Reference design and consultation update

The Western Distributor project is entering a detailed planning and development phase.

Feedback received through recent consultation has been used to inform project development, including:
• an updated design called the Reference design
• requirements for construction tenderers
• impact assessments for the project’s Environment Effects Statement (EES).

Reference design phase
The Western Distributor is now in Phase Three of its development. This will run from July 2016 to early 2017 and includes the submission and evaluation of tenders and the preparation of the EES. During this phase:

A short list of construction companies are asked to develop a Tender based on criteria known as functional requirements
• a Design and Construct (D&C) Request for Tender (RFT) is released to construction companies bidding for the project
• tenderers prepare a priced design as part of their response, which must be submitted in late 2016 for assessment

The EES is progressed in preparation for public exhibition
• specialist studies are completed by technical specialists
• the EES is prepared

Feedback from communities and stakeholders continues to inform project development
• the project team continues discussions with local communities about the Reference design, the EES, the tender process and next steps
• the Community Liaison Group (CLG) and Technical Reference Group (TRG) continue to meet regularly, providing a forum for the project team to seek advice and provide updates about what’s happening
• feedback is regularly provided to tenderers and specialists completing the EES.

Key steps

1. Proposal design
   Understand what’s important in Transurban’s proposal

2. Concept design
   Discuss key issues and opportunities

3. Reference design
   Have ongoing discussions with communities

4. Tender designs and EES
   Get feedback on EES and design
   • Planning approvals
   • Design refinements

5. Final project
   Give regular updates and prepare for construction
   • Construction
Key features of the Reference design

No residential acquisition

The Reference design maintains the commitment to deliver the project without the need to acquire people’s homes. This is now embedded as part of the functional requirements for the project.

Cycling and walking improvements

Cycling and walking in the west will be easier and safer with new and improved paths and upgrades to existing infrastructure including:

- completing the Federation Trail ‘missing link’ and improving connectivity between both sides of the West Gate Freeway
- a new off-road connection from Somerville Road/High Street to Footscray Road
- new connections from the Dynon Road shared path to the Capital City Trail, McCoy Pond Creek Trail and to Spencer Street
- grade separating the Footscray Road shared path, so that cyclists do not need to cross intersections at Links Street, Dock Links Road and Aplington Dock Road
- new pedestrian bridges over the West Gate Freeway that are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant.

A sustainable design

We are aiming to achieve a design which meets the Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia’s excellence rating. The project's approach seeks to achieve a sustainable road, requiring that stormwater be re-used within the integrated water management, biodiversity and habitat protection and urban city living. The use of greener infrastructure is considered and addressed.

Allowing for future infrastructure

Tenderer designs must not prevent potential future public transport, freight and road improvements, including:

- a tram route to connect the City of Melbourne to the City of Maribyrnong
- future west–east freeway link to open
- bus routes along Footscray Road
- M10 and Preston Freeway upgrades
- freight rail on the North to Sunshine line at the Port of Melbourne and in the vicinity of Dynon Road

A commitment to maintain public open space and mitigate impacts to community facilities

Tenderer designs must avoid key public open space areas and community facilities, including:

- Yarraville Gardens, the Docklands Cotton Mill, and St Joseph’s Primary School and Kindergarten, in Hyde Street Reserve as part of the Hydesdale Reserve and Crofts Reserve; strict requirements to limit any negative impact have been put in place.

Efficient freight

The Western Distributor will be built to accommodate future freight growth and support the efficient movement of goods to and from the Port of Melbourne. Stopping trucks will be avoided wherever possible to ensure that traffic can keep moving throughout Melbourne to the City of Maribyrnong. Strict specifications have been developed in consultation with the freight industry including maximum ramp and tunnel gradients, space for long trucks (4-triple), bridge strengthening and intersection improvements. Providing a direct and user friendly route will help trucks off local roads.

Keeping traffic moving during construction

The construction contractor is required to maintain all freeway lanes during peak times so that traffic can keep moving throughout the construction period. A traffic management coordination group will be established to ensure that the construction contractor maintains and properly manages traffic flow at interfaces.

Urban design

Urban design guidance recognises the importance of achieving positive outcomes for those who live, work, or use the parks, paths and other facilities, next to the freeway.

In particular, Urban design guidance encourages tenders to:

- ensure existing and planned parks, paths and other facilities, next to the freeway, maintain amenity environments either side of the river and creek.
- ensure noise walls are doing their job.

Minimising traffic noise

Noise in upgraded noise walls will be built to a high standard, with a life-span of at least 40 years. The EES will assess potential noise impacts and recommend an appropriate level of mitigation. Noise testing will be undertaken before and after the Western Distributor is built to ensure noise walls are doing their job.

Bridge design

Urban design guidance encourages tenders to:

- subject specific attention to a bridge crossing over the Maribyrnong River and Moonee Ponds Creek.
- provide guidance on the scale, structural and architectural form, integration of current and future land use, open space and community requirements to provide high amenity environments either side of the river and creek.

Key design updates since Concept design

1 Tunnel connection to the West Gate Freeway – long tunnel design

The Reference design includes the long tunnel option as this responds directly to the requirements of the local community and council feedback that a design which stays within, or as close as possible, to the existing freeway would help to minimise impacts to open space, residents and community facilities.

2 Hyde Street access – an updated north-south design

The north-south Hyde Street connection option has been refined as a result of feedback and included in the reference design.

This portion of the design remains one of the most challenging because of impacts on both sides of the river. However, it is preferred to minimise impacts to the north-south option are that it does not include an elevated option. The north-south option has been refined as a result of feedback both intra and extra community.

3 Wurundjeri Way: extension and widening

Wurundjeri Way will be extended north to provide a continuous CBD link route. The scope also includes widening of Wurundjeri Way at all its intersections with local streets, to allow this route to cater for traffic which will move off the CBD roads particularly Spencer Street.

This creates opportunities to improve cycling, walking and access to public transport in the CBD.

Key design updates since Concept design
What we have heard

During April and May 2016, we asked local communities, councils and industry for their feedback on the Western Distributor Concept design and other key topics including construction management, air quality, traffic noise, urban design and walking and cycling.

With detailed information provided at community consultation sessions and online – including road design drawings and 3D visuals, people were able to see how the project could look in their area. This resulted in feedback with a strong focus on localised issues and how the project may impact communities.

The feedback received helped us understand people’s views about the different advantages and disadvantages of the Concept design and design options for the tunnel and Hyde Street ramps.

Residents, local groups and other stakeholders continue to tell us that addressing truck impacts in the inner west, improving traffic flow and capacity of the M1, and providing an alternative to the West Gate Bridge are important and necessary, but that the impacts on local communities and public open space must be minimised and carefully managed.

While feedback varied among the different groups of stakeholders involved in consultation, key themes identified were:

- continued preference from communities close to potential routes, for a design that stays within or close to the existing freeway reserve and industrial land
- comments from those communities about new elevated structures including amenity, noise, vibration, business operation and property impacts
- importance of open space and recreation facilities
- comments about air quality impacts in the inner west and measures to achieve the best air quality outcome
- comments about noise impacts and quality of treatments, particularly along the West Gate Freeway and elevated structures
- support for a solution to truck impacts and requests for more information about truck restrictions and incentives
- maintaining and improving efficient and value-for-money freight access to key destinations, including the port
- comments about impacts on waterways
- integration with other transport and land use improvements
- changes to traffic and the need to address road congestion for all road users, including buses
- managing construction impacts on residents, businesses and road users
- requests for more information on how impacts will be managed – including traffic changes, noise and air quality.

Detailed information about the consultation process, what we heard and how we are responding to this feedback is available in the Western Distributor Consultation Report September 2015 – May 2016 on our website.
How we are using feedback

We have consulted with communities and a range of interested stakeholders from the early stages of the project because we know that understanding their views and concerns will help deliver a better project and the right outcome for Melbourne’s future.

Input from communities, stakeholders, industry and regulators is used in many ways at each stage of the project’s development, to inform assessments and decision making.

Functional requirements are issued to tenderers and describe what needs to be designed and built. These requirements include specifications and constraints for a range of topics including road design, quality of construction, traffic management and safety.

The Reference design provides a base for tenderers to develop their own, more detailed design. It outlines the functional requirements of the project in a visual way. Tenderers may use their specialist knowledge and expertise to identify solutions that enhance and change the design to achieve a better outcome, as long as the functional requirements are met.

17 impact assessments are being undertaken as part of the EES, on topics including air quality, noise, health, visual, traffic, social and business impacts. Information on these studies is available in the EES specialist studies discussion paper.

Tenders include fully costed designs developed through the competitive tender process. Tenderer designs that differ from the Reference design will be assessed through the EES.

An EES presents a thorough and transparent analysis of the project’s anticipated impacts and plans from how these impacts will be managed. It will be publicly exhibited in the first quarter of 2017 and community and stakeholder submissions on the EES will be considered by an independent planning panel. Outcomes of the EES inform planning approval decisions by the Minister for Planning.

Construction is expected to start in late 2017 and be complete in 2022.

Find out more and stay involved

- Sign up to email updates or ask a question through our website
- Visit our pop-up hub in your area during July, August and September
- Follow us on Facebook and Twitter
- Talk with your local Community Liaison Group member to stay informed or to provide feedback for the project team to consider
- Look out for updates from the team via newsletters, email, our website and at local events.

Contact us

You can keep in touch with the project team and be informed of the latest news by subscribing to updates via:

- 1300 280 939
- western.distributor@ecodev.vic.gov.au
- westerndistributorproject.vic.gov.au
- facebook.com/westerndistributorproject
- twitter.com/WDMelb
- Interpreter service: 13 14 50