



Inquiry into Managing Transport Congestion

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TRAFFIC CONGESTION ON ARTERIAL ROADS AS A RESULT OF CITYLINK

1. Introduction

The tolling on CityLink is having a major effect on the magnitude and intensity of traffic on the road network in the Moonee Valley City Council area. This is leading to significant economic, safety and environmental costs, as well as loss of urban amenity for the citizens.

The tolling has increased traffic between the AM and PM peaks (the inter-peak period) along a number of arterial and local roads. This has important repercussions on the efficiency of the business travel that dominates in this daily period.

Removing the toll would reduce traffic congestion along both Mt Alexander and Pascoe Vale Roads, which currently offer a toll-free alternative to CityLink and have experienced traffic increases of about 20% since tolling began.

2. Economic Costs of Tolling

The tolling has resulted in detrimental impacts on the community because a freeway, which has low road user costs, is being underutilised and a significant volume of traffic has been diverted onto arterial roads, with high user costs. Not only are there higher economic costs for this diverted traffic but the additional traffic increases costs for the existing traffic on arterial roads. These roads do not have the capacity to take this additional traffic without causing major travel time delays to existing road users and greater accident, environmental and amenity costs in residential and business areas.

These greater community costs are the result of tolling at Tolling Station 1 on the Western Link, between Moreland and Brunswick Roads. A report prepared by Dr John Cox in February 2000 provides estimates of the economic, safety and environmental costs of the tolling at this location. The key findings of the report are summarised below. Although the report provided both the lower and upper cost estimates, conservatively only the lower estimates have been included in this document.

It should be noted that the costs were only estimated for road users in the Moonee Valley City Council area and that there are likely to be additional costs for motorists using roads in other council areas, particularly those to the east of the Western Link.

2.1 Travel Time Costs

The average travel speed along freeways is approximately twice the speed along arterial roads. The cost of additional travel time to traffic diverted from CityLink has been estimated at \$20.3 million per year. The diverted traffic also increases delays to existing road users along the arterial roads. The cost of these delays has been estimated at \$25 million per year.

2.2 Accident Costs

The accident rate per kilometre travelled is approximately three times greater along arterial roads than on freeways. The traffic diverted from CityLink onto the arterial roads is likely to experience a higher accident rate than it would have if it used CityLink. The cost of these additional accidents to the community has been estimated at \$4.1 million per year. VicRoads accident data indicates that 340 casualty accidents have occurred along both Mt Alexander and Pascoe Vale Roads during the 5-year period prior to the opening of CityLink and 421 accidents have occurred along these roads in the 5-year period since CityLink opened. This represents an increase of 16 accidents per year since the opening of CityLink.

2.3 Fuel Consumption

Vehicles use less petrol when travelling along freeways compared to stop-start operations along urban arterials. The increase in fuel consumption costs due to traffic diverted from CityLink has been estimated at \$0.6 million per year (it should be noted that petrol costs have risen considerably since Dr Cox's report was written in February 2000).

2.4 Environmental and Urban Amenity Costs

The vehicle emissions of carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons along arterial roads are approximately twice the emissions along the freeways, due to the greater proportion of unburnt fuel from idling, accelerating and decelerating under the stop-start operations. The increased air pollution causes health problems, leading to higher health costs for the community. The greater traffic volumes along shopping strips reduce urban amenity, making it more difficult to carry out shopping and social activities. Higher traffic levels also result in increased noise, affecting house values along arterial roads. The additional environmental and amenity costs of traffic diverted from CityLink have been estimated at \$0.4 million per year.

2.5 Total Cost of Tolling

The total economic cost of the increases in travel time, accidents, fuel consumption and the detrimental environmental/amenity impacts has been estimated at \$50.4 million per year (total of the above costs).

3. Conclusion

The tolling at Tolling Station 1 on the Western Link is having considerable detrimental impact on travel time, accidents, fuel consumption, environment and amenity. The total economic cost of these impacts has been estimated at \$50.4 million per year.