

# **SOUTHBANK BOULEVARD LINEAR PARK COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SUMMARY**

## **Introduction**

In Council's *City Plan 2010* document it advocates for 'Developing Southbank Boulevard Parkway' as the area has a shortage of public open space.

In response, a concept design was prepared and presented to the former Planning and Environment Committee in July 2005, together with a report recommending the project be put out for community consultation. The Committee endorsed that recommendation and community consultation was undertaken.

## **Consultation Process**

Four methods were used to inform stakeholders of the project and invite their responses including a public meeting, a web page, a display board and a series of one-on-one meetings.

The proposal was presented to the community at a public meeting on 27 October 2005, attended by 21 members of the local community. Stakeholders were notified of the meeting through newspaper advertisements, a mail-out to around 800 addresses, a listing on the Southbank Residents Association website, and at a preceding community meeting. Verbal and written responses were received.

From late October to early December 2005, drawings, text and a response form were posted on the City of Melbourne website. A link to Council's website was also provided from the Southbank Residents' Association website [www.southbankinfo.com.au](http://www.southbankinfo.com.au). Drawings and text were displayed near the Town Hall reception desk from 9 November to 9 December 2005, together with copies of the response form.

Individual meetings were held with 13 key stakeholders – transport organisations as well as local businesses and institutions.

A total of 29 completed response forms were received, together with seven other written submissions. To the extent that interviewees addressed the questions on the response form, their verbal responses have been included in the statistics collated.

The two main issues addressed were:

- the degree to which people would appreciate the provision of increased and enhanced open space; and
- the acceptability of reduced road space - particularly the loss of on-street parking at peak hours on week days. Views were also invited on the naming of the linear park.

## **Results from Questionnaire**

The following responses were recorded from questions asked on the response form forwarded to residents, ratepayers and stakeholders.

- **The Value of the proposed Open Space Improvements:**
  - 64 per cent of respondents agreed a new linear park would be a useful place for recreation;
  - 51.5 per cent agreed they would walk to the park from their home. This lesser figure may be attributable to some of the respondents not living in Southbank. Employees from one of the largest employers Fosters Pty Ltd suggested their staff would not use

the park due to their offices overlooking the area, whereas ABC staff believe they would be likely to use it; and

- 62 per cent of respondents believe the proposal would improve the experience of travelling by foot, bicycle or car along Southbank Boulevard. This positive response relates mostly to pedestrians and cyclists.
- **The Impact of Reduced Roadway on Motorists:**
  - 64 per cent of respondents consider reducing parking at peak times acceptable;
  - 68 per cent of respondents said they would value the increase in on-street parking at other times;
  - Comments on the effects of the proposal on transport and/or movement through the precinct – traffic, parking, public transport, cycling and walking varied from strongly negative to strongly positive;
  - Several respondents expressed concern at increased congestion at peak times, although the initial traffic analysis shows the proposal to be quite acceptable. This highlights the need for further work to be underpinned by sound traffic analysis (additional to the SIDRA analysis already undertaken), and for this information to be clearly communicated to stakeholders. Several people noted the worst congestion currently occurs west-bound between Sturt and Kavanagh Streets during the pm peak;
  - The ABC and Fosters both expressed concern at the loss of on-street parking and drop-off space, particularly close to their entries, which are both at the Sturt St corners. The ABC currently has no on-site parking;
  - While the proposed Kavanagh Street parking would be close enough for most ABC visitors, it is considered important for dignitaries in particular to be able to be dropped off close to the entry during the pm peak. Fosters' onsite parking is taken up by their executives, and they would not like to lose on-street parking at either the am or pm peak; and
  - Both acknowledged they are somewhat privileged to have the on-street parking currently available to them, but equally see its retention as very important. Each of these organisations has frontage to two side streets. Parking in Sturt Street could provide an acceptable alternative for the ABC, but Fosters representatives did not see scope for Sturt or Kavanagh Streets to compensate for lost parking in Southbank Boulevard.
- **Impacts on Sustainable Transport:**
  - Melbourne Bus Link (MBL) operates three routes along Southbank Boulevard, and is concerned to ensure that buses are not delayed. Ideally, they would like dedicated bus lanes. During clearway times, they are concerned that no-parking compliance may be difficult to enforce;

The peak periods for buses are 6.30 - 9.30am and 3 - 6.30pm, longer than the overall peaks identified in the traffic report. At non-clearway times, MBL is concerned that an accident or breakdown would significantly disrupt services, noting that any re-routing of buses would involve a significant detour;

- MBL also suggested the reduction in turn lanes could result in vehicles backing up and thus delaying buses, eg at Kavanagh and Moore Streets. These concerns suggest that further traffic analysis is warranted. If bus services are found to be compromised, both design changes and technological solutions should be investigated. Options include

lengthening clearway periods, transponders triggering traffic signals, and bus clearways in Queen St;

- Two local stakeholders also expressed an expectation that bus services would be adversely affected by congestion. Neither MBL, nor the Department of Infrastructure's Public Transport Division expressed any views regarding the desirability of a reduced speed limit or improvements to bus stops;
  - The Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC) supported the provision of a platform tram stop, but Yarra Trams noted this would only be useful if low-floor trams were introduced on this route which is not proposed in the near future;
  - A majority of respondents consider the effect on cycling to be positive. Vic Roads and RACV noted the value of bicycle lanes, given that Southbank Boulevard is on the Principal Bicycle Network;
  - A majority of respondents consider the effect on walking to be positive. Several people noted that the current waiting time for pedestrians at traffic lights is excessive; and
  - One noted the disruptive effect of slip lanes currently on the walk from Queensbridge Square to the Domain, and the hostile effect of having to negotiate several traffic lanes to cross Southbank Boulevard.
- **Other Traffic Issues:**
- Vic Roads advised that Southbank Boulevard is a 'local road' and their interests are therefore limited to impact on main roads such as City Road and Citylink, public transport, cycle routes and emergency access. They requested a full traffic impact assessment in due course in line with Vic Roads TEM Vol 1 – Road Closures;
  - RACV requested assurance the removal of slip lanes would not compromise the operation of intersections and warned of possible increased traffic in Power Street exacerbating safety problems in that street. Some respondents suggested that future traffic analysis should factor in the additional demand being generated by Freshwater Place and Eureka, and should ensure that peak demand for the Arts Centre car park is addressed;
  - Several respondents were happy to leave traffic decisions to the Council, while a few were distrustful of traffic engineers' reports;
  - Respondents and interviewees were generally supportive of a reduced speed limit along Southbank Boulevard. This included Vic Roads, who noted that reduced speed would enable lane widths to be narrower;
  - There was also broad support including from Vic Roads, for reprogramming traffic signals to reduce wait times for pedestrians; and
  - With the mounted police based in Dodds Street there will be occasions when traffic is slowed by mounted police travelling to events in the CBD.
- **Naming the Park:**
- 50 per cent of respondents said they supported the park being named after Alfred Felton, with two of the more popular names being *Alfred Felton Park* and *Felton Reserve*;
  - The National Gallery of Victoria indicated they would defer to the Felton Bequest trustees on this matter, but that only a park of high quality should be named after Felton.

If the naming does proceed, the park could provide a suitable location for a statue of Felton which is currently being commissioned; and

- Two alternative names were suggested; John Landy Park or an Aboriginal name.

- **Suggested Design Changes:**

Some respondents made suggestions which would involve significant change to the design. These suggestions include:

- Grade-separated bicycle lanes; this would support mode shift, encouraging people to take up cycling. Together with the proposed shared path along Linlithgow Avenue, it would offer a real alternative to the congested Southbank Promenade. More space would be required, particularly at bus stops, and this would tend to result in reduced width for the park;
- Significant works between Sturt Street and St Kilda Road should be undertaken that could possibly include tram track realignment; consider relocating tram stop north to Dodds Street, with an associated pedestrian crossing; delete one of the west-bound turn right lanes at Sturt Street accessing the Arts Centre car park; and provide for crowds of pedestrians associated with the proposed MTC and Recital Centre;
- Extend bicycle lanes all the way from Southbank Promenade to the Capital City Trail at the east end of Linlithgow Avenue. This together with improved signage, is important if the current pedestrian/cyclist conflict on Southbank Promenade is to be alleviated;
- Extend the widened median to City Road;
- Relocating the park to the south (sunny) side of the road reserve, so that it would only have a traffic interface on one side; and
- Upgrading the median without widening it.

- **Suggestions for Design Development - Park Design:**

- Conceive Southbank Boulevard as part of a journey or loop, punctuated with public art, places of shelter and amenities such as drinking fountains;
- Broad support for public art. Both the National Gallery of Victoria and Victorian College of the Arts offered to contribute to the process of selecting art;
- An historical boardwalk, redressing Southbank's lack of character and history;
- Run path centrally rather than on both sides of the park;
- Provide sanctuary from traffic;
- Provide breaks in hedges so as not to unduly limit pedestrians' options for crossing the road. (Others saw the hedges as crucial to achieving safety and a sense of shelter in the park.) RACV suggested that any children's play area should be protected from vehicles with fencing;
- Provide good pedestrian lighting and ensure the space feels safe at night, provide shelter and toilets, all-weather seating, and native plants;
- Elements acknowledging the indigenous community – eg a bora ring; and

- Ensure the park is well maintained.
- **Suggestions for Design Development - Road works:**
  - Reduce the extent of parking in Kavanagh Street, as necessitated by proximity to street corner and Fosters loading bay;
  - Add a second right hand turn lane for outbound Southbank Boulevard traffic into City Road;
  - Clearway bicycle lanes should be consistent with Vic Roads Cycle Notes No 4, while parking should be consistent with AS23890.5-1993 Part 5;
  - The interface with the MTC and Recital Centre will need to be resolved in collaboration with Major Projects Victoria; and
  - Address the issue of drop-off for disabled people – eg at MTC.
- **Suggestions for Traffic Management:**
  - Traffic metering to prevent queuing cars backing up across tram tracks;
  - Street signs encouraging noise to be minimised. This may best be achieved by reducing the speed limit; and
  - Ban peak hour turns into Kavanagh Street west.
- **Other Suggestions for Design Development:**
  - Apply water sensitive urban design principles;
  - Extend the bluestone palette of the National Gallery of Victoria; and
  - Contribute to the cohesiveness of the arts precinct.

▪ **Conclusions**

With a majority of respondents being supportive of the proposal, it's recommended the project proceed to design development. The design should be developed in response to the feedback received.

The suggested design changes outlined above should be tested and further traffic analysis should be undertaken to ensure that stakeholder concerns are adequately addressed.

The developed design should also take into account the concerns expressed by Fosters and the ABC regarding on-street parking. As the draft Southbank Plan and Study (previously referred to as the Southbank Structure Plan) and the Open Space Strategy evolve, these strategies could influence the development of the design.

The community should be informed of the outcomes of the consultation process, and should be kept informed as the project develops.