

SECOND SUBMISSION: EAST-WEST LINK NEEDS ASSESSMENT

by: Ron Brons

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as follows:

UNDERGROUND EXTENSION OF THE FLEMINGTON RACECOURSE RAILWAY LINE TO THE HIGHPOINT SHOPPING CENTRE

Currently, east-west PUBLIC TRANSPORT movement between Melbourne's CBD and the Highpoint shopping centre area of the City of Maribyrnong is time-consuming, indirect and slow.

Although the direct distance is only about 9-10 kilometres, in my experience it typically takes 45-65 minutes to travel this distance by public transport (eg. by train to Footscray followed by tram 82 to Highpoint). In addition, at meetings I have heard car drivers say that it can take them 40 minutes.

One of the reasons for this extended travel time is the fact that the Maribyrnong river forms a considerable barrier to the direct east-west movement of both public transport and motor vehicles which has to be gone around. Another reason is that trams are being obstructed by cars driving in front of them, especially between Footscray railway station and River street, Maribyrnong.

I BELIEVE YOUR INQUIRY SHOULD RECOMMEND THAT A FEASIBILITY STUDY BE DONE INTO EXTENDING THE FLEMINGTON RACECOURSE RAILWAY LINE VIA A SHORT UNDERGROUND TUNNEL TO HIGHPOINT SHOPPING CENTRE.

FEATURES OF MY PROPOSAL:

- An UNDERGROUND railway station below Highpoint shopping centre, possibly built inside one of the existing underground, multilevel carparks.
- The use of a SINGLE railway tunnel and SINGLE railway line to keep down overall costs.
- A relatively SHORT tunnel (the total length is approximately two-and-a-half kilometres).
- The tunnel would run UNDERNEATH the Maribyrnong River, thus eliminating any ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT on the river.
- The line would use THREE-CARRIAGE TRAINS only, thus reducing the size (length), and therefore cost, of the underground railway station underneath Highpoint shopping centre.
- Quite a few bus services converge on the bus station at Highpoint shopping centre from surrounding suburbs such as the Maribyrnong township, Footscray, Avondale Heights, Maidstone, St. Albans, Keilor and Moonee Ponds. These, as well as the local #82 and #57 tram services, would act as feeder services for the proposed underground railway station.

ADVANTAGES OF MY PROPOSAL:

- 1) Greatly reduced travel times between the Highpoint shopping centre area and Melbourne's CBD and vice versa. I estimate the total travel time to be 20-25 minutes, which is at least HALF the current travel time.
- 2) As a result of this extension of the Flemington Racecourse line, the line would be in use all day long, and every day, instead of only for sporting events as it is now.
- 3) For patrons who live on the western side of the Maribyrnong River, it will provide direct and speedy access to the Flemington Racecourse and its events.
- 4) For people who live on the western side of the Maribyrnong River, it will provide direct and speedy access to stations on the city loop.
- 5) For people who live on the western side of the Maribyrnong River, it will provide direct and speedy access to the Showgrounds and its events.
- 6) Being mostly underground, the rail extension is likely to have a VERY LOW environmental impact.
- 7) Reduced car use in the area surrounding the rail extension would help cut pollution. It would also reduce traffic congestion.
- 8) Much improved access for city and regional customers to Highpoint shopping centre.
- 9) Highpoint shopping centre will soon be the centre and focal point of a densely populated suburban area which, currently, is without easy access to a railway line. This is because very large, new residential estates have been, or are about to be, built on large, former munitions factory areas including the following:
 - the Defence Site Maribyrnong (DSM) including the former Explosives Factory Maribyrnong (EFM) area which is likely to become a new housing estate containing some 2000 new dwellings.
 - the former Ammunition Factory Footscray (AFF) site, now being developed as the new Edgewater housing estate.
 - the former Ordnance Factory Maribyrnong (OFM) site, now in existence as the new Waterford Green housing estate.
 - the former New Pyrotechnic Section area of the Explosives Factory Maribyrnong along Hampstead road, including the part recently vacated by Telstra to make way for a soon-to-be-built housing estate.
- 10) Better and more speedier access for the business traveller to the Highpoint shopping centre area from Melbourne's CBD and to Melbourne's CBD from the Highpoint shopping centre area.
- 11) More people living on the EASTERN side of the Maribyrnong River may visit Highpoint shopping centre due to the much easier access. This has obvious benefits for the shopping centre.
- 12) Probable easy construction due to digging the tunnel through soft (?), volcanic (?)rock/soil.

13) Temporary and permanent employment benefits (eg. station staff, construction workers).

14) A lessening of current passenger congestion at peak times at Footscray railway station.

DISADVANTAGES OF MY PROPOSAL:

Construction cost may be considered by some to be a significant disadvantage of my proposal. However, when it's considered that the tunnel may be in use for hundreds of years, any such cost will appear to be quite reasonable (it is my understanding that at least some of London's railway tunnels have been in use since the 1800's!).

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

- Instead of the railway line running through a tunnel UNDERNEATH the Maribyrnong river, it could run over a new railbridge alongside the existing Farnsworth Avenue/Fisher Parade road bridge. However, this alternative option would be much less desirable from an environmental (ie. noise and visual amenity) point-of-view.

OPTIONAL, FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS:

- An EXTRA underground railway station under the Edgewater estate in Footscray. This station would also service the nearby Victoria University (Footscray park campus).

- A FURTHER half-a-kilometre underground extension to a semi-underground railway station on the vacant land behind the Maribyrnong Community Centre in Randall Street. This could service the future 2000 home housing estate likely to be built on the Defence Site Maribyrnong (DSM) as well as established residential areas in the vicinity.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, this proposal would seem to be an IDEAL EXTENSION of Melbourne's rail network! "Everyone" benefits: residents of the Highpoint shopping centre area and surrounding suburbs, a rail company, the State Government, construction companies, Highpoint shopping centre, Flemington Racecourse, the Showgrounds and the environment.

Imagine the convenience and luxury of being able to board a train underneath Highpoint shopping centre and arriving in the City 20-25 minutes later!

Yours sincerely,

Ron Brons