



Infrastructure Australia
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Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission in response to the National Land Freight Strategy Discussion Paper

The following submission is made on behalf of the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG).

MTAG was formed in late 2005 out of concern about the negative effects of the growing number of trucks using residential streets in the inner west Melbourne municipality of Maribyrnong, which includes the suburbs of Footscray and Yarraville.

MTAG is not politically aligned; its members represent a spectrum of political views but share a conviction that it is time something is done to address excessive levels truck traffic and to get it off our streets. Since its formation, MTAG has had a significant impact on raising the profile of the issue of excessive truck traffic and the threat it poses to the health and safety of residents of inner West.

While trucks may comprise a relatively minor part of aggregate traffic flows in urban areas, there are some routes where freight is concentrated (e.g. port-related roads). A number of these routes are found in Maribyrnong. We already have thousands of trucks per day cutting through our suburbs heading to the Westgate Freeway and the Port of Melbourne.

Our aim is to pressure Government at all levels to put some real solutions on the table.

With this in mind, we support the concept of a national land freight network strategy and plan if it helps minimise 'externalities' from freight on communities; including congestion, global greenhouse gases, local amenity issues and accidents.

We note that the Productivity Commission has argued that there is a need for further research into transport externalities. Ten years ago, in June and July 2001, the Environment Protection Authority tested diesel pollution levels in Francis Street, Yarraville. They found that the pollution regularly exceeded the levels where their regulations say they should intervene. Since then, the EPA has been silent on the alarming results recorded, and MTAG has witnessed a decade of failure by government, EPA and VicRoads to act to protect the health and amenity of the citizens of Melbourne's inner West.

We are concerned that a national land freight network strategy and plan will not adequately address 'last mile' issues associated with truck access the Port of Melbourne, and are worried that it could result in even more trucks using residential streets in Maribyrnong.

We note that the indicative program list includes major intermodal terminal/freight cluster sites at Donnybrook and the Melbourne Western Interstate Freight terminal. We also note the proposed goal to introduce dedicated road freight infrastructure between ports and intermodal freight hubs.

The MTAG plan for getting trucks off residential streets in Maribyrnong calls for the Victorian Government to establish intermodal hubs where freight is taken by rail and then distributed by trucks to local destinations. More freight on rail means less trucks on our roads. Rail is more efficient, less polluting and improves our neighbourhood amenity. The Victorian Government must commit to 40% of port freight onto rail.

We agree that public transport is an important part of the truck/freight solution. Improved and more frequent public transport frees up space on our existing roads for freight by getting people out of cars. Urban congestion could be reduced by greater public transport connectivity, speed and reliability. The Victorian Government must set targets to get 60% of peak hour, inner city commuter traffic onto public transport by 2020.

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We would also like to see greater integration of land use and transport planning. Integration of land use and transport planning is important for productivity and amenity. In Yarraville, a recent planning decision will result in a new community of up to 1,000 houses being built on Francis Street, which carries thousands of trucks every day. In Footscray, multiple new high-rise developments are being built where people will need to cross Moore Street and Hopkins Street, which both carry a large number of trucks, if they want to access the Footscray activity centre, Footscray market or train station. We believe that houses and trucks do not mix, and this type of urban encroachment can become a substantial constraint to freight.

We note that one proposed goal is the completion of several urban motorway networks to freight specifications/priority, including Westlink and the Outer Melbourne Ring Road-E6.

We strongly believe that a network of designated truck routes will help get trucks off residential streets in Maribyrnong, but do not agree that the construction of Westlink is the best solution.

Westlink, as proposed by the Victorian Government, is a six-lane tunnel and freeway costing over \$5billion, to be used for freight and for personal transport. We believe there are more effective and affordable options to improve freight movements. We also recognise that freight can be affected by congestion caused by personal transport. We are concerned that if Westlink is built, traffic will follow, and there has been little thought into how to 'lock in' the benefits for freight.

Instead of Westlink, MTAG believes that the 'last mile' issues affecting Maribyrnong could be addressed in part by other, less costly, road infrastructure. We strongly support building new ramps to connect the Westgate Freeway with Whitehall Street and the Port of Melbourne. We have also identified a possible Sunshine Road-Westgate Freeway Link, achieved by constructing a new truck route from Sunshine Road to the Westgate Freeway through the industrial areas of Tottenham and Brooklyn. This would get the trucks off Buckley and Moore Streets in Footscray and Dempster Street and Sredna Streets in West Footscray. The ramps, the Westgate Freeway, Western Ring Road, a new Sunshine Road - Westgate Freeway Link would form a network of designated truck routes.

We agree that the identification of specific opportunities to develop and embed interoperable smart technology in infrastructure and operations, will enable maximum use of existing and new infrastructure. It could also serve to address the 'externalities' associated with freight. For example, GPS technology could be used to enforce truck bans and curfews on residential streets (without penalising local trucks). In Maribyrnong, existing truck bans and curfews need to be extended and enforced (for example, on Francis Street and Somerville Road); and curfews need to be introduced on Buckley and Moore Street, and Dempster and Sredna Street.

We agree that the freight industry has to get more efficient. Trucks must not be allowed to operate empty or with half a load. Full trucks mean fewer trucks on our roads. Trucks should be made to use roads at night when there is less commuter traffic and more capacity. A smarter industry will use fewer trucks to move more freight.

MTAG wants cleaner air and safer roads. Trucks belong on Freeways, not residential streets. If a national land freight network strategy and plan achieves this, we are 100% behind it.

For more information about MTAG, please visit www.mtag.org.au

Regards,



Lisel Thomas
MTAG member