



VICTORIA
State
Government

WESTERN DISTRIBUTOR

Communications and
Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

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Contents

1.0		
Introduction		1
2.0		
Project background		2
3.0		
Engagement approach		4
4.0		
Stakeholders		5
5.0		
Issues and responses		6
6.0		
Key messages		7
7.0		
Communications and engagement program		8
8.0		
Communications and engagement methods		10
9.0		
Evaluation		11
Appendix A		
Stakeholder groups		12

1.0

Introduction

The Victorian Government is preparing a business case for the Western Distributor, a proposed tunnel and elevated motorway connecting the West Gate Freeway with the Port of Melbourne and CityLink, and a bypass of the Melbourne CBD, providing an alternative river crossing and easing pressure on the West Gate Bridge.

Other elements of the project include:

- West Gate Freeway widening: adding additional lanes and a new configuration from the M80 Ring Road to the West Gate Bridge to add capacity and ensure the efficient operation of the corridor given the inclusion of a new Western Distributor.
- Webb Dock access improvements: a dedicated new connection to Webb Dock and upgrades to the ramp from the West Gate Freeway to Bolte Bridge to support the city's growing freight task.
- Monash Freeway Upgrade Project: additional lanes on the Monash Freeway between the EastLink interchange and Clyde Road in Berwick; new and upgraded ramp metering between Warrigal Road and Koo Wee Rup Road to improve the flow and ease congestion on Melbourne's critical east-west spine.

These combined elements provide a comprehensive solution to significantly improve the way people and freight move around Melbourne.

The Government has developed this communications and stakeholder engagement strategy as it prepares to share the findings of the business case, to ensure community and stakeholders understand the benefits of the project and can be involved in further planning and decisions.

2.0

Project background

The Western Distributor has been proposed to address a number of community needs, including to:

- Cater for population and economic growth and the growing demand for east-west travel.
- Improve access to the Port of Melbourne and increase the reliability of the freight network.
- Increase the capacity and reliability of the State's most critical transport corridor (the M1) including reducing the over reliance on the West Gate Bridge.
- Improve liveability and safety for residential communities and activity centres in the inner-west who are dealing with high volumes of heavy vehicle traffic.

2.1 Relationship to previous Government projects

The Western Distributor builds on previous projects considered by the Victorian Government to remove trucks from inner-western suburban streets, build a new connection from the West Gate Freeway, and improve connections to the Port of Melbourne. These projects include the Truck Action Plan and WestLink.

Project 10,000 released in 2014 committed to delivering the West Gate Distributor, a project similar to the former Truck Action Plan. Key features included on-and-off ramps from the West Gate Freeway and an elevated road along Hyde Street, upgrade and duplication of Whitehall Street between Francis Street and Somerville Road, strengthening of Shepherd Bridge and upgrade into Footscray Road.

2.2 Relationship to the Transurban market led proposal for the Western Distributor

In March 2015, Transurban put forward a market-led proposal for the Western Distributor. The Transurban proposal is currently being assessed by the Victorian Government under its Interim Market-led Proposal Guideline.

Part of that analysis and scrutiny has involved the development of a business case. The Government determined that the most appropriate way for Victorians to have confidence that an unsolicited proposal would clearly deliver public benefits for the estimated cost and within timelines, was to test it against a public sector design.

A Project team of experts from across Government agencies and the private sector has considered a range of alternative scope options, delivery and funding approaches to ensure the investment will deliver network-wide benefits for communities.

While the business case does not evaluate the merits of Transurban's proposal, it better informs the Government's assessment by providing an important public sector comparator.

The business case supports many of the key features of the Transurban proposal to help Melbourne stay ahead of gridlock, along with more investment in Victoria's critical economic spine, the M1 Corridor.

A summary of the key steps in the project assessment and planning process is below:

1. Proposal development (mid to late 2015)

Transurban submits its revised concept proposal for assessment by Government.

The State releases a business case to determine if the project can deliver value for money to the community; and assess the options for its delivery.

2. Proposal decision

Government decides whether to proceed with the Transurban proposal, modify it or opt for another delivery option.

3. Planning and consultation process (2016)

A statutory planning process would be undertaken to assess the environment, social and technical impacts of the project.

This includes extensive community engagement and a formal planning panel hearing. The business case assumes that the State will lead the planning study.

2.3 Planning study

The timing of statutory planning for the Western Distributor will be determined by the Victorian Government. The two potential planning instruments (either the *Major Transport Facilitation Act* or the *Environment Effects Act*) are designed to be transparent, with materials including the project proposal, scoping directions and planning report are required to be released publicly. The project proponent must deliver a comprehensive communications and engagement program to obtain community input, and the public review and public hearing phases are further designed to facilitate public feedback.

Planning for the Monash Freeway upgrades will be subject to a separate, simpler planning process under the *Planning and Environment Act*.

2.4 Community feedback to date

Transurban has undertaken a broad range of community and stakeholder engagement activities to feed into the development of its proposal to Government. These include information sessions, the establishment of an online portal, local advertising and distribution of information materials including fact sheets and email updates. Transurban has also established the Western Distributor Liaison Group with key stakeholders, and has made a number of commitments to communities and stakeholders relating to the scope of the project.

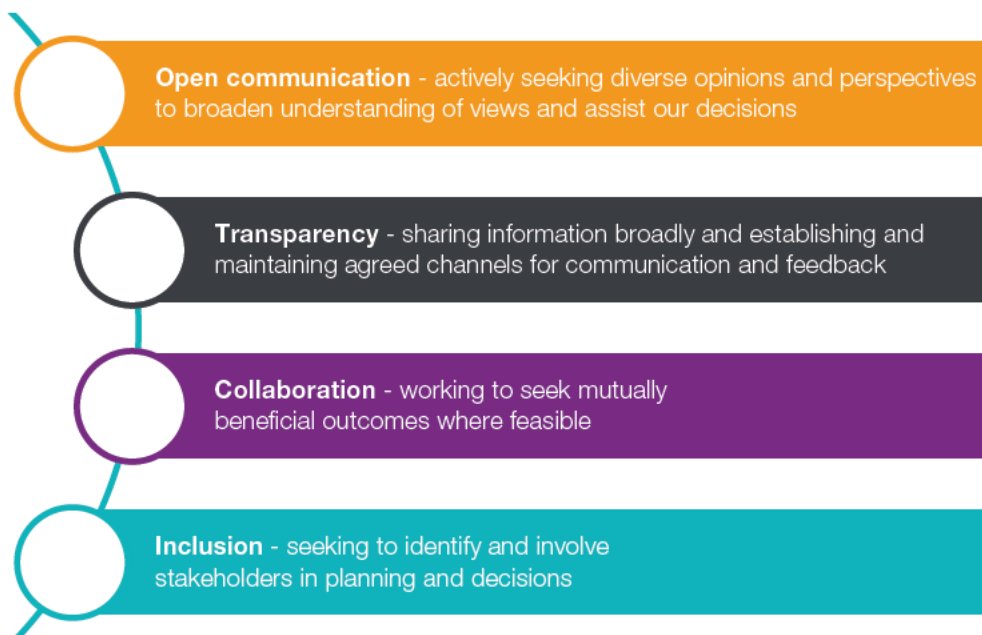
A key finding of Transurban's consultation was that congestion is a major issue in the community and local people who participated in the engagement process rated removing trucks off local streets as the number one priority for the area. A key focus of this communications and stakeholder engagement strategy is explaining how the Western Distributor will contribute to reduced congestion and reduced volumes of heavy vehicle traffic using inner western roads.

3.0

Engagement approach

Public participation in the planning and delivery of projects is essential for achieving high quality outcomes and community acceptance.

3.1 Principles of engagement



Engagement with stakeholders will focus on building trust, gathering information about community values and encouraging public participation in the project development.

4.0

Stakeholders

The Western Distributor project will attract interest from a broad cross-section of the Victorian community, particularly people who live, work, own land and travel through the project corridor. Stakeholders with an interest in transport and freight movement, as well as those which play an advocacy role for the development of Melbourne will also have an interest. This strategy is designed to target these and broader categories of stakeholders as outlined below, with more detail provided in Appendix A.



5.0

Issues and responses

Communication and stakeholder engagement about the Western Distributor project is happening in a complex environment. The inner western suburbs are established and historically industrial areas experiencing rapid growth and change. There is also major investment in other transport projects to support Melbourne's growth that will change the way people move.

To date, most consultation has been related to the Western Distributor component of the project. Transurban has led community and stakeholder engagement, and managing community expectations and understanding about planning and procurement may be challenging. A key focus of the State's communication and engagement program will be to ensure the community and stakeholders are well informed. As the project progresses to the planning stage, the full range of issues associated with the project proposal will be communicated, so that people can make well informed decisions about project impacts and benefits.

6.0

Key messages

Key messages will be updated as the project proposal progresses through the various stages of assessment. Some messages will be relevant throughout, while other messages specific to particular phases of the project will be developed as required.

- The Western Distributor will make it easier and safer for people and freight to move along the entire M1 corridor.
- It will also make it safer for people and more efficient for freight to move around the west by reducing congestion and removing trucks from local streets.
- It's important to the future of Melbourne's west, as hundreds of thousands of people move into the area and the amount of freight on road and rail doubles within decades.
- It will provide an alternative to the West Gate Bridge for people, goods, emergency services and businesses to move between east and west.
- We want to work with the community to develop a solution which responds to local concerns, and supports the need for people and goods to move efficiently and safely around Melbourne.
- There are several opportunities for the community to provide feedback on the plans and we will keep you informed throughout the process.
- The project will create thousands of jobs during construction.
- The new Western Distributor will be tolled, but there will be no toll on the West Gate Bridge.

7.0

Communications and engagement program

7.1 Engagement phases

The phases can be implemented in support of any timeline agreed for project development. Phase 3 aligns with the formal statutory planning process and Phase 4 relates to procurement. These phases would only be implemented should the project proceed to this stage.

A detailed Communications Program would be developed in advance of each engagement phase to detail the sequence and timing of activities to be undertaken.

PHASE 1 – EARLY ENGAGEMENT

KEY OBJECTIVE:

- Explain the problem
- Explain the project planning and development process
- *Build relationships*

PURPOSE:

Hold high level discussion with stakeholders and the community about the transport problems facing Melbourne and how the Western Distributor can help address these, including its opportunities and challenges.

Once formal planning commences, the focus will be on establishing Government relationships with community and stakeholders to explain the project planning, development and procurement processes.

KEY ENGAGEMENT TOOLS:

- Establish Community Reference Group
- Online engagement forums
- Distribute project newsletters and information materials
- Engage with landowners to confirm high level feedback documented by Transurban and capture any additional issues for consideration.

PHASE 2 – CONCEPT PROJECT

KEY OBJECTIVE:

- Seek stakeholder views on the concept including opportunities for refinement and ensuring impacted stakeholders are informed
- *Input and feedback*

PURPOSE:

Seek feedback on any issues or concerns that need to be considered by the project team in relation to the reference design. This will be a more detailed design than the high level proposals the community has viewed to date.

KEY ENGAGEMENT TOOLS:

- Hold community workshops and information sessions
- Online and social media engagement
- Distribute project newsletter
- Formal feedback period to receive written submissions
- One on one engagement and support with landowners

PHASE 3 – SUBMISSION

KEY OBJECTIVE:

- Support the engagement process as part of the statutory planning process
- Generate public awareness about the project benefits and outcomes
- Ensure that stakeholders are kept informed about the project development in a timely manner

PURPOSE:

Present the findings of the planning studies to the community and encourage participation in the formal statutory planning approval process e.g. making a submission.

KEY ENGAGEMENT TOOLS:

- Public displays
- Project newsletter
- Online engagement
- Establishment of independent planning panel to review submissions and to host a public hearing for submitters to present their views.

PHASE 4 - PROCUREMENT

KEY OBJECTIVE:

- Raise awareness and generate support for the Western Distributor whilst ensuring that stakeholders are kept informed about the project development in a timely manner

PURPOSE:

Should the project move into procurement, this phase would aim to maintain a high level of community support for the project and its benefits, explain the potential procurement model, maintain advocacy from key stakeholders, ensure directly impacted landowners are supported during the acquisition process, and provide regular information updates to reduce fear and uncertainty in the project corridor.

Communications would be undertaken to announce and explain the winning tender, including the procurement model and its features, as well as to engage with stakeholders about any variations to the concept project.

KEY ENGAGEMENT TOOLS:

- One on one engagement and support with landowners
- Community information sessions

8.0

Communications and engagement methods

A suite of engagement activities and information tools have been planned to achieve the communications goals and engagement objectives, and to support the engagement phases. An outlined of the methods to be implemented is provided below.



9.0

Evaluation

The effectiveness of communications and engagement activities in achieving the objectives set out earlier in this strategy will be determined through a number of measures, including participation in consultation activities such as responses to surveys, attendance at forums, online engagement and social media. Additional community research would also be used to assess effectiveness.

Appendix A

Stakeholder groups

Communications and engagement activities will be targeted to include the stakeholder groups listed below.

Decision makers

Project steering committee representatives including DTF, DEDJTR, DELWP, VicRoads, PTV and DPC.

Other agencies

EPA Victoria, Parks Victoria, Yarra Trams, Metro, Melbourne Water, Heritage Victoria, Port of Melbourne Corporation and emergency services organisations, Utilities.

Federal Government

Infrastructure Australia

Referral under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Local Government

Councillors and council officers from the Cities of Maribyrnong, Hobsons Bay, Melbourne, Wyndham, Brimbank, Moonee Valley, Greater Geelong, as well as councils affected by the Monash Freeway upgrades and those indirectly affect situated in the eastern and western regions of Melbourne; and the Municipal Association of Victoria and Victorian Local Governance Association.

Private road operators

Liaison will be required with Transurban in relation to connections with CityLink.

Communications will also be maintained with ConnectEast as the owner and operator of EastLink, as it will be particularly interested in tolling and impacts related to the Monash Freeway upgrade.

Market

Financiers involved in funding public private partnerships in Australia and internationally.

Directly/potentially impacted landowners

Owners of residential and industrial land – will be interested in potential short and long-term impacts of construction on their property, including subterranean land title and adjoining land.

Residents and tenants – will be interested in impacts such as noise, visual environment, air quality and impact on community facilities during construction.

Port of Melbourne precinct

Port of Melbourne Corporation, transportation companies situated within or accessing the Port of Melbourne precinct, commercial shipping operators, terminal operators, transport operators located along Footscray Road.

Business owners

Will have an interest in relation to amenity and traffic conditions as well as opportunities for job creation and growth. It should be noted that a business impact assessment will be undertaken for directly affected businesses during the statutory planning process.

Road users

Commuters, heavy vehicle operators, cyclists and pedestrians will be interested in transport impacts of project as well as potential impacts during construction.

Community facilities

There are a number of community sporting and recreational facilities along the project corridor that will have an interest in the project, including WJ Crofts Reserve, West Gate Golf Club, Donald McLean Reserve, Stony Creek Reserve, Yarraville Gardens, Yarraville Tennis Club, Footscray Arts Centre.

Transport advocacy stakeholders

Peak bodies and advocacy stakeholders will have an interest in informing and involving their members, including RACV, Victorian Transport Association, Bicycle Network Australia, Bus Association Victoria, VECCL, Committee for Melbourne and the Metropolitan Transport Forum.

Interest groups

Resident, environment and public transport interest groups should be involved to ensure their interests are considered. Groups include MTAG, Protectors of Public Lands, North and West Melbourne Residents Association, Save our Suburbs, Public Transport Users Association and the Friends of Stony Creek.

Heritage stakeholders

There are key heritage sites along the route that will require input into the planning process, with stakeholders including indigenous groups, Victoria Trust and Heritage Victoria.

Social service providers

Such as schools, hospitals, retirement villages and neighbourhood houses may have particular access needs that need to be considered. Stakeholders in close proximity to the project include the Yarraville Community Centre.

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Fifteen language groups have been identified as priority audiences in the Brimbank, Melbourne and Maribyrnong municipal areas. These language groups include: Vietnamese, Italian, Macedonian, Greek, Croatian, Arabic (Lebanese), Spanish, Turkish, Serbian, Bosnian, Chinese (Hakka), Maltese, Chinese (Cantonese), Dinka (Sudanese) and Somali. Chinese (Mandarin speakers), Burmese Karen, Filipino and Indian (Hindi and Punjabi) speakers are also important CALD audiences.

Disadvantaged groups

Will have special needs that need to be met in order to be involved in the engagement process and to maintain their access and movement requirements.

Media

Will have an interest in the project development at key milestones, as well as where there are community and stakeholder views about the project and its impacts, benefits and opportunities for Melbourne.