

Belgrave Station car park upgrade

Summary of community feedback
June 2020



Over 300 individuals and organisations have had their say on the design of the car park upgrade, including 291 respondents to an online survey.

The Victorian Government is improving access to public transport by upgrading and increasing car parking at stations.

At Belgrave Station, up to 470 new car parking spaces are being delivered to boost total parking capacity to more than 600 spaces.

Along with the additional parking, other improvements include:

- better pedestrian access for people of all abilities
- increased safety features with new CCTV, lighting and public announcement system,
- better integration between the station and the Belgrave township.

Since early 2019, we have sought the views of the Belgrave community to inform the design of the new car park.

This has included targeted engagement with the Yarra Ranges Council and relevant statutory authorities, local stakeholders including local trader and resident groups, tourism operators, Metro Trains Melbourne, station users, and interested residents and disability user groups.

This engagement included presentations to councillors, meetings with council officers, meetings with the local State Member of Parliament, one to one meetings with key stakeholder groups, conducting drop in sessions for the general public, and seeking direct input from station users about what they want as part of the design.

In April and May 2020, we presented a concept design to the Belgrave community seeking further input to inform the next stage of design. To support engagement activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing requirements, an online survey was hosted on the Department of Transport's Get Involved website from 27 April to 17 May 2020.

The survey was promoted in the Belgrave Mail local newspaper, on signage at the station, and via a postcard distributed to 2000 local properties.

Between these methods of engagement, we had input from over 300 individuals and organisations to help inform the design of the car park upgrade.

Who we heard from

291 people responded to the online survey. Of these, 218 (74 per cent) were local residents, including 75 living within one kilometre of the station. 19 respondents were local traders or owners and employees of local businesses, and 75 respondents were station users from outside of Belgrave.

Of the 286 people that responded to the question about travelling to the station:

- 182 currently drive and park at the station
- 97 currently walk to the station
- 92 drive and park in neighbouring streets
- 48 take the bus
- 11 use bicycles and e-bikes.

What we heard

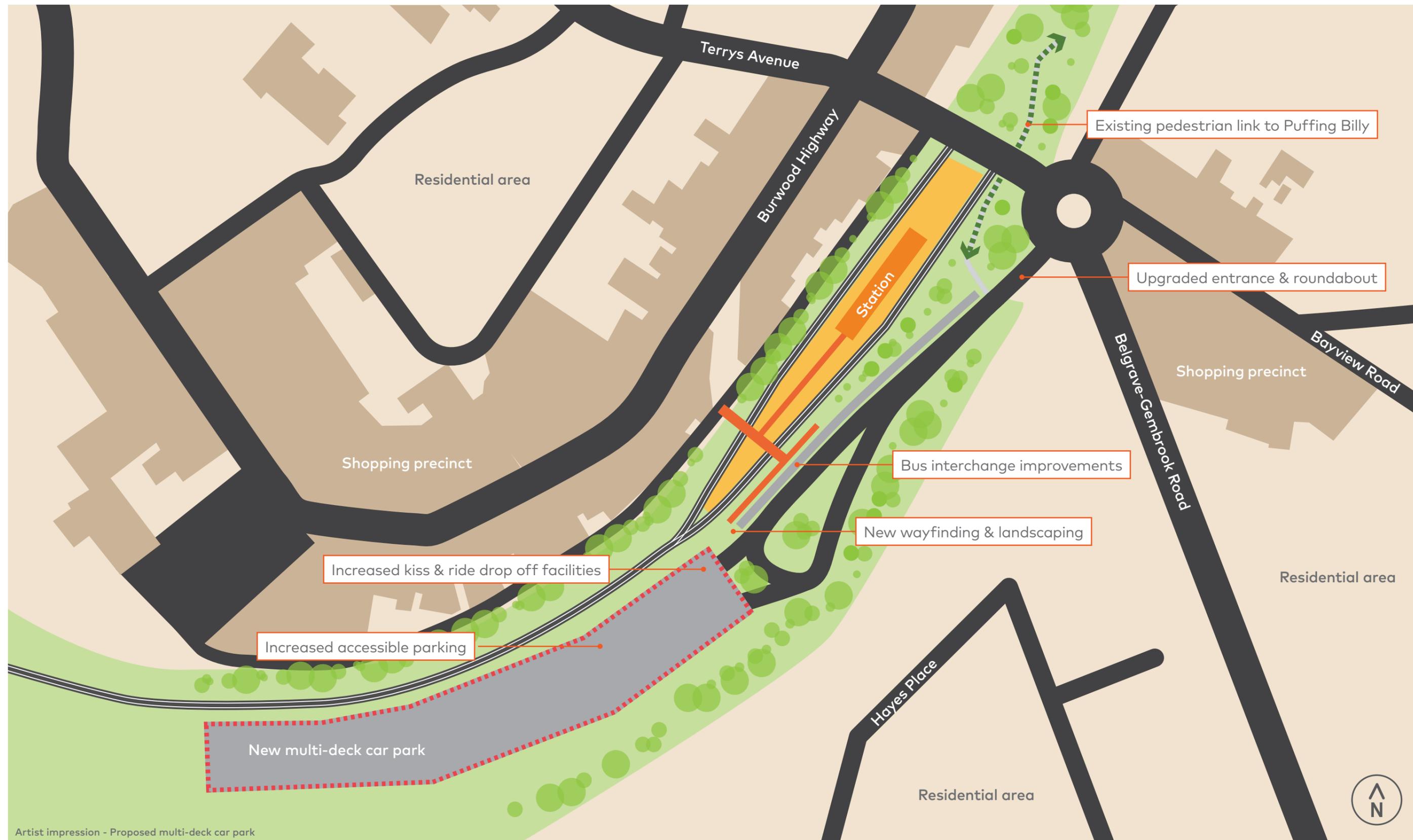
Overall, local residents, traders and station users welcome the car park upgrade and want it delivered as soon as possible with enough spaces to cater for future growth.

They want to see improved traffic management and safety in and around the car park and bus interchange, and better access in and out of the station precinct.

Whilst people want the new infrastructure, they want it done in a way that complements the area's unique character and values, particularly its natural environment.

Please note, comments provided by the community have not been changed to correct spelling or grammar.

Belgrave Station sitemap



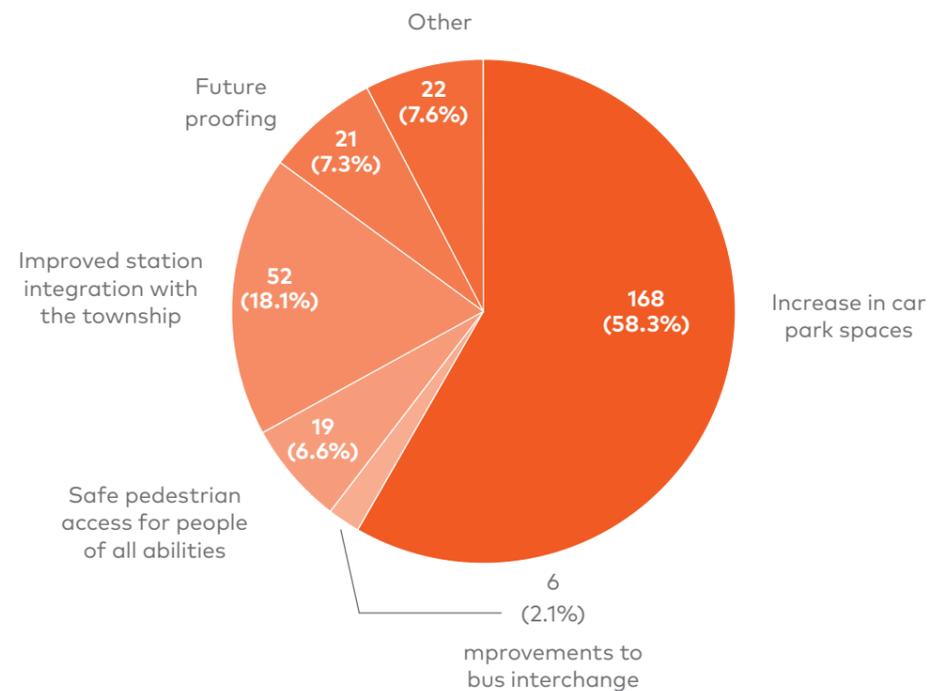
Artist impression - Proposed multi-deck car park

1. What is most important to the community about the upgrade?

Increasing the number of car parking spaces is the top priority, with 58.3 per cent identifying this as the most important benefit. Within this extra capacity, respondents want the design to cater for:

- larger vehicles
- people of all abilities
- station staff
- commuters who travel after school drop off times, and
- visitors to Puffing Billy.

Better integration between the station precinct and the Belgrave township was the second most important identified benefit (18.1 per cent).



Some of the comments people made in particular include:

- "Bus interchange, good lighting, number of carparks left displayed, electric car charge stations."
- "Car parking spaces for Puffing Billy passengers."
- "More car parking spaces are definitely needed and planning for the future beyond the next few years a MUST."
- "Belgrave is the end of the line, and accessible from other locales such as Narre Warren. As neighbouring areas grow, further stress will be placed on the Belgrave line and thus parking. It will no doubt require an increase in capacity in years to come."

2. What is the most important design aspect of the new multi-deck car park?

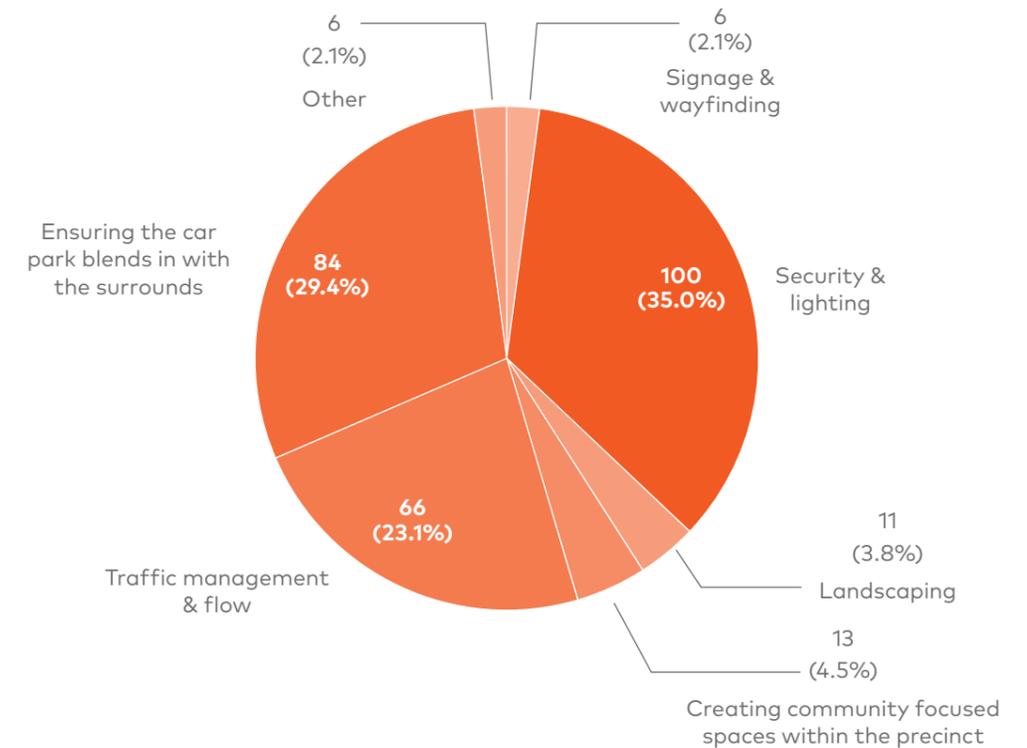
The most important design aspects identified were:

- improving security and lighting (35.0 per cent)
- ensuring the car park blends in with the surrounds (29.4 per cent)
- improving traffic management (23.1 per cent).

Concerns about traffic management included challenges getting in and out of the existing car park, especially during peak hour, and school drop-off and pick-up times.

Survey respondents also highlighted a lack of drop-off and pick-up spaces, with double parked vehicles blocking the bus interchange while they wait to collect train passengers as being particular problems.

Responses also expressed concerns about security at night, and the adequacy of existing lighting.



In particular, people said:

- "Access for visually disabled people and guide dogs. Provision should be made for toileting Guide/Assistance dogs."
- "Congestion occurs near the roundabout - especially at school times."
- "Conflicts around bus bay area for pedestrians, kiss and ride and bus traffic. (Not enough kiss and ride space)."
- "Often at end of normal school days, with pedestrians, school kids being picked up & train commuters with buses & cars leaving car park."
- "I experience congestion around Belgrave itself as there are not enough car parking spaces."
- "The lack of parking means rail commuters congest not only all of the car parks in town but also local streets and also the main road leading in to station, the Main Street of Belgrave can be like a ghost town however every conceivable parking spot is full to capacity."
- "Congestion is worst when exiting the station complex and entering the roundabout on Belgrave-Gembrook Rd."

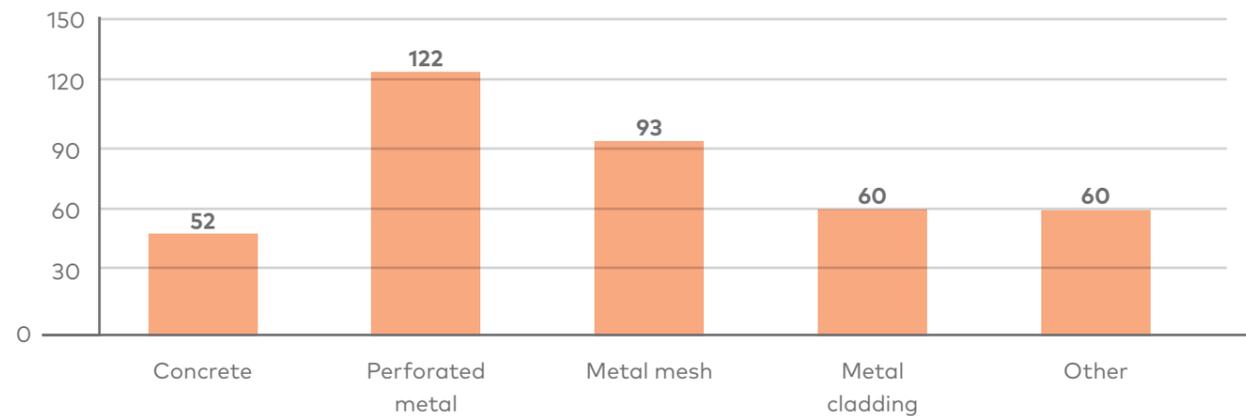


3. What material would you like to see on the facade?

Community members made it clear that preserving the natural value of the area was important. There is a strong desire for a design that will blend in with the character of Belgrave – its leafy green environment, village feel, and status as home to Puffing Billy. The impact of the car park on the environment and matters of sustainability were expressed as both concerns and opportunities.

Therefore, the physical appearance of the new car park structure is important. Some survey respondents had expressed a preference for timber materials to be incorporated in the structure, however this is not possible due to fire safety requirements.

In the survey, 122 respondents (41.9 per cent) wanted perforated metal on the façade of the new car park. Metal mesh is the next most popular choice (31.9 per cent), followed by metal cladding and then concrete.

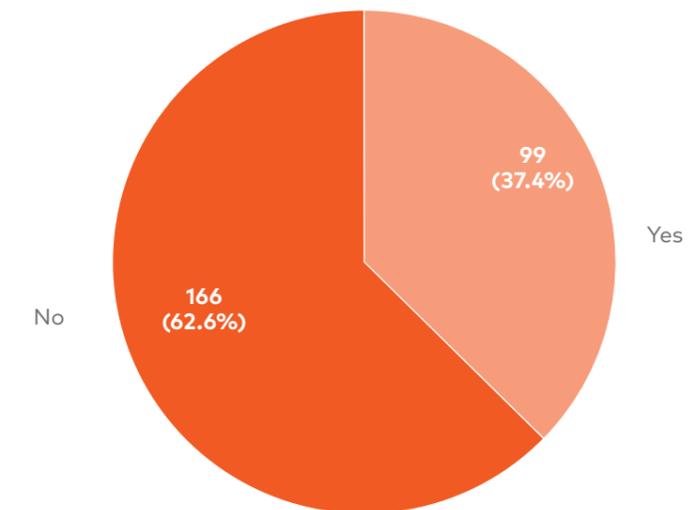


In particular, people said:

- "Timber-like appearance as a detail would be great."
- "I would like to see it reflect the image of the original historic station that was first built on the site."
- "Noting that timber cannot be used, another product that looks like timber and fits with our environment."
- "Your design concept looks pretty good to me!"
- "Rustic materials that add an artistic vibe to the town"
- "Colours that don't fade graffiti resistant."
- "Recycled materials or use of materials that later can be recycled"
- "A safe and inviting space with lots of natural light and greenery, a living garden."

4. Do you currently have issues entering or exiting the car park?

The current car park is constrained and 37.4 per cent of survey respondents experienced issues entering and exiting, and with internal traffic flow. Comments referred to the impact on specific groups of station/bus interchange users, including pre-school and school aged children, tourists, cyclists, and people with disabilities.



In particular, people said:

- "Poorly signed and designed one way traffic system. Cars often don't see/ignore one way directions and can get dangerous especially in poor light."
- "Buses blocking the road."
- "Bottleneck.... on entrance to carpark, past the buses."
- "As pedestrian walking to/from Hayes Place to the Station I regularly find that motor vehicles don't use their turn signals or look for pedestrians on this path, so I'm always very cautious crossing here."
- "Peak times hard to access & a confusing roundabout with people entering from Belgrave not indicating direction etc."
- "That there be clear vision of passengers coming off the ramp and pick up zone and car waiting to pick up zone spaces."
- "Roundabout requires improving and the entry exit widened."
- "Pinch point with narrow roadway when buses are parked and two directions of traffic operating"
- "Puffing Billy patrons are clueless of where to park, signage needs addressing."
- "Currently there are cars parked all along the main road between the roundabouts due to lack of carpark places."
- "It is difficult to see pedestrians when driving through the car park. They have nowhere safe to walk while walking to their cars."
- "The traffic on Belgrave Gembrook road is very busy in the mornings. The weirdly shaped roundabouts and the congestion on the bridge and into Belgrave is poorly designed and needs priority"

5. Is there anything specific you would like to see in the design for the multi-deck car park?

Other design aspects survey respondents noted as desirable include:

- access for people of all abilities
- minimising impacts on neighbouring residents
- sufficient parking spaces appropriate to the types of cars used in the area
- dedicated motorbike spaces
- environmental sustainable design features.

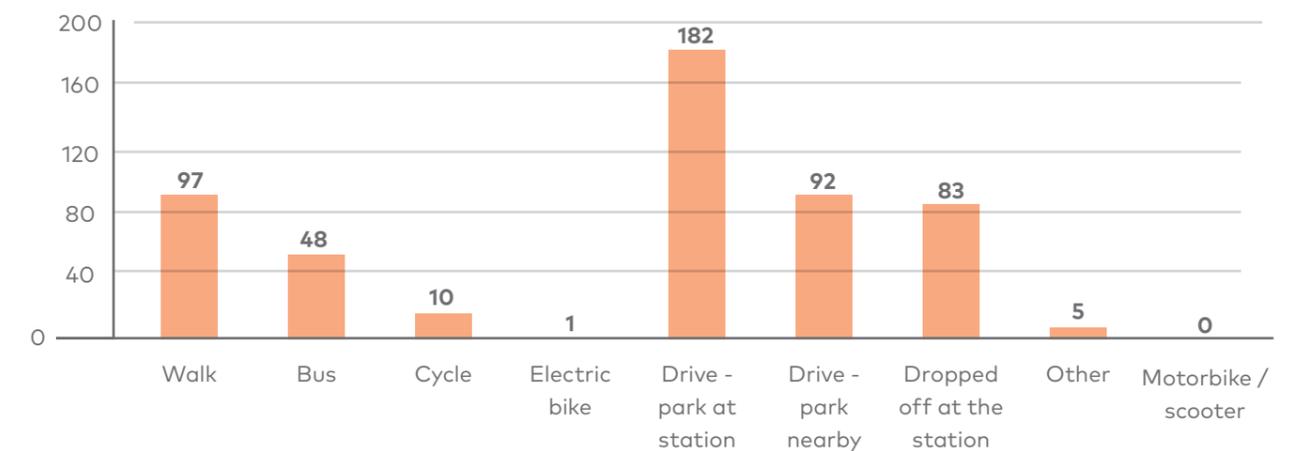
In particular, people said:

- "Keep the trees to ensure some separation from Hayes Place, design it so it's not an eye-sore, and won't create extra noise. Ensure enough security and lighting that it, and the park beneath it, don't become a local hang-out place. We already have trouble with this."
- "Pedestrian zebra crossing on entrance to give priority to those that are walking to and from Hayes Place. This reinforces that people should choose a sustainable and healthy alternative to the car..."
- "Whilst you have talked about the inclusion of good lighting, I wish to add that as a local resident, yellow lighting, over white light is my strong recommendation, to avoid light pollution."
- "Signage for welfare services in area, community notice board, lost & found notice board for things we accidentally leave on the train, food truck for homeless / underprivileged folk at night."
- "Retain and replant native trees. Provide highest standard of access for the disabled"
- "The use of earthy tones of concrete mixed with varying green tones of perforated metal. Direct access from the car park to a rebuilt station footbridge at an equivalent level (ie, not having to go down and up like at Syndal)"
- "I don't want people smoking in or around the station, as people seem to just smoke in front of the no smoking signs at the current bus interchange and it frustrates me. Another thing, can we get LED lights and not the orange sodium vapour lamps that street lights are. I think white LED lights will look good and also use less electricity. Oh and lots of security cameras so I feel safe at night"
- "Is it possible to address the heat island effect which will occur on the top layer of the carpark, by incorporating some large tub plantings on the top deck? These do not have to take from carparks, as they can exist on the interacting corners of four parking spaces (this has been done very well in the Berwick Woolworths carpark) Thinking of addressing the heat-island effect early on avoids retro-fitting down the track when this becomes an issue."
- "Ample width per space to reduce the instances of cars being damaged when having to shoehorn your car in too small a space Ample lighting inside and out Adequate signage Put some thought into the traffic management in and out of the carpark and execute it accordingly"
- "High enough that 4WDs can enter."
- "Efforts to blend the carpark into the environment 2. Security for moving around the carpark 3. Dual entrance ways at both the entrance to the carpark and where cars/buses come in from the roundabout."

6. Do you own an electric car or plan to own one in the future? When do you aim to own one?

Less than two per cent of respondents indicated that they own an electric car, however almost 75 per cent indicated they would consider owning one in the future. This means that provision will need to be made for electric vehicle charging stations.

7. How do you currently travel to the station?



Most respondents, 182 (62.5 per cent), drive and park at the station. The equal second most common travel options were for commuters who walked to the station or drive and park in neighbouring streets; 97 (33.3 per cent) and 93 (31.9 per cent) respectively.

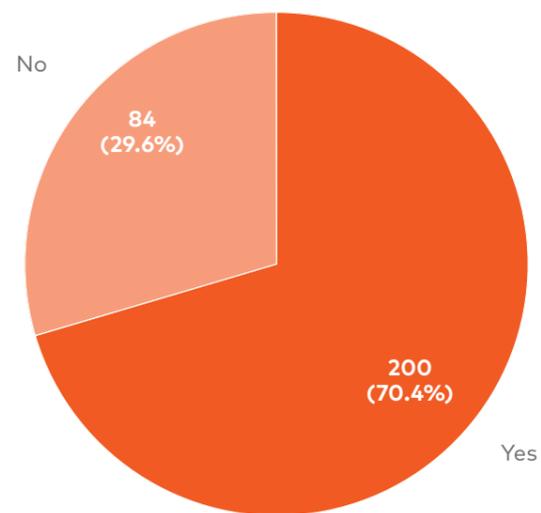
Only 48 (16.4 per cent) people took the bus to the station and even less rode their bikes, 10 (3.4 per cent) and a single electric bike response was recorded.



8. Do you experience congestion around the station?

When asked if they experience congestion in or around the station precinct, 70.4 per cent of respondents said yes. This question elicited one of the highest number of responses, with almost 174 respondents providing feedback.

Many comments related to getting in and out of the existing car park, especially during peak hour and school drop-off and pick-up times. Several respondents highlighted insufficient drop-off/pick-up spaces, bus traffic, and vehicles blocking the bus interchange while they wait to collect train passengers as being particular problems.



In particular, people said:

- "I experience congestion around Belgrave itself as there are not enough car parking spaces."
- "Entering in the mornings during peak commute periods, and exiting the station in afternoon peak commute periods can be congested, exacerbated by the traffic congestion caused by the roundabouts and pedestrian lights into Belgrave..."
- "Cars dropping people off / picking them up from the station makes a lot of wait times and is very dangerous."
- "Car parking spaces for the township are constantly used for station travellers. Tourists visiting for Puffing Billy also have a hard time accessing parking."
- "Closely placed roundabouts can get congested during peak times. However, locals appreciate that this is a hard issue to solve."
- "The roundabout is always congested during school times and peak hours."
- "No parking, and the traffic around the station does not flow during peak times."
- "Roundabout, school time, even weekends."

Access for all abilities

Ensuring the station car park is accessible to people of all abilities featured in the comments across answers to different survey questions. Lighting, signage and wayfinding were also priority considerations.

In particular, people said:

- "Safety. Access all abilities."
- "Lifts rather than having to walk up and down stairs."
- "Making it as unobtrusive as possible, and ensuring that it is safe for solo commuters."
- "Easy, level access for people, not in wheelchairs, who have compromised physical ability and can't easily negotiate ramps or a distance from the train platform."
- "Elevator and toilets with good security."
- "Wider and longer car parking spaces....the large 4wd vehicles people are using at present take up the whole space provided in car parks making it difficult to get in/out of your vehicle - especially if you're not in your prime!"

Broader community benefits

Survey respondents also saw the opportunity for broader community benefits to flow from the project.

In particular, people said:

- "Signage for welfare services in area, community notice board, lost & found notice board for things we accidentally leave on the train, food truck for homeless / underprivileged folk at night."
- "Commission some local artists to work on the project as consultants, looking for ways to make the carpark a more pleasant space that blends with the surroundings and isn't just a serviceable concrete box."
- "Good urban design includes opportunities for impromptu social interaction, so please consider building in purpose bench seating at the base of the large gum (that would be terrific and could be done cost effectively if featuring simple railway sleeper benches, as a nod of appreciation to the area's railway history). Currently the artist's image only features grasses planted here."
- "Distinctive municipal buildings can become landmarks in their own right: tourists will photograph them if they are unusually appealing. Can we create something of that kind in Belgrave?"



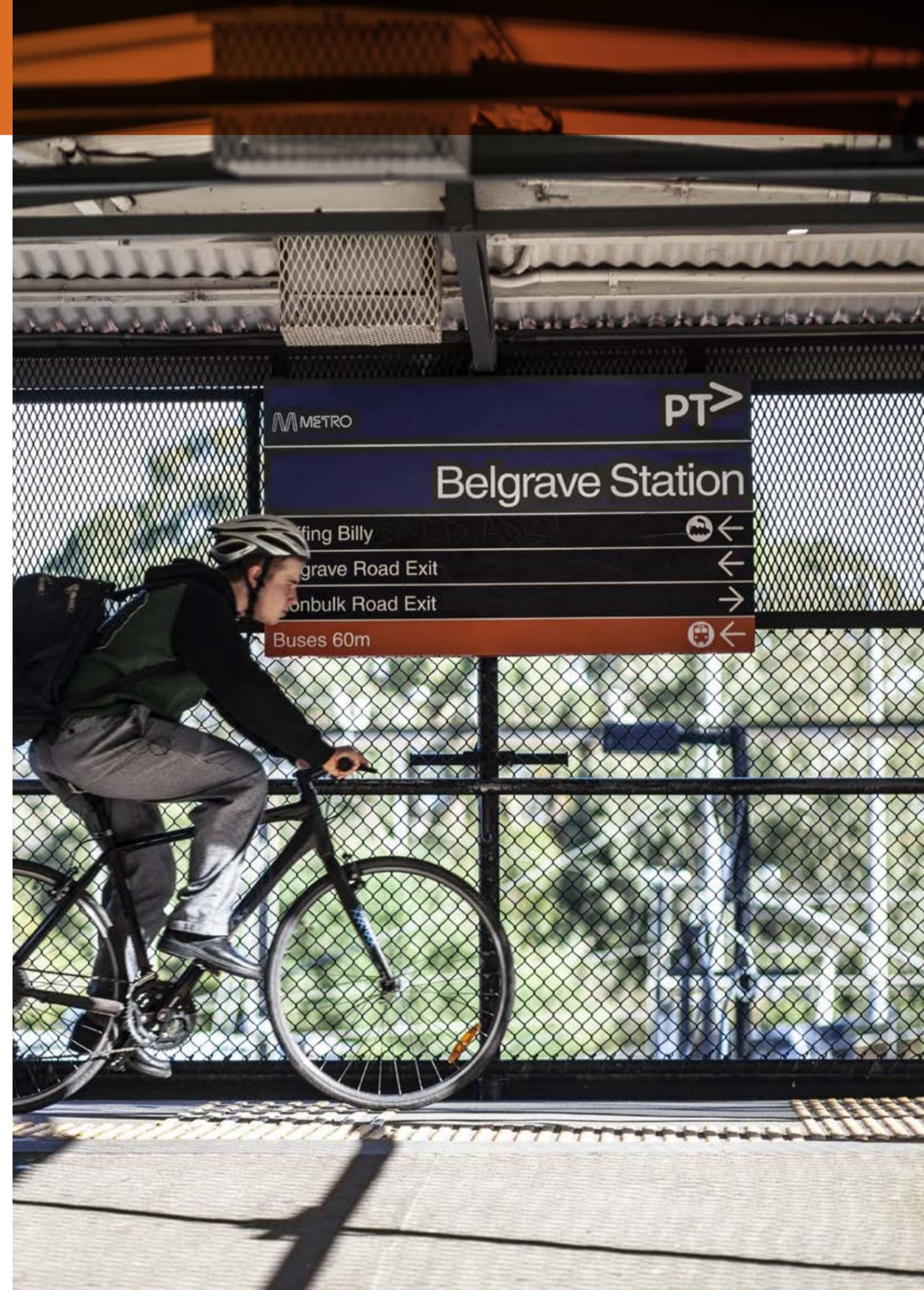
Artist impression - Proposed multi-deck car park

9. During construction the current car park will be closed. How can we help you travel to the station?

As the car park upgrade will take place on the site of the existing car park, its construction will pose a significant disruption to station users. Survey respondents have acknowledged this disruption and have made a number of suggestions on alternative options to access to the station through the construction phase, noting that there are limited parking options in Belgrave in close proximity to the station and at other nearby stations. VicTrack will advise on alternative parking options as the project develops.

When asked what their preferences would be during the construction phase, people said:

- "An option to park elsewhere."
- "I'll go to Upwey or Upper Ferntree Gully station instead."
- "I walk up from Hayes Place, so keeping that route up available and safe would help me."
- "Do not, allow parking in side streets. Temp car park with shuttle bus is preferred."
- "You can't. We'll suck it up... but get it built quickly."
- "Make sure access remains to Hayes Place. Also if you want to support the local businesses that is always a plus (post iso I wouldn't mind a donut, sausage or other snack)."
- "We would love to see the Puffing Billy car park below old service station, cleaned up and made useful for passengers."
- "I will travel to a different station during construction."





Chronology of community engagement activities

Late 2018: Early engagement on high level concept design

- Local residents survey
- Face to face engagement with station users, community and local trader groups and the Yarra Ranges Council

2019: Development of concept design

- Technical advisers
- Community 'drop in' on high level schematic designs
- Online survey
- Face to face engagement with commuters, community and local traders and Yarra Ranges Council
- Consultation with railway operator on technical requirements
- Site surveys and geo-technical assessments
- Input from relevant statutory authorities on key design requirements – Department of Transport (VicRoads and Public Transport Victoria)

Mid 2020: Finalisation of concept design

- Presentation to Yarra Ranges councillors and officials and key transport stakeholders.
- Online survey to allow further community input into design (27 April – 17 May)

The survey was promoted in the Belgrave Mail local newspaper, on signage at the station, and via a postcard distributed to 2000 local properties.

Key stakeholders include:

Metro Trains Melbourne, Yarra Ranges Council, Visit Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, Public Transport Users Association, Emerald Valley Tourist Board (Puffing Billy), bus operators (tourist and public transport), Belgrave Traders Association, local organisations and businesses, Country Fire Authority, Yarra Ranges Council Disability Advisory Group, Landcare and Australia Post.

Engagement with community, station users, local residents and local traders is ongoing.