

Odenwald Road Bridge

– Improving safety for pedestrians

We are seeking:

- Government investment of \$5 million to construct a new Odenwald Road Bridge across the Hurstbridge Railway Line, and to include provision for safe pedestrian access.



The Odenwald Road Bridge is the only road bridge and pedestrian access connecting the Eaglemont residential estate with the nearby Heidelberg and Ivanhoe Activity Centres.

The narrow two-way bridge does not have a separated footpath for pedestrians and is a major safety concern for residents of the area. Traffic surveillance reports show vehicles approaching Odenwald Road Bridge from both directions at speeds of up to 50km/h with limited vision for pedestrians on the bridge at the same time.

Additionally, a recent audit of the bridge has identified that its structural integrity is not capable of carrying heavy vehicles and a 14-tonne load limit has been placed on the bridge.

History

Odenwald Road Bridge was built in the 1800s as a horse carriage bridge.

It is the main route to Studley Road from Eaglemont and has a high volume of vehicle using it for access between Eaglemont, Heidelberg, and Ivanhoe. It is often used as a rat run between Lower Heidelberg Road and Studley Road to avoid the traffic congestion around the Banksia Street and Lower Heidelberg Road intersection.

“We often witness elderly pedestrians who cross the bridge slowly. Some have hearing issues and do not hear oncoming traffic. Mums with babies are exposed to just as much risk as they generally have large prams when crossing the bridge. The best solution is a new pedestrian only footbridge placed immediately to the north of the existing bridge. This completely and safely separates pedestrians and vehicle traffic.”

Local resident, 2022 Community Survey

The bridge is located between Alandale Road and Studley Road and is the only northern crossing over the Hurstbridge Railway Line for Eaglemont residents, traders and visitors to Eaglemont Village.

“As a long time resident of Ivanhoe and of Eaglemont I have witnessed many ‘near misses’ on this bridge both between vehicles and pedestrians and vehicles... We have a lot of older residents in Eaglemont that struggle greatly to cross the bridge in a timely and safe manner. We also have a lot of young families and I have seen mothers with prams trying to negotiate the bridge under great duress with cars travelling at speed...”

The only safe option would be to have a separate pedestrian only walkway running alongside the current road bridge.”

Local resident, 2022 Community Survey

This bridge is the main connection between Eaglemont, the hospitals district and Ivanhoe and Heidelberg Activity Centres.

Recent traffic data indicates that approximately 3300 vehicles travel across the Odenwald Road Bridge daily, with more than 300 vehicles during peak hour.

An increasing number of trucks are using the bridge, with heavy vehicles rising from 4.2 per cent of traffic volumes to 5.8 per cent over the past two years.

The ageing infrastructure was never built to accommodate such large and heavy volumes of traffic.

Structurally unsound

A 2021 audit by the Office of National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) found that urgent structural works are needed if the bridge is to continue carrying heavy vehicle loads.

Following the ONRSR audit and after discussions with MTM, Council installed 14-tonne load limit signs on the bridge.

Since the load limit signs were installed, vehicles above the load limit have still been observed using the bridge due to limited alternative routes into and out of the area.



Improvements to pedestrian safety

In 2022, Council applied to Metro Trains Melbourne (MTM) seeking consent for interim improvements to pedestrian safety across the bridge.

This involved a six-month trial of:

- Reducing the bridge from two traffic lanes to a single lane, with linemarking and signage prompting vehicles to wait before crossing; and
- Installing speed reduction measures on bridge approaches and additional footpath and kerb ramp improvements.

Council was advised that for MTM to endorse the project, protection screens would need to be fitted to the bridge to prevent any potential danger between pedestrians and the high voltage wires in the railway corridor.

To achieve this a structural load would need to be applied to the bridge, which the bridge cannot support.

Considering the response from MTM, it is not feasible or practical to continue with the original proposed trial.

Pedestrian safety remains a priority for Council and we are still installing speed treatments on both approaches to the bridge.

Council does not see this as a long-term solution and is looking to the State Government to invest in a full replacement of the Odenwald Road Bridge.

This will provide for two-way traffic without load restrictions and with a separate path for pedestrian and cyclist access.




Banyule
City Council

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Michele Purtle
Advocacy Lead

Banyule City Council

 Michele.Purtle@
banyule.vic.gov.au

 0419 397 290

 banyule.vic.gov.au