

## LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL AUTHORITY (LXRA) DROP-IN SESSIONS:

This report has been written in relation to the Victorian Government's announcement to remove select level crossings on the Frankston line, with a focus on the communities between Edithvale and Carrum. This information has been collected from the Drop-In Sessions to date, being held between 02/03/16 and 21/03/16.

### **1. FINANCIALS**

1.1 Six billion has been allocated to the overall project, with geotechnical testing and traffic studies having already commenced, and no specific budget allocated to the level crossing removals at this stage.

### **2. ENGINEERING**

#### 2.1 Sound and vibration

- Brad (Engineer) could not confirm whether additional lines would be added to the Frankston line, and said that if the rail were raised the freight trains would continue to run as per normal overnight. He also said that there has been no mention of the need to increase capacity on Frankston line.
- Phil (Engineer) said that whilst they can attempt to repeal sound within an elevated rail scenario, it would make no difference to the diesel trains. It would certainly be louder than any underground alternative in his view. Elevated rail is generally noisier than underground rail, as sound is directed outwards and over existing houses, however attempts will be made to repeal sound as per the Passenger Rail Infrastructure Noise Policy
- Diesel trains can already be heard 3-4 kilometres away at night in neighbouring suburbs.

#### 2.2 Developing an underground solution

- Engineers (present at the session) believed that an underground solution was possible, however whether this is considered as an option is entirely dependable on funding and on the scope provided to them.
- An underground rail solution can be engineered if necessary, with many local examples on hand such as the multiple underground car parks on the beachside of the highway and notably the Safety Beach Tunnel. Just recently a development on Carrum Beach had a 10-metre (approx.) trench dug out and there are plenty of international examples to study, including the Channel Tunnel, Seikan Tunnel and Auckland's City Rail Link project. Whilst the sediment is different at each location, these examples are constructed under or near large bodies of water.
- One of the Engineers on hand said, "that any tunnel must have pumps." These are known as submersible pumps and can be supported with systems to prevent failure, or alternative systems can be considered. There is also the option of cut and cover to explore also, and the Engineers acknowledged that there were many successful examples locally and globally of underground roads or rail networks near large bodies of water.
- Phil (Engineer) was of the opinion that to develop an underground solution at Edithvale the depth required would be approximately 6-metres, however other factors could come into play as they could also look into raising the height of the road slightly to reduce the depth of the trench. The cut and cover method is one to be considered at this location, and the differences between this method and a tunnel are vastly different.

- It should be noted that when lowering the rail, the fall in depth is at a 2-degree angle, and therefore to lower the rail 1-metre it takes a total of 50-metres to do so.

### 3. PROCESS

#### 3.1 Introduction

- The Communications Manager, 'Shazz', said that a "different process" had been selected for the Frankston line, but wouldn't answer why the process had changed, only to say that the process would be more extensive.
- Shazz admitted that the LXRA were a government organisation and sat under the Department of Transport.
- The LXRA's consultation process on the Pakenham line has left residents feeling insecure and fearful that their input will not be taken seriously. Some residents have indicated that they will sell their homes if a *skyrail* plan is announced. Residents are more comfortable speaking with the City of Kingston than the LXRA.
- City of Kingston has been very supportive and passed a motion to ensure that the LXRA's consultation process took into consideration a variety of factors. The LXRA at the Carrum meeting seemed keen to differentiate themselves from the Government, and said that an underground solution was not necessarily any more expensive than an elevated rail, but could not comment either way. This conflicts with the LXRA's support and broadcasting of the benefits of elevated rail, including the funding of a study.

#### 3.2 Process

- At the end of each Drop-In Session the LXRA team are debriefed. All data collected from Drop-In sessions will be uploaded to Social PinPoint. The Communications Manager said that they hadn't had the time to upload it all just yet. Community amenity, including pedestrian access across the railway lines will be considered, and discussions with schools and some community groups are on the cards.
- Quantitative data will then be collected via surveying and door knocking before concepts are put forward in July. The community will again be allowed to have input and further consultation will occur.
- The data will then be analysed before a consultation report is formed and made available publicly.
- The design will be announced towards the end of 2016, which will be followed by the tendering process, and a report being presented to Engineers along with a budget and project scope.

#### 3.3 Drop-In Sessions

- Many residents who attended were uninformed about the project and the engineering aspect. Arguably this is due to the media publishing information creating a perception that the water table inhibits the available designs.
- It was suggested by a staff member that one thing in "our favour" was the fact that we are mostly marginal Labor seats and that this could impact the process.
- At the Drop-In Session on March 5<sup>th</sup>, the staff acknowledged that despite signing up for updates, they had not delivered any to its subscribers (apparently due to a 'glitch'.) The LXRA feedback form is also not available online.

- The primary feedback method largely consists of post-it notes being stuck to large boards, which will apparently be categorised (and made visible on Social PinPoint for all to see.) A 3<sup>rd</sup> party is managing this and reportedly entering collected data manually into the software, however it has been discovered that comments have been removed, and at the Drop-In Session on March 21<sup>st</sup>, the LXRA explained that they were not attempting to be malicious and believed that a glitch must exist. A further follow-up on this revealed that only 1200 comments could be displayed in total on Social PinPoint, and that whilst some comments had 'disappeared' others were 'hidden' according to a staff member.
- The LXRA admitted that anyone could leave feedback including those who don't reside locally at the Drop-In Sessions and via the Social PinPoint feedback tool. This can potentially lead to bias occurring during the market research process.
- Union activists attended the March 21<sup>st</sup> Drop-In Sessions, where they intimidated and abused local residents in addition to leaving feedback in support of elevated rail.

### 3.4 Feedback forms and promotional activity

- The first written question on the feedback form asks you to, "please tell us what is important to your area". There are no mentions of the available design options.
- The LXRA have not disclosed whether other stations (outside of the flagged 11 level crossings) such as Parkdale will be impacted. Flyers were distributed to Parkdale shops with the message, "Frankston line boom gates to go." This is odd because some residents in Carrum near the railway have not received any notifications from the LXRA. It is these residents who will be directly impacted.
- Flyers promoting the Drop-In Sessions were distributed on the day of the event
- Flyers distributed for the 'interactive community' sessions read, 'we want to hear what is important to you' within the subheading. This has however since changed to, "before we create designs for these crossing removals, we want to hear from the community about what is important to you."
- The dominant set of photos at the LXRA meetings have been based on elevated designs. Phil (Engineer) agreed that this material suggested that the LXRA were looking to steer the conversation towards elevated rail when this wasn't the case (in his personal view.)

## **4. COMMUNITY RESPONSE**

The Edithvale, Bonbeach and Carrum communities are calling for the Government to take their time, and to deliver upon a quality outcome that keeps with the character of these small beachside suburbs, whilst addressing the concerns of residents.

These concerns include but are not limited to:

- Increased noise and ground vibration
- Infrastructure being not in line with the neighbourhood character
- Potential negative consequences for property values considering the overshadowing of backyards and blocking of bay views
- Potential place for crime and anti-social activity to occur
- No agreement between the authorities as to who will be financially responsible for the maintenance of the train station precinct/s
- Being mislead or deceived by the Level Crossing Removal Authority

The sessions have reaffirmed the position of residents as opposed to raised rail (with many wanting to hear about the alternatives!)

Judging by the feedback from residents at the sessions, at Carrum the LXRA may well need to evaluate:

- Relocation of Carrum Railway Station further south in conjunction with increased car parking
- Closure of the Station Street, Carrum level crossing and realignment of McLeod Road with the Nepean Highway
- Eel Race Road to be lowered under the level crossing to the Nepean Highway
- Or alternatively to the above points consider the cut and cover method

The cut and cover method has been proving popular at all Drop-In Sessions for the level crossings at Edithvale, Bonbeach and Carrum, with residents providing the very clear feedback that they would like to see the rail lowered.