Melbourne Airport Rail Link – 2014 Discussion Paper

A new station for Airport West, Keilor East and Keilor Park

The State Government appointed a consultant to Technical, Planning & Engagement Advisor for Melbourne Rail Link, which includes Airport Rail Link, in November 2014.

This is further to a comparison of four shortlisted routes, and an ultimate state government decision to pursue the Albion East alignment.

As part of the Airport Rail Link, there is potential for a new station to provide access to and from Melbourne Airport, Melbourne CBD and Keilor East, Airport West and Keilor Park. This catchment is currently poorly served by public transport connections. The current proposed alignment of Airport Rail Link will impact resident and local amenity (for example considerable increase in noise), with no associated benefit to this catchment.

Provision of an appropriately located local station would provide clear benefits to residents of Airport West, Keilor East and Keilor Park. It would benefit visitors to and, importantly, employees of, Melbourne Airport by providing a local, quality public transport connection. It would also provide increased access to key strategic destinations such as Airport West, a technology hub in Plan Melbourne.

Airport West and Essendon Fields have limited connectivity to the surrounding network due to significant geographical barriers like CityLink, Tullamarine Freeway, the Albion-Jacana freight line and the Moonee Ponds Creek. This lack of connectivity increases congestion on local roads and key arterials in this area. Improved sustainable access to Keilor East, Airport West and Keilor Park would play a role in decreasing private car travel and associated parking and congestion.

This document recommends further investigation into a potential location for a railway station at Terror Street.
Policy position:

Plan Melbourne

Plan Melbourne has designated Airport West and Essendon Fields as a technology hub. Improved access to Airport West’s employment and residential uses will support its function as a technology hub.

Network Development Plan and government preference for Albion East alignment

The Network Development Plan favours the Albion East alignment to provide a rail connection between Melbourne CBD and Melbourne Airport.

Western Transport Strategy

The Western Transport Forum is commencing a tender process for a consultant to prepare a paper providing the Western Region position on rail issues and priorities.

Brimbank Transport Strategy

City of Brimbank’s Integrated Transport Strategy supports ‘development of a railway station at Keilor Park Drive as part of the possible future development of Melbourne Airport Rail Link.’

The rail link to Melbourne Airport is a long term proposal and would create the opportunity for a new passenger rail station in the north east of Brimbank at Keilor Park Drive on the existing inter-state and freight line to Sydney.

Brimbank’s Walking and Cycling Strategy notes access to railway stations to be important. An identified key barrier in key walking and cycling routes is the railway line at the Steele Creek crossing.

Moonee Valley Transport Strategy

MVCC’s Integrated Transport Plan supports a rail option between Melbourne CBD and Melbourne Airport incorporating extension of the Flemington Racecourse line and provision of future railway stations in Highpoint. It also contains an action to advocate to the State Government to include a station at East Keilor and Airport West when the Melbourne Airport railway line is constructed.

With regard to shared path connectivity in this area, Council has committed to investigating a potential pedestrian and cyclist link along Steele Creek from Roberts Road to the Western Ring Road trail.
Potential site:

The site considered as part of this exercise is shown to the right. It has potential to service the surrounding local populations within Moonee Valley and Brimbank LGAs.

This site lies along the alignment of three of the four shortlisted routes to Melbourne Airport (Albion East, Direct Tunnel Link & Flemington Link).

Melbourne Airport growth

Trips to and from the airport are growing rapidly—30 million passengers pass through Melbourne Airport each year and this number is expected to more than double to 64 million a year by 2035. The airport employs 14,000 people, and handles a third of all freight moved at Australian airports, with the precinct contributing $1.5 billion to the economy each year.

The CityLink-Tullamarine Freeway corridor is the primary route to the airport for passenger and freight vehicles. As demand on this corridor increases, journeys to and from the airport will become less reliable, impacting air passengers, Melbourne’s liveability and the Victorian economy. This has already begun to occur at peak times.

Strong growth is forecast to continue and Melbourne Airport will need to be serviced by high capacity, efficient and reliable transport services for Melbourne to maintain its status as a global, vibrant and liveable city.

The Melbourne Airport Rail Link aims¹ to provide a journey time of 25 minutes between Melbourne CBD and Melbourne Airport. It proposes:

- A new Melbourne Airport station
- Dedicated Melbourne Airport Rail Link tracks between Melbourne Airport and the Albion-Jacana freight corridor
- Two new Melbourne Airport Rail Link tracks along the Albion-Jacana freight line
- A rail flyover to connect trains to the existing metropolitan rail network at Albion
- Stations on the network at Caulfield, South Yarra, Richmond, North Melbourne, Footscray and Sunshine

According to Melbourne Airport’s 2006 Ground Transport Plan, 1276 (11.6%) and 1032 (9.4%) of Melbourne Airport’s staff reside in Moonee Valley and Brimbank respectively.

Size and access by all modes

The site is located within Industrial Zone 1 (refer Appendix 2) and is 2.3ha in area. The size of the Development Plan Overlay referred below is 0.3 ha. The rail lines are located adjacent to the site and therefore would not impact on usable site area. For comparison purposes, Essendon Station, including all parking and rail lines, is 2.4 ha.

Access to the Terror Street site is directly off fullarton Road and therefore it is readily accessible from the surrounding road network.

There is also cycling and walking access to the site via the existing Steele Creek shared path. The Steele Creek shared path exists in Moonee Valley and Brimbank, however there is a lack of continuity between the two and an opportunity to resolve this.

The existing bus routes that run adjacent to the Terror Street site are Route 476 and Route 465.

Appendix 1 shows the connections with the surrounding road, public transport and walking and cycling network.

Planning controls on the site

The land is within the existing Public Use Zone 4 (PUZ4 –Transport). The land also is subject to an historical planning scheme overlay. Appendix 2 shows the extent of the Development Plan Overlay.

The Moonee Valley Planning Scheme contains a Design and Development Overlay over the current designated route. Design and Development Overlay 6 “Melbourne Airport Rail Link Area (DD06)” has the following objective:

To ensure that the Melbourne Airport Rail Link is constructed in accordance with the approved Melbourne Airport Rail Link Development Plan.

A planning permit is not required for maintenance, repairs, upgrading or other works associated with existing rail infrastructure and for buildings or works associated with new rail infrastructure other than for the Melbourne Airport Rail Link.

An application under this overlay that is in accordance with the approved Melbourne Airport Rail Link Development Plan is exempt from the notice requirements of Section 52(1)(a), (b) and (d), the decision requirements of Section 64(1),(2) and (3) and the review rights of Section 82(1) of the Act.

A similar DDO applies in the Brimbank Planning Scheme and Maribyrnong Planning Scheme.
Who would benefit and likely usage

Overview of train use in Moonee Valley

Findings from the Moonee Valley Community Survey show that in terms of general use, 15-24 year olds represent the highest proportion of users, with over half (57%) of train users falling within this age range. Those in their retirement years are the other group for whom trains are particularly critical, with a more than a quarter (29%) of those aged 65+ indicating that they use trains to get around. In terms of commuting, one in six (17%) indicated that they use a train.

The suburbs with higher levels of access to trains obviously show higher incidences of use of trains for both getting around and commuting.

In the suburbs surrounding the proposed station (Keilor East and Airport West), use of trains is understandably quite low (due to poor access to train stations).

![Usage of trains chart]

When analysing this by age range, it is apparent that amongst the elderly (65+ year olds – green bar in following chart), use of trains to get around increases up to around half when there is easy access to a station (shown in purple boxes in the following chart). The suburbs closest to the proposed new stations (red arrows on chart) have very low levels of usage of trains amongst the elderly; therefore a great deal of potential for providing access for this segment of the community.
The Annual Community Survey also shows that those who live in rental property show a higher incidence of catching a train to get around (41%, compared to 34% of those who own outright and 28% of those who own with a mortgage).

Comparison Station

A train station was chosen for comparison purposes - Keon Park. This station was chosen as it is a similar distance from the city, has similar levels of housing density and is in close proximity to a large freeway.

- The community survey revealed that youth and those who are employed are the most frequent users of trains.

- The raw numbers (table below), show that the Terror Street site has a high number of people within the 1km catchment. This is primarily due to over 1000 elderly residents; for whom there is a great deal of potential to provide greater access (as previously mentioned).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within 1km</th>
<th>Proposed site MVCC</th>
<th>Comparison site Keon Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population 15+ years</td>
<td>3,978</td>
<td>2,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth (15-24)</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working years (25-64)</td>
<td>2,416</td>
<td>1,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly (65+)</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- It is assumed that car ownership is related to ease of access to public transport. For the Terror Street site, 60% of households within 1km have 2 or more cars.
Incidentally, only 47% of households within 1km of the Keon Park site indicated that they have 2 or more cars; this could be a function of proximity to transport (therefore no additional cars are needed) – if so, access to a train station may result in reduced car ownership and therefore reduced impact on the environment.

- The Terror Street proposed site has 17% of residents living within 1km who are renters. Incidentally, the incidence of rental properties within 1km of the comparison site is much higher (Keon Park, 24%). The community survey shows that renters more commonly use trains to get around, therefore having more renters nearby will potentially result in higher levels of usage.

- Current 2011 Census findings suggest that current incidence of use of public transport to get to work is just 9% within approximately 1km of the Terror Street proposed site but 17% within 1km of the Keon Park comparison site. This illustrates that there is clearly potential for an increase in public transport use if a train station were available, with a station at Terror Street offering potential for increase.
Appendix 2

EMBANK PLANNING SCHEME - LOCAL PROVISION

Subject site