investigating and funding the trial of a shuttle bus service in the Bayswater/Boronia area to address the need for a "last mile" public transport service in lieu of the 745 service. The shuttle service aims to utilise two shuttle buses and service the wider Bayswater Business Precinct, including the Bayswater activity centre.

The Bayswater Train Station is a popular Park and Ride facility in Knox. However, the majority of commuters parking their cars at Bayswater train station live 3 – 5km away. It is proposed that if a mode shift can be accomplished using the Bayswater Shuttle, the park and ride can increase the current catchment as commuters from Bayswater North and Wantirna can utilise the car parking facilities.

This will minimise car parking demand within the local streets adjacent to the Bayswater Activity Centre. It will also improve access for students and elderly as the shuttle buses are more personalised.

Approximately 33% of employees in the Bayswater Business Precinct live within the same or adjacent suburb. The proposed route could provide a high frequency transport service that can compete against the car.

2.5 Advocacy Approach

In developing its advocacy position, it is appropriate that any discussion about key transport elements, such as Rowville Rail, Knox Tram and Better Buses be seen in the context of a wider network vision for eastern Melbourne which benefits not only Knox, but also surrounding municipalities. This enables a stronger economic case to be built for key proposals when viewed at this subregional level.

It is therefore appropriate to develop a consolidated document which outlines public transport priorities in an integrated manner. This includes development of a sub-regional network map, supplemented with key messages for both State and Federal Government about the specific role public transport provision can play in delivering on economic growth, land use integration and community cohesion aspirations.

The proposed advocacy document is intended to work both as a standalone document in addition to integrating with Council's wider advocacy agenda. A draft copy of the document is presented as an attachment in Appendix A.

With the recent announcement of the proposed rail proposals to Rowville Rail along the Wellington Road corridor, it is appropriate for Council to revisit its position with regard to Rowville Rail. Council has a long standing position advocating for heavy rail as its preferred solution for Rowville and the majority of the Knox community are generally supportive of this approach. The challenge as it currently stands is one of timing. The State Government is currently exploring its light rail proposals and it is equally necessary for Council to be part of these discussions.

At its core, Council should be welcoming any significant investment in Public Transport in Melbourne's east and articulate its desire to engage with both State Government and Federal Governments on this matter to ensure that any proposal developed provides direct and long term benefit to Knox.

Noting that both current proposals incorporate a Phase 1, which deliver rail only to the Monash University precinct as a first stage, with connections to Rowville to come later, Council needs to advocate strongly to ensure that the project be planned and delivered as one project. If a light rail solution were deemed to be the preferred solution, it is possible that lower costs could deliver this outcome. Making the economic case for this outcome is essential to the success of the advocacy approach.

The approach for buses targets a more general appeal for better servicing across Knox through extended operating hours and more frequent servicing, coupled with a call for specific route enhancements across Knox.

3. CONSULTATION

The advocacy document was developed through a collaborative approach between the traffic and transport and marketing teams, with input from EMT, City Planning and preliminary input from Councillors. Key details relating to current planning projects at the State level were provided through recent Eastern Transport Coalition meetings.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL/AMENITY ISSUES

Transport services affect the quality of life of residents and it is therefore important that there are transport choices and sustainable transport options available.

5. FINANCIAL & ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

The Traffic and Transport unit has an operational budget capacity to support public transport advocacy to the amount of \$10,000. The approach also considers the need to engage a specialist transport consultant to provide support to Council on the provision of strategic transport advice. Additional costs to produce content, including a booklet would be considered within the context of Marketing and Customer services current budget capacity. It is anticipated that the total cost of the work could be in the order of \$25,000 to \$30,000.

6. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Transport provides opportunities for all members of the community to access employment, education and other local services and activities, thereby improving community capacity and minimising social isolation.

7. RELEVANCE TO KNOX COMMUNITY AND COUNCIL PLAN 2017-2021

Having the ability to move around easily adds to our health, wellbeing, connection and interaction with others. It enables people to access employment, socialise with family and friends, and access to healthy food. It also has an economic benefit for the municipality.

Goal 3 — We can move around easily.

Strategy 3.1 - Enable improved transport choices supported by integrated and sustainable transport systems and infrastructure.

In addressing this goal, the Community and Council Plan identifies the following Council initiatives:

- 3.1.3 Continue to advocate for all priority transport projects, including the Knox Tram, Rowville Rail, improved bus services, and the Dorset Road extension.
- 3.1.5 Advocate to State and Federal Governments for improved sustainable transport infrastructure and services.

Knox is significantly car-dependent, particularly in the southern area which has poor access to public transport services whereby almost 75 per cent of Knox residents travel to work by car, compared with a metropolitan average of 64 per cent.

8. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Under section 80c of the Local Government Act 1989 officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

Officer Responsible – (Ian Bell) - In providing this advice as the Officer Responsible, I have no disclosable interests in this report.

Author – (Matthew Hanrahan) - In providing this advice as the Author, I have no disclosable interests in this report.

9. CONCLUSION

Knox Council has a well regarded reputation for public transport advocacy and given recent government interest in the delivery of dedicated public transport routes, it is timely that Council's current advocacy position be refreshed. All levels of Government are already aligned on removing barriers to jobs, education and economic development. With this shared commitment, and compelling evidence of the benefits for everyone, getting the transport system right should be as simple as joining the dots.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY

There are no matters of confidentiality associated with this report.

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Linking communities

The proposed transport vision for Melbourne's east connects major destinations for jobs, education retail and entertainment and will be a big step towards achieving the Victorian Government's aim to achieve '20-minute neighbourhoods'.

The key educational precincts of Monash, Deakin and Swinburne will be directly connected by proposed networks.

Key activities centres with higher density residential and retail hubs like Knox Central and employment hubs like Bayswater Business Precinct, Scoresby-Rowville-**Knoxfield Employment Hub** (incorporating Caribbean Park), Knox Central, Wantirna Health Precinct, Monash Employment Cluster and Dandenong South will also be stimulated by a priority public transport offering.

The benefits will likewise flow to retail hubs, housing developments and transport interchanges. Combined, these essential transport links will help generate more significant investment throughout Melbourne's east.

The proposed network links are designed to connect with the metropolitan rail network, providing the opportunity for seamless, high quality interchanges for passengers, enhancing connections across Melbourne and maximising the utility of the existing transport infrastructure.

Kev requirements for public transport

Knox needs a next-generation public transport systems that supports residential and economic growth. This means:

- Effective interchanges with other transport modes (trains, trams, buses, cycling).
- Dedicated transport corridors (unrestricted by other traffic movement).
- Grade separation between road and rail services.
- High-speed vehicles.
- Quality station environments.
- Greater spacing between stations.
- Supportive technology solutions.

The area's capacity for employment and economic growth is under threat because of transport issues that can be easily fixed. All it would take is a collaborative effort between all tiers of government to properly plan and invest.

All levels of government are already aligned on removing barriers to jobs, education and economic development. With this shared commitment, and compelling evidence of the benefits for everyone, getting the transport mix right in Knox should be a simple as joining the dots. Council looks forward to discussing options with all stakeholders, including State and Federal governments.

Delivering the vision

A step by step approach is needed to deliver Knox's transport vision.

STAGE 1

Deliver rail along Wellington Road to Rowville as one integrated project, utilising \$475m in Federal Government funding

STAGE 2

Extend the Knox Tram (light rail) to Upper Ferntree Gully station, directly serving Knox Central

STAGE 3

Deliver light rail along Stud Road, connecting Dandenong with the Bayswater Business Precinct. Deliver light rail along Springvale Road.

Help build a better Knox



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Interpreter 131 450

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Public Transport: A vision for the East

Knox needs a next generation public transport system that connects more people with jobs, education, business and health precincts. A more effective system throughout eastern Melbourne will enable the area to become an employer of choice and encourage economic growth.

Overview

Commuters in Knox and throughout Melbourne's east are car captives - forced to use their cars because the public transport offering is minimal.

The lack of public transport connectivity between Knox and Monash contributes significantly to the rapidly increasing congestion on freeways and arterial roads.

Knox and six other local government members of the Eastern Transport Coalition advocate on behalf of a million people in Melbourne's east. We are ready to work with local, state and federal stakeholders to develop a next generation transport system throughout Melbourne's east.

Economic growth

More significantly, traffic snarls are stifling economic growth and preventing the area from becoming an employer of choice.

Knox and neighbouring Monash make up an industry, education and retail powerhouse that generates over \$26.9 billion for the state and national economies, with strong aspirations for further growth.

Current significant employment hubs in the municipality of Knox includes Bayswater Business Precinct (30k), Scoresby-Rowville-Knoxfield Employment Hub including Caribbean Park (19k) and Wantirna Health Precinct (4k).

The municipality of Monash is one of the biggest employers in all Melbourne, and more than half of all employees travel from either within Monash or from municipalities to the east (Knox) and southeast. Delivering a rail solution that stops at Monash University will actually leave half the passengers behind.

Education

Students at Monash University, Swinburne University and TAFEs travel from every direction, creating demand for a system that serves all areas of Knox and connects to their homes beyond.

A new vision

Council's vision is for a series of new rail-based public transport routes and coordinated, frequent bus services that link to provide a network grid to connect with existing train lines and Melbourne's CBD.

Realising Rowville Rail (Wellington Road) and the Knox Tram (Burwood Highway) projects will fill the gaps and reinforce the spine of dedicated east-west public transport corridors in Melbourne's east.

Heavy rail (trains) is the best longterm solution for the Wellington Road corridor in serving Monash University, the Monash Employment cluster and the Scoresby-Rowville employment precinct. The entire corridor to Rowville should be delivered as one project because travel is a two-way system and relies on ridership from all directions.

These projects plus future light rail services along Springvale Road and Stud Road will become the workhorse of public transport in the east, connecting with key heavy rail routes at Springvale and Dandenong (the Cranbourne/Dandenong corridor), Nunawading, Glen Waverley and either Bayswater or Upper Ferntree Gully (the Belgrave/ Lilydale corridor).

Effective bus services are the final integral part of the network. High quality, frequently serviced bus routes capture strong patronage. Current wait times of 60 minutes. and sporadic weekend and evening services is not effective and is a barrier to those wanting to leave their car at home. Knox is calling on the State Government to provide more frequent services more often.

