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Letter to the Editor

Yet again we have seen a whole array of letters opposing the proposed EastWest Link and in particular the futility of a tunnel system from Hoddle Street to CityLink. Carolyn Whitzman (Comment 30-09) sets this in a wider urban strategic context. It is abundantly clear that this proposed tunnel would not resolve the current congestion or improve commuting from the eastern suburbs. The reality is that this is not, and never could have been, a realistic plan to resolve commuter congestion. It is a covert freight facility - but not a good one.

This is clear when the larger plan is considered. Phase 2 includes a new high-level link parallel to CityLink down the Mooney Ponds Creek to connect into Dynan Road and Footscray Road and thus the Port of Melbourne. But that is only the beginning. This Phase 2 of the EastWest Link Project also connects the Port of Melbourne to the logistic hubs situated in the Western Suburbs of Melbourne via a major tunnel under Footscray and a high-level road system out to join the Western Ringroad. Mindful of the fact that the west of Melbourne has been for 150 years and remains today the major logistic hub not only for Melbourne but for much of the rest of south eastern Australia this is at least a plausible scenario but the estimated cost before the EastWest Link actually works is not \$6Billion but likely to be about 20Billion. Yet this is a fundamentally flawed strategy.

For a start it goes only half way from the Port of Melbourne to the national rail intermodal facility currently being developed jointly by the State and Commonwealth Governments at Truganina. Even more important, however, is the fact that this huge expenditure, while closing off the opportunity for many other capital investments for many years, also commits Melbourne and south eastern Australia to having its primary heavy freight system – the very life blood of the economy – committed to fossil fuels. If ever there was a case for a dedicated non-surface rail freight system connecting the various Melbourne docks (Port of Melbourne, Hastings, Point Wilson and Geelong) to inland ports and logistics hubs it is the collection of flawed arguments surrounding the current EastWest Link proposal. A radically new approach to the whole urban transport system is needed.

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