

Submission: Northbridge Link masterplan

Overall, I believe the Northbridge Link proposal is an excellent addition to Perth's urban fabric. In particular, I commend:

- the proposed pedestrian laneways and squares
- Horseshoe Bridge Plaza
- the underground bus station that will link to the train station via the plaza (I do not believe that more bus stops along Wellington Street will suffice)
- the European-style street design
- the proposal on page 16 of the masterplan to provide historical information in the form of unobtrusive plaques accompanying public art

However, there are a few elements in the plan that I believe can be improved.

Burying the railway line past Lake Street

If it is at all possible, the railway lines in the Northbridge Link site should be buried for a greater distance than in the current masterplan.

For the Fremantle line, it would be ideal if the line could be underground throughout the whole site – from the freeway interchange to Perth station. This will maximise the land available for redevelopment and ease the task of constructing buildings above the railway. It will also ensure that the underground section of the Fremantle line is more than simply one or two hundred metres in length, which will improve passenger comfort by spreading out the up-down motion of trains on this track.

If money is available, the eastern exit of the Fremantle line tunnel should be built underneath the existing Citiplace car park (east of the station platforms). This would have the railway tunnel continuing under the other Perth station platforms, and would maximise the land available for the Horseshoe Bridge plaza. In the existing draft, the northeastern corner of the plaza is lost to an unwieldy railway dive structure.

If this is done, new platforms for the Fremantle line could be built underneath the Horseshoe Bridge plaza, linked to the other station platforms by a north-south pathway that opens on to the plaza. Emerging from these underground platforms into the plaza would maximise the sense of arrival that is discussed in the masterplan's objectives, and would create opportunities to simplify pedestrian flow (such as a tunnel to the new bus station) or to reorganise the platform layout as part of a redevelopment of the station.

A railway station at the Perth Arena site

For the Mandurah to Clarkson line, it would be best if the above-ground section between the new tunnel exit and the older Roe Street tunnel could also be moved underground. Whether or not this is possible, this section of track offers an excellent opportunity to construct a new station to service Perth Arena and the surrounding area.

This station would be approximately 700 metres (by track length) from the new William Street platforms, and 1.4km from Leederville station. This matches the typical spacing for inner-city stations, and is similar to the distance between the William Street platforms and Esplanade station. Fremantle Line trains would not stop at this station, since their nearest stop (at Perth Station) is closer to Perth Arena than the underground Mandurah to Clarkson platforms.

Such a station would ease pressure on the William Street platforms at peak times, because this location is closer to QV1 and the Woodside building. More importantly, it would greatly improve access for railway patrons to places in Northbridge, such as Russell Square and the development areas above the Farmer Freeway tunnel. If it were built above-ground, the station could integrate with the proposed pedestrian bridge at Milligan Street in a similar way to the integration between the Horseshoe Bridge Plaza and Perth Station. I believe that this would be greatly beneficial to pedestrian flow through the western end of Northbridge Link.

Streetscape and public space concerns

I believe that the amount of public space in the masterplan is entirely adequate, and there is no need to reserve large areas of land for parks instead of buildings.

Although there have been public calls for more open space, I believe that this is the opposite of what is required. The masterplan creates several small but potentially busy laneways and intimate spaces, which I fully support, because they will enhance the city's atmosphere and sense of place. (Currently, London Court and Shafto Lane are the only significant intimate public spaces in Perth.)

Thus, I believe it is important that streetscapes in Northbridge Link be designed to enhance the sense of exploring narrow paths through a dense urban environment – as is the case in the centre of most European cities.

Miscellaneous: police station, pedestrian movements

Although it is not part of the masterplan, the State Government proposal to construct a police station on the corner of Lake and Roe Streets must not be allowed to go ahead. A police station at this site would be detrimental to the 'vibe' of the area, and would hamper integration between the CBD and Northbridge. In particular, it is likely that people will be discouraged from walking along King Street and onto Lake Street if they must travel past a police station to do so.

In addition, page 55 of the masterplan proposes building designs to discourage Perth Arena patrons from walking through the centre of the development area. I believe that this should not be necessary, as long as there is adequate soundproofing in the apartment buildings.

Pedestrians should be able (and encouraged) to meander between the Arena and Perth station along a variety of different routes, which will help create a sense of vibrancy in the entire Northbridge Link site. More pedestrian activity means more 'eyes on the street', and will generally lower the amount of antisocial behaviour. Without it, the central residential precinct will most likely become dead and lifeless, with little pedestrian traffic except for people leaving their apartments.

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