

Frequently Asked Questions

August 2014

GENERAL

What is the Blackburn Road Level Crossing Removal project?

The Victorian Government has committed to eliminating a number of the busiest level crossings across Melbourne as part of the Metro Level Crossing Blitz, including Blackburn Road in Blackburn.

The State Government announced funding in the 2014-15 budget to remove the level crossing at Blackburn Road by lowering the train tracks below the road, to remove interaction between road and rail traffic. This will greatly improve safety in the vicinity of the crossing and create a more efficient transport network.

What works are part of the Blackburn Level Crossing Removal?

The Blackburn Road Level Crossing Removal will remove the level crossing with a rail under road option. This includes:

- Removing the existing level crossing by lowering the rail line under Blackburn Road.
- Replacing the existing pedestrian crossings at Cottage Street and King Street/Oliver Avenue with new pedestrian overpasses
- Providing a shared use path on the south side which forms part of the Box Hill to Ringwood Shared Use Path Project.
- Retaining, but making improvements to the existing train station entrances at Blackburn. These include improving the pedestrian and cyclist connections around the station entrances and reducing the impact of flooding at the pedestrian underpass.

Due to the geographical layout of the rail corridor the works to lower the rail track will run between Blackburn Station and Moncrief Road, Nunawading.

Why isn't a new station being built for Blackburn? How was the option decided on?

Before funding is given for a large infrastructure project, VicRoads investigates the feasibility and benefits of undertaking the project. After significant planning, investigations and community consultation VicRoads develops a number of recommended options and provides them to the Government in the form of a business case.

The Government evaluates the business case against other projects competing for funding across the state.



VicRoads in consultation with the community and key stakeholders developed two options for the government to consider for the 2014 budget:

- Lower the rail line under Blackburn Road and construct a new station at the lower level.
- Lower the rail line under Blackburn Road and retain the existing station.

Based on the recommendations of VicRoads, the State Government made the decision to lower the rail line under Blackburn Road and retain the existing station.

This option will provide a cost-effective solution to reduce congestion while improving safety for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists in the area.

Additionally, the construction of a new station at Blackburn would have a much larger impact to the area during construction. When comparing the two options, retaining but making improvements to the existing station is expected to deliver the desired safety and congestion reducing benefits in a more cost-effective project.

What improvements are being made to the station?

Improvements will include improvements to the drainage to reduce the impacts of flooding at the station pedestrian underpass and upgrades to the station forecourt on the north and south sides of the station to improve disability access and amenity of the local area.

Why has this site been chosen? What are the safety and traffic impacts? Approximately 15,000 vehicles travel through this part of Blackburn Road per day. Around 240 trains pass through the Blackburn level crossing each weekday on the Belgrave/Lilydale train line (28 services per hour).

The boom gates at the crossing are down for around 45 minutes or 38% on average for a typical 2 hour peak period.

In the five year period between July 2006 and June 2011, there were a total of 9 recorded casualty crashes involving vehicles and/or pedestrians in the vicinity of the rail crossing on Blackburn Road between Railway Road and Central Road.

In the period 2004-2013 four train/pedestrian and train/vehicle near misses were recorded at the level crossing on Blackburn Road.

In addition, two train/pedestrian 'near misses' were recorded at the Oliver Ave/ King Street pedestrian crossing (east of the Blackburn road level crossing).



What is the timeline for project?

2011 – Funding provided to start planning and investigation activities
2012 – Community consultation on options and further planning activities
2013 – On-site investigations and surveys
2014 – Business case submitted and full project funding provided
2015 – Contract award and some preparatory early works
2016 – Main construction to remove the level crossing starts
2017 – Main construction to remove the level crossing finishes

What about the surrounding road network? Will Surrey Road be extended?

During planning and investigation in 2012, VicRoads explored a number of options including the extension of Surrey Road across Maroondah Highway.

With the boom gates down approximately 38% of the time during peak period, the level crossing on Blackburn Road is the major contributor to congestion and traffic analysis suggests that removing the level crossing will provide the greatest benefit to the area.

Traffic modelling undertaken suggests that extending Surrey Road across Maroondah Highway would require significant investment for very marginal benefit in traffic flow along the north-south route. In addition, there would be negative impacts on the east-west route along Maroondah Highway. As a high capacity main road, priority is given to Maroondah Highway.

Will there be any works at the Blackburn Road roundabout?

With the boom gates down approximately 38% of the time during peak period, the level crossing on Blackburn Road is the major contributor to congestion and traffic analysis suggests that removing the level crossing will provide the greatest benefit to the area. As such, the focus of the project is removing the level crossing.

Why isn't main construction starting until 2016?

In the 2014 Victorian Budget the State Government announced the removal of level crossings at four sites under the Metro Level Crossing Blitz Program. The four projects are:

- Main Road, St Albans – Construction starts 2015
- Burke Road, Glen Iris – Construction starts 2015
- Blackburn Road, Blackburn – Construction starts 2016
- North Road, Ormond – Construction starts 2016

The projects will be delivered as two contracts over two years to reduce the impact on the train and road network and manage the industry resources available.

When the contracts are awarded in early 2015, work will start on Main Road, St Albans in 2015 and finish in 2016. Once complete, work will begin on Blackburn

Road in Blackburn in 2016 and finish in 2017. This was prioritised on which project would deliver maximum outcome.



Will car parking change as a result of the project?

There are currently 112 car parking spaces at Blackburn Station. Detailed plans for car parking will be finalised when a contractor has been selected. It is expected that there will be no net loss of parking at/near the station.

During construction there may be disruptions to car parking around Blackburn Road and South Parade to enable machinery to move around the site and material storage. VicRoads will communicate this well in advance and work closely with the traders in the area.

What are the next steps?

The next step is to start the tendering process for the contract for construction. Expressions of interest were advertised in August 2014. The contract is expected to be awarded in early 2015.

DURING CONSTRUCTION

What is the impact to local businesses during construction?

There will be some impact to local businesses during construction to allow for a greater flow of traffic and increased accessibility to existing businesses.

Typical activities that could impact businesses include:

- Trucks using local streets and roads to make deliveries to and from the project
- Noise, dust and vibration from construction activities
- Temporary car park closures, footpath detours and closures, relocation of bus stops away from construction zones and traffic disruptions such as reduced speed limits, lane closures and road closures.

Procedures and processes will be in place to minimise the impact on the local community.

Will train and bus services be affected during construction?

Significant planning will be undertaken to minimise the impacts to train services as much as possible when the project moves into construction.

Throughout construction, there may be delays and lane closures at the level crossing. At times, some short term closures at the level crossing may be necessary.

It is estimated that Blackburn Station and the Blackburn Road level crossing will be closed for approximately four weeks over late December 2016/early January 2017 while major construction takes place.

During this time a bus service will replace trains between Ringwood and Box Hill. All closures will be communicated well in advance via advertising in local newspapers, the VicRoads website and letterbox drops where appropriate.

How will the project manage noise during construction?

There will be some unavoidable noise associated with the works. The project team makes every effort to minimise noise levels out of day light hours.

Some night works will be necessary throughout the project. The project team will notify local residents of any planned night works well in advance.



The project will be subject to the laws and policies set by the Environment Protection Agency. Further information on the noise guidelines during construction is available on the VicRoads website at:

<http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/Home/Moreinfoandservices/Environment/Noise>

Will residents be offered to the option to relocate during major construction?

During major construction, the project team may offer temporary alternative accommodation in circumstances where there are extended out-of-hours works. However, more detail on relocation conditions and arrangements will be determined when the contract is awarded in 2015.

The community will be notified in advance of any upcoming significant construction that may impact residents over an extended period.

How will the project deal with vibration caused by excavation and heavy machinery?

Before major construction begins, residents and businesses that reside near the site will be offered a inspection of their property. The contractor will engage an independent third-party to undertake the inspection who will provide a report of the condition of the property including any existing damage. Both the resident and the alliance will receive a copy of the report.

It is highly recommended for residents and businesses that reside near the site to proceed with inspection. The report will serve as a record that can be referred to in the unlikely event of property damage due to construction works. If a property owner suspects damage due to construction but has not had a property condition report undertaken it will be very difficult to prove the damage is a result of the works.

How will the project manage dust on site?

Dust is closely managed on site, particularly during the hotter, drier months when the project site can be more prone to dusty conditions. An environmental officer closely monitors weather conditions, and when needed, employs suppression measures such as water trucks to spray the site to reduce dust.

VicRoads and the contractor are subject to legislative requirements and guidelines to ensure all air pollution, including dust from construction sites, meets an acceptable standard in residential areas. These standards are set by the Environmental Protection Agency.



COMMUNITY

What community consultation has been undertaken?

A series of planning, investigation and community consultation activities were undertaken in 2012.

Feedback generally supported a grade separation at Blackburn Road and findings from the community consultation concluded that:

- The current operation of Blackburn Road is unsafe for pedestrians, motorists and cyclists
- Local residents often avoid the level crossing and surrounding area due to the congestion and safety issues
- Requests for additional parking as part of the station/precinct design
- Requests for improved access to public transport and amenities in the area
- A key interest in the future operation of the nearby roundabout
- Requests for the station to retain its 'village' feel

The survey results reflect the community's feedback and concerns and these were included in the business case submitted to the Government.

How are VicRoads keeping the community informed?

The community are advised of the progress of the project via the VicRoads website, local media, mail drops, advertisements, onsite information boards, community information displays and face-to-face meetings.

Changes to traffic movements will be communicated to motorists in advance via on-road signs, radio, website and social media, newsletters and advertising in local and metropolitan newspapers.

Proposed traffic changes will be communicated via on-road signs, radio, website, social media, newsletters and advertising in local and metropolitan newspapers.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

Email VicRoads: railprojects@roads.vic.gov.au

Call: (03) 9915 4798 Mon – Fri business hours

Website: vicroads.vic.gov.au