



ENVIRONMENT
EFFECTS
STATEMENT

Summary Report

VICTORIA'S
BIG BUILD



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Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne

North East Link Project Environment Effects Statement

Public hearing by Inquiry and Advisory Committee

6 September 2019

Presented by
Bruce Echberg

on behalf of
Australian Institute of Landscape Architects
(Victoria)





Australian Institute of Landscape Architects

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) champions quality design for public open spaces, stronger communities and greater environmental stewardship.

AILA represents over 3,500 (and growing) members throughout Australia and overseas. As a not-for-profit professional association, our role is to serve the mutual interests of our members and the wider community.



Australian Institute of
Landscape Architects

AILA declares

Climate &

Biodiversity Loss

Emergency

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) has
declared a Climate and Biodiversity Loss Emergency.

INDEPENDENT EXPERT PANEL

Interim Emissions Reduction
Targets for Victoria (2021-2030)

FINAL REPORT

*IPCC 2108 statement for
2050, and IPBES
biodiversity statement:*

- *Urgently need to limit anthropogenic green house gasses (GHG).*
- *Cities account for 60-70% of GHG emissions. Concrete accounts for 5-7% GHG emissions*

AILA has joined many other government, private and professional organisations in declaring a climate and biodiversity emergency.

AILA believes that it is essential that all major infrastructure projects like North East Link are carefully evaluated and tailored through the lens of climate change.

The current reference design and the mechanism to facilitate it has only responded to climate issues in a token manner, yet the project is planned to be rolled out over the next decade, which is critical to our contribution to limiting climate change to 1.5°C by 2050.

FREEWAYS IN A WORLD CONTEXT

1. Los Angeles, USA

Los Angeles is implementing the most ambitious transportation improvement plan in North America.

At the same time, the region is undergoing an equally significant transformation in the planning, design and development of the neighborhoods now served by transit.

Proposed redevelopment around North Hollywood Metro Station with new parks and affordable housing.



FREEWAYS IN A WORLD CONTEXT

2. Boston, USA

“Boston’s “Big Dig” project ballooned into a \$22 billion boondoggle, but Boston came out of it as a better city:

- property values more than doubled,
- streets are safer,
- economy is more robust than ever.

Planning began in 1982; the construction work was carried out between 1991 and 2006; the project concluded on December 31, 2007

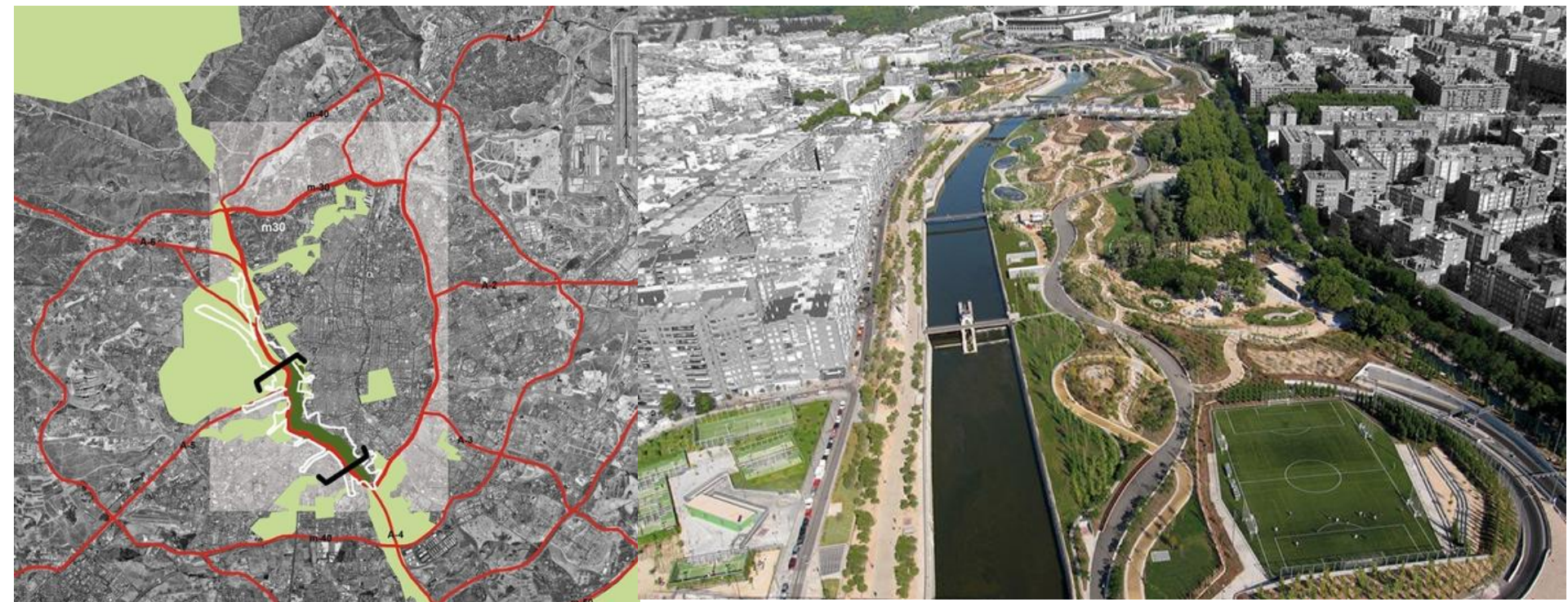
Image and text Boston Globe 27.10.2015



3. Madrid, Spain

Madrid Rio is a widely recognised and awarded urban design-led project to relocate a section of Madrid's existing ring road below ground and enhance the city with new open space.

Report and images World Landscape Architecture December 5 2017



Comparison of North East Link and Madrid Rio

<i>Issue</i>	<i>NE LINK</i>	<i>MADRID RIO</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
<i>Project timing</i>	2016-28	2013- 2018	Madrid Rio is already built and recognised as world best practice through international awards.
<i>Location</i>	Suburban Melbourne	Central Madrid	Central Madrid is already developed at much higher density than Melbourne.
<i>Procurement method</i>	Engineering reference design followed by design construct tenders.	Urban design-led design competition with visionary brief.	Making the project an urban design-led competition meant that the road engineering was subservient to good urban design outcomes. The NE Link Authority charter and internal expertise have precluded visionary thinking about urban design opportunities. Quality design is not possible through such a process.
<i>Anticipated cost</i>	\$15.8 billion AUD	290 million Euros	Establishing the final cost of Madrid Rio is difficult because the initial phases of construction have stimulated further private and public investment.
<i>Site area</i>	Not clear from EES documentation. Similar road length.	880 ha master-planned area 8 km of road put underground	They are similar-scale urban infrastructure projects.
<i>Open space creation</i>	Replacement of the status quo seems to be the objective both in terms of vegetation and recreation	150 ha of new parkland. Public and sports facilities, interpretation and art centers, an urban beach, children's areas and cafés, and the restoration of the hydraulic architectural heritage and 12 new pedestrian bridges.	NE Link has no agenda for significant additional open space or new facilities that would enhance livability or sustainability for the precinct it passes through. It is purely and simply a road-building project with limited amelioration.

Comparison of North East Link and Madrid Rio (continued)

<i>Issue</i>	<i>NE LINK</i>	<i>MADRID RIO</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
<i>Intervention in surrounding areas</i>	Apart from parking garages at rail and bus access points, there is very little improvement of urban fabric in the corridor and negative impacts on adjoining suburbs because of increased traffic.	Grants for renovation of surrounding medium-density apartments and development of 1000 basement parking spaces for residents. Improved amenity for around 30,000 existing nearby residents	NE link will involve acquisition of land for construction that may be excess to its needs after completion. There is no clear vision for and value capture and enhancement of this precinct to increase the sustainability of Melbourne.
<i>Transport benefits</i>	Increase of the freeway network capacity and connectivity is maximised. Limited improvement of a poor cycle network.	10 km of the city's first ring road put below ground. The existing road network was maintained and extensive new active transport and interfaces with existing and future public transport was accommodated.	NE Link will provide for increased car-based transport at huge cost to the community. Public transport provisions are inadequate and largely road based when spending a higher proportion of the budget on more efficient rail could substantially enhance Victoria's carbon footprint long term.

AILA suggest that a massive infrastructure project that has such a simple objective as reducing congestion of motor vehicles, effective in 2028, is a wasted opportunity to enhance the sustainability and liveability of Melbourne.

Are there better ways to make this long-planned freeway link?

The process of a consultation on the current reference design followed by design construct bids is unwieldy and it has so far failed to produce best practice urban design outcomes despite the limited involvement of our profession.

It seem quite clear that a best practice outcome for the community and environment will not be achieved through such a risk-averse engineering-led process!

AILA recommends abandoning the current reference design and commissioning a new urban design-led process through a limited competition or other selection process.

The new brief should:

- preference and fully integrate existing and new public and active transport.
- provide for, and integrate, new medium-density mixed use development to replace existing industrial and low-density housing in close proximity to public transport using value capture mechanisms.
- substantially increase the quality and quantity of open space and green infrastructure through the development corridor. This could be done by redeveloping the entire length of the route even if it means making fewer connections to the surface road system.
- prioritise retention of existing vegetation, especially mature trees, and ensure that there is a canopy cover increase of at least 100% by 2030.
- design to enhance all surface-level streets and public spaces within a 5-km catchment of all stations by retrofitting street spaces to remove car parking and prioritising active transport and greening.
- substantially downgrade all interchanges to conventional off-ramp and street connections.
- maintain the current Eastern Freeway (M3) road profile and abandon the proposed eastern busway to be replaced with Doncaster Rail within the current road reservation.
- develop the new North East Link road in tunnel with capacity limited to accommodate heavy vehicles and non-peak hour traffic volumes with tolls set to recover on-going maintenance and repayment of cost by 2050.

In summary

AILA believes that the current NE Link Project, as represented by the reference design and EES documentation, together with currently proposed implementation methodology, lacks the necessary vision to implement Plan Melbourne's vision for a sustainable liveable city and meet zero carbon by 2050 goals.

It needs to be abandoned or quickly modified.

We recommend either of two options:

- 1. Abandon the project and reallocate resources to building public transport and new low carbon precincts related to existing and new public transport.**
- 3. Re form the project bid process with a new brief developed by the Government Architects Office that has sustainability and good urban design as a core evaluation criteria with no requirement to comply with the reference design.** The cost of running such a bid process could be substantially reduced over the current competitive bid process, by limiting the level of detail required to select the concept design of a preferred bid team.