

The logo for Western DISTRIBUTOR features the word "Western" in a serif font and "DISTRIBUTOR" in a bold, sans-serif font. A thin, curved line arches over the text.

Western DISTRIBUTOR



Western Distributor

Environment Effects Statement Communications and Engagement Strategy

June 2016

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1. Purpose of this document

This is the overarching Communications and Engagement Strategy for the Western Distributor planning and approvals phase.

The strategy is designed to support the Environment Effects Statement (EES) process in line with the objectives defined in the Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (Ministerial Guidelines).

NOTE: *Activities to inform and assist tenderers in developing a bid to build the project will be occurring at the same time as the EES development. This consultation program includes activities which feed into this process.*

Western Distributor description

The Western Distributor is being developed through a partnership between the Victorian Government and Transurban. It is a \$5.5 billion project which includes the Monash Freeway Upgrade and access improvements for Webb Dock.

The Western Distributor addresses some of Melbourne's biggest growth, transport and liveability challenges. The project will create 5,600 new jobs, provide a much-needed alternative to the West Gate Bridge, remove thousands of trucks from local streets, and deliver an \$11 billion boost to Victoria's economy.

The EES will be assessing:

- Widening from 8 to 12 lanes and other improvements along the West Gate Freeway
- A new road and tunnel under Yarraville connecting the West Gate Freeway with the Port of Melbourne, CityLink and the CBD
- A bridge over the Maribyrnong River joining an elevated road along Footscray Road
- A direct connection to the port from Hyde Street for trucks carrying hazardous goods
- Improved access to the Port of Melbourne
- An eastern interchange connecting to CityLink, inner northern suburbs and the city
- Smart technology adding to the M1 managed motorway
- Improvements to traffic management on connecting roads
- Major new cycling and walking paths.

NOTE: *The Western Distributor is part of the wider Western Distributor Project which has three elements:*

- *Western Distributor*
- *Monash Freeway Upgrade*
- *Webb Dock Access improvements.*

*The EES scope **does not** include Monash Freeway Upgrade and Webb Dock Access improvements. They have separate communications and engagement strategies that are not covered in this document.*

Western Distributor overview map



Project benefits

The Western Distributor supports the Government's strategic transport plan. It will:

- Provide an alternative to the West Gate Bridge
- Improve travel time reliability
- Save 20 minutes in peak travel times from the west
- Reduce truck numbers on the West Gate Bridge
- Reduce the costs of traffic congestion
- Better connect Melbourne's road network
- Serve the travel demands of our growing population
- Greatly improve the way we move freight, especially through the inner west
- Reduce trucks on local streets in the inner west.

2. Key messages

Key messages assist in providing information in a consistent way that allows the community to provide meaningful input. The messages will be updated as the project develops. Some messages will be relevant throughout, while other messages specific to a particular phase of the project will be developed as required.

Key messages for the Western Distributor are as follows:

- The project will keep peak hour traffic flowing and provide a vital alternative to the West Gate Bridge for people, goods, emergency services and businesses to move between east and west
- The Western Distributor will deliver immediate travel time savings of up to 20 minutes a day for anyone making a return trip along the length of the project
- The project will make it safer for people and more efficient for freight to move around the west by reducing congestion and putting an end to trucks rat-running through the inner west.
- The \$5.5 billion project will boost the economy by \$11 billion, create up to 5,600 new jobs and is vital to the future of Melbourne's west, as hundreds of thousands of people move into the area and the amount of freight on road and rail doubles within decades
- We want to work with the community to develop a solution which responds to local concerns, and supports the need for people and goods to move efficiently and safely around Melbourne
- The final design of the project, including the length and location of the tunnel entrances, will be guided by the EES and input from the community, local government and industry.
- The EES process will enable community members to have their say and be involved every step of the way.
- The new Western Distributor will be tolled, but there will be no toll on existing infrastructure for cars. Cars, motorcycles and light commercial vehicles won't pay a toll on the upgraded West Gate Freeway – only if using the Western Distributor tunnel or Hyde Street ramp. The West Gate Freeway between Grieve Parade and Williamstown Road will include a new toll for trucks
- The project will be funded by a \$1.46 billion contribution from the Victorian Government and a mix of tolls on the Western Distributor and an extension to CityLink's tolling concession.

3. Community and stakeholder engagement

Strategic guidance for public participation

Public participation in the planning and delivery of projects is essential for achieving positive outcomes.

There are many aspects that need to be considered in designing a major road infrastructure project including technical considerations and constraints. Those elements which can be influenced by community and stakeholder input will be clearly identified and input will be encouraged. For example, the project's alignment is largely set but key connections are not clearly defined and will be further developed with community and stakeholder input.

During consultation the aim will be to provide information that assists the community to understand technical constraints; and present ideas and options in a way that provides opportunities for people to express their values and preferences.

Wherever it is not possible to incorporate community or stakeholder preferences, the underlying reasons will be clearly explained. This will demonstrate how and why decisions were made and build confidence in the engagement process.

Government legislation and policies provide guidance around the need for community engagement, including:

- **Transport Integration Act 2010:** most notably includes the principles of stakeholder engagement and community participation in decision-making
- **Planning legislation:** provides for formal opportunities for public engagement and the proponent's proposed plan for informal consultation, which needs to be endorsed by Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- **Victorian Government Accessible Communications Guidelines:** ensures communications materials are presented in ways that allows the information to reach all Victorians
- **Victorian Government Communications Guidelines:** frameworks to ensure communications activities by Victorian Government entities are effective, well managed and responsive to the diverse needs of the Victorian community
- **Victorian Auditor-General's Office Public Participation in Government decision-making:** provides a high level framework for the public sector to use when deciding how best to involve the public in government decision-making and implementation.

This strategy is guided by the engagement principles set out in the Victorian Auditor-General's Office Public Participation Guide.

Public participation principles ¹	WD Project engagement approach
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being open and honest with communities to allay concerns and support constructive discussions.
Transparency and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing accessible information about the project and its potential environmental and social effects.
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving people time to digest information, understand the project and make informed decisions.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving stakeholders and the community so they have the opportunity to play a part in decisions that affect them.
Inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising benefits and minimising adverse effects by listening to the community and incorporating their needs where possible into project planning.
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities for ongoing two-way dialogue that allows for detailed timely discussions and provides a continuous feedback loop.

Approach

The Western Distributor provides major benefits for Melbourne, but it involves some complex decisions. The engagement process aims to:

- Build trust so stakeholders and the community can be confident they are receiving accurate and timely information
- Gather information about stakeholders and the local community to inform the project design
- Encourage public participation in the project's development.

This will help achieve the best possible outcomes for locals and the broader Victorian community.

Integration with social and business impact assessments

The social and business impact assessments prepared for the EES will establish a baseline of existing conditions so potential impacts can be assessed and mitigation measures developed. Part of this involves meetings and group discussions with local residents and community groups. Having the social and business specialists involved in the overall community engagement program will build an understanding of community and business issues, preferences and priorities which can then inform impact assessment reports.

Objectives

Through a structured communications and engagement program, we aim to:

- Achieve a level of awareness and understanding of the need for the project, its broad scope and benefits, its potential effects and proposed mitigation measures and opportunities for people to have input
- Actively involve community and stakeholders in the project design and planning to improve project outcomes
- Gather community and stakeholder feedback at appropriate times for them to meaningfully influence project development.

¹ Victorian Auditor-General's Office, *Better Practice Guide - Public Participation in Government Decision-Making*, p5

How feedback will be used

Community feedback will inform various stages of project development.

Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform options assessment and further develop project design.• Provide input to an urban design framework.
Planning and approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be considered in preparing the EES, including impact assessments.• Help inform measures to avoid, mitigate and manage impacts and inform performance requirements.
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform construction methodology including avoidance, management and mitigation measures and community accessibility requirements.• Provide input to developing the performance requirements for the contractor/s who will build the project.

4. Stakeholder analysis

The Western Distributor will attract interest from a broad cross-section of the Victorian community, particularly people who live, work, own land and travel through the project corridor. Stakeholders with an interest in transport and freight movement, as well as those who play an advocacy role for the development of Melbourne will also have an interest. Stakeholder analysis has been informed by community engagement conducted in 2015 (see Section 7).

Overview of stakeholders and their interests

Note: The collection and use of stakeholder information by the project team meets the applicable privacy legislation.



5. Communications and engagement methods and tools

To provide the best opportunity for stakeholders and community to be involved, a wide range of activities and tools will be used. This section provides an overview of the communications, stakeholder relations and community engagement methods which may be used.

Digital and print communications

Interactive website and social media:

- Interactive map with capacity for public comments
- Discussion questions
- Twitter
- Facebook.

Print and online material:

- Q&As
- Fact sheets
- Community update newsletters
- Maps
- Reports.

Media:

- Advertising
- Editorial contributions
- Interviews and responses.

Community engagement

- Information sessions and discussion forums
- Face to face meetings on request
- Pop-up stands in nearby communities
- Community Liaison Group meetings
- Workshops on special interest topics
- Project presence at community events
- Email and phone contact arrangements
- Letter/ flyer drop for surrounding residents

Freight, transport and logistics industry engagement

- Meetings
- Representation on the Community Liaison Group
- Workshops on special interest topics
- Information sessions, surveys and discussion forums

Government and agency engagement

- Meetings
- Workshops
- Partnership agreements with local government
- SharePoint web based information portal

NOTE: Government agencies and local government are also represented on the Technical Reference Group convened by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communications

- Translations of printed materials
- Use of a language line for interpreters
- Advertising in specific language publications
- Consultation with community group leaders to identify vulnerable and hard to reach communities and to provide culturally sensitive ways to approach and involve different communities
- Collaboration with local government to use known contacts

Vulnerable and hard to reach community members

The project team will work with local government and other relevant agencies to:

- Identify relevant individuals, groups and those who support them
- Determine the best approaches on a case by case basis.

6. Engagement program

Transurban began a comprehensive early engagement program in April 2015 to understand what was important to the local key stakeholders and community. This phase of engagement was completed in late 2015 prior to the Minister for Planning announcing the Western Distributor would be assessed through an EES.

2015 engagement summary

Engagement from April to September 2015 included consulting with local government, communities and industry. Its purpose was to:

- Provide information about the proposed scope and objectives of the Western Distributor
- Gather feedback about what was important to all stakeholders before the project was further developed.

Activity	Statistics	Description
Newsletter	3 newsletters to 30,000+ households	Newsletters updating local communities about the project and consultation activities were distributed to residents across the inner-west on three occasions – in April, July and September 2015.
e-news	8 updates 500+ subscribers	Email updates were sent to subscribers as new information became available – usually at milestones and to inform about opportunities to get involved.
Social media	30+ tweets 5500+ views for 4 YouTube clips	Social media raised awareness of the proposal and encouraged participation in consultation.
Site investigations notifications	Tailored letters to 200+ households	Notifications were provided to residents and businesses in areas surrounding geotechnical investigations. Letters included information about the Western Distributor, explained why investigations are important, and detailed how people could contact the project team for more information.
Pop-up sessions	13 sessions	Pop ups were held across the inner-west at Docklands, Yarraville, Footscray and Spotswood. The project team spoke to hundreds of people about the project and handed out invitations to upcoming information sessions.
Community information sessions	8 sessions with over 500 attendees	Sessions were held in West Melbourne, Yarraville, Footscray, Spotswood and South Kingsville, to explain the proposal and seek community input to inform its development.

Activity	Statistics	Description
Advertising	50 adverts	Advertisements in metro, suburban, languages other than English publications and regional newspapers promoted the different opportunities to have a say on the proposal.
Meetings with key stakeholders	150+ meetings with around 50 stakeholders	Meetings provided project briefings and gathered input from key stakeholders including local government, various government departments and agencies, freight industry representatives, and community groups.
Telephone enquiries (1300 number)	50+ calls received	Public enquiries received on the project community information line.
Email enquiries	190+ emails received	Emails from the public asking questions or providing feedback. All received individual responses from the project team.
Project website	27,400 page views 14,900 downloads	The website was regularly updated with information.
Online enquiries using Q&A tool	135 enquiries received, 120 answered publicly	The online enquiry tool allowed people to ask a question and have an answer published publicly on the project website.
Online discussion forums	45 comments and 170+ votes	Three online discussion forums between April-June 2015 encouraged discussion about the proposal.
Online survey	200 survey responses	An online survey was used to collect initial community feedback about the Western Distributor proposal during May-June 2015.
Online interactive map	2 maps 5500+ views 430+ comments	Interactive maps were used to seek community comment on specific topics or areas to inform the proposal development.
Doorknocks	150 households	Doorknocks were conducted to speak directly with residents who lived close to the updated southern portal location
Feedback forms	177 responses	A hardcopy feedback form was used to collect community feedback about the southern portal in September 2015.

Interests varied greatly by group, but broadly speaking strong interest was identified in:

- Connections to the port and the city
- The location and impacts of tunnel portals and ventilation structures
- Air quality
- How the project will move trucks off local roads, and complementary initiatives to support this objective
- Traffic benefits and expected changes to traffic movements
- Urban design
- Construction impacts
- Value for money
- Importance and best use of public open space
- Traffic noise on the West Gate Freeway and elevated structures
- Overall impacts on land use and transport connectivity
- Moving more trucks away from residential streets
- Improving the operation of the West Gate Freeway
- Providing redundancy for the West Gate Bridge
- Improving cycling and pedestrian connections and safety with infrastructure improvements
- Minimise disruption during construction
- Providing opportunities for amenity improvements for a positive legacy.

Ongoing engagement

The planning and engagement program that will run until late 2017 aligns with decisions about the project's design, delivery and operation. It requires a regular two-way flow of information about the project and the process for its development.

Ongoing engagement will help inform:

- EES investigations and impact assessments
- A reference design – the next level of detail in planning
- Content for the tender documents provided to companies who bid to construct the Western Distributor.

Stakeholder and community feedback will be sought on key elements including:

- Design options, particularly key connections
- Connectivity through traffic and public transport
- Land use and public open space
- Expectations about construction and operation
- Air quality
- Urban design
- Cycling and walking connections.

An overview of engagement phases and indicative dates is shown below. Specific implementation plans will be developed as required to support the delivery of the engagement program.

	Engagement objectives		
Timing	EES	Design & delivery	Activities
Jan – May 2016 Support EES process and development of design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage public input to draft EES scoping requirements • Promote understanding of the EES process • Encourage involvement in the EES process • Support preparation of EES • Provide community access to technical specialists • Gather information to inform EES existing conditions reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin consultation on design elements • Encourage involvement in Community Liaison Group • Gather feedback on specific design elements (eg southern portal, port connection, city access) • Support preparation of tender requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council partnerships • Community Liaison Group • Council technical briefings and workshops • Technical Reference Group (DELWP lead) • Community consultation sessions • Letterbox drops • Community update newsletter • Website • 1300 number • Advertising • Use of community facilities and established community/CALD networks to distribute project information
Mid-late 2016 Reference design and EES impact assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report back on consultation so far • Explain how feedback informed existing conditions studies • Explain how feedback helped in developing the scope of specialist assessments and their evaluation criteria • Continue encouraging involvement in EES process • Gather information to inform impact assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report back on consultation so far • Explain how feedback helps shape design and performance requirements • Gather feedback to inform design refinements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landowner engagement • Online engagement • Council updates • One-on-one meetings with key stakeholder groups • Signage to promote contact details for further information • Workshops on air quality, urban design, active transport

	Engagement objectives		
Timing	EES	Design & delivery	Activities
<p>Late 2016 – late 2017</p> <p>Support formal EES engagement and tender process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote involvement in EES consultation • Support formal exhibition of design and impact assessments as part of EES process • Respond as required to EES submissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on tenderer designs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public information sessions • Briefings to key stakeholder groups • Letterbox drops • Community update newsletter • Website • 1300 number • Advertising • Online engagement
<p>Late 2017</p> <p>EES process complete</p> <p>Final design refinements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report back on EES assessment outcomes and approvals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult on detailed design from successful tenderer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community update newsletter • Website • 1300 number • Advertising • Online engagement

NOTE: Engagement on the project will continue through the construction phase.

7. Reporting, evaluation and continuous improvement

This plan will be continuously monitored and updated to reflect themes emerging from engagement.

Market research and media monitoring will be investigated to better understand project sentiment, highlight areas of importance, test messaging and the effectiveness of the program.

It is proposed that effectiveness of engagement and communication will be monitored and measured in a number of ways:

- Community understanding and level of awareness of the project and planning process
- Participation in engagement process and interaction with project during public engagement activities
- Participation and desire for involvement demonstrated by registrations for email updates, follows on Twitter and visits to project website
- Feedback on the engagement approach as measured by survey
- Reach into CALD communities as measured by survey of peak groups and local government support channels
- Reach to vulnerable groups and individuals as measured by survey of individuals, organisations who support them, and local government channels
- Comments received during public engagement that can be used to support EES and design development.

The effectiveness of the consultation program will be evaluated on an ongoing basis, using a range of mechanisms including:

- Feedback on process surveys
- An independent survey of a representative sample of the community scheduled to occur every 12 months from project inception to completion.