



Bulla Road to Power Street Construction Bulletin

Lemon-scented gums



JUNE 2016

Flemington Road interchange

Significant improvements will be made to the freeway interchange at Mount Alexander Road and Flemington Road to improve the safety and efficiency of this extremely busy and complex junction.

As part of the CityLink Tulla Widening project, two new inbound traffic lanes will be built on Mount Alexander Road, providing easier access to Elliot Avenue and reducing congestion. The Flemington Road exit ramp will also be widened to include two additional lanes, and the outbound freeway entry ramp will be extended.

To allow for these and other improvements to be made to the interchange, the narrow traffic island on Flemington Road will be removed, including the row of five lemon-scented gums, one of which is on the National Trust's Significant Tree Register.

Safety is our no.1 priority

Taking recent community feedback into consideration, our preference was to retain the five lemon-scented gums located on Flemington Road.

Together with the City of Melbourne, extensive analysis has been undertaken to again review all options for designing the improved interchange with the trees remaining.

The project has considered the City of Melbourne Tree Retention and Removal Policy at length and all tree protection requirements have been exhausted.

Unfortunately, the alternatives considered do not meet Australian road safety standards and present significant risks not only for drivers, but pedestrians, cyclists and tram-users.

We understand the value of these gums to the local community, but our first priority must be the safety of this interchange and all road-users, particularly when we consider the projected increase in vehicle, cyclist and pedestrian traffic.

Key considerations

Four options were explored with a view to keeping the trees.

However, it was determined that changes to the initial design would result in unacceptable safety concessions to pedestrian crossings, bike paths, road conditions and lane widths.

In exploring these options, the following issues were considered:

Speed limit: In order to meet safety standards, it would be necessary to reduce the speed limit at the intersection from the current 60km/h to 50km/h if the trees were retained. Motorists would exit a high-speed environment on the freeway and be required to slow to 50km/h in a short space of time, which may increase the risk of collision. After passing the trees, the speed limit would then increase to 60km/h, creating further confusion and dangerous traffic conditions. Motorists driving towards the city from Mount Alexander Road will be driving through a 60km/h to 50km/h to 60km/h zone, adding to the confusion. There are no current plans to reduce the speed limit for the length of Flemington Road and Mount Alexander Road in the vicinity of exit/entry ramps. Speed reduction on any arterial road is determined in accordance with Speed Zoning Guidelines, following extensive consultation and understanding of the local environment, traffic volumes and road condition.

Footpath width: Narrowing the footpath by up to one metre may increase the likelihood that a pedestrian could stray onto the road, risking a serious accident. This is a busy intersection that serves multiple needs, pedestrians accessing the tram stop, motorists exiting the freeway, commuter cyclists heading to the CBD for work, and local residents passing through the area. Narrowing the footpaths would place all road users at risk.

Lane width: The bend of the road requires that lane widths provide for a one-metre separation to allow semi-trailers to turn without boxing in cars or other trucks. The design to retain the trees will only achieve a separation of 295mm which presents a significant safety risk. In addition, the volume of large trucks at this intersection is expected to increase due to suburban truck curfews which will intensify the traffic squeeze effect at this bend.

Road curve: The additional lanes are constrained by both the position of the trees and the tram stop, meaning the curve of the road will be below the standard required for

60km/h speeds. A sharper curve increases the risk of a driver being unable to remain in the correct lane. In this instance, it also increases the risk of a car colliding with the tram stop or adjacent vehicles.

Ride quality: VicRoads has set standards for ride quality (or the smoothness of the road) which are determined by the speed limit. As such, freeways and arterial roads are required to have high ride quality in order to increase safety. The existing road alignment has crests built into the lanes to assist with water drainage due to the position of the trees. The sudden transition in slope creates instability for drivers, particularly at high speeds. Over time, the road quality would also be affected by tree roots from the lemon-scented gums.

Tram stop safety: Due to the drainage issues created by the position of the trees, the additional lanes on Mount Alexander Road may have to be built at a different vertical geometry or height, meaning cars will be more likely to lose control without sufficient room to recover. This is of particular concern as it occurs adjacent to a tram stop.

Kerb height: An increase in kerb height will be required to match the height of the narrowed footpath. The higher kerb will significantly increase the likelihood of wheel and/or tyre damage if a vehicle makes inadvertent contact.

Water ponding: The new kerb height may also lead to issues with water ponding. Increased volumes of water on the road could lead to a greater chance of drivers losing control of their vehicles, skidding and then over-correcting. This poses a significant safety risk.

Future traffic growth: While forecast traffic growth through the interchange will be gradual, reflecting growth across the road system generally, this increase will intensify the above concerns.

Unsafe pedestrian behaviour: Currently, pedestrians use the tree island as a refuge to cross Flemington Road, rather than crossing at the lights. Keeping this island will continue to have a negative safety impact on pedestrian behaviour, which would be mitigated with the removal of the island.

Relocation of tree

The project has also investigated the process of potentially transplanting or relocating the mature tree through extensive arborist consultation. The arborists have advised that the Eucalypt species is unlikely to survive the removal and transplant process, due to the damage it will sustain during relocation.

Logistically, it would also be extremely difficult to attempt to relocate a tree of this size, which would require significant works removing pavement and road infrastructure, and substantial traffic disruptions as a result.

The City of Melbourne Tree Retention and Removal Policy states it is rarely possible to repair stressed and injured trees, particularly when their root systems are disturbed. The policy also requires adequate above and below ground space for the trees to continue to grow, which would not be possible if safety requirements of the interchange upgrade are met.

Value of the trees and contribution to re-greening projects

Both VicRoads and the project team understand the great value of the lemon-scented gum trees to the local community. However, the first priority in road design must be the safety of this interchange and all road-users, particularly when we consider the projected increase in vehicle, cyclist and pedestrian traffic.

Given the high amenity and ecological value of the five lemon-scented gum trees, the project will make a contribution to the City of Melbourne's Urban Forest Fund to support re-greening initiatives undertaken within that program.

In addition, wood from the trees will be recycled and used as park furniture in the nearby City of Melbourne reserves.

Community engagement

The project understands that members of the community feel they haven't been adequately engaged with in relation to the removal of the trees to date. VicRoads is working together with both Transurban and CPB Contractors to improve community engagement and take into consideration the needs of residents.

Key activities include distribution of this information pack, door-knocking, letterbox drops, telephone calls, information sessions and notification posted on the trees.

We look forward to speaking to residents in person and answering any further questions you may have.

Contact details

For further information
Call 1300 783 947, select 1
Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Email ctwbulatopower@cpbcon.com.au

Visit citylinktullawidening.vic.gov.au

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Please call 131 450 if you require
information in another language

