



# Suburban Rail Loop:

## Draft Precinct Visions for Cheltenham

Community Engagement Summary Report  
February 2024

## 1 Background

This document provides a summary of stakeholder and community feedback on the Victorian government's Suburban Rail Loop project, with a focus on the Draft Precinct Visions for Cheltenham.

Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) will deliver a 90km rail line linking every major train service from the Frankston Line to the Werribee Line via Melbourne Airport, better connecting Victorians to jobs, retail, education, health services and each other.

SRL East from Cheltenham to Box Hill will connect major employment, health, education and retail destinations in Melbourne's east and southeast. The new underground station at Cheltenham will be the southern gateway to the SRL network, providing faster and more convenient public transport to key destinations across Melbourne's middle suburbs.

Beyond the rail line, SRL will open up a host of new social and economic opportunities for hundreds of thousands of Victorians by creating greater access to jobs, health services, education and a diverse range of quality and affordable housing.

Sir William Fry Reserve in Cheltenham on the Bayside/Kingston border has been selected as the location of the SRL anchor station. The first stage of the SRL is the south-east segment from Cheltenham to Box Hill. Initial works for Stage One commenced in 2022, with commissioning of the railway expected by 2035.

Bayside City Council is providing strong input to the Suburban Rail Loop Authority to advocate on behalf of the Bayside community. We want to minimise impacts from the construction of the new station and maximise the opportunity to improve sustainable, efficient, and connected public transport across and onward from Bayside.

In addition to the Suburban Rail Loop Authority's (SRLA) community engagement (concluding 3 March 2024), Bayside City Council undertook a seven-week engagement from 21 December 2023 to 11 February 2024 to inform its response to the draft Precinct Vision.

Bayside City Council received 221 responses to its online survey. Community feedback provided directly to Council is summarised in this report and will inform Council's advocacy and submission to the SRLA.

## 2 Consultation process

### 2.1 Consultation purpose

Council is providing strong input to the Suburban Rail Loop Authority (SRLA) to advocate on behalf of the Bayside community. Council wants to minimise impacts from the construction of the new station and maximise the opportunity to improve sustainable, efficient, and connected public transport across and onward from Bayside.

The consultation was designed to provide the Bayside community and stakeholders with the opportunity to provide input into refining the SRL East draft Precinct Vision papers and raise awareness within the community of the SRL East project.

During Q1 and Q2 2024, SRL will continue to shape the precinct visions and draft structure plans with the aim to be on Exhibition by late 2024. The Exhibition period will provide another opportunity for feedback from the community. An advisory committee will consider the structure planning documents and draft planning scheme amendments in early 2025. Community feedback will inform final structure plans and planning scheme amendments.

The Structure Planning Phase of the SRL East will culminate in an adopted structure plan for the area surrounding the Cheltenham Station in early following a planning scheme amendment 2026. There will be further opportunities for community engagement at various points during the planning scheme amendment process.

### 2.1.1 Consultation methodology

Details	Engagement Activity
<b>21 December 2023 to 11 February 2024</b> Online only <b>221 contributions</b> <b>3182 views of Council's SRL Have your say page</b>	<b>Have your Say engagement website survey</b> Bayside City Council online survey and promotion of the SRLA consultation materials. A survey of questions was sent to the subscribers of the SRL Have Your Say page. A series of social media posts were used to raise awareness of the survey on the Have your say page. Community members provided feedback as well as community neighbourhood associations. No written submissions were received outside of the survey responses.
Details	Communication Activity
<b>Social media</b> <b>8 posts</b>	Eight (8) social media posts, including sponsored advertising to raise awareness of the consultation and SRL project.
<b>Website news</b> <b>2 articles</b>	Two news stories published on Council's website regarding the consultation period and encouraging participation
<b>This week in Bayside e-newsletters</b> <b>4 editions</b> <b>12,042 recipients</b>	Featured in four editions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21 December 2023</li> <li>• 29 January 2024</li> <li>• 1 February 2024</li> <li>• 8 February 2024</li> </ul>
<b>Direct email</b> <b>2 January</b> <b>59 project subscribers</b>	Invitation to participate in consultation sent to 59 project subscribers.
<b>Project webpage</b> <b>3,254 views</b> <b>2,383 unique visitors</b>	Have Your Say webpages where participants could complete the online survey, provide a written submission, or post a general enquiry. Project webpages included links to read the Precinct Vision paper for Cheltenham, participate in the SRLA consultation, and raise awareness of the precinct planning program timeline.

### 3 Participant profile

Most respondents were aged over 50 and resided in either Beaumaris, Highett, Hampton East and Sandringham – with respondents from these suburbs over-represented compared to the Bayside census population profile. This is to be expected, as the SRL precinct incorporates Highett, Cheltenham and parts of Sandringham.

	Demographic	Bayside 2021 Census	Participants (%)
Age	15-24	7.8%	3%
	25-39	7.8%	10.9%
	40-49	19.4%	15.4%
	50-59	15.7%	21.3%
	60-69	12.1%	20.4%
	70-84	12.2%	22.6%
	85+	3.4%	0.96%
	Undisclosed	-	
Suburb	Beaumaris	12.8%	20.4%
	Black Rock	6.2%	-
	Brighton	23.7%	8.1%
	Brighton East	15.6%	4.5%
	Cheltenham	3.9%	13.1%
	Hampton	13.6%	-
	Hampton East	4.9%	12.2%
	Highett	7.6%	18.10%
	Sandringham	11.8%	11.8%
	Outside Bayside	-	7.25%

We did not ask for gender data from participants as this was not deemed relevant to the engagement.

The data shows the engagement program received strong participation from the 25 to 59 (47.6% of respondents) age group. Age groups 60 to 84 (43% of participants) were the next largest sample size. One reason for this finding may be because the SRL East project will not be complete until 2035 and the younger generations may benefit exponentially in comparison to the older generations. Increase provision of medium and higher density housing may also benefit younger generations, as they seek to live or stay in Bayside.

This data is drawn out in section 4.2.2, which highlights there is no clear stand out priority for the project from different demographics. Feedback also shows that the SRL East project has divided community views.

## 4 Consultation findings

The engagement was undertaken to help inform Council's Advocacy Position Paper and represent the views of the community to the SRLA. No actions, outside of advocacy, were presented to the community for feedback.

The following section summarises the key themes which arose in community feedback on Suburban Rail Loop: Draft Precinct Visions for Cheltenham. In the interest of stakeholder and community privacy, individual quotes have not been included within this public document. Where there was more than one mention of a topic or item, the number of mentions has been specified in brackets.

### 4.1 Overview of Feedback

Participants strongly opposed the proposed increased density of built form outlined within the draft precinct plan visions. Participants also raised concerns the project will cost too much money and other State-provided services may suffer as a result of budget blowouts.

Community members were also concerned at a loss of amenity (traffic congestion, reduced services) because of overdevelopment and overcrowding.

### 4.2 Common themes in feedback

Common themes through written responses with regard to respondents overall support for the SRLA's draft Precinct Vision for Cheltenham include concerns that the project is not needed (46 comments), concerns regarding the costs to provide the SRL and precinct (42 comments) and that it is a waste of money (36 comments) with many respondents also of the feeling that this money would be best spent elsewhere (33 comments).

Many respondents were also concerned by the proposed high-density outcomes and where this would be directed to and the amenity impacts that would come with this (35 comments).

Comments about overall support for the SRLA's draft precinct vision	
Project not needed	46
Concern about costs to provide	42
Waste of money	36
Concern about social impacts of multi-story apartments (future ghettos, isolations)	35
Other priorities: Invest in education, healthcare, etc instead	33
Concern about amenity impacts of high density apartments (traffic and parking)	21
Need to make sure integrated public transport outcomes are enhanced	20
Rail is needed/best to avoid traffic congestion	16
Not planned properly	14
Concerned about traffic congestion and safety	13
Infrastructure changes needed to address population and housing growth	12
Concerns about loss of open space	8
Concerned about consultation process	7
Miscellaneous	7
Project should be delayed/cancelled (State debt concerns)	6

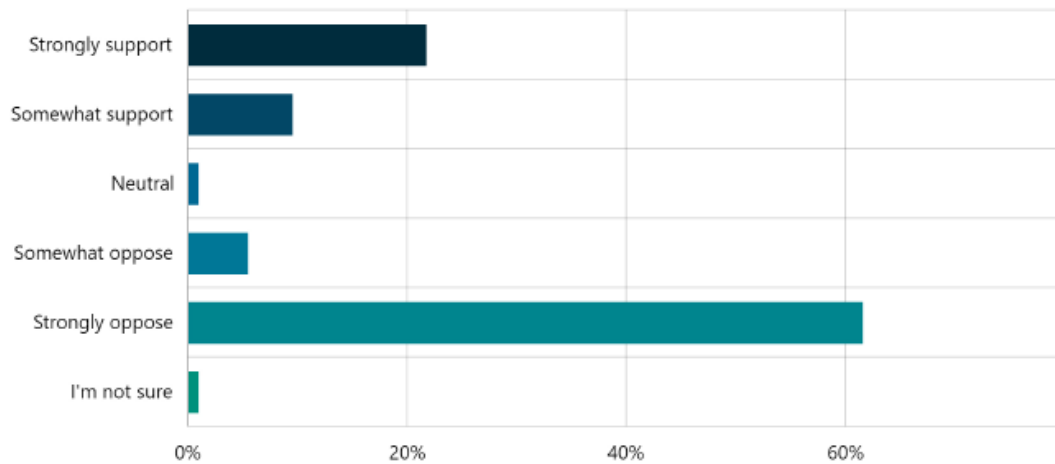
Concerns that development will impact environment	6
Concerns that design and masterplanning so far do not provide for high quality outcomes	6
Provide much needed housing	4
Need vibrant precinct	3
Improve sustainability (reduce fossil fuel use)	3
Concerned by increased social housing	2
The Vision and future outcomes for the area is vague	2
Project is needed – provides various benefits	1
Supports opportunity to be involved in consultation process	1
Promote activity centres, employment and growth	1
Will be beneficial to small local businesses	1
Concern that the boundary of the train line would restrict access	1
Not supportive of the location of Station chosen in Sir William Fry Reserve	1
Total	348

#### **4.2.1 Overall Support for the SRLA's draft Precinct Vision for Cheltenham**

Over 65% of respondents (221) expressed a level of opposition (61.54% strongly opposed and 5.43% somewhat opposed) to the SRL's draft precinct Vision for Cheltenham.

**1. What is your overall level of support for the Suburban Rail Loop Authority's draft Precinct Vision for Cheltenham? Required**

Multi Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 221 (100%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Strongly support	21.72%	48
Somewhat support	9.50%	21
Neutral	0.90%	2
Somewhat oppose	5.43%	12
Strongly oppose	61.54%	136
I'm not sure	0.90%	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>221</b>

When asked to provide a reason for their response all participants (221) provided comments which have been themed and summarised in a table below.

**Topic**

**Community feedback**

**Project not needed**

- Cost / Benefit analysis needs to be undertaken
- Unsure how State government have identified the need for this
- The route of the SRL train line won't be of benefit

Many respondents were concerned that the State Government had not built a sufficient case to justify the benefits that the Suburban Rail Loop would bring.

There were also many comments made that the destinations on the train line would not be accessed by passengers and therefore not required.

**Amenity impact**

- Density increase
- Overdevelopment
- Traffic congestion
- Loss of open space

Concern with overdevelopment the precinct, increase the density of built form and increasing traffic issues.

**Funding and budget**

- State budget blowouts

Waste of state money and should be directed elsewhere. Cost blow outs.



- Impact on other state provided services

### Community infrastructure

- State needs to plan and provide sufficient community infrastructure (schools, daycare, health services) for the increase in population.

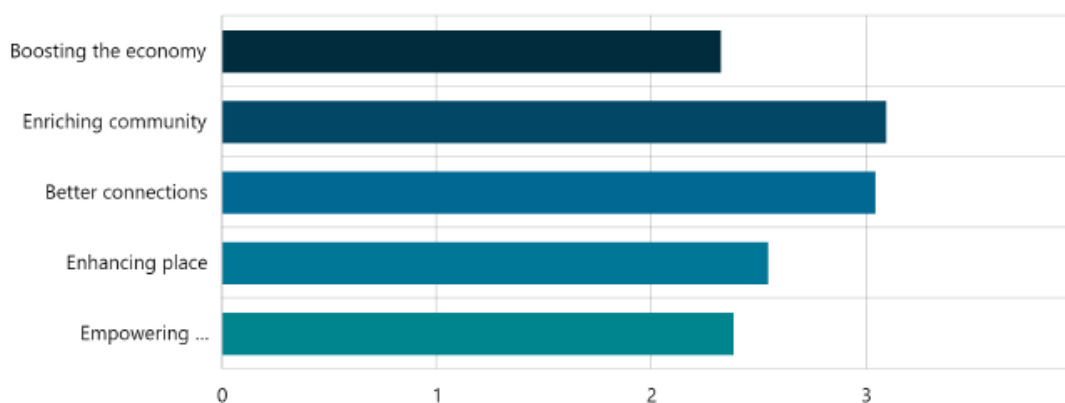
Planning and provision of community infrastructure to cater for the population growth.

## 4.2.2 What is your highest priority in terms of the following precinct themes as set within the SRL draft precinct Vision for Cheltenham?

The highest priority expressed by the respondents was for better connections, with 37.3% of respondents (143) ranking “*better connections*” as their highest priority in terms of the precinct themes for Cheltenham, followed by “*enriching community*” (26%)

### 3. What is your highest priority in terms of the following Precinct Themes as set within the SRL draft Precinct Vision for Cheltenham?

Ranking | Skipped: 78 | Answered: 143 (64.7%)



	1	2	3	4	5	Count	Score	Avg Rank
Boosting the economy	22.69% 27	14.29% 17	12.61% 15	20.17% 24	30.25% 36	119	2.32	3.21
Enriching community	26.02% 32	30.89% 38	23.58% 29	15.45% 19	4.07% 5	123	3.09	2.41
Better connections	37.30% 47	15.08% 19	17.46% 22	15.87% 20	14.29% 18	126	3.04	2.55
Enhancing place	11.57% 14	28.93% 35	20.66% 25	25.62% 31	13.22% 16	121	2.54	3.00
Empowering sustainability	18.40% 23	12.80% 16	21.60% 27	16.80% 21	30.40% 38	125	2.38	3.28

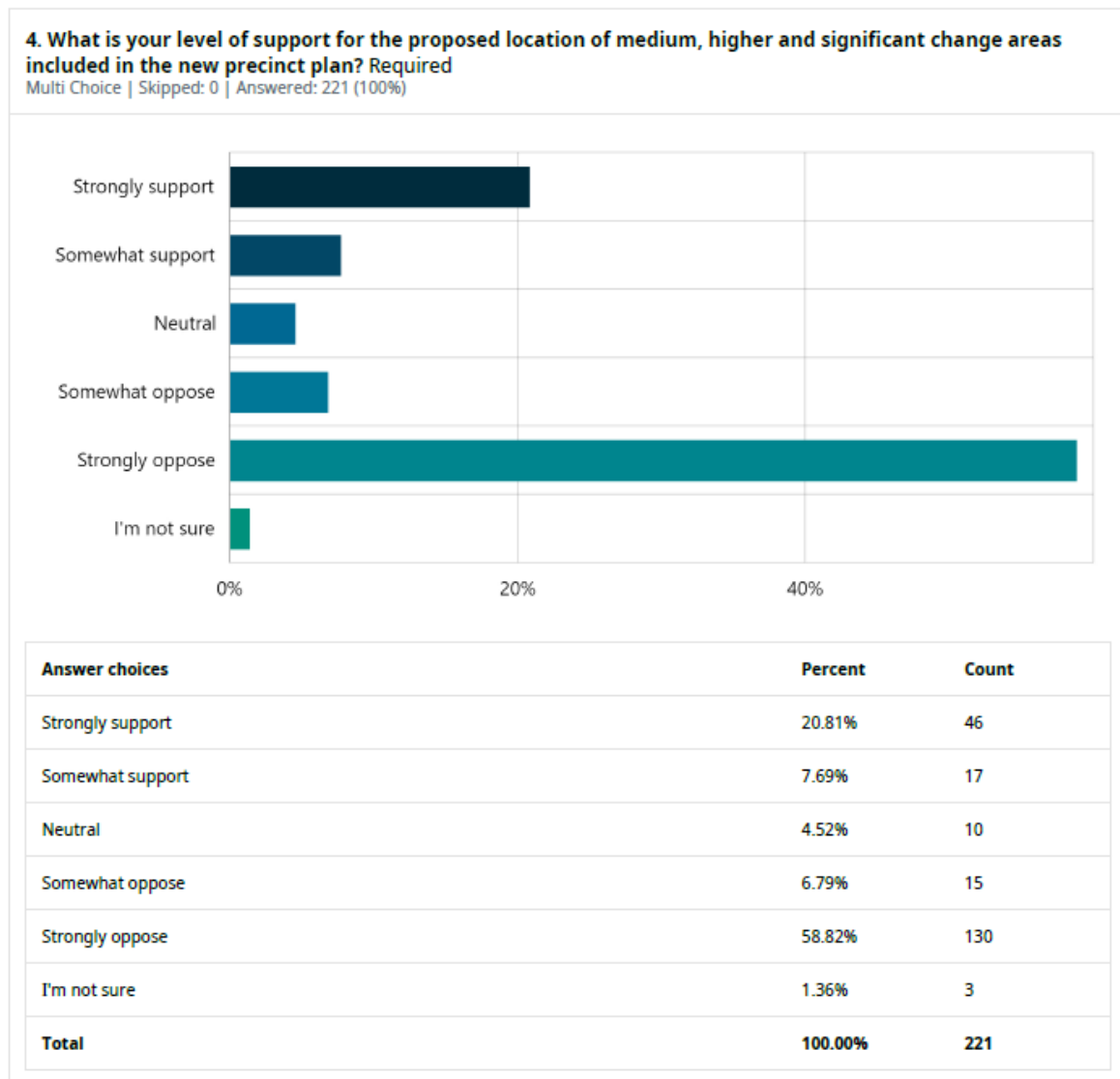
Score - Sum of the weight of each ranked position, multiplied by the response count for the position choice, divided by the total contributions. Weights are inverse to ranked positions.

Avg Rank - Sum of the ranked position of the choice, multiplied by the response count for the position choice, divided by the total 'Count' of the choice.



#### 4.2.3 What is your level of support for the proposed location of medium, higher and significant change areas included in the new precinct plan?

Over 60% of respondents expressed a level of opposition (58% strongly opposed and 6.79% somewhat opposed) to the SRL's proposed location of medium, higher and significant change areas included in the new precinct plan for Cheltenham.



All participants (221) provide a comment explaining the reason for their view. As to particular concerns regarding the medium, high and significant change areas, many comments were made regarding concerns of overdevelopment (53 comments), the design of the high-rise development and how this may impact neighbourhood character (50 comments).

There were 30 comments made that did support the vision of the SRL, however, noting this was outweighed by concerns with the SRL.

Comments about change areas	
Concern about overdevelopment	53
Concern: design of high-rise, neighbourhood character	50
Other (see previous response)	30

Support the vision	28
Support: Higher density near public transport	27
Concern: increased traffic	26
Support: Improved sustainability outcomes	24
Not properly planned	20
Waste of money	17
Concern: Loss of public open space/poor environmental outcomes	16
Cancel project	10
Increase in crime	9
Population need to be close to public transport	9
Affordable housing near employment is needed	8
Low-rise (townhouses) more suited to Bayside	7
Need more mid rise housing	7
Concern: fast-tracked planning; lack of Council involvement in planning decisions	3
Limited land for higher density development	2
Extend Frankston to Baxter rail line	1
Total	347

#### 4.2.4 Do you agree with the enhancement of Bay Road as a gateway to the new SRL station at Cheltenham?

Over 50% of participants strongly disagreed to the enhancement of Bay Road as a gateway to the new SRL station at Cheltenham.

A range of specific concerns were raised during the consultation regarding this item, when asked how they would like to see movement and connectivity improved across the precinct.

As to how connectivity and movement could be improved, the following suggestions were raised, which have been themed in the table below:

Topic	Community feedback
<b>Needs to function well</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide an integrated front to transport</li> <li>- Increase frequency of bus service</li> </ul>	Many respondents provided feedback on site-specific requirements, including the need to implement a shared user pathway and walking and cycling options.
<b>Encourage sustainable transport</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Walking paths</li> <li>- Cycling paths</li> <li>- Accessibility</li> </ul>	Similar to above, many respondents provided site-specific examples to implement within the precinct, including a pedestrian/cycle bridge over Bay Road and connectively through William Fry and Lyle Anderson Reserve.

<b>Other</b>	Respondents provided comments such as ‘there’s enough movement and connectivity! Leave people alone’ and general opposition.
- General comments reinforcing respondents opposition to the SRL	

<b>Comments relating to improving connectivity and movement</b>	
Needs to function well	50
Other	58
Encourage sustainable transport (cycling)	28
Fix roads and footpaths	23
Develop traffic management plan	18
Future maintenance of parkland	17
Leave parks alone	16
Reduction of traffic lanes will cause congestion	14
Traffic congestion	11
Concern about cost/affordability	11
Planning too high level	5
Use buses instead between universities	5
Improved sense of community	4
Consider aesthetics and quality	3
Needs more car parking	2
Sky Rail to airport	1
Total	266

#### **4.2.5 Is there anything in the SRL’s draft Precinct Vision for Cheltenham that you think has been missed or could be improved?**

There were several comments made by respondents with suggestions for improvements to the draft Precinct Vision. It is important to note the high level of comments that were in request that the project be cancelled (42 comments) and that this has been reiterated by respondents throughout majority of survey responses.

Other topics raised by majority of respondents include that the project is a waste of money (13 comments) and ‘other’ which include general comments in opposition (18 comments).

<b>Comments relating to how the Precinct Vision could be improved</b>	
Cancel project	42
Other	18
Waste of money	13
Data on traffic/parking impacts	12

No improvements	10
Need to consider sustainability/natural environment	9
Make sure community is consulted	9
Connection to Sandringham station	7
Need to protect current neighbourhood character	7
Walking/cycling connections	6
Enhanced public spaces/facilities	6
Need to consider costs more thoroughly	5
Sky Rail to airport	3
Quality first approach	3
Need more stations	3
Contamination at site	3
Greater detail	3
Need for better public transport links	1
Total	160

### 4.3 Project Evaluation

The main purpose of the engagement program was to raise awareness among the Bayside community of the SRL East project as a whole, and highlight the start of the precinct planning phase of the project.

Feedback was sought to help inform Council's submissions to the SRLA and advocate for the community on their concerns about the project. Community feedback will also help inform Council's advocacy Position Paper which will be considered for adoption by Council at its 23 April 2024 meeting.

The engagement program took place over the festive and period between 21 December and 11 February 2024. Despite this, there was a strong response with 221 submissions received – 8% of visitors to the project page. The strong response validates the success of the digital communications program.

Extensive community engagement had already been undertaken by the SRLA themselves as well as hosting pop up sessions and the Precinct Reference Group (PRG) sessions.