

Community Environment Groups -

Sustainability Opportunities Workshop Report

March 2019

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The purpose of the workshop was to share knowledge and generate ideas on sustainability opportunities that could be implemented for the Project.

About this report

This report provides a summary of the insights and opportunities we heard from the Community Liaison Group (CLG) who participated in the North East Link Sustainability Opportunities Workshop, held on 22 March 2019.

Feedback from the workshop is being reviewed by North East Link Project (NELP) to determine how these ideas and opportunities could be facilitated. This information, along with feedback gathered from an earlier sustainability workshop held with Councils and Agencies (December 2018), will be provided to parties bidding on the North East Link (the Project).

Background

The community sustainability opportunities workshop is built on outcomes from earlier engagement with communities and stakeholders including:

- Community surveys held in 2017
- Community workshops held in 2018
- Sustainability opportunities workshop with Councils and Agencies held in 2018

Workshop Participants

The community sustainability opportunities workshop involved around 20 participants selected by North East Link's Community Liaison Group (CLG) environmental representatives and included representatives from Warringal Conservation Society, Friends of Banyule, the Yarra Riverkeeper and Sustainable Gardening Australia.

Ahead of the workshop, NELP held a session with the CLG's environmental representatives to discuss the topics to be covered and to ensure all representative's topics were addressed. NELP provided background on previous engagement, which formed the basis for the sustainability content, and sent all participants the draft report from the Council and Agency workshop held in December 2018 as pre-reading.

At this workshop, there were four speakers: the Sustainability Advisors from NELP and Level Crossing Removal Project, an ecologist from the project's Technical Advisory Team (GHD), and the owner of Indigenous Design on sustainable landscapes.



North East Link Sustainability Policy and Themes

Sustainability for NELP means moving beyond just a 'business as usual' approach to one in which we actively seek to maximise long term benefits for the environment, our communities and our economic prosperity. We have established a Sustainability Policy which reflects this and commits us to achieving excellent environmental, social and economic outcomes across all phases of the Project.

Our people are committed to being leaders in sustainability and integrating sustainability principles into planning, design and project decision making. We want to ensure we leave a positive legacy for present and future generations.

Our first step in planning for sustainability was to consider the sustainability issues and opportunities most material to North East Link. These themes would be the platform from which we establish specific objectives and targets.

Six themes were developed that span environmental, social and economic aspects:



1. Leadership¹

Achieving excellent environmental, social and economic outcomes across all phases of North East Link.



2. Resource efficiency

Embedding energy, water, material and waste reduction initiatives into the design, construction and operation of the project.



3. Urban ecosystems

Protecting and seeking opportunities to enhance natural environments.



4. Communities

Making a positive contribution to social, cultural and community health and wellbeing.



5. Economic opportunities

Facilitating opportunities for economic development, providing a skilled local workforce and promoting diversity and inclusion.



6. Climate change

Playing a part in Victoria achieving its emission reduction targets while preparing for the challenges presented by climate change.

Note that the workshop participants had indicated a specific interest in the urban ecosystems theme.

¹The 'Leadership' theme was added later following feedback from the stakeholder workshop in December 2018. As such, the leadership theme was not part of this workshop.

Sustainability Opportunities Feedback

NELP has developed objectives around each of the sustainability themes. Opportunities that could be implemented to achieve these objectives have been previously gathered from Councils and agencies.

Participants provided feedback on a) previously identified opportunities they supported and b) further opportunities or considerations that could be explored to achieve objectives.



Theme 1

Resource Efficiency



We asked participants to consider potential opportunities to achieve the resource efficiency objectives:

- Reduce the use and the lifecycle impacts of all materials, like concrete, asphalt and steel
- Reduce water use and maximise the use of alternatives to potable water
- Reduce waste and maximise the sustainable reuse of excavated material

Potential opportunities already identified that participants supported were:

- Water Sensitive Urban Design to manage and treat stormwater
- Develop an integrated water management plan for the project in consultation with DELWP's Integrated Water Management Working Group
- Design stormwater retention as local features
- Use stormwater harvesting for vegetation establishment

Additional opportunities and considerations suggested by participants were:

- Use permeable surfaces instead of impermeable materials for bike paths, footpaths, pavements and walls
- Make manufacturers responsible for the whole life cycle of products
- Transparency on 'business as usual' assumptions made to calculate savings achieved through sustainability initiatives



Theme 2

Urban Ecosystems



We asked participants to consider potential opportunities to achieve the urban ecosystem objectives:

- Protect and enhance biodiversity and habitat links
- Seek opportunities to improve stormwater quality and contribute to improvements in waterway environments
- Contribute to local urban forest outcomes

Potential opportunities already identified that participants supported were:

- Tree planting species selection to contribute to ecological function including consideration of habitat for fauna and pollinator species
- Contribute to maintaining habitat corridors for core habitat/source populations on the Yarra Floodplain. Use rope ladders and tunnels alongside habitat improvement and creation with the suggestion that the Yarra River corridor include a wide area along the Yarra while emphasising its importance as a migratory corridor
- Contribute to biodiversity research and knowledge sharing

- Prioritise retaining high value trees (even in small pockets) beyond the actual road footprint
- Seek to offset vegetation loss within the local area by working with affected local governments to locate opportunities
- Contribute to restoration projects for Bolin Bolin Wetlands and Banyule Flats, Koonung Creek Yarra River and Plenty River (suggestion was made to include Banyule Creek)
- Consider the design of new street lighting and construction lighting to minimise impacts on fauna

Additional opportunities and considerations suggested by participants were:

- Contribute to research programs drawing on the work undertaken for the North East Link Environment Effects Statement in partnerships with universities and PhD students (and potentially the LaTrobe University wildlife sanctuary)
- Translate specialist research into education kits on local geology, aquifers, threatened species such as Matted Flax-lily, Powerful Owl, etc

- Incorporate environmental research into permanent community education displays in association with the Bolin Bolin to Banyule Billabong "Cultural Precinct" from the Yarra River Plan
- Seek opportunities to increase threatened species within the local area e.g. Matted Flax-lily, Studley Park Gum
- Consider the applicability of Biodiversity 2037 and the Yarra Strategic Plan
- Set up a trust fund for local environmental groups for protection, rehabilitation and restoration of wildlife corridors, habitat and indigenous flora and fauna. A percentage of revenue from tolls could be directed to the trust fund
- Establish structures in waterways, such as permanent Large Woody Debris (LWD) style structures, to enhance fish migration
- Avoid undergrounding creeks and increase riparian zones that connect to the Yarra River

Theme 2

Urban Ecosystems



- Research the design of noise barriers, such as height and transparency of walls, to optimise the best outcomes for fauna
- Consider options to prevent fauna deaths from road collisions
- Enhance habitat for some species e.g. nest boxes for Sugar Gliders, provide food source for Powerful Owl
- Incorporate ongoing vegetation maintenance into contracts. Consider how local environment groups could be included in ongoing maintenance requirements
- Ensure early tree planting survives through having adequate watering and maintenance regimes. Consider a contract requirement that trees achieve 80% survival rate and replanting as required
- Undertake iterative planting i.e. replace plantings that aren't surviving with other species
- Avoid soil compaction during replanting and construction processes
- Freeway plantings can lack diversity and hence, consider more understorey species. Prioritise creating structural ecosystems of high value
- Start ecological work early as leaf litter takes 10-15 years to form. Better structured leaf litter layer ensures regeneration of herbs, grasses, plants and trees
- Plant for regeneration (not for more planting)
- Develop the baseline now so that ecological change can be measured in the future
- Monitor invertebrates as a measure of biodiversity
- Identify tree offsets within the area and investigate benefits to local habitats
- Consider chemical use for vegetation restoration and maintenance





Theme 3

Communities

We asked participants to consider potential opportunities to achieve the communities theme objectives:

- Enhance open space, active transport opportunities and community facilities
- Respect and promote cultural and historical heritage values

Potential opportunities already identified that participants supported were:

- Provide new bike paths and walking tracks to improve connections and access for communities
- Embed Indigenous knowledge and values into the project design through engagement with the Wurundjeri
- Identify sustainable design opportunities for community facilities being reinstated
- Work with Water Authorities and Councils to identify opportunities to develop alternative water sources for sports facilities
- Better utilise the project's community hubs for additional community activities
- Underground powerlines and other services to facilitate leafy boulevards to increase walkability

- Implement relevant opportunities in the Bulleen Precinct Plan and/or Yarra Strategic Plan

Additional opportunities and considerations suggested by participants were:

- Contribute to training, mentoring and encouraging local people to get involved and become champions for local environments
- Create spaces for communities to come together for farmers markets and moonlight cinema
- Incorporate sustainability into school programs to encourage ongoing participation in environment projects
- Create community education facilities and or a sustainability education centre for training on revegetation and best practice regeneration techniques
- Create a funding model for the advocacy and participation of community groups in infrastructure projects (in a way that does not compromise independence)
- Build an environmental based playground, like the Eltham North playground,

that attracts families to the community. Include an electric car recharging station

- Encourage residents to plant local indigenous flora and contribute to corridors for wildlife
- Create demonstration gardens that incorporate vegetation for dry climates or food growing
- Address the social and mental health effects on people from displacement from businesses and jobs
- Improve road/public transport interactions including access, timing and parking
- Focus on walking not just cycling
- Consider how commuters on the road could experience connection with the environment (such as through incorporating biophilic design principles)
- Include self-guided interactive learning on the road journey including sculptures and incorporating messages into road furniture and infrastructure
- Consider funding the purchase of cultural water for example, for eels in Bolin Billabong
- Support a cultural indigenous centre near Bolin Bolin Billabong



Theme 4

Economic Opportunity

We asked participants to consider potential opportunities to achieve economic opportunity theme objectives:

- Achieve social value and sustainability outcomes through procurement
- Promote sustainability capabilities within industry

Potential opportunities already identified that participants supported were:

- Partner with innovative companies who are using new technologies
- The Edendale Community Farm (Eltham) has a native plant nursery that can provide plants of local provenance and runs volunteer programs
- Encourage contractors to source food locally, from local community gardens and support local food growing opportunities

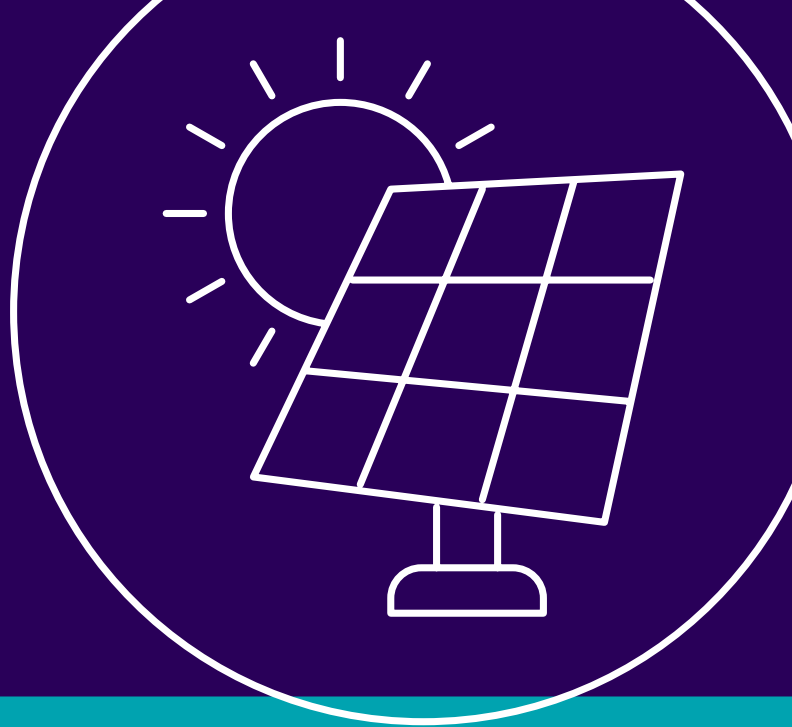
Additional opportunities and considerations suggested by participants were:

- Use locally owned businesses during construction of the project
- Partner with not-for-profit organisations
- Consider new locations for businesses who must relocate



Theme 5

Climate Change



We asked participants to consider potential opportunities to achieve our climate change theme objectives:

- Reduce carbon emissions during construction and operation
- Design to be resilient to a changing climate

Potential opportunities already identified that participants supported were:

- Use LED and/or solar lighting
- Green walls to decrease urban heat island effect
- Carbon neutrality during construction and/or operations

Additional opportunities and considerations suggested by participants were:

- Account for the loss of the carbon sink from trees removed for the project
- Account for the increase in emissions from increased car usage
- Limit the heat island effect by avoiding large masses of concrete facing extended periods of sun and replace or screen hard surfaces
- Consider increasing climate resilience through techniques to hold soil moisture
- Contribute to climate adaptation research that would consider links between revegetation outcomes and climate change
- Research indigenous species which are adaptable to climate change and use these for revegetation. Consider genetic diversity of vegetation to increase resilience to climate change
- Undertake predictive modelling of how climate change will impact on species effected by the project





Next steps

In the coming months we will be:

- Assessing the feasibility of the sustainability opportunities that were suggested
- Providing sustainability opportunities to project bidders so that they can consider how they could incorporate initiatives into their designs
- Having further conversations with stakeholders on sustainability opportunities

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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government,
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne