

# Meeting 17.10.19 of West Gate Tunnel Community Liaison Group (North)

Report by Peter Gerrand (NWMA).

This meeting was held on 17 October 2019 at the West Gate Tunnel Project Information Centre, Somerville Road, Yarraville, from 5.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

Chaired by Jim Williamson (an independent), the meeting included community members from Yarraville, Footscray, Kensington and NWMA, as well as representatives from Bike Network Victoria, Maribyrnong Truck Action Group, Victorian Transport Association, and the cities of Melbourne and Maribyrnong.

Presenting to the meeting, and answering questions, were six employees of the West Gate Tunnel Project (formally the WGTP Major Transport Infrastructure Authority: the WGTP for short), two from Transurban, and four from the construction group CPBJH (CPB John Holland Joint Venture).

## Topics discussed

### 1. Contamination

The WGTP confirmed that contaminated soil has been found in some areas. This soil is either being stockpiled (under EPA supervision) for subsequent removal or covered until removed. WORKSAFE is on site on a weekly basis (initially more frequently when contamination was first discovered). All stockpiles will be removed. All stockpiles in the East Zone (east of the Maribyrnong River) *have* been removed.

### 2. Native fauna

Community reps raised concern about the disturbance of snakes in the Stony Creek area, causing them to move from grassland to neighbouring houses. A WGTP rep said that a couple of large snakes had been removed by Stevie the Snake Catcher (contracted for this purpose). He also claimed that a wildlife expert is on site before destroying any native animals.

### 3. Landscaping around infrastructure

This was a contentious issue, as detailed plans for the proposed landscaping had been sent to the City councils, to meet the WGTP's legal obligations, but not to the community reps.

An email alert that landscape design fact sheets had been uploaded to the project website was only sent to CLG members at 4.49 pm on the day of this meeting, i.e. some 40 minutes before the start of the meeting.

Peter Sammut from the WGTP finally agreed (1) to provide a comparable level of detail to all CLG members, and (2) that it is not too late to provide feedback that can affect the landscaping designs.

### 4. **Community Grants:** the West Gate Neighbourhood Fund

Grants of up to \$100,000 (but in some categories, up to \$10,000 or \$20,000) will be available to provide funding towards community projects and initiatives, with the opening date for applications to be announced soon. Preliminary details can be found [here](#).

However only communities within the cities of Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong are eligible to apply. When I asked why communities within the City of Melbourne were excluded, given that there will be a significant amount of WGT infrastructure based within our city, I received a very convoluted answer. The gist seemed to be that the community grants were part funded by the State Government,

which had already committed “up to \$50m”, to be matched by the City of Melbourne, towards traffic management infrastructure and design to handle the huge amount of additional vehicle traffic flowing into our suburbs. The inference was, that that was our share of the possible funding contribution.

**Important:** The City of Melbourne (CoM) has subsequently informed me that it disagrees with the WGTP MTIA’s interpretation of the relevant Environmental Performance Requirement (EPR). The CoM considers there is nothing in the WGTP’s Environment Performance Requirement which implies that negatively affected communities within the CoM are not eligible for the plan/fund. In other words, negatively affected communities within the CoM (e.g. the NWMA) should also be eligible to apply for these community grants. CoM is still awaiting WGTP’s written response to CoM’s letter (dated February 2019) on this matter.

#### 5. Progress with tunnelling

The Tunnel Boring Machines, named Bella and Vida, have been assembled at the WGTP site in Yarraville. The commencement of tunnelling, with a formal launch by the State Premier, will occur soon.

#### 6. Construction of major vehicle bridge over the Maribyrnong River

The installation of steel cylindrical piles (each 7.2m wide) is proceeding, with piles to be driven 36m down into the basalt stratum beneath the river. Local businesses are being kept in touch with construction plans, including traffic diversion, by means of meetings and weekly emails. The bridge is planned to be completed by mid 2021.

#### 7. Construction of dual use bicycle/pedestrian bridges over the Moonee Ponds Creek

During a coffee break, Paul Baggeridge (Senior Project Manager, State Infrastructure at the City of Melbourne) drew my attention to the plans for three new dual use bridges over the Moonee Ponds Creek, that will provide both bicycle access from the west side of the creek to the creek paths and also pedestrian access from the east to the western side of the creek. **But no rubbish bins, safety lighting or toilets are proposed for the newly accessible recreation area.**

#### Next meeting

A combined meeting of the North and South Community Liaison Groups is scheduled for 12 December 2019 at 5.30 pm.