

15 October 2021

Dear Rethink EastLink Committee

Thank you for the questions submitted on 15 September 2021, and for meeting with the EastLink WA Integrated Planning Team (IPT) on Tuesday 12 October 2021 to discuss the project. We acknowledge your questions and have addressed these below.

The purpose of EastLink WA

- *What is the purpose of this road?*
- *If the purpose is safety, can you provide the stats that show the need for this work over other roads in the State?*


EastLink WA is a culmination of more than 40 years of road planning activities to provide a safer, more efficient route from Perth to Northam for freight and road users. It is needed to help strengthen WA's freight network, facilitate economic growth, and support regional development. It will do this by improving freight efficiency and creating a primary freight route between Perth and Northam, providing access to the Perth metropolitan area, freight terminals, industrial areas, the Port of Fremantle, Hills communities, and popular visitor and recreation areas and attractions.

The Perth and Peel Transport Plan (Transport @ 3.5 Million), retains Toodyay Road at its current function until 2031 (2.7 million population horizon), which includes restrictions on heavy vehicles coming down the Darling Scarp. The Plan proposes that 'Orange Route' be constructed by 2051 to address Perth's growing transport and freight needs.

Toodyay Road and Great Eastern Highway are currently used by a large mix of vehicles, including a significant number of freight and heavy vehicles. With the continued urbanisation and population growth of the Swan Valley and Perth Hills, there is increasing local traffic using Toodyay Road and Great Eastern Highway with limited alternative routes for freight and regional traffic. The mix of freight, local, and regional traffic with no separation of traffic streams has an adverse impact on:

- Safety, as it is compromised where there are more interactions between cars and heavy vehicles, and increasing interactions between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists in built-up areas.
- Local amenity for communities in Gidgegannup and Mundaring with high traffic volumes, including many heavy vehicles moving through the town centres.
- Access for visitors to the Swan Valley and destinations in and around Gidgegannup, Mundaring and Northam.
- Access to current and future development areas in the City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring.
- Freight efficiency and access to and from Northam and within the Wheatbelt.

EastLink WA will address and improve these issues.



Freight considerations

- *Why should triple trucks/road trains enter Midland and Perth?*
- *If the problem is haulage, is a rail assessment due?*
- *If rail assessment is not being undertaken, why is the orange route being considered for haulage and not rail?*

RAV7 heavy vehicles travelling from the east are currently required to reconfigure into smaller combinations at Northam before travelling into the metropolitan area. Currently RAV7 vehicles can travel from the north and south of the state to the metropolitan area, with the portion between Perth and Northam the only missing link to the east. This leads to significant freight inefficiencies which necessitate upgrades to the network.

Transport planning for WA is looked at holistically and needs to consider a balance between all modes of transport to be effective. An efficient regional freight transport network is essential for the long-term development of the State and relies on both road and rail freight to ensure remote, regional, and metropolitan businesses and communities have reliable access to goods and services. This is reflected in the State's Perth and Peel @ 3.5million Transport Network Report, which identifies the Perth Adelaide National Highway (PANH) as the primary freight road linking Perth to the Eastern States.

The National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy addresses both road and rail freight regarding targeted investments, improved efficiency, better planning and regulation, and better freight location and performance. Investment in the existing rail freight network is being considered as part of the Department of Transport's 'Revitalising Agricultural Region Freight Strategy' which aligns to the 'National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy'. If realised, this would not remove the need for road freight; rather, both would work in tandem leading to improved overall freight performance.

The National and State freight strategies also identify a need to strengthen WA's road freight network. EastLink WA will help to address this by providing more efficient freight movement and will cater for the wider freight requirements of the State.

Alignment selection

- *When was the last time the Orange Route was compared to the Brown Route?*
- *Why are other routes (like the blue and brown routes) not being investigated as a viable option given the amount of change that has occurred since the original proposal?*

We acknowledge that the planning and concept of 'Orange Route' has existed for some time and appreciate the community want to understand how 'Orange Route' is valid in today's context.

The Perth Adelaide National Highway alignment (former Orange Route) was born out of the Eastern Corridor Major Roads Study (1988) and has been established, and in parts reserved, as a key transport corridor.

In the original study, several alignment options for an improved national highway route between Perth and Northam were assessed. The Orange Route was selected as the preferred alignment as it had significantly less impact on the environment, less indirect affects in terms of noise and visual amenity and provided a shorter national highway route for a substantially less cost. The Orange Route alignment was referred for environmental assessment and endorsed by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) in 1989.

Following the environmental referral, the alignment was endorsed by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) and several local and State strategic planning measures were put in place between 1989 and 1992 to begin to define the strategic corridor and secure some

of the land required. The alignment was formerly protected under the Perth Metropolitan Region Scheme (MRS) for the purpose of a future transport corridor in 1994. A more detailed understanding of the planning studies and strategies undertaken over time to determine the long-term transport needs and define the transport corridor for the Perth Adelaide National Highway is available at [EastLink WA Project Lifecycle](#).

As part of the 1994 MRS amendment, a detailed review of the whole route between middle Swan and the MRS boundary at Wooroloo was completed to ensure contemporary issues were considered. This review resulted in changes to the alignment which included the route passing to the north of Gidgegannup.

The area protected for the future transport corridor includes the section from Middle Swan to the MRS boundary at Wooroloo. The State Government has secured land for this purpose within the MRS and urban planning and development in surrounding areas has occurred with consideration of this transport corridor.

The alignment of the Perth Adelaide National Highway from Werribee Road to Clackline through Wundowie, Bakers Hill and Clackline has undergone previous planning and has been established to follow the alignment of an existing railway reserve and transport corridor.

The alignment in this section has been noted in the Shire of Northam Local Planning Strategy (2013) and the Department of Planning Lands and Heritage's Regional Planning and Infrastructure Framework (2015).

As part of the EastLink WA planning and development study, we will review the planning work to date across the whole alignment. We will undertake contemporary environmental, heritage, geotechnical and engineering-based studies to inform the relevant environmental assessments and comply with all local, State and Commonwealth legislation and regulatory frameworks to confirm the validity of the alignment.

Environmental considerations

- *What is the plan for wildlife bridges?*
- *What natural habitat will be destroyed?*
- *If you find that there are roosting / breeding sites for the endangered species of Black Cockatoos (Red Tails) along the proposed Orange Route, what happens?*
- *What are Main Roads planning for the springs at O'Brien Road/Toodyay Road that home western swamp turtles and an array of native fauna?*

We are committed to managing impacts to the surrounding environment through the planning and development work for this project. The project team have commenced extensive environmental studies which include flora and fauna to inform environmental assessments and to comply with all legislation and regulatory frameworks. These assessments will identify impacts arising from the project, and strategies will be developed in response to the environmental findings to avoid, minimise, or mitigate these as much as possible.

Environmental studies for the project, including flora and fauna, are being undertaken in spring of 2021 and spring of 2022. Additional surveys with respect to heritage, noise, and other relevant environmental and social factors will also be undertaken to inform environmental assessments and to comply with all legislation and regulatory frameworks. Fauna movement structures (or wildlife bridges) will be assessed as part of the environmental approvals process.

Avoidance will be assessed where specific environmental values are noted, including black cockatoo breeding habitat and hollows, natural springs and water sources, and other key habitat features.

The environmental values for the springs at O'Brien Road/Toodyay Road will be surveyed in a manner consistent with the rest of the project and environmental values will be managed. In saying this, the only known native surviving populations of Western Swamp Tortoise are located at Twin Swamps and Ellen Brook Nature Reserves, which were both created to protect the remaining habitat of the tortoises. If there is a known population of Western Swamp Tortoise in Gidgegannup, it should immediately be reported to the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

Climate Change

- *What amounts of CO2 will be emitted from this project from both the road being constructed and loss of trees being able to sequester carbon and how does this fit within WA's Climate Policies and net zero targets?*

As part of the EastLink WA planning and development study, we will undertake preliminary calculations of energy requirements for construction (including clearing), to understand which emission sources are most significant. This will help to inform the opportunities to reduce emissions from construction so this can be considered for implementation during design and construction.

The Western Australian Climate Policy, developed by the Department of Water and Environment was released in November 2020. This policy outlines priorities for WA to transition towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy. The aspiration of Net Zero emissions by 2050 is keystone to the policy.

The energy and carbon emission estimations and identification of reduction opportunities align with the Net Zero emissions by 2050. These will cover the following sources of emissions:

- Construction fuel use and electricity consumption
- Ongoing energy use and carbon emissions of the infrastructure asset including maintenance activities
- Changes in carbon sink from vegetation and soils
- Fill and spoil haulage
- Transportation of materials used in significant volumes
- Embodied energy or carbon of significant materials
- Waste disposal

Due to the complexity of the project, the opportunities are likely to be developed in stages as information becomes available throughout the project lifecycle. Please note that project sustainability is included in Main Roads annual reporting which is accessible through the Main Roads website. This will outline sustainability progress throughout the planning and development phase.

Aboriginal engagement and heritage

- *What consultation has been undertaken or is planned to be undertaken with elders in relation to aboriginal heritage sites that will be affected?*

Consultation with Traditional Owners on Aboriginal heritage, cultural and archaeological sites is required under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972). The process of obtaining consent for the use of land on which Aboriginal sites are present, requires the knowledge that Traditional Owners hold about the country in which a project would occur. This information assists to identify sites and understand the potential impacts to sites.

As such, engagement and consultation with Traditional Owners inclusive of both the Whadjuk and Ballardong people within each respective country, is a critical element of the ethnographic consultation process that the project will be undertaking.

Given ongoing refinement of the project corridor, it is not anticipated that an ethnographic consultation with Traditional Owners would take place until the second quarter of 2022 when a more defined footprint is available.

Affected landowners

- *What is your proposal for affected properties? How is this going to affect property prices and how will people be compensated (if at all)?*
- *Can you release an official map with red zones of affected properties?*

The project team will be working with affected landowners to minimise/mitigate any impacts to their properties. It is too early in the process to discuss exact impacts to properties, however the general process for land acquisition/compensation is outlined on the Main Roads website.

Given it is too early in the project to confirm impacts to properties, and to respect the privacy of individual landowners, a map showing affected properties will not be provided at this time.

Community engagement

- *Why aren't residents, who are currently living here, being surveyed?*

To compliment the wide-ranging technical work being undertaken over the next three years, we will engage communities along the proposed alignment to better understand local issues and aspirations for the project.

As we move through the project, the community will be asked to comment on specific issues at various times during planning and development. This will be done through activities such as community drop-in sessions and via the "My Say" Transport website. These activities will be communicated within our project updates, and residents will be given the opportunity to provide input through these forums.

Local road access and travel times

- *The current maps have little detail regarding current roads and how they will connect or cross over the Orange Route.*
- *How will the local roads be affected? Where will the access points for Toodyay Road access be, exactly?*
- *How much longer would it take for locals to access the townsites and villages for services like food and medical?*

Previous work has been undertaken regarding access and connectivity along the alignment which we are currently reviewing and refining. The current maps are reflective of the level of planning at this stage of the planning and project development.

The topic of access and connectivity has been raised during our stakeholder engagement process, including at our recent community drop-in sessions in Northam and Gidgegannup. We are gaining a better appreciation about how locals use the road network and their important connections. We will continue to engage the community on this issue which will be considered alongside technical and environmental information, to help inform project decisions. We anticipate having more information regarding specific access points and changes by mid-2022. This will provide improved clarity on accessibility to townsite and key services.

Noise impacts

- *Would we hear the noise in Tilden Park and surrounds?*
- *How are you planning to keep the noise to a minimum?*

We will undertake preliminary monitoring to understand current noise experienced in residential areas near the proposed route. Modelling will also be instigated to understand potential future noise impacts that take into account a wide range of factors, including predicted traffic volumes.

We will consider noise mitigation measures in preliminary designs for the proposed route. These measures may include noise walls and road surfacing treatments to reduce noise where practicable.

The project will meet noise limits set by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) Road and Rail Noise Policy (State Planning Policy 5.4).

Local jobs

- *Has there been an assessment of how many jobs will be lost in Northam (if any)?*

There has been no assessment undertaken to identify job losses in Northam. It is envisaged that if funding were committed, a significant amount of local employment would be generated throughout the construction period. Projects of a similar scale have previously created a significant number of jobs, increasing employment and skills in local areas. In addition, the higher standard route from Perth will reduce travel times to Northam and other townsites along the route, potentially attracting development and creating jobs.

Operations and maintenance

- *How much will the ongoing maintenance of this road cost per kilometre and how much of that will be covered by the current heavy vehicles charge?*
- *Will this be a toll road for all traffic?*

It is too early in the project to outline asset management costs for the project. These will be determined based on the outcomes of the project development phase. This includes considerations such as connectivity details, the number of bridges and types of pavements. There are no plans to have toll charges on EastLink WA.

Thank you for your considered questions.

Regards



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