

Proposal for extension of Tram Route 112



Front cover image: Concept sketch of Tram route 112, Edwardes St, Reservoir Village

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Introduction

Extending Tram Route 112 to the Reservoir Activity Centre will reap many benefits, including economic (for the centre), access to health, employment and study for residents, and opportunities for land use development.

The extension of Tram Route 112 has been an issue for the community for many years, and Darebin City Council has advocated on the issue for decades. Advocacy for the extension dates back at least to the 1970s. The extension of Tram Route 112 is identified in the Darebin Transport Strategy in ‘Action 11 – Introduce additional public transport services linking Darebin to surrounding areas.’ All relevant State Government agencies were heavily involved in the development of the Darebin Transport Strategy.

The proposed extension of Tram Route 112 would link the existing route along Gilbert Rd to Reservoir Principle Activity Centre and Reservoir Train Station. In order to understand community attitudes of residents towards the proposed extension, Darebin City Council surveyed residents and businesses within an 800m boundary around the proposed route.

Over 1,884 surveys were returned of the 8200 surveys that were distributed providing a response rate of 23%. Respondents rated in favour of the project an average of 9.1 out of 10, which is an extraordinary high level of support. This high level of support was evident across all demographic groups and ages.

The survey showed that for most respondents, tram is the preferred public transport option and the most disadvantaged members of the community said that the tram extension would in particular provide better access to health services and the local shops in Edwardes St.

Darebin Council is also open to consider enhancing land use along the corridor to improve economic development and housing in Reservoir.

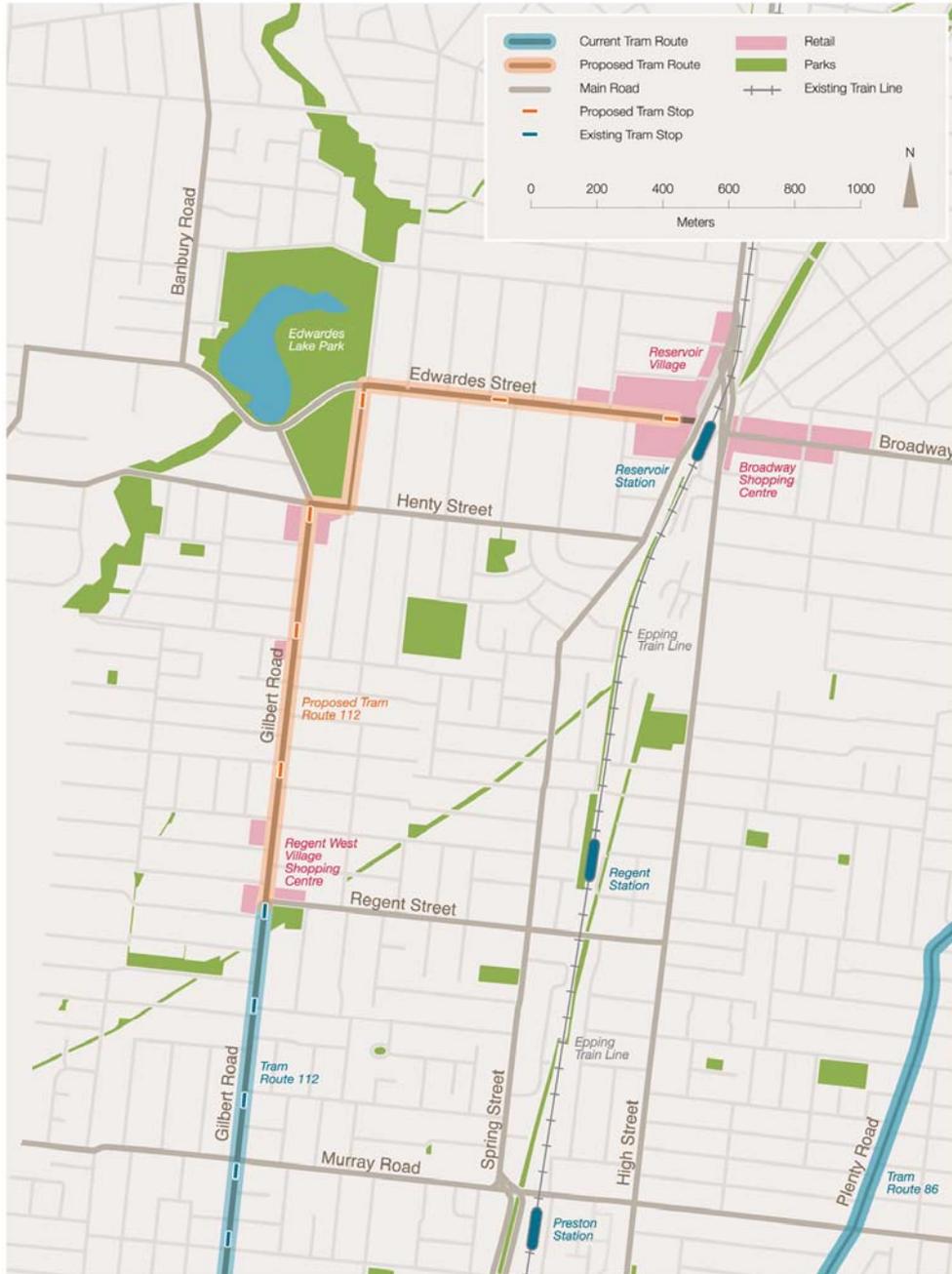


Figure 1 – Map of proposed extension of Tram Route 112 to Reservoir Principle Activity Centre

Issues and discussion

Why extend tram route 112

The extension of the tram route would have considerable advantages. The enhanced transport route would provide an opportunity to further encourage development along the route to meet Darebin's future housing and economic needs. The improved transport corridor and greater land use development will combine to promote mode shift in travel behaviour towards more safe, sustainable modes. The community survey confirmed this, with 69% of those surveyed saying they would use their car less if the tram was extended.

The extension would improve the public transport service to the local community by providing a missing link in the metropolitan transport network. This would also enhance connection and social inclusion of residents in Reservoir to the rest of Darebin and wider Melbourne. This was highlighted in the survey with over 1,300 people saying they would benefit from a more frequent public transport service and closer public transport options. Respondents who reported disadvantage of some kind particularly valued having better access to health services.

The existing bus service 553 has been favourably compared to the tram. The bus 553 service currently provides a link via Henty Road and Newlands Road between Gilbert Road (tram terminus) and the Reservoir train station and activity centre. The travel between the terminus and the railway station takes 15 minutes. Of those responding to the community survey, 72% recorded that they would find an extension of the tram extremely beneficial (5 out of 5) in comparison to the current option of changing to a bus at Regent St. The tram was also the preferred form of public transport of 69% who completed the survey, compared to 5% who preferred the bus.

Furthermore, the recent implementation of the Bus Review has not seen a significant improvement of service levels for residents in this area. This increases the importance of the tram extension.

Council Commitment

Community interest in extending Tram Route 112 was recognised in the development of the Darebin Council's 'Going Places - Integrated Travel Plan (2001 – 2007)', with the creation of Action A19 – "Identify, investigate and promote possible new and extended tram route with the tram company and Department of Infrastructure".

The essence of this action was carried forward into the development of the successive document, 'Going Places – Darebin Transport Strategy (2007 – 2027)'. One of the objectives of this strategy being to 'improve local and metropolitan accessibility', and Action A11 is specifically concerned with 'advocating for additional public transport services linking Darebin with surrounding areas' which includes Tram Route 112 extension and bus coverage.

Context

Over the past ten years, there has been a steady increase in the Government's concern about public transport provision and development for metropolitan Melbourne.

A feasibility study into the extension of Route 112 would provide better definition of the community, environmental and financial implications. In addition, it would identify the benefits of a review of land use planning along the proposed corridor, including reconsidering development height limits. A study could also look at short- and long-term options for servicing Reservoir with public transport, including improved bus services in the short term.

This route provides a range of environmental, social and economic benefits through a better transport network and the opportunity to increase development along the proposed route.

The extension of Tram Route 112 would benefit:

- the large and growing aging population in the north-west area of Darebin
- people without a car or who experience transport access issues

The residents of West Reservoir exhibit a relatively low SEIFA index (Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage) – improved transport is a crucial need of these residents'. The below map shows the SEIFA index for Darebin.

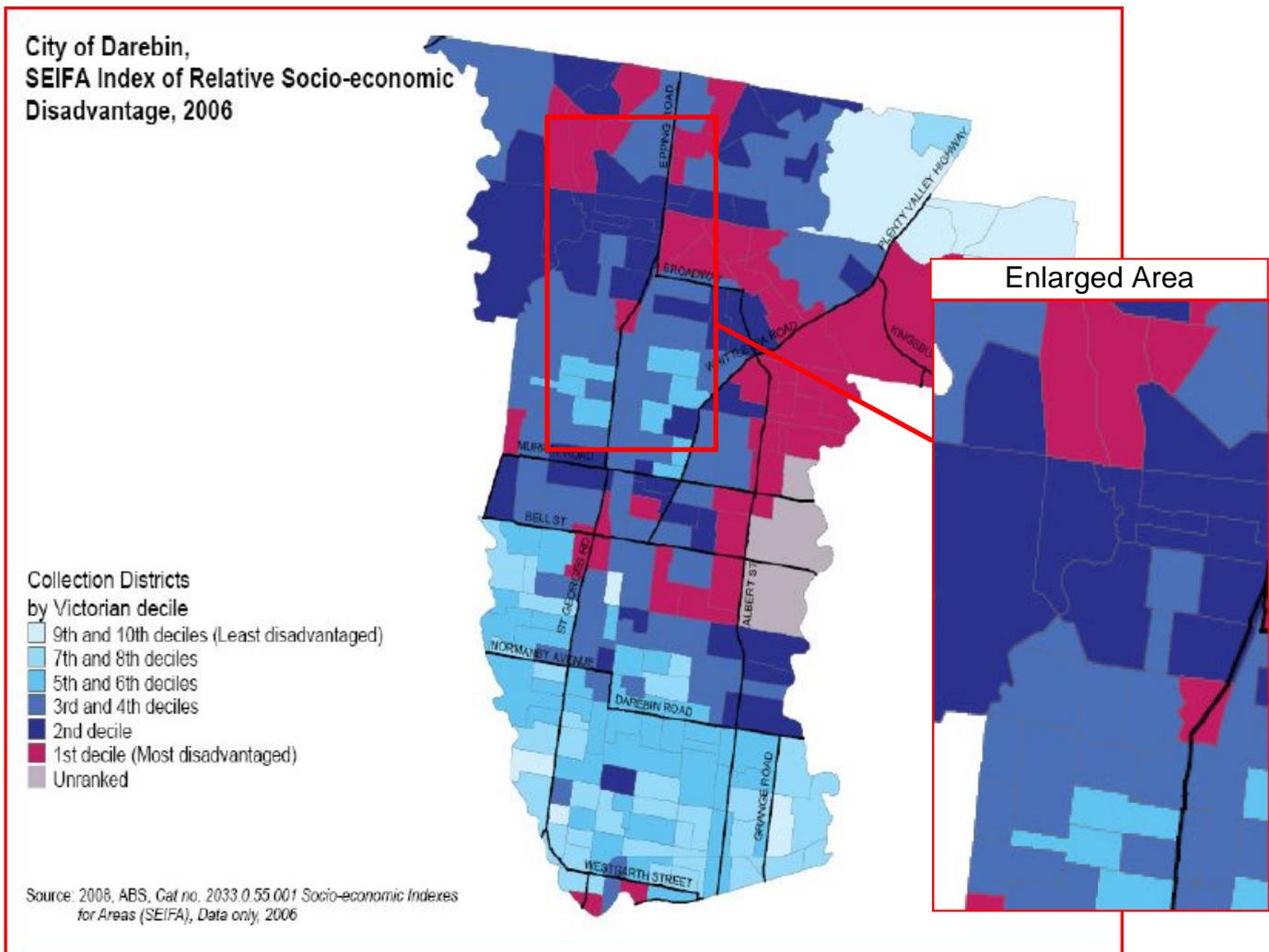


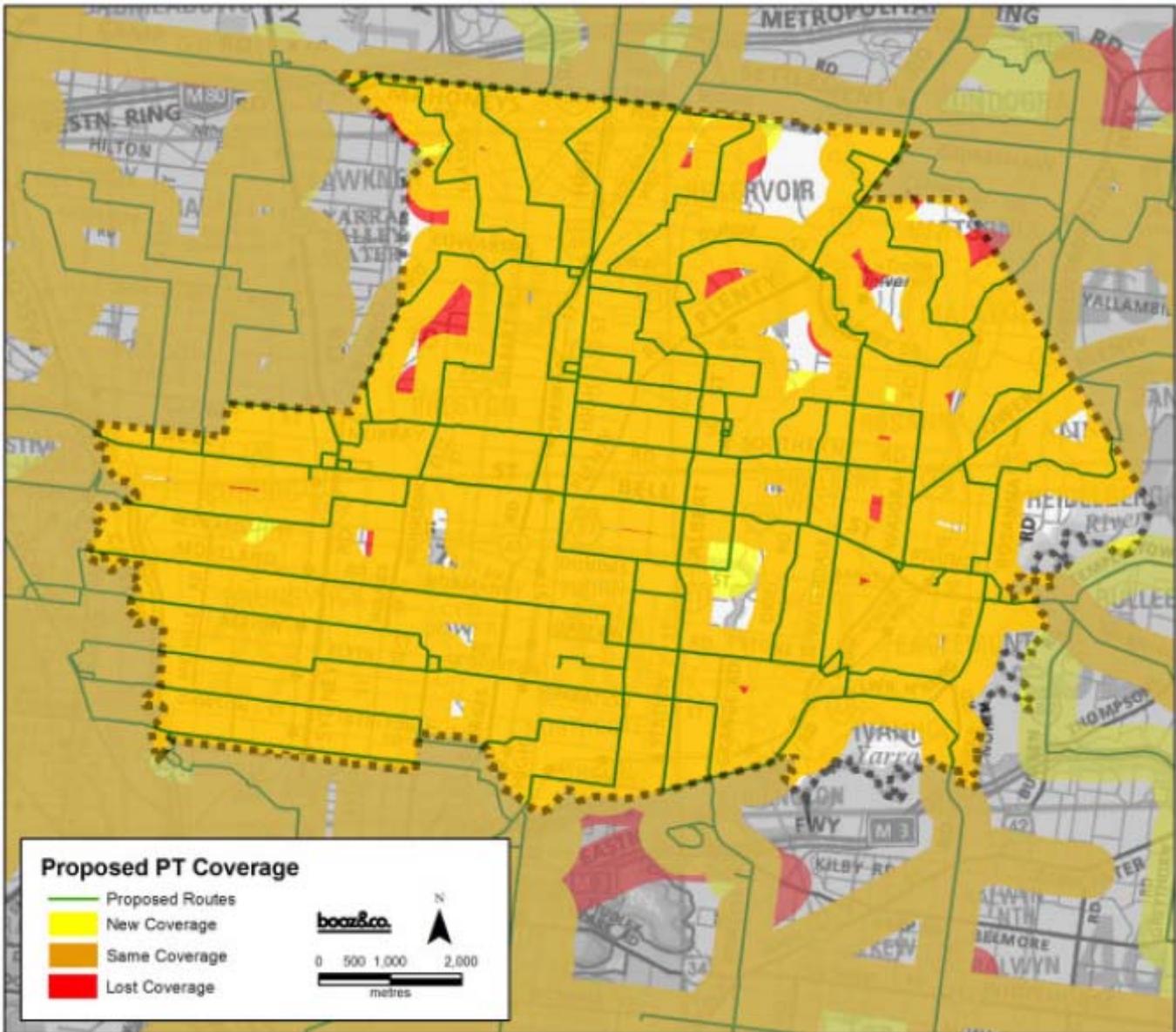
Figure 2 – SEIFA index for Darebin

An extension to Tram Route 112 presents an opportunity for Darebin to review the current height and land use restrictions along the proposed corridor, with a view to encouraging mixed use and increased density. This links into other mutual policy drivers such as increased housing, employment opportunities and reduced community infrastructure in growth areas. Planning for mixed use development in this area will also benefit the residents by providing local goods and services and promoting local living.

Information from a recent State Government housing assessment suggested that the extension of the Tram Route 112 could increase housing in walking distance of the corridor by approximately 4,180 dwellings.

The Community Survey suggests that an extended Route 112 will increase tram patronage – with almost 70% of people reporting that they would use their car less if there was a tram extension, and 90% saying they would increase their use of the tram. In addition, over 70% said they would use the tram often or most days if the proposal went ahead.

An improved bus service could deliver to residents a better service whilst building demand for an extended tram service in years to come. The recent bus review tabled on 23rd September 2010 did not include improvements to the Gilbert Road bus (route 553) despite requests from Council, but did reduce the coverage of the bus network for the area (see below graphic, from *Banyule/Darebin/Moreland and Melbourne/Port Phillip/Yarra Bus Service Review Final Report, September 2010*).



Route Features

Edwardes Lake Park

This District Park hosts a bi-annual festival attracting up to 40,000 people, with numerous other festivals and sporting events throughout the year.



Figure 3 - Community Kite Festival, Edwardes Lake Park 2009

Reservoir Principle Activity Centre

Reservoir Principle Activity Centre is a major trip attractor, including local shops, community services and a train station.



Figure 4 - Edwardes Street looking east to train station

Regent Convenience Centre

The shops and services that make up the convenience centre at the corner of Gilbert Street and Regent Street in Preston provides an important resource for the local community. This centre would benefit from increased patronage due to greater use of this corridor.

Community survey

Council recently completed a community survey of 8,200 properties within 800 metres of a proposed route up Gilbert Road, Henty Street, Spratling Street and Edwardes Street, Reservoir. This had an extremely high response rate, with 1,884 responses - being 23% of those surveyed.

The survey showed that for most respondents, tram is the preferred public transport option and the most disadvantaged members of the community said that the tram extension would in particular provide better access to health services and the local shops in Edwardes St.

More than 80% of the respondents (1,467 people) gave the proposal an overall score of 10 for 'strongly in favour'. This is an extraordinarily high score.

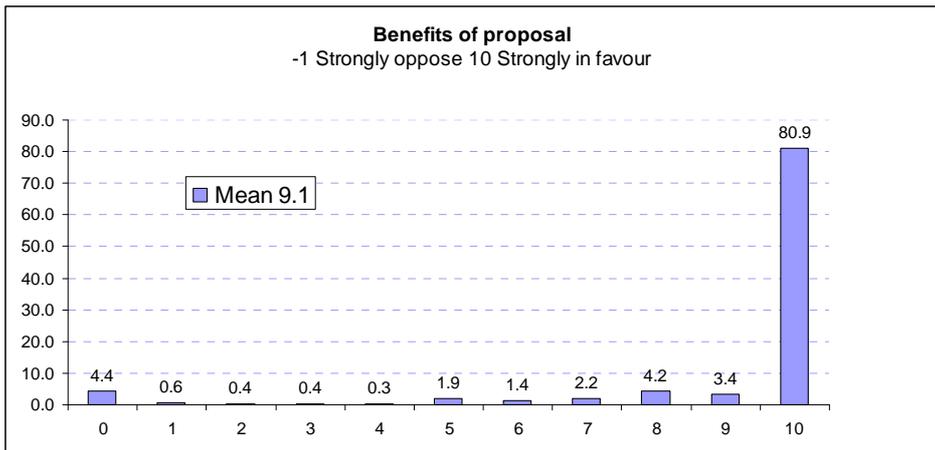


Figure 5 – On a scale where '0' is strongly oppose and '10' strongly in favour, overall, how do you feel about the proposal to extend the Route 112 tram along Gilbert Road and Edwardes Street to Reservoir Railway Station?

The community survey asked respondents to rate the benefits to them if Tram 112 was extended along Gilbert Rd and Edwardes St to Reservoir Station. The most valuable benefits included “more frequent public transport” and “closer public transport options” which was selected by three quarters of the respondents. More than half the respondents selected “connection to Edwardes St shops”, “faster access to the city”, “connection to the train” and “better access to local shopping” as being very important to them. Respondents with Healthcare cards, without cars and with disabilities particularly valued the better access to health services the tram extension would bring.

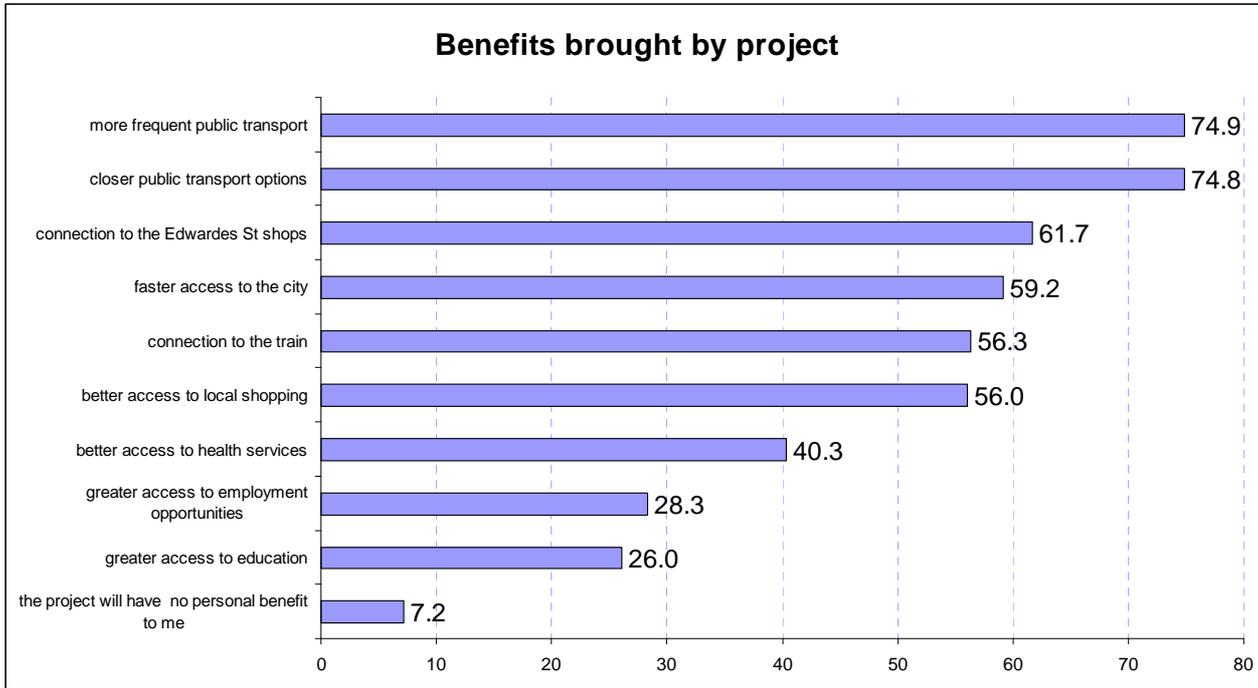


Figure 6 - If the Tram 112 was extended along Gilbert Road and Edwardes Street to Reservoir Station, please indicate the benefits (if any) that it would bring to you personally?

Two thirds (1,182 respondents) said that they were much more likely to catch the tram if the project went ahead. Ninety percent were much more likely and more likely combined to catch the tram if the project went ahead.

Over 70% of respondents said they would use the tram often or most days if the project went ahead. Nearly 70% also said they would use the car less if the project went ahead.

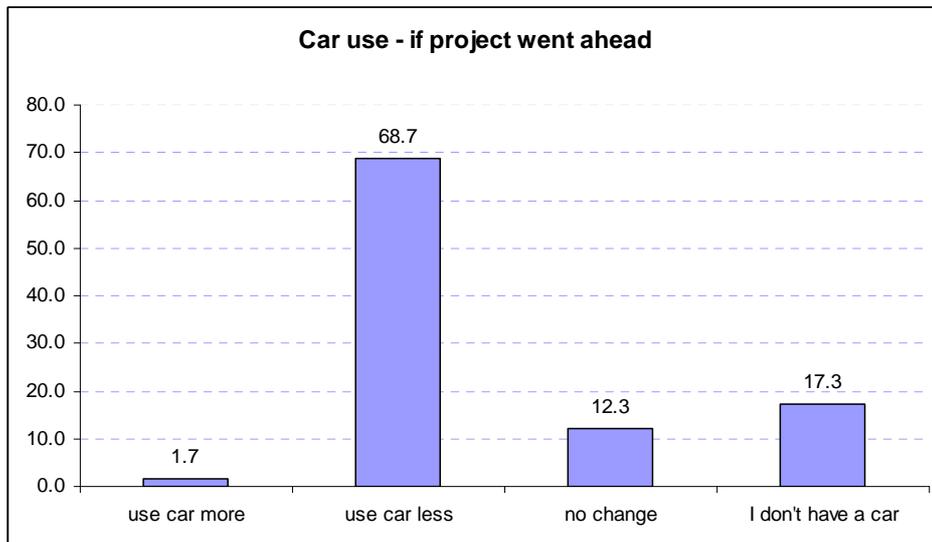


Figure 7 - If you have access to a car, do you think you would be more or less likely to use it if the project went ahead?

Nearly 70% of the respondents preferred tram over any other type of public transport. When asked if an extension of the tram along Gilbert road would be more beneficial to them than the current option of changing to a bus at Regent St, most respondents gave the benefit of the proposal a score of five (5 out of 5) for extremely beneficial.

The survey included respondents generally representing the demographic characteristics of the Darebin population. This area of Reservoir and Preston is understood to have a high proportion of non-English speaking residents. Of those that completed the survey, 40% speak a language other than English in their home, which is comparable to the Darebin average of 39%. There was also a high response rate, 42%, from those reporting to hold a health care card, which is a social disadvantage indicator.

Summary of survey comments

There were almost 900 comments recorded in the survey, of these over 750 were in favour, and over 100 were either against the extension, unsure or preferred an alternative route. The comments have been reviewed and a summary made of the main themes that were raised. Some survey responses contained multiple topics; these have been recorded separately. The main themes are detailed below.

There were 306 comments giving full support for the project, without necessarily being specific. A large proportion of the comments were on the theme of “Long overdue” (159 comments).

“About time”

“I have been waiting 56 years for the tram”

“Should have been done years ago”

“This would be a great asset to residents in the area. We have been waiting for an extension to the tram line since the 1940's - my grandparent's day. In this 'modern' world, public transport is a must. We have to get people out of cars. Public transport also builds community. Thank-you. It would be a wonderful thing to achieve a tram line extension.”

“It would be fantastic, we have been waiting 40 years! I walked 1 hour for four years just to catch the tram so I could go to work.”

Not everyone was positive about the proposal; there were 95 comments from those concerned about issues including an increase in congestion, difficulty in accessing their home or business and potential loss of parking.

“Do not support the tramline extension at the expense of the car lane. Car used for convenience and time saving - no benefit in losing car lane for unreliable timetables.”

“I think the extra tram line will cause more traffic issues in that area which is already congested and with so many problems to this area concerning traffic it would be even more chaotic.”

“My only concern would be the congestion it will cause on Edwardes Street.”

One of the strongest themes was that the extension will provide increased access and amenity for the elderly and those with disabilities; there were over 80 comments on this topic.

“When we bought our block of land in 1949, it was proposed to extend tram line then. We built and shifted here in 1956. We are still waiting for that promised extension. Now at our age it would be most helpful.”

“Having turned 86 I don't expect to be driving much longer and will need to rely on public transport more. I came to live in Gilbert Road over 60 years ago and was told the tram was to be extended up to the Lake. Sadly that didn't happen.”

“Strongest support possible for this long-overdue, much-needed project. Congratulations to everyone involved. It would greatly improve my quality of life and allow me to live in my Gilbert Rd home for much longer than I have been expecting - wonderful news! Please do it!”

Many people highlighted the benefits in terms of access to the shops in Edwardes St (58 comments), the train (47 comments), Edwardes Lake Park (37 comments), the City (37 comments), education (36 comments), employment (34 comments) and health services (31 comments). These themes frequently linked into a corresponding reduction in car use (46 comments).

“It would be an excellent extension; in fact it would change my quality of life dramatically by giving me, my husband and son access to work and education opportunities that are currently only accessible by a combination of car and, occasionally, train. Reducing car use is a major desire for me and my family, and if the 112 tram went to Reservoir station that would happen.”

“The tram extension would be great for Reservoir as there is poor public transport in the evenings and weekends. It would also increase the number of people visiting Edwardes Lake Park. I don't own a car but are considering buying one due to poor transport in the evenings and weekends. That end of Reservoir would really benefit from better and more frequent transport.”

There were a number of comments on the need for this service to support the growing population and the higher density development in this area (51 comments), and support economic development (23 comments) and to increase community connection (44 comments).

“It's about time. This development will also bring life back to Edwardes St and local business.”

“Great idea and given the increase in the units and townhouse development in the area, resulting in more people, transportation improvements is a must - tram extension would compliment and maximise the infrastructure use.”

“I think that if the proposal went ahead it would be extremely beneficial for all the community. This proposal has been on the agenda for many years. Can the government finally stop playing politics and finally put this proposal forward that would benefit all the community.”

“This is the most important issue facing our local community, in terms of required infrastructure.”

Many people particularly commented that they felt safe on trams, comparing them favourably to other forms of transport, and to having to walk from existing services (47 comments).

“It is essential that this proposal go ahead. For one, it will increase the safety of people - especially women, travelling alone and after dark. And secondly, it's just not contemporary to be living this close

to the city and still have to walk 1/2 an hour to the closest train station and 1 hour to the closest tram stop!!!”

“Being a senior citizen, trams are much more accessible and seem safer than either buses or trains. We always use public transport when going to the city and usually drive to the tram stop to catch the tram. The new route would mean we can walk to the tram stop making life easier.”

Some people only supported an extension along Gilbert Road, as far as Edwardes Lake Park (36 comments). This was linked to concern that Edwardes Street was too narrow to take a tram (17 comments). Some people also felt that the route should be going west of Edwardes Lake Park instead (17 comments).

“As I live in Edwardes St I strongly oppose tram tracks in Edwardes St. The tram should end at the top of Gilbert Rd (before the lake) and connect with existing bus service. The tram would make traffic worse and increase noise levels.”

Interestingly, a number of respondents questioned which ticketing zone the tram extension would fall into, and strongly requested that it be entirely in zone one.

The amount of comments has been overwhelming and it more than demonstrates the immediate imperative to conduct a detailed study and feasibility for the extension of Tram Route 112.

Estimated cost and analysis

Table 1, below, provides a preliminary analysis of the likely costs estimated by Darebin Council. These cost estimates are based on information from the State Government transport agencies and also current projects such as the Tram Route 112 upgrade on St Georges Road and the Tram Route 86 improvement project (High Street and Plenty Road). Costs do not take into account complications such as land acquisition or steep graded slopes.

	Estimated Cost	Opportunities	Obstacles
Feasibility Study	\$50,000		
2.7 km tram route extension	\$30M (estimated)	Logical link to a rail / bus interchange Strong patronage potential Scope for enhancements along the corridor Activity Centre trip generator Better connections and reduced social inclusion	Avoid steep slope at Edwardes Lake May need to travel around J.E. Moore Park

Table 1 – Analysis of the Tram Route 112 extension

Policy implications

Environmental sustainability

The provision of public transport is of fundamental importance to environmental sustainability principles within the field of transport. Public transport must be available for everyday travel to enable people to make the choice of using public transport, instead of driving by car. This in turn reduces the reliance of the private motor vehicle and reduces the contribution made to greenhouse gas emissions.

Although car ownership is currently lower in West Reservoir than in other metropolitan areas, this trend is changing and car ownership is rising in the absence of alternative means of transport, area gentrification, and the decline in local jobs.

Social Inclusion and Diversity

West Preston and West Reservoir are both areas of lower socio-economic demographics, with less car ownership or means of accessing a car. These areas also have higher Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) groups than other areas of Darebin as well as higher elderly population who may not be able to drive. Enhancing public transport in this area would be of major benefit to these disadvantaged groups; improving access to jobs, services and amenities outside of their local area without need or costs of car ownership. For older persons and CALD groups, being able to increase social interaction by travelling to other neighbourhood centres and Activity Centres (such as Reservoir), has a significant impact on their health, wellbeing and feeling of community inclusion.

Other

In March 2008, Council launched *'Going Places – Darebin Transport Strategy (2007 – 2027)'*. One of the objectives of this strategy is to 'improve local and metropolitan accessibility' and, with Action A11 specifically concerned with *'advocating for additional public transport services linking Darebin with surrounding areas'*. This information paper is consistent with the aims of the transport strategy.

Conclusion

The extension of tram 112 has irrefutable benefits for residents, land use, and local economies.

Community consultation on this issue has confirmed that there is strong support for the proposal to extend tram route 112. The vast majority of responses given in the survey highlighted the need of residents and businesses for an improved public transport service.

The recent bus review resulted in a reduction in the coverage for many people in Reservoir. This increases the isolation and car dependency of an area with already low public transport service provision. As existing residents age, and higher density brings population increases, this need will only intensify.

The community have been waiting decades for a tram extension, and now is the time for State Government to do a feasibility study and provide a fully considered and thorough analysis of this proposal.

Consultation

Darebin City Council
Department of Transport
VicRoads
Yarra Trams
Booze and Co.

8,200 residents within 800 metres of proposed tram route extension.

Related Documents

- Darebin Transport Strategy 2007-2027
- Some characteristics of communities in Darebin vulnerable to social exclusion February 2010, Social Inclusion and Diversity Unit
- Darebin Municipal Strategic Statement
- Melbourne @ 5million
- Draft Reservoir Structure Plan