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Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Minister for Transport Infrastructure
1 Spring Street
Melbourne 3000

16 July 2021

Dear Minister,

SURREY HILLS-MONT ALBERT LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL PROJECT

Thank you for your letter of 12 July 2021 responding to the Association's letter of 29 April.

The Association is deeply disappointed by the failure of the LXR to address any of our significant concerns in the updated designs released in June. Contrary to your advice, virtually none of the material outcomes sought by this Association have been delivered in the recent plans.

I note, in particular, your comments that *"Substantial decking over the trench to provide new open space is not within the scope of the project . . . [and] of the 20 rail trench projects delivered . . . only one has included decking over the trench to provide new open space."*

From the outset, this Association has argued that the scope of the project needs to be expanded in order that the unique challenges raised by its design can be properly addressed.

Key to note is that this is the only level crossing removal project that involves replacing two historical stations with one new station; with that station to be placed in a completely new location.

Due to the significant disruption to the suburban fabric created by this approach (at three key locations - Mont Albert Village, Surrey Hills Village and in the residential corridor precinct), this project cannot sensibly be compared with the other rail trench projects undertaken by your government.

It makes no sense and is, in fact, quite negligent to ignore these unique impacts in scoping the project.

The removal of long standing stations from their locations and the urban framework that has established around them, without compensating for or mitigating this loss in meaningful ways, is simply vandalism.

Similarly, squeezing a large new super station into a narrow suburban residential corridor, encroaching severely on a public park, again without appropriate design accommodation or mitigation, is totally unacceptable.

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The SHPA rejects the LXP's most recent plan for the project because it:

- Threatens the future of the two shopping villages by removing the stations and replacing them with an ugly trench;
- Removes and moonscapes public open space at Lorne Parade Reserve including significant oak and eucalypt trees and vegetation;
- Severely impacts neighbourhood character, heritage and amenity in the residential corridor;
- Creates access and safety problems for all commuters, including people with disabilities, at both station entrances; and
- Fails to deck the trench, at strategic points, with connecting community spaces that support both shopping villages and properly integrate the new station precinct with the changed urban environment.

Accordingly, the Association requests that the Government revert to its original plan and the promise it made at the last election that **“The removal works will also deliver two new stations at Mont Albert and Surrey Hills”** (source: Media Release by The Hon Jacinta Allan MP 23 October 2018).

Incidentally, a commitment not only made in October 2018 but reaffirmed in mid 2019 and promoted on the websites of our local members of parliament as recently as May 2021.

Completely unfounded claims by the LXP that the government's promised plan would require the compulsory acquisition of the Coles supermarket in Surrey Hills have been debunked by independent engineering advice that reveals a number of feasible and compliant options are available to meet the government commitment.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Buchanan
President

cc: Premier, Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
Hon David Davis MP
Paul Hamer MP
Will Fowles MP
Matthew Bach MP
Steve Brown LXP
Cr Andrew Munroe, Mayor City of Whitehorse
Cr Amanda McNeill
Cr Garry Thompson, Mayor City of Boroondara
Cr Jane Addis
Simon McMillan CEO Whitehorse
Phillip Storer CEO Boroondara