



St Georges Road, Northcote median opening review Community Consultation Report

August 2017

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

St Georges Road is separated by a 27m wide centre median that consists of tram lines and a cycle and pedestrian path which carries 1600 cyclists every weekday to and from the northern suburbs.

A review of the crash history shows there were 61 casualty crashes on St Georges Road between Arthurton Road and Miller Street in five years prior to 30 December 2016. 14 crashes occurred at the 5 centre median openings.

The City of Darebin commissioned a safety study in 2015 and the recommendation of the study was to close most of the centre medians between Merri Parade and Murray Road to address safety concerns.

Melbourne Water works are currently underway along St Georges Road, Northcote to renew the existing water mains. The project commenced in mid-November 2016 and is expected to take 12 months to complete.

The median openings at the following unsignalised intersections along St Georges Road have been closed for the duration of the construction works.

- Beavers Road
- Beaconsfield Parade
- Gadd St
- Woolton Avenue
- Watt Street

We're currently investigating the longer term access management of St Georges Road, Northcote. This includes considering a number of options for the median crossings on St Georges Road, ; the impact of any road closures and the future of the median openings.

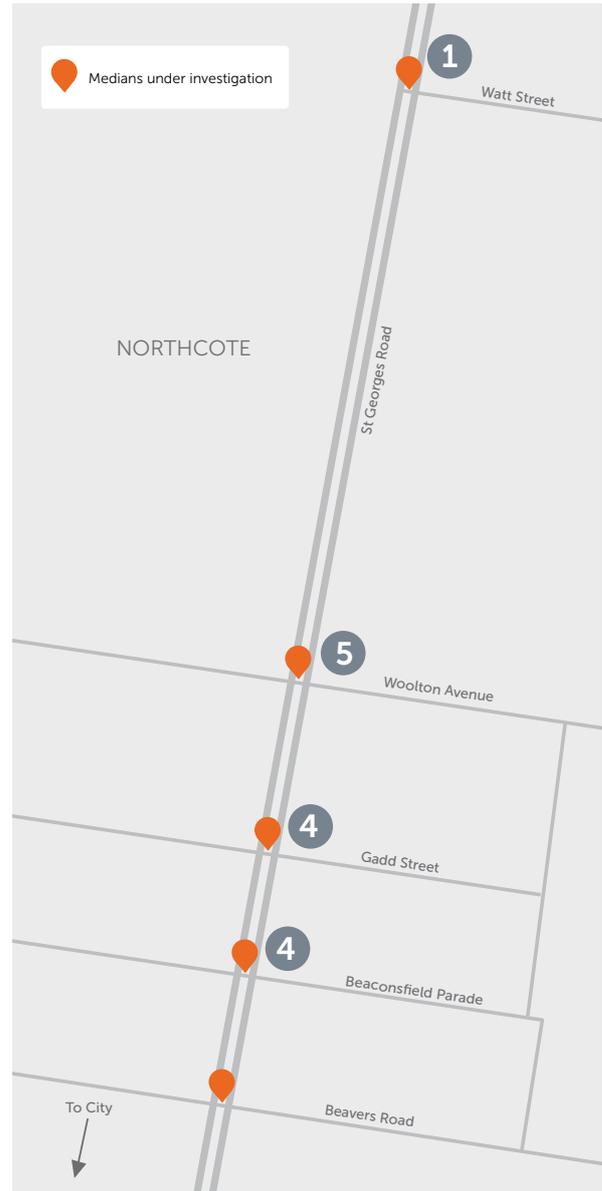
This research and investigation has consisted of; traffic modelling research, engagement and consultation with key stakeholders and gathering and reviewing community feedback.

1.2. The project

To help us with our review, we gathered feedback from local residents, traders and the broader community who frequently access the centre medians. Feedback was received through an online survey and also via pop up stalls at Croxton Train station and on St Georges Road.

In addition to the online survey and pop-up stalls, we received formal submissions through email and also via one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders including:

- Darebin City Council
- Melbourne Water
- Yarra Trams
- Transport for Victoria
- Public Transport Victoria
- Emergency Services
- Bicycle User Groups



1.3. Community engagement activities

The objective of the engagement activities was to engage the local residents, traders and the broader community who frequently access the centre medians to give us feedback through our online survey.

We held two pop up events to raise awareness of the project and the online survey.

There was a Facebook post to advertise the pop up events and the survey.

*Number at intersections indicates number of crashes.

1.4. Key activities

Between Monday 1 May and Monday 15 May we had approximately 4959 interactions and 2312 responses to the survey. The table below shows how the interactions to how the community got involved.

| Forum | Results |
|--|--|
| Online survey | 2312 respondents |
| Community open pop up Croxtton Station 8th May 2017 | Approximately 500 people |
| Community open pop up St Georges Road/Arthurton Road, Northcote | Approximately 50 people |
| Email personal contact | 23 emails received |
| Facebook post 02 May – 08 May 2017 | 798 reactions 122 comments, 124 shares, 2074 post clicks |

1.5. Who contributed?

People who submitted feedback in person and online included:

- local residents
- have family or friends live nearby
- visit the area often to spend time there or nearby
- non-local commuters travelling through the area
- local business owners.

1.6. The overall reaction

Key stakeholders

There are opportunities to enhance the safety and movement of cyclists, pedestrians, tram passengers and emergency access along the corridor. However it is important to balance this with local access needs of the community.

Community

There was a mixed reaction from the community regarding the impact of the current closures and the response to permanent closures of medians on St Georges Road.

There is acknowledgement that traffic flow and safety along the shared path on St Georges Road are key considerations with significant response to the survey indicating the impacts of the closures were positive and created a safer cycling route and improved traffic flow for cyclists who use the shared path.

There was consistent feedback that the closures had impacted and increased traffic congestion with: increased traffic volumes, increased traffic on residential side streets and a change to regular journey routes. The closure impacted accessibility of east-west travel for those travelling by car and foot and also limited access to local amenities, businesses and schools.

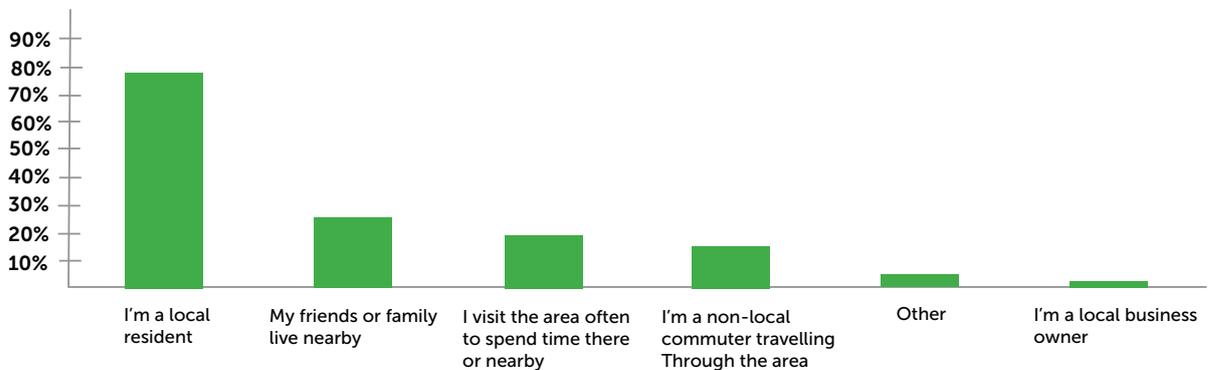
2. Survey results

The survey results are presented below. The quantifiable results are presented graphically to show all results received. The questions that enabled an open response have been summarised into key themes. Appendix 1 provides a copy of the full responses provided.

2.1. Using St Georges Road

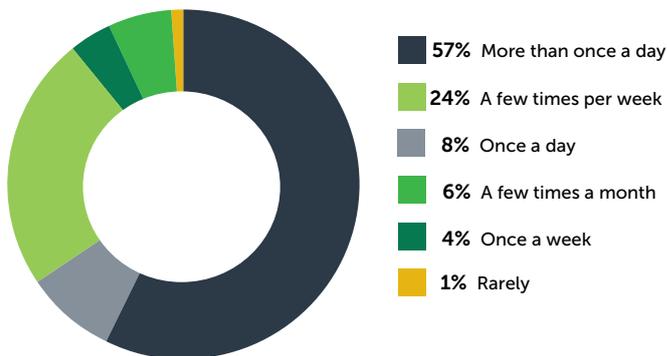
Of the 2312 responses to the survey, 2061 respondents indicated that they are a local resident; this is 79% of responses. The following graph shows the responses to the online survey, note respondents could tick all that apply.

Why do you travel along, use or cross St Georges Rd?



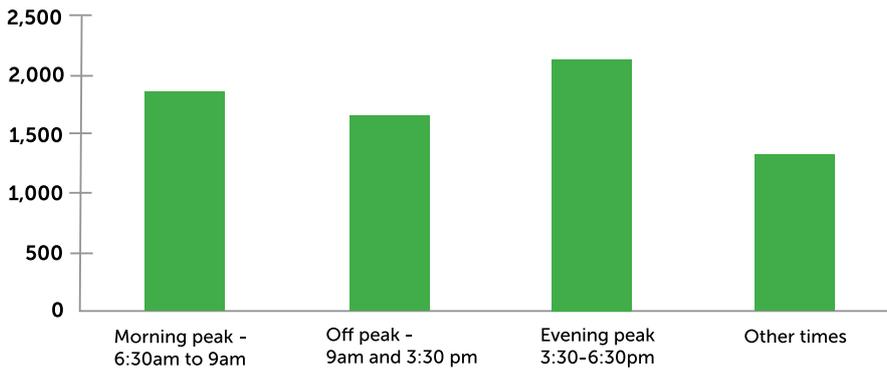
2.2. Frequency of travel

Respondents were asked how often they travelled, used or crossed St Georges Road. The graph below shows that St Georges Road is frequently used more than once a day.



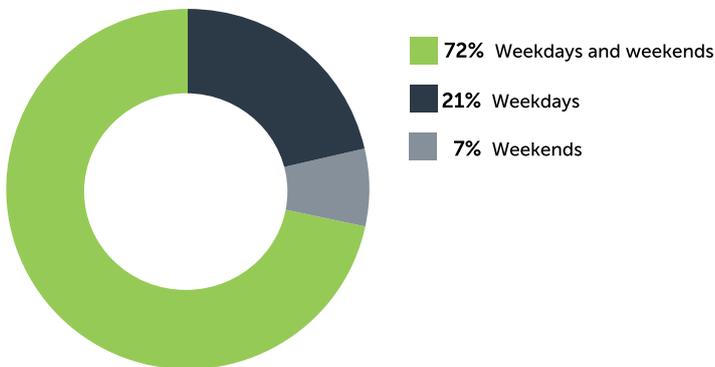
2.3. Time of travel

Respondents were asked what time they travelled along St Georges Road and the responses were varied, with people accessing the road at all times of the day. The evening period (3.30 – 6.30pm) being the most popular time of day (82% of respondents). The graph below shows the responses, note respondents could choose all that apply.



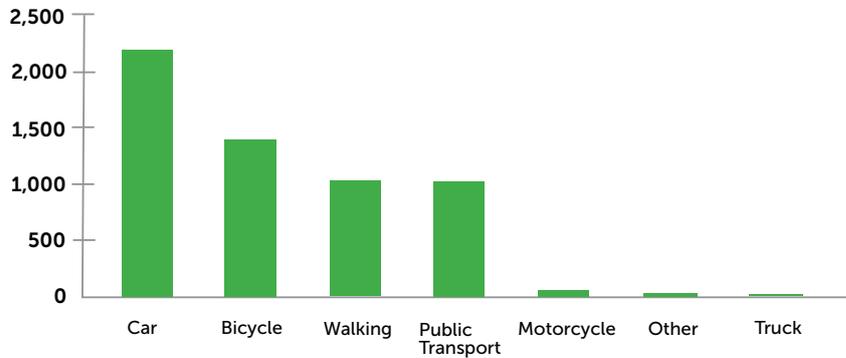
2.4. Day of usage

Respondents were asked when during the week they used St Georges Road. Respondents used St Georges Road across the week. The graph below shows the majority of respondents (72%) use St Georges Road during both weekdays and weekends.



2.5. Mode of travel

Respondents were asked what their usual mode of travel was. Responses indicated that they used a variety of travel modes, not just one. The majority of respondents use a car (84%), followed by bicycle (54%), walking and public transport (40%).



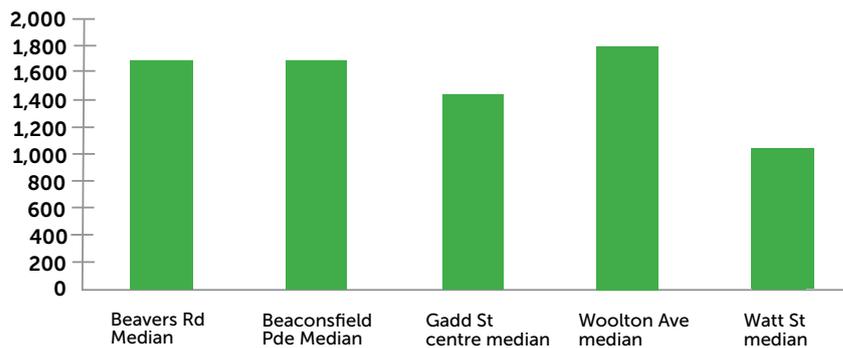
2.6. Use of the centre medians

Respondents were asked to select all medians that they frequently use. Woolton Avenue centre median had the most responses (1,815), with Beaconsfield (1,693) and Beavers (1,692) used an equal amount. Watt St received the least amount of responses (1,038). The graph below shows the responses.

Following this question the survey then asked respondents to select the medians they used and answer three questions:

- 1 Has the closure of this median had an impact on your journey?
- 2 Please explain how
- 3 Would you support this median being permanently closed?

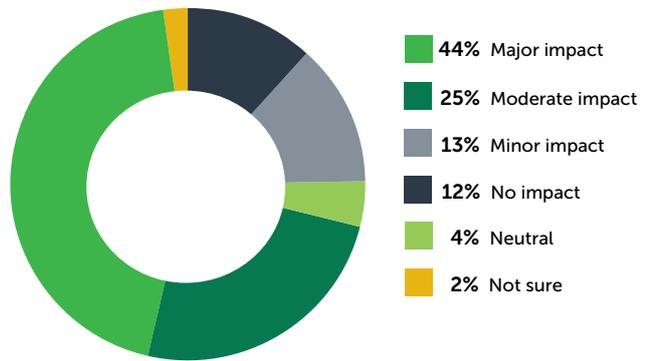
The next section details the responses to each median and then provides a summary of key themes on how respondents felt the closure impacted them.



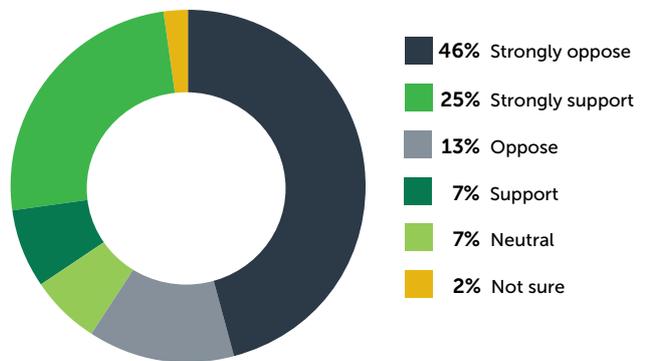
2.6.1. Beavers Road median impacts and responses

Respondents were asked to select all medians that they frequently use. Woolton Avenue centre median had the most responses (1,815), with Beaconsfield (1693) and Beavers (1692) used an equal amount. Watt St received the least amount of responses (1038). The graph below shows the responses.

Has the closure of Beavers Rd centre median had an impact on your journey?



Would you support the Beavers Rd centre median being permanently closed?



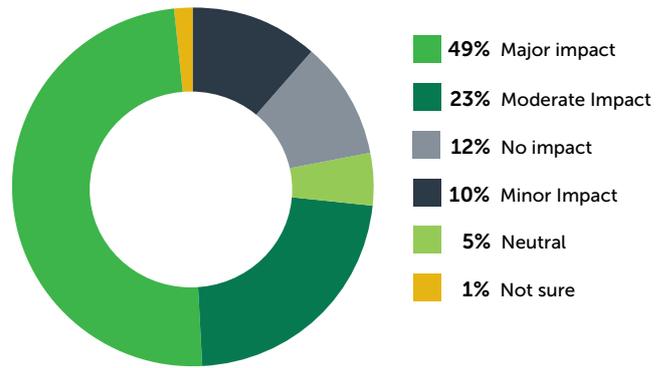
2.6.2. Beaconsfield Parade median impacts and responses

There were 1565 responses to the closure of the Beaconsfield Road median being an impact on a respondents journey. 72% of these responses felt it was an impact (49% major and 23% moderate). 22% felt it had no or minor impact.

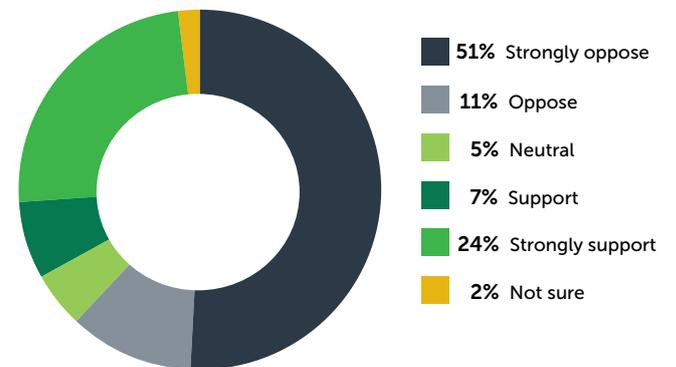
62% of respondents opposed the closure of Beaconsfield Road centre median and 31% supported the closure.

The graphs below show the breakdown of the responses to the questions of impact and closure.

Has the closure of the Beaconsfield Pde centre median had an impact on your journey?



Would you support the Beaconsfield Pde centre median being permanently closed?



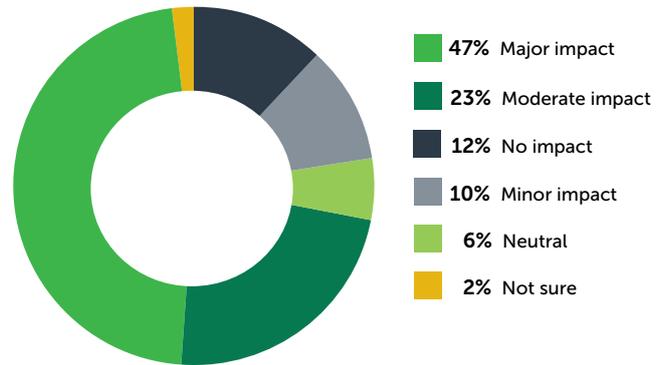
2.6.3. Gadd Street median impacts and responses

There were 1322 responses to the closure of the Gadd street median being an impact on a respondent's journey. 70% of these responses felt it was an impact (47% major and 23% moderate). 23% felt it had no or minor impact.

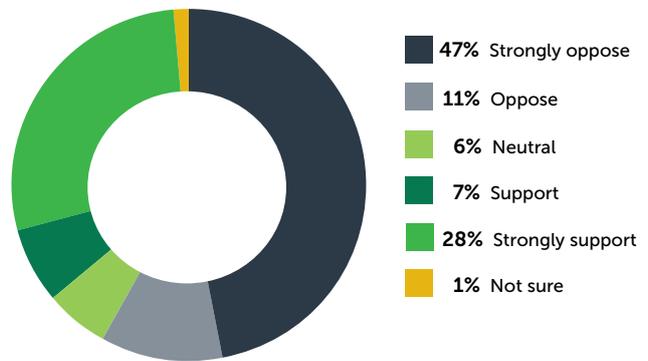
58% of respondents opposed the closure of Gadd Street centre median and 35% supported the closure.

The graphs below show the breakdown of the responses to the questions of impact and closure.

Has the closure of the Gadd St centre median had an impact on your journey?



Would you support the Gadd St centre median being permanently closed?



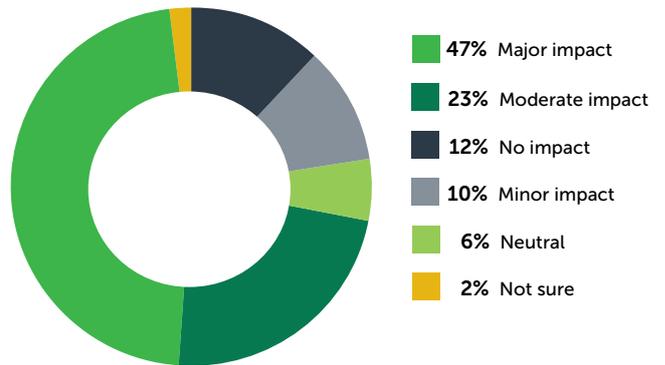
2.6.4. Woolton Avenue median impacts and responses

There were 1644 responses to the closure of the Woolton Avenue median being an impact on a respondent's journey. 69% of these responses felt it was an impact (44% major and 25% moderate). 24% felt it had no or minor impact.

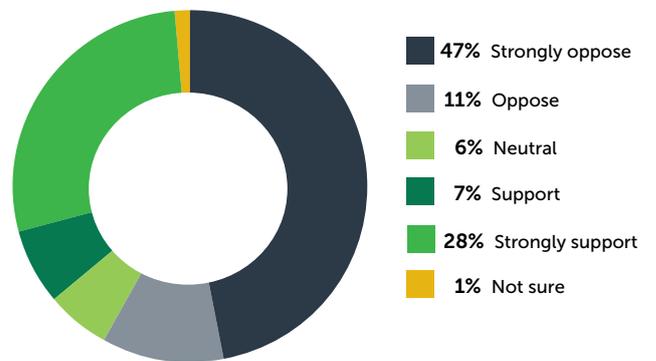
62% of respondents opposed the closure of Woolton Avenue centre median and 32% supported the closure.

The graphs below show the breakdown of the responses to the questions of impact and closure.

Has the closure of the Woolton Ave centre median had an impact on your journey?



Would you support the Woolton Ave centre median being permanently closed?



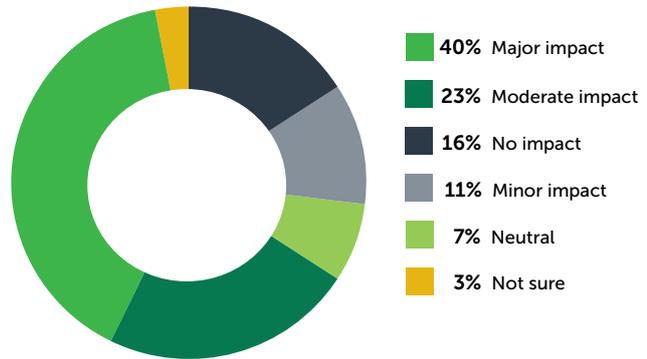
2.6.5. Watt Street median impacts and responses

There were 922 responses to the closure of the Watt Street median being an impact on a respondent's journey. 63% of these responses felt it was an impact (40% major and 23% moderate). 27% felt it had no or minor impact.

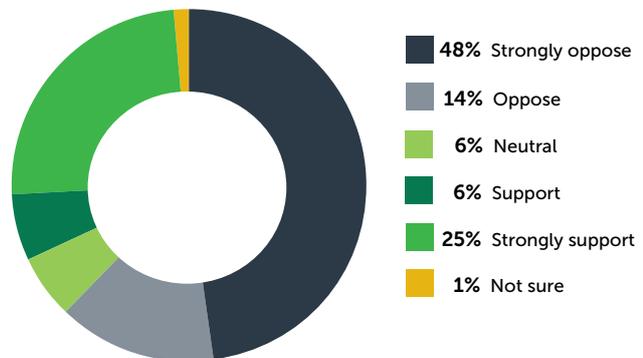
46% of respondents opposed the closure of Watt Street centre median and 43% supported the closure.

The graphs below show the breakdown of the responses to the questions of impact and closure.

Has the closure of the Watt St centre median had an impact on your journey?



Would you support the Woolton Ave centre median being permanently closed?



2.7. Impacts of the closures

The following is a summary of the broad feedback themes that were noted through the survey, pop ups and direct correspondence. Included with the summary are quotes provided in the survey to highlight these themes.

2.7.1. Cycling

Closure of the centre medians has had a positive impact on cycling. Those that responded to the survey saying the impacts were positive were comments related to using the shared path for cycling. The closure has not only improved safety for cyclists but has also improved the flow and speed for cycling.

Quote

It has made it much safer for me to ride along the path.

I feel so much safer cycling in this area!! I was hit in my bike on St Georges in Thornbury, by a car that failed to give way to me on the bike path. Cars always blow through the stop sign. I've seen so many cyclists get hit here. I used to feel too unsafe to use the bike path and id feel panicked about it. Now I can use the path confidently!! I love it!

All of the closures have negatively impacted travel by both car and bike. Major delays by car, overspill of traffic onto smaller roads causing further delays and higher risk for bike travel

It has made it safe for cyclists. It can be difficult to navigate the cycling traffic with the stops and starts during peak time and it feels significantly safer without the cars crossing

2.7.2. Traffic impacts

The most significant number of responses related to traffic impacts with the following being consistent comments regarding the closure of all the medians:

- There is increased traffic congestion in general
- There is increased traffic on the residential side streets with rat running and speeding
- Trucks are now using residential back streets
- There is increased car queue lengths on cross roads that are open: Arthurton and Normandy Roads
- Local residents now have increased journey routes and have to drive significantly further to return

There were some respondents that felt the closures ensured traffic speed was now lower and this in turn had positive impacts for the local environment as the medians were now safer.

Quote

When I come out of BiRoad Ave and need to head south, I now need to go to Normanby Road to do a U-turn. The number of cars in the turning lane has multiplied and it takes ages to get through. The alternative is to go via Leinster Grove to either Normanby or Arthurton and the amount of traffic on Leinster has increased significantly, which is not acceptable for a residential street

Use it to get to businesses and friends a lot. We use this crossing to get to friends, businesses Coffee shops, schools and supermarkets. Mostly, as local residents we need a way to cross St Georges ROAD several times a day and that does not involve us having to use already overcrowded intersections (St Georges/Separation and St Georges/Normanby). Having to go all the way around to those major intersection and join in the traffic to do a U turn is a nightmare, unnecessary and frustrating. As locals we already have to put up with the heavy traffic as it is. Don't make us join them as well

We need to go significant extra distance via Normanby avenue which is now congested with cars to drop off and pick up children from primary school. walking in the area has become dangerous due to extra cars.

Traffic congestion, having to take indirect routes, lengthy delays crossing St Georges road at intersections, more traffic through our home street (Smith Street) and frustration.

It has had a positive impact rather than negative. Less speeding traffic using Beaconsfield parade to avoid using the major roads. The crossover at Beaconsfield is dangerous for drivers, cyclists and trams.

2.7.3. Travel time impacts

One of the significant impacts was the increase to journey times due to increased traffic congestion and volumes of traffic. This is due to having to drive further to access local streets and the additional time to perform a u-turn. The increase in travel time has impacted the amount of fuel motorists need to use and respondents felt this would have negative impacts on the local environment and increased pollution levels.

Quote

Very difficult to get to outbound lanes - adds extra 10-15 minutes to what used to be a 2 minute crossing

Have children at special school and mainstream... And after school activities...what use to take 10 mins usually now takes 25 and I am often late for one youngster or the other.stressful and anxiety provoking

Traffic congestion is outrageous. Wait times at traffic lights are doubled or tripled. I've seen more accidents and near misses during these closures. Frustrated motorists taking large risks to beat traffic signals. Increased travel times are not wanted ever traffic in the area is bad enough already.

Congested traffic by having to use Normanby avenue and separation St as the only means to cross St Georges road. Has substantially increased my car travel time for school drop off. Because of the congestion a trip that would normally take 5 minutes to drive to the Northcote plaza now takes 20minutes. The increase in travel time has become very very frustrating!

It takes longer to get to where I need to go causing my car to be on the road for longer-more fumes/pollution-more expenses.

2.7.4. Pedestrians

Pedestrians that are crossing St Georges Road at one of the medians or using the shared path on St Georges Road responded that the closures have not only increased their route and journey times but has adversely impacted safety. Some respondents felt that if cyclists are able to travel at increased speeds they will be less likely to consider pedestrians crossing and will create an unsafe environment for others. They feel the path is not being used as a shared path and is only benefiting cyclists.

Quote

Traffic is terrible trying to get across St Georges road. Really dangerous for pedestrians.

The main impact here for us is the flow on congestion to the major intersections because of traffic having to seek alternative routes around. Also, St Georges Road pathway has become a racing thoroughfare for cyclists who think they are in a race now. I am now very fearful for my safety as a pedestrian walking on this pathway, even though it is a shared pathway, not just a cycling path. I would hate to be an old person trying to cross, or a mother with kids.

Live on Beaconsfield Parade. Due to the road closures, to crossover at Gladstone ave traffic lights, it's extremely dangerous to cross the shared path, let alone use it. Cyclists are travelling at extremely high speeds and it's very frightening to cross at peak time taking young kids to school. Why not consider the pedestrians equally as the cyclists. I believe it's a shared path.

I have adapted to the closure of Beaconsfield Parade to road traffic and prefer that it would stay closed for cars but allow pedestrians and bikes to cross there to reach Croxton railway station. However, Woolhouse Street and Leinster Grove would have to be adapted to take increased road traffic.

2.7.5. Access to public transport

Closures to the centre medians have impacted access to public transport. Survey respondents who are accessing the tram on St Georges Road and the Croxton train station now have increased journey routes and travel times.

Quote

Walking journeys have almost doubled. Missed trams. Almost wiped out by cyclists on a number of occasions

I live on Woolton Ave; this closure has affected me the most. I can no longer turn into my street off St Georges Road when driving, or easily walk to the tram stops or bus stops. It really does make me so frustrated.

Pedestrian access across St Georges Road at Gadd St is now closed and the tram stop is closed. I can't get to the Croxton train station without making a 600 metre detour, making the walk from my home 2kms.

Closes to the pedestrian path through Gadd street has also had a major impact including lack of access to the closest tram stop adding an additional 10 minutes to morning commutes. This in particular has made it more difficult and dangerous to walk home at night, having to go 15 minutes out of the way when travelling back from the train station.

2.7.6. Streetscape

Some survey respondents felt that to facilitate the current Melbourne Water works there has been a change to the streetscape in the temporary removal of plants and trees. This was seen as a negative impact as they felt there will be a significant change to the landscaping and that landscaping is an important feature in the area. However it was also seen as an opportunity to redesign the shared path and the median crossing to ensure landscaping did not impact site lines for all that used the medians as crossing points.

Quote

As a local resident not having the medium strip available has kept all the local traffic jammed with passer bye people. Maybe use landscape that's safe for EVERYONE. Cars, trams, bikes, walkers, wheelchair uses. Thanks.

So much better that all sections are closed. Four point traffic of foot, bike, car and tram is very dangerous and a real hazaRoad. So much better and hope they stay closed in the future. Will be good to get plants back as an eye sore for walking and riding, will be especially bad in hotter months.

I do not understand how motorist are being impacted and cyclist are taking no responsibility for the events which are taking place. The median strip has been poorly designed with the number of trees and plants up to each crossing that obstruct the view of motorist.

Horrified by the removal of such old and beautiful plants. Also traffic build up is now a pain. But I am most disgusted by the loss of such important and old plants.

2.7.7. Access to local amenities

The closure has significantly impacted accessibility of east –west travel not only in car travel but also walking and cycling. It has limited accessibility to local amenities, businesses and schools. More thought and time is needed to access local areas.

Quote

I work at Croxton School so cross Beaconsfield pde twice a day and it adds a good 10 - 15 minutes to my travel each day. Also our school buses take longer to arrive so our students miss valuable education time.

The closures have limited my access to the parks and shops on both sides of St Georges Road. The closures have also significantly increased vehicle traffic on my road. Vehicles are travelling much faster, in excess of the speed limit, along St. Georges Road since the closure endangering me and my family.

Travel times to work have increased dramatically. Getting to and from school ballet classes, medical appointments and grocery shopping has become much more difficult.

Gadd st is somewhere I used to frequent because of the dance school, but after these closures I have stopped going there because it's too much of a hassle to get around... which makes me wonder how many other businesses are being affected by these closures!

I can't get to my business, my customers are going elsewhere & it's costing me heaps on my fuel bill who will pay my expenses.

2.7.8. Other options to closures

Some survey respondents acknowledged the challenges and impacts but also suggested that there were other alternatives to closures that they would like to see considered: landscaping, signage, signalisation, median treatments and awareness campaigns.

Quote

All young families in this area need to travel by car and closure of ANY of these crossovers increases travel time A LOT! Why not explore other measures to make the crossover safer, such as better visibility of bikes, signs for trams and driver education.

Getting from one side of St Georges Road to the other has become a completely ridiculous situation. As a local resident it is apparent that roads are struggling to deal with current traffic congestion so why on earth would we close more access points? At the commencement of this survey, statistics re: Road accident casualties are presented. Do you realise why these accidents have occurred? I do! I have had 2 separate incidents involving cyclists while driving my car in the past 3 years. Let me preface, I am not a cyclist hater as I cycle myself as well. The problem is that the bike lane is extremely busy and cyclists move at a fast pace and you can't see them until you push out because of the plants on either side of the bike track that can grow above the viewing point. One of the dumbest things I have seen in the local area. Take these away, allow proper viewing and accidents will reduce. No need to close of access roads. This would show an extreme lack of vision and create only another problem.

3. Summary

There was a mixed reaction from the community regarding the impact of the current closures and the response to permanent closures of medians on St Georges Road. The closures have improved safety and accessibility of the shared path for cyclists. However there have been significant impacts to traffic congestion, journey times and pedestrian access and safety.

In general 60% of respondents did not support the majority of medians being closed, with the exception of Watt St, where 43% of respondents supported the closure.

4. Next steps

Thank you to everyone who attended the pop up opportunities and completed the online survey in May 2017. We will be using this feedback together with our targeted stakeholder engagement feedback and our traffic modelling research to inform our decision on the future of the median openings.

