



# **NORTH EAST LINK & HURSTBRIDGE RAILWAY LINE COMMUNITY UPDATE**

A short update to answer some of the common questions we have been receiving about these major transport projects.

## **NORTH EAST LINK LEGAL CHALLENGE**

Since the NEL was formally announced in 2016 Council has strongly advocated and worked to improve the design of the project. We want the project to deliver the best overall transport solution and minimise the environmental impacts while maximising the benefits for the Banyule community.

Council partnered with the community to make the case for improvements during the public Environment Effects Statement (EES) process in 2019. The independent report from this process agreed with many of the improvements that Council has advocated for. The most important recommended improvements, a longer tunnel, broader environmental safeguards and protections to specific locations, have not been adequately included in the project design.

In Feb 2020, Banyule, Boroondara and Whitehorse councils alongside Manningham Council commenced a Supreme Court legal challenge of the EES process. In the lead-up to a scheduled hearing in September 2020, Council entered into mediation with the Victorian Government and the North East Link Project (NELP) with the aim of negotiating improvements.

Banyule needs improved transport infrastructure to help keep people moving and connected to jobs, activities and the rest of Melbourne. The Victorian Government has responded to continued Council advocacy and is funding major transport projects in the north-east of Melbourne.

The North East Link (NEL) and Hurstbridge Railway Line duplication project – Stage 2 are being built within Banyule. It is essential that these projects deliver the right outcomes for the short and long-term benefit of the community and that more is done to meet our transport needs.

During the pre-hearing mediation sessions the other councils reached an agreement with the Victorian Government and NELP and withdrew from the legal process. After seeking our own updated legal advice, Banyule also decided to reluctantly withdraw its legal challenge.

## **WHY DID COUNCIL WITHDRAW FROM THE LEGAL CHALLENGE?**

With the other councils withdrawing, Banyule was unlikely to succeed in pursuing a legal challenge alone. Council also received advice on a recent ruling of the Supreme Court on Environment Effects Statement processes. This ruling set a precedent that added to Council's concerns that pursuing a legal case was unlikely to be successful. Even if Council was successful, the outcome would be a new EES process with no guaranteed outcome.

Based on this information Council decided it was not in the best interests of the community to continue to pursue a legal challenge.

For more information see [banyule.vic.gov.au/advocacy](https://banyule.vic.gov.au/advocacy)



**Banyule**  
CITY COUNCIL

## MEDIATION OUTCOMES

Prior to withdrawing its legal challenge, Council secured a range of additional improvements to the NEL including:

- Improved Watsonia Village - \$5.5m for public space upgrades and a new town square
- Major improvements to pedestrian and cycling paths - \$3.1m for designs in Heidelberg and delivery of an east west path in Watsonia
- An upgraded Trist Street Reserve - \$80,000
- New walking/riding Yarra River Bridge and connecting paths into Heidelberg - \$5.8m (with Manningham Council)

These improvements had been part of Council's existing advocacy effort. Importantly, Council also secured ongoing direct involvement in the design, development and construction phases of the project.

## OTHER LOCAL BENEFITS

These benefits are in addition to the already secured \$30 million of improvements and expansion to Banyule's sporting and community facilities at Binnak Park, Ford Park and Greensborough Secondary College.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

With the contract for the main NEL works expected to be awarded later this year, Council will continue to advocate strongly to the Victorian Government, NELP and the appointed construction company to ensure

that the project delivers the maximum benefits for the community.

Advocacy needs to continue to secure improvements to the project that will further protect the natural environment, preserve local neighbourhoods, avoid dividing the community, minimise health impacts and provide real solutions to the transport issues in the north east.

Early in 2020, the community's expectations for the project were outlined to companies bidding to construct the project so that they could make improvements to their final designs.

Once a confirmed construction company is appointed, Council will continue to make the case that the NEL design can and must be improved.

## EARLY WORKS AND CONSTRUCTION

With early works already underway and more soon to come, Council will continue reviewing the early works designs, and construction and traffic management plans, and work with those involved to minimise detrimental impacts during construction.

**To stay up-to-date with early works visit:**  
[northeastlink.vic.gov.au](http://northeastlink.vic.gov.au)

# WHAT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED?

The public Environment Effects Statement (EES) report highlighted several key improvements that could be included as part of the North East Link (NEL). There is an ongoing case to be made that these improvements can and should be locked into the project as the final design is being developed.

## Improvements needed:

- A longer tunnel to eliminate dividing the community and lessen the environmental impact
- Greatly improving the Lower Plenty Road interchange by simplifying the design
- Launching the tunnel boring machine at the Bulleen Industrial Estate away from residential properties at Borlase Reserve
- Additional green bridges across the road trench, if a longer tunnel isn't delivered
- Environmental protections at the Simpson Army Barracks
- Improved landscaping along the NEL corridor
- More support for local businesses and communities impacted by the project
- Bike paths, landscaping and urban design improvements

# HURSTBRIDGE RAILWAY LINE UPGRADE - STAGE 2

With significant Victorian Government investment to deliver a new Greensborough Station, upgraded Montmorency Station and railway line duplication, it is critical that vital gaps in the current project are addressed as part of an upgraded Hurstbridge railway line.

Council has already made the case for significant design improvements to the proposed station and highlighted that essential elements are missing from the project currently being designed.

Many of the missing elements such as the transport interchange were Victorian Government commitments prior to the last state election.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

With more consultation occurring on the station designs shortly, the benefit of broader improvements need to be highlighted as critical to making the project a success.

These projects are once in a lifetime and need to be designed right and deliver the right outcomes for our community now and for many years to come.

# WHAT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED?

Improvements to this section of the line have been strongly advocated for since 2006.

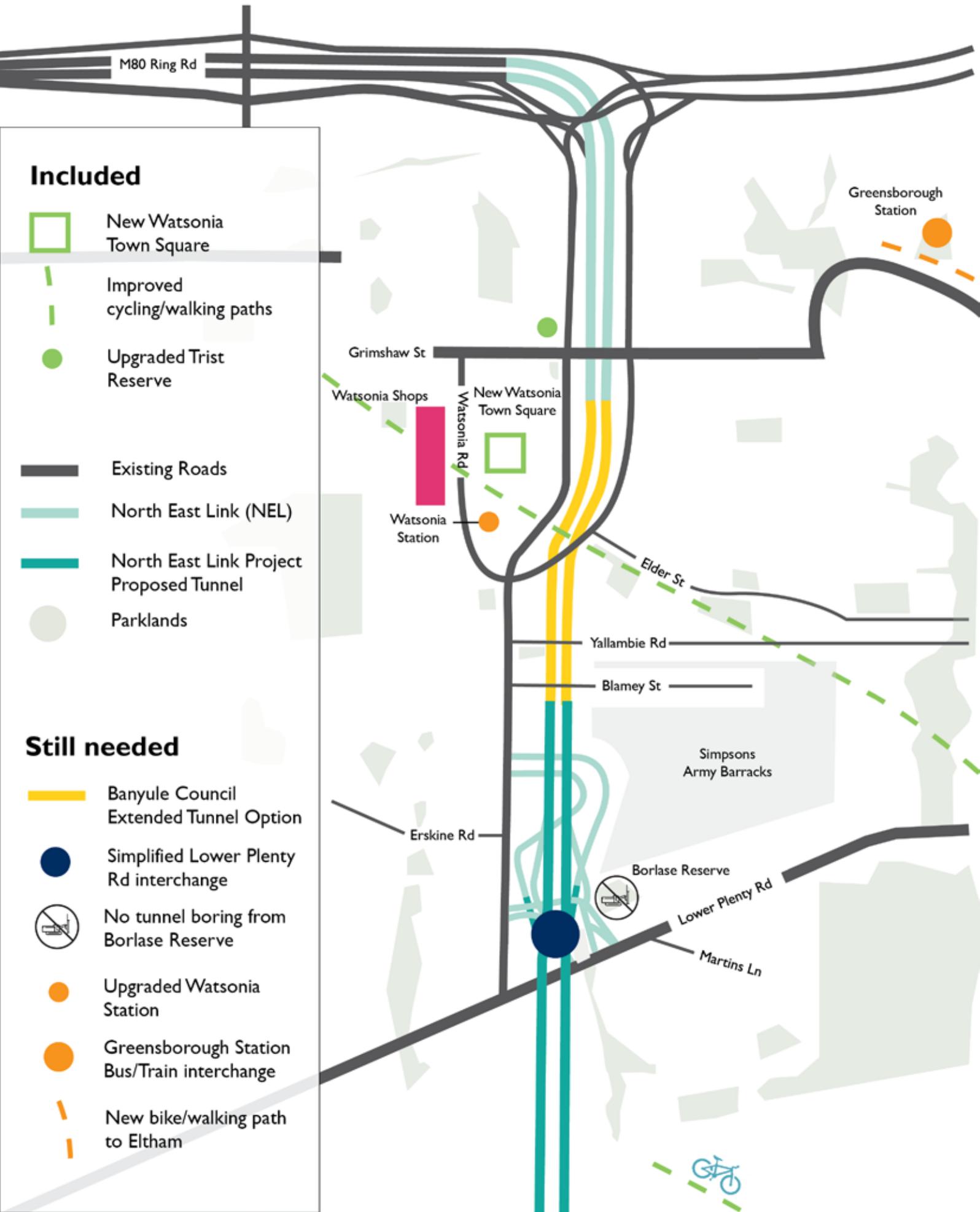
While the current investment is welcome, more is needed to meet the community's transport needs including:

- Connecting buses and trains through an interchange at Greensborough Station
- A shared user path to be provided along the rail corridor connecting Greensborough to Eltham
- A taxi zone and cycling facilities at both Montmorency and Greensborough stations
- Improved landscaping and urban design of the rail corridor interface and public spaces around the stations
- A full review of bus services for the north-east of Melbourne
- Upgrading Watsonia Station with increased parking to align to the NEL project improvements in Watsonia

To stay up-to-date with this project visit:  
[levelcrossings.vic.gov.au](http://levelcrossings.vic.gov.au)



# IMPROVING THE NEL AND HURSTBRIDGE RAIL LINE



## Included

-  New Watsonia Town Square
-  Improved cycling/walking paths
-  Upgraded Trist Reserve
-  Existing Roads
-  North East Link (NEL)
-  North East Link Project Proposed Tunnel
-  Parklands

## Still needed

-  Banyule Council Extended Tunnel Option
-  Simplified Lower Plenty Rd interchange
-  No tunnel boring from Borlase Reserve
-  Upgraded Watsonia Station
-  Greensborough Station Bus/Train interchange
-  New bike/walking path to Eltham