



Peninsula Link

**The Peninsula Link Trail -
Promoting walking and cycling
along a new 25 kilometre path**

December 2010

Introduction

Peninsula Link is a new 27 kilometre freeway which completes the missing link in the Mornington Peninsula Freeway between Carrum Downs and Mt Martha. Scheduled to open to traffic in 2013, construction of Peninsula Link follows a two and a half year planning study known as the Frankston Bypass Environment Effects Statement (EES). This study, completed in 2009, assessed the social, economic and environmental factors relating to the project and identified how Peninsula Link could benefit the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula communities.

Projects of the scale of Peninsula Link provide the opportunity to incorporate community assets such as walking and cycling paths. A 25 kilometre walking and cycling path will be built as part of the Peninsula Link project. Often referred to as a shared use path or the Peninsula Link Trail, it will provide for pedestrians, cyclists, prams, skateboarders, rollerbladers, runners and others.

A concept route was developed for the Peninsula Link Trail as part of the EES and Linking Melbourne Authority (LMA) has since reviewed the alignment to further improve connections for the community and enhance safety for users.

The purpose of this report is to describe the route adopted for the Peninsula Link Trail, summarise the consultation that has been undertaken and explore the key issues raised by the community. The path will be referred to throughout this report as the Peninsula Link Trail.

2 Background

LMA is a government authority that facilitates major road project delivery on behalf of the Victorian Government. LMA oversaw the delivery of the \$2.5 billion EastLink project, which included a 35 kilometre walking and cycling track known as the EastLink Trail.

Peninsula Link is being delivered in partnership with private operator Southern Way as an Availability Public Private Partnership (PPP). This means that in return for quarterly payments which commence after opening, Southern Way will finance, build and then operate Peninsula Link toll-free for 25 years. Southern Way has appointed Abigroup to design and construct Peninsula Link and Conneq (formerly Bilfinger Berger Services Australia) to operate and maintain the road upon its completion.

3 Frankston Bypass EES concept route

The Frankston Bypass EES concept route can be viewed in the planning documentation; it extended from Patterson River to Bungower Road, Moorooduc. The alignment largely ran adjacent to the eastern boundary of the new freeway, except for a small section north of Frankston-Dandenong Road and a section between the Centro Karingal shopping centre and the Stony Point Rail Line.

The EES was evaluated by an independent panel in early 2009 and planning approval was granted. However, the EES Inquiry Panel made recommendations in relation to the concept route and requested that the State:

“E2.3 Refine the location and detailed design of the shared use path.” (Townsend, Banon & Turnbull 2009, p.139)

In his response to the Inquiry Panel’s recommendations, the Minister for Planning stated:

“In regard to recommendation (3), it is my assessment that the detailed design of the shared use path within the reservation for the Frankston Bypass be refined along with the road design.” (Minister for Planning 2009, p.38).

4 Review of the Peninsula Link Trail

Following the project's planning and approval stage, LMA commenced a consultation process and full review of the Frankston Bypass EES concept route. Community feedback into the adopted route was an important part of the review and details of the consultation program have been provided in section six of this report.

Given the project is being delivered as a PPP, the interactive bidding phase brought further opportunities for changes and enhancements to the path. Each of the private companies bidding for Peninsula Link submitted their final proposals in late 2009. After the award of the contract in early 2010, the Peninsula Link Trail route was confirmed. This section describes the adopted alignment for the Peninsula Link Trail.

4.1 Patterson River to Ballarto Road

The Peninsula Link Trail connects with the existing Dandenong Creek Trail at Patterson River. The Frankston Bypass EES route proposed that the path be located east of the Mornington Peninsula Freeway between Patterson River and Ballarto Road. Following the review, the route was moved to the western boundary of the freeway to improve accessibility for the Patterson Lakes community.

The revised route begins at Patterson River and travels on the western side of the Mornington Peninsula Freeway. A new pedestrian overpass will be provided over Thompson Road to help path users cross the road safely. The path then travels within the freeway reservation to Old Wells Road and through the Edithvale-Seaford wetlands. The exact route through the wetlands is being determined during the design phase and in consultation with Frankston City Council and the Friends of the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands.

From this point, the Peninsula Link Trail connects with an existing path which runs south and east of the wetlands. A new overpass crossing the Frankston Freeway will connect this section of the path with the existing Maple Street Reserve path. Both existing paths will be upgraded to three metre wide sealed paths. At the end of the Maple Street Reserve, the path realigns with the western side of Peninsula Link, around the boundary of Belvedere Reserve which is being developed as a major sporting precinct and will be the new home of the St Kilda Football Club. The path crosses to the eastern side of Peninsula Link at Frankston-Dandenong Road where it continues to Ballarto Road.



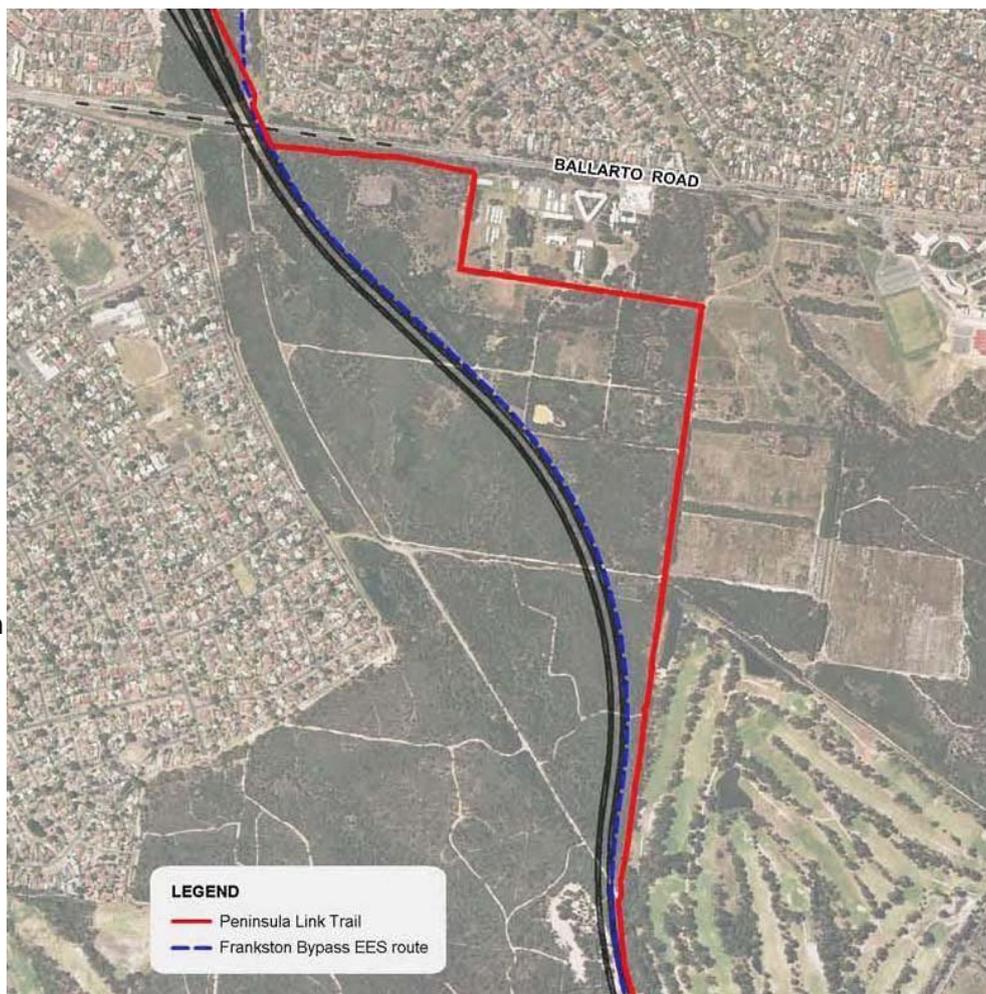
Discussion

The changes to this section of the path have significantly improved accessibility because the east side of the freeway is less populated than the western side. The changes eliminate the need for path users to traverse the EastLink interchange, which involved having to travel north to a suitable crossing point over EastLink. Another benefit is that the revised route provides a new connection to two local reserves – the Edithvale-Seaford wetlands and Belvedere Reserve.

4.2 The Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve

The Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve (the Pines) is a 220 hectare nature reserve in a developed urban area. Extensive effort is being channelled into protecting and enhancing its environmental values as part of the Peninsula Link project.

The Frankston Bypass EES route for the path was located adjacent to the eastern side of the freeway and was to be along the freeway, partly as an elevated structure. The revised route is located at ground level and will be built on existing disturbed areas which have previously been used as informal tracks. Some sections of the path will be elevated to allow for fauna movements and animal habitat connectivity. These features will be finalised during the detailed design of the Peninsula Link Trail.



Discussion

The alignment was changed for connectivity and safety reasons. A ground level path through the Pines provides superior connectivity to existing walking tracks, the new Pines visitor node as well as to residential areas and the Flinders Christian College. While connections could have been built from the five metre high structure proposed in the EES, it would mean building a series of boardwalks requiring the removal of existing bushland. Safety is also improved by the revised alignment. The elevated structure would not have provided the ability to exit the path for approximately 1.5 kilometres. A ground level path improves safety as users can easily exit the path. The revised route also has environmental benefits as the path largely uses already disturbed land, minimising the footprint of the path.

The path will also provide a better user experience when travelling through this section.

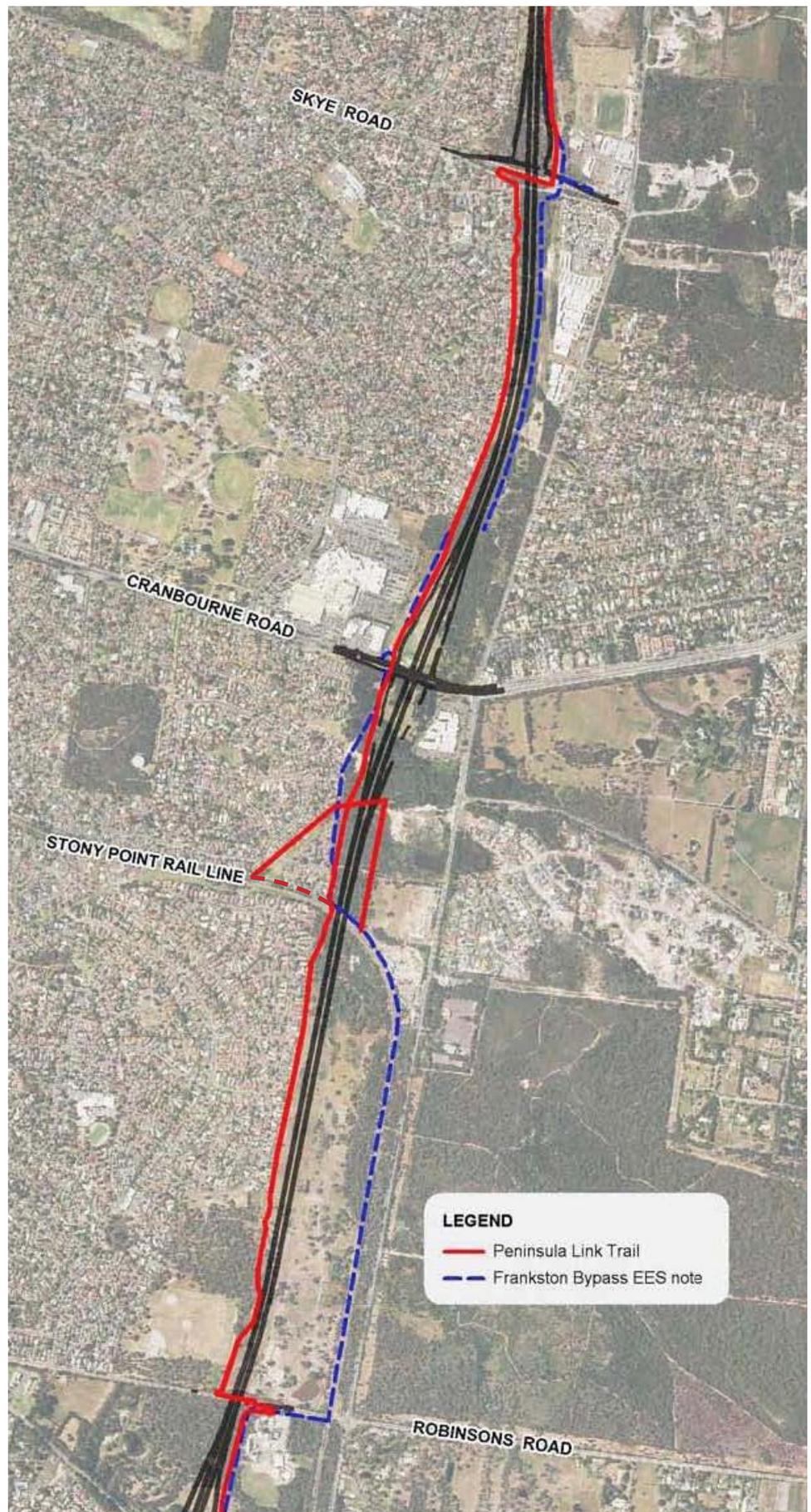
4.3 Skye Road to Robinsons Road

The Frankston Bypass EES route continued on the eastern side of Peninsula Link from Skye Road to just north of Cranbourne Road where it crossed over Peninsula Link near the Centro Karingal shopping centre. The path then continued south to the Stony Point Rail Line where it joined the existing two metre wide Baxter Trail running along the railway line. Where this existing path met Robinsons Road, the concept route travelled west to reconnect with the eastern side of Peninsula Link.

The revised Peninsula Link Trail route has been moved to the western side of the freeway between Skye Road and Robinsons Road. To maintain connectivity to the existing Baxter Trail on the eastern side of Peninsula Link, a new bridge is being built over the freeway to the north of the Stony Point Rail Line.

Discussion

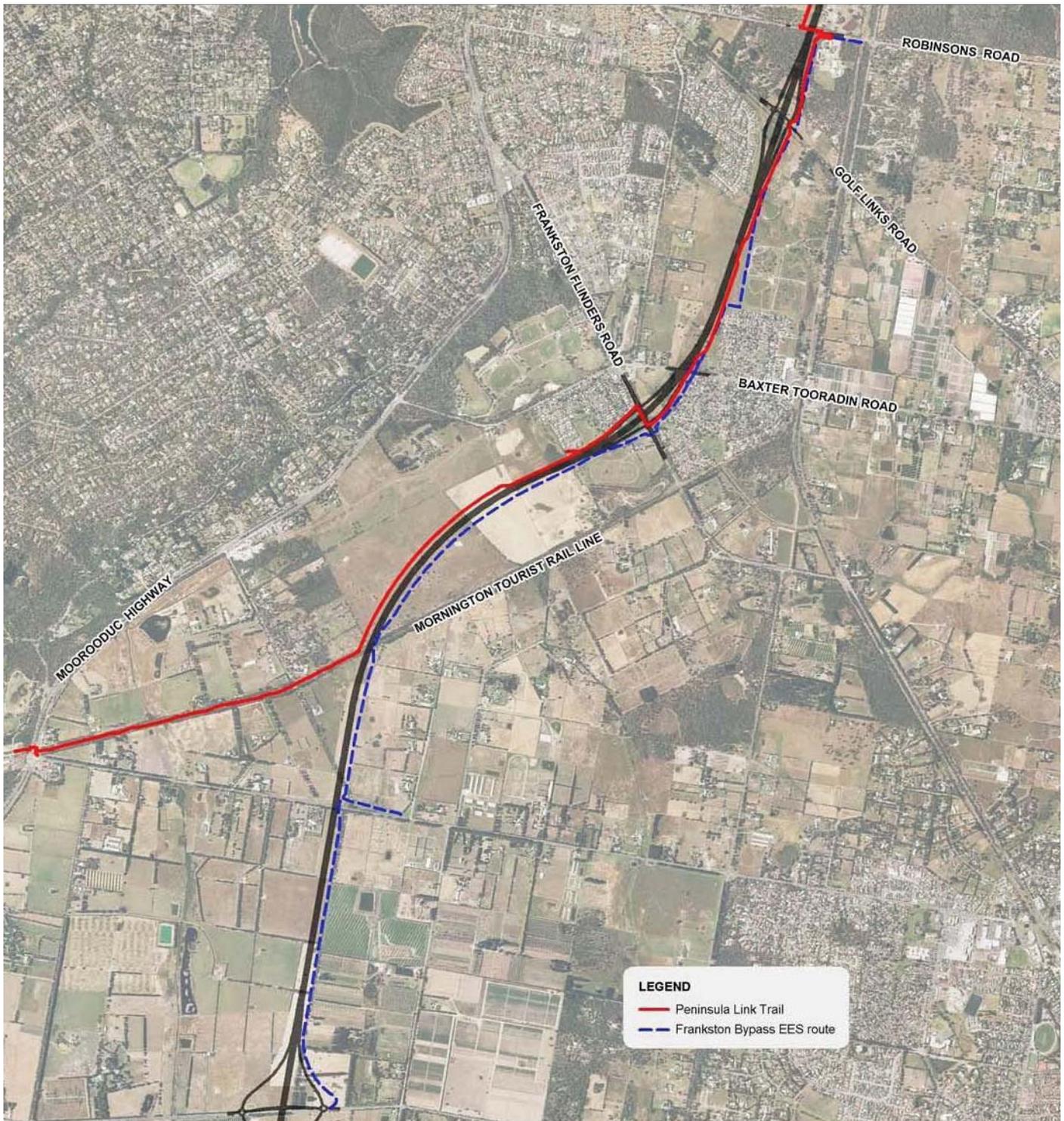
The changes to the route in this area allow better access to the path as the majority of residents live on the western side of Peninsula Link. The path has a connection to Robinsons Park and avoids Peninsula Link Trail users having to cross the rail line at grade of Robinsons Road thereby increasing the safety of the path.



4.4 Robynsons Road to Moorooduc Highway

From Robynsons Road, the Frankston Bypass EES route continued on the eastern side of Peninsula Link until its termination point at Bungower Road.

The revised alignment crosses Frankston-Flinders Road in Baxter and travels along the western side of Peninsula Link until it reaches the Mornington Tourist Rail Line. It then travels alongside the disused rail line as far as Moorooduc Highway where it crosses the highway with traffic lights and takes path users to Mt Eliza Regional Park and Moorooduc Station. The Mornington Rail Preservation Society runs a tourist rail service on selected Sundays from this station towards Mornington.



Discussion

Following the EES, there was consensus that the path from Baxter to Bungower Road was of little community benefit as it would terminate in a rural area with no links to other paths or attractions. A number of alternative alignments were investigated with the eventual decision to locate the route adjacent to the Mornington Tourist Railway (there is further discussion on this topic in the next section).

As this changed alignment was not included in the EES assessment process, a detailed assessment of the environmental and heritage implications of the route has been undertaken and the necessary approvals have been sought.

Although it is not within the scope of the Peninsula Link project, LMA, together with Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, is investigating the possibility of connecting the Peninsula Link Trail from Moorooduc Highway to Mornington. The aim of the work is to identify an acceptable route for a path to Mornington given the environmental and land use challenges associated with this connection.

4.5 Alternative routes investigated

As noted in Section 4.4, there was consensus that the termination of the path at Bungower Road had limited community benefits and a number of other possibilities were therefore investigated. The three routes which were given close consideration were:

- The path as detailed in the EES with an extension to Devilbend Reserve;
- A path through Baxter to Somerville; and
- The route adjacent to the Mornington Tourist Railway.

All options considered featured in the existing Mornington Peninsula Shire Council Shared Trails Strategy 2002. A number of stakeholders were consulted as part of this decision and the route towards Mornington was adopted for the following reasons:

- The EES alignment to Devilbend Reserve was not supported, as the Devilbend Natural Management Plan currently discourages bicycle traffic on most existing paths and is not currently developed to cope with a significant increase in visitors that the path may bring. However, provision has been made to construct a path along the freeway if needed in the future.
- The path from Baxter to Somerville has merit and community members have advocated for this connection to be built as part of the project. When looking at the priorities for the area, it was considered as a secondary priority to the path along the Mornington Tourist Rail Line.
- The path to Moorooduc Station was preferred as it provides a new link between the Baxter and Mt Eliza communities; it will enable an extension towards Mornington in the future; and has a more complex statutory approvals process that LMA felt it could assist with due to the environmental features of the area.

6 Consultation

The current Peninsula Link Trail route has been developed in consultation with a range of interested parties including local councils, Parks Victoria, the Department of Sustainability and the Environment, the Department of Transport, VicTrack and special interest groups such as Bicycle Victoria. Nearby residents and the local environmental community have also been involved in the development of the route. LMA is appreciative of this community input and would like to thank all stakeholders involved in discussions about the Peninsula Link Trail.

Kingston City Council, Frankston City Council and Mornington Peninsula Shire Council were consulted about the sections of the path within their municipal boundaries. Frankston City Council has included the route in its recent Frankston Bicycle Strategy and the path to Moorooduc Station features in Mornington Peninsula Shire Council's Shared Trails Strategy 2002.

Now that the contract to design and build Peninsula Link has been awarded, a Community Advisory Group (CAG) has been established. The CAG plays an important role in the project by representing the views of communities along the freeway route during the detailed design and construction phase of the project. The Peninsula Link Trail has been a regular topic discussed with CAG members.

In order for the community to learn more about the path and provide feedback, public information displays were held during the planning phases and throughout 2010.

More recently, targeted consultation has been undertaken with residents who abut the proposed alignment or are in very close proximity. While many locals view the path as a positive initiative for their area, some have raised concerns about privacy, security and maintenance associated with the Peninsula Link Trail. These issues are explored in section seven of this report.

The community is also able to find out more information about the project and provide feedback at the Peninsula Link Info Hub which has been open to individuals and groups since March 2010. The Hub is located at 405 Nepean Highway, Frankston and is open Wednesday to Friday from 10.00am to 4.00pm and the third Saturday of each month from 10.00am to 1.00pm.

In addition to these formal consultation activities, LMA and Abigroup staff have responded to almost 100 telephone, email and mail enquiries about the path, mainly from residents. Staff have also conducted home visits for nearby residents to discuss the project and have done presentations for interested parties.

Consultation will be ongoing throughout the detailed design and construction phase of the project.

7 Community issues

Safety/security

Several people have raised concerns that locating the path adjacent to property boundaries may compromise safety and security.

Whilst this is a common concern for residents when paths are in their planning phase, evidence shows that well planned paths can actually help reduce crime, vandalism, dumping and anti-social behaviour (New South Wales Government 2004) as the presence of trail users deters this behaviour through passive surveillance.

A number of studies, largely conducted in America, have assessed the effects of paths adjacent to residential areas (see Racca & Djanju 2006 for a summary). Most studies found that no public safety issues in neighbourhoods adjacent to the path could be linked to the trail (The Conservation Fund & Colorado State Parks State Trails Program 1995; Murphy 1992; National Parks Service 1992) and a number of studies found that a majority of residents adjacent to paths reported that the trail improved their quality of life (Zarker & Bourey 1987; Greer 2000; Murphy 1992; National Parks Service 1992; Wolter & Lindsey 2001).

Design features can be incorporated to assist in making the path more secure such as strategic landscaping and fencing. These matters will be considered during the detailed design and construction of the Peninsula Link Trail. Ensuring the path is well maintained is also an important factor influencing safety and security along the path. Once built, Conneq will be responsible for maintaining the sections of the path along the freeway. The parts of the path which deviate from the Peninsula Link reservation will be maintained by the relevant council. Conneq will be required to meet specified maintenance standards.

Privacy

Some residents are concerned that the location of the Peninsula Link Trail adjacent to their property boundary may affect their privacy. Under the requirements of the Peninsula Link contract, privacy for abutting households needs to be maintained and Abigroup will develop a range of measures to ensure this is achieved during the detailed design phase of the project.

Connectivity – connection to the EastLink path

The Peninsula Link Trail begins several kilometres north of the new Peninsula Link freeway so that it links with the existing gravel path at Patterson River - part of the popular Dandenong Creek Trail - and then the EastLink Trail. Although several people have advocated for the seven kilometre section between the two paths to be sealed as part of the Peninsula Link works, sealing of this section of the Dandenong Creek Trail is not included in the Peninsula Link scope of works.

The aim of the Peninsula Link path is to provide a benefit to the community adjacent to the road and to provide as much new infrastructure as possible. For this reason, LMA took the decision to ensure that the path along the road corridor is designed and built to benefit the community adjacent to the road corridor rather than upgrading existing paths some distance away from the project.

Connectivity to existing paths and features of the area was a key consideration when determining the path alignment. The Peninsula Link Trail links with a number of existing paths and will also connect to a number of existing parks and reserves including the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands, Belvedere Reserve and bushland, the Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve and Mt Eliza Regional Park.

Path surface

The Peninsula Link Trail will be a sealed three metre wide path. The path will be mostly comprised of a concrete surface with some sections comprising an asphalt surfacing treatment. Some walkers had expressed a preference for a gravel track. Sealing the path allows a greater variety of people to use the path including walkers, cyclists, prams, rollerbladers, skateboarders and runners. In addition, considering the context of the project, the path is designed to be an 'urban' path rather than a more rural, unsealed path.

Route through the Pines

A road reservation for Peninsula Link existed through the Pines Reserve for nearly 40 years. However, during the planning the route was moved further towards the east to protect the more environmentally sensitive bushland.

There was a lot of discussion about the route of the Peninsula Link Trail through the Pines. Some people expressed a preference for the path to be built through the middle of the Pines in the land originally reserved for the freeway. This would maximise connections to existing walking tracks in the Pines and provide better access to the residential area between the Pines and Skye Road. This was not adopted as the preferred approach given the road had been moved away from this area to protect habitat areas. LMA thanks the Friends of the Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve, Frankston City Council, Parks Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment and other community members for their involvement in identifying a path through this area.

Construction impacts

Concerns have been raised about the impact on existing walking and cycling paths while the Peninsula Link Trail is being constructed. While it is sometimes necessary to close paths during construction, Traffic Management Plans are prepared in consultation with the community and stakeholders to identify appropriate detour routes and minimise disruption during the works.

7 Further work

The Peninsula Link Trail will continue to be a major focus during the design and construction of the Peninsula Link project. Over the coming months, the route will be fine tuned to ensure minimal environmental impact, smooth connections and a pleasant journey along the 25 kilometre trail.

In addition, LMA will continue to work with Mornington Peninsula Shire Council to help identify a route to extend the path further towards Mornington. The project will also investigate potential connections identified as priorities by Frankston City Council.

More information

For more information or to provide feedback on the Peninsula Link Trail, visit our website at www.linkingmelbourne.vic.gov.au, phone us on (03) 8562 6800 or write to us at Linking Melbourne Authority, Building 1, Level 1, Brandon Business Park, 540 Springvale Road, Glen Waverley VIC 3150.

To see a large scale map of the project, visit the Peninsula Link Info Hub located at Level 1, 405 Nepean Highway, Frankston. The Info Hub is open every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 10.00am to 4.00pm and the third Saturday of each month from 10.00am to 1.00pm.

References

- Greer, L. (2000) *Omaha Recreational Trails: Their Effect on Property Values and Public Safety*, University of Nebraska, Omaha.
- Minister for Planning (2009) *Frankston Bypass Assessment Under Environment Effects Act 1978*, Melbourne.
- Murphy, M. (1992) *The Impact of the Brush Creek Trail on Property Values and Crime*, Sonoma State University, Santa Rosa.
- National Park Service (1992) *The Impacts of Rail-Trails: A Study of the Users and Property Owners From Three Trails*, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, Washington.
- NSW Government (2004) *Planning Guidelines for Walking and Cycling*, Sydney.
- Racca, D. & Djanju, A. (2006) *Property Value / Desirability Effects of Bike Paths Adjacent to Residential Areas*, University of Delaware, Newark.
- The Conservation Fund & Colorado State Parks State Trails Program (1995) *The Effect of Greenways on Property Values and Public Safety*, Colorado.
- Townsend, L., Banon, C. & Turnbull, H. (2009) *Frankston Bypass EES Inquiry Report*, Melbourne.
- Wolter, S. & Lindsey, G. (2001) *Summary Report Indiana Trails Study: A Study of Trails in 6 Indiana Cities*, Indiana University.
- Zarker, G. & Bourey, J. (1987) *Evaluation Of The Burke-Gilman Trail's Effect on Property Values and Crime*, Seattle Engineering Department and Office of Planning.