



Community Engagement Results Report

Background

The State Government has proposed a design for the Bell Station carpark as part of the level crossing removal project. Darebin Council sought feedback from the community about possible future scenarios for local road traffic management changes and targetted local residents directly impacted by the proposed design.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions from January 2021, the month of engagement activities were largely online, however once restrictions eased, officers ran six drop-in sessions over the course of two days (27 January 2021 and 4 February 2021). This was an opportunity for community to engage with officers and share additional feedback about the proposed scenarios while walking in the precinct.

During the course of the engagement, 122 participants provided feedback about their preferred traffic management options via the online survey and 21 participants attended the drop-in sessions.

This report references feedback collected during the drop-in sessions but focuses on the online survey responses due to the comprehensive questions that were posed.

The majority of respondents (77%) voted for the preferred option for the carpark to be Option 2: access from Bell Street via Blanch Street.

FEEDBACK

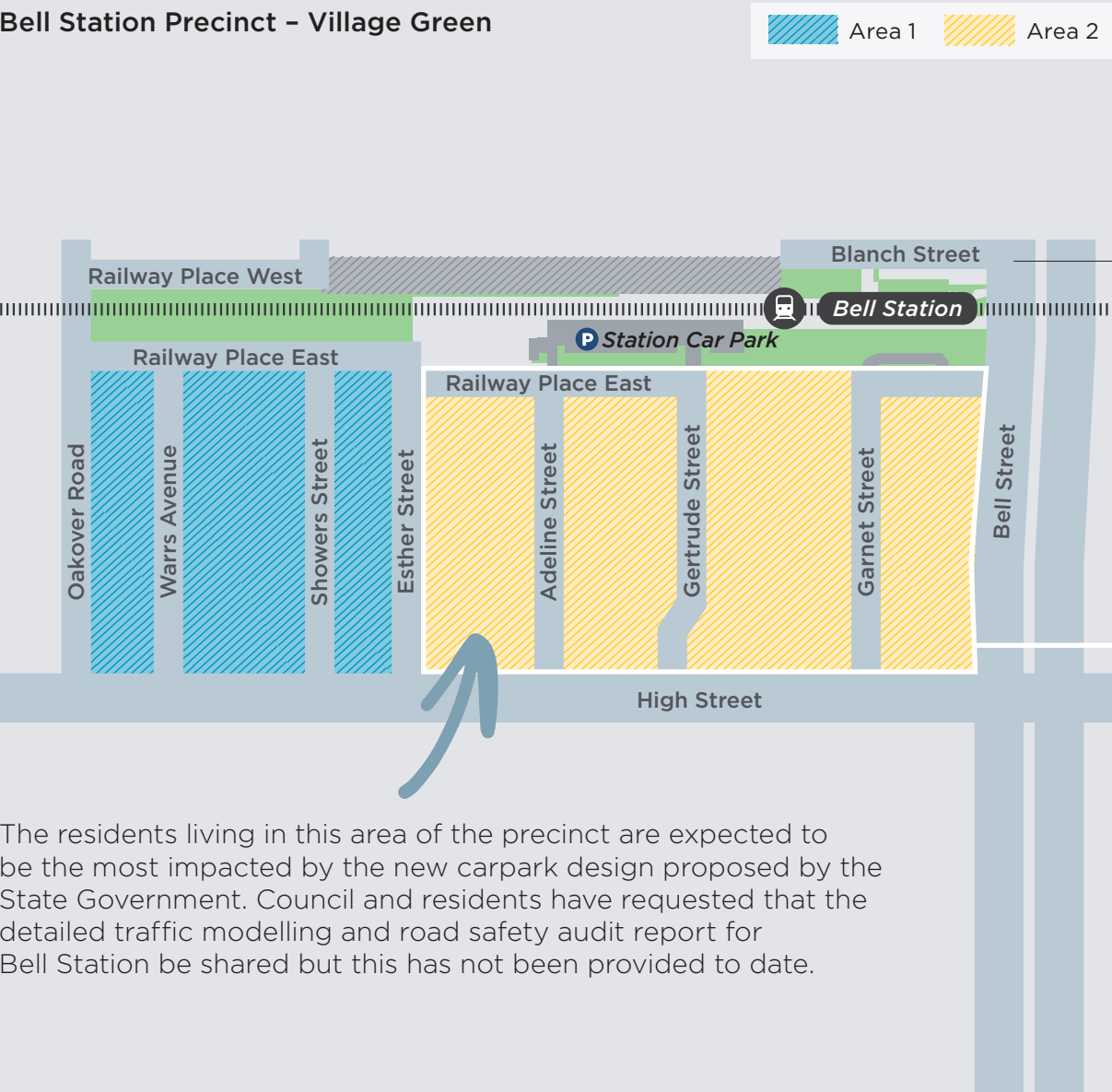
Feedback from the engagement strongly supported Option 2, access from Bell Street via Blanch street, as their preferred option for access to the commuter carpark. Access using Garnet Street was not discounted by residents. The implementation of this option supports walking and cycling and improves safety in the precinct, however it is highly reliant on the State Government making those changes as part of the design of the Bell Station carpark.



Participation Analysis

The engagement process sought to reach the local residents directly impacted by the State Government’s proposed design for the Bell Station carpark and collected feedback on possible future scenarios for local road traffic management changes.

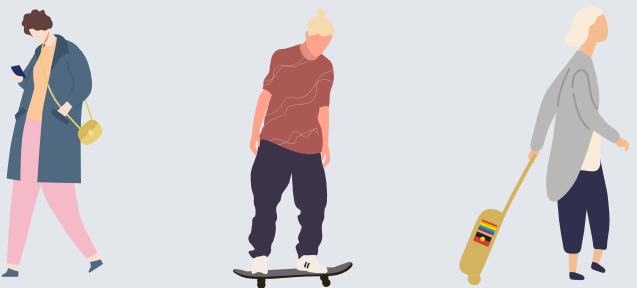
Bell Station Precinct – Village Green



The residents living in this area of the precinct are expected to be the most impacted by the new carpark design proposed by the State Government. Council and residents have requested that the detailed traffic modelling and road safety audit report for Bell Station be shared but this has not been provided to date.

The majority of respondents (77%) voted for the carpark to be **Option 2: access from Bell Street via Blanch Street** as their preferred option.

	Area 1		Area 2	
Access Option 1	3	14%	18	23%
Access Option 2	17	81%	59	77%
Access Option 3	1	5%	0	0%
Total	21	100%	77	100%



20%

of the participants of the online survey indicated living in the Area 1
Area bounded by Esther street (North) and Oakover Road (South) and Railway Place East (West) and High Street (East).

54%

of the participants of the online survey indicated living in the Area 2
Area bounded by Bell street (North) and Esther street (South) and Railway Place East and Garnet Street (West) and High Street (East).

26%

of the participants of the online survey indicated living outside of the identified areas, but within Darebin

Use of the Bell Station Precinct

72%

I live in Area 1 or 2

55%

I travel to the station by foot, bike (or other) for commuting

18%

Other (please specify)

17%

I work/live on High Street around the Precinct

2.5%

of the 122 respondents indicated their primary use of the precinct was travelling to the station by car for commuting.



My son travels to Bell Station for school

I regularly walk through this area

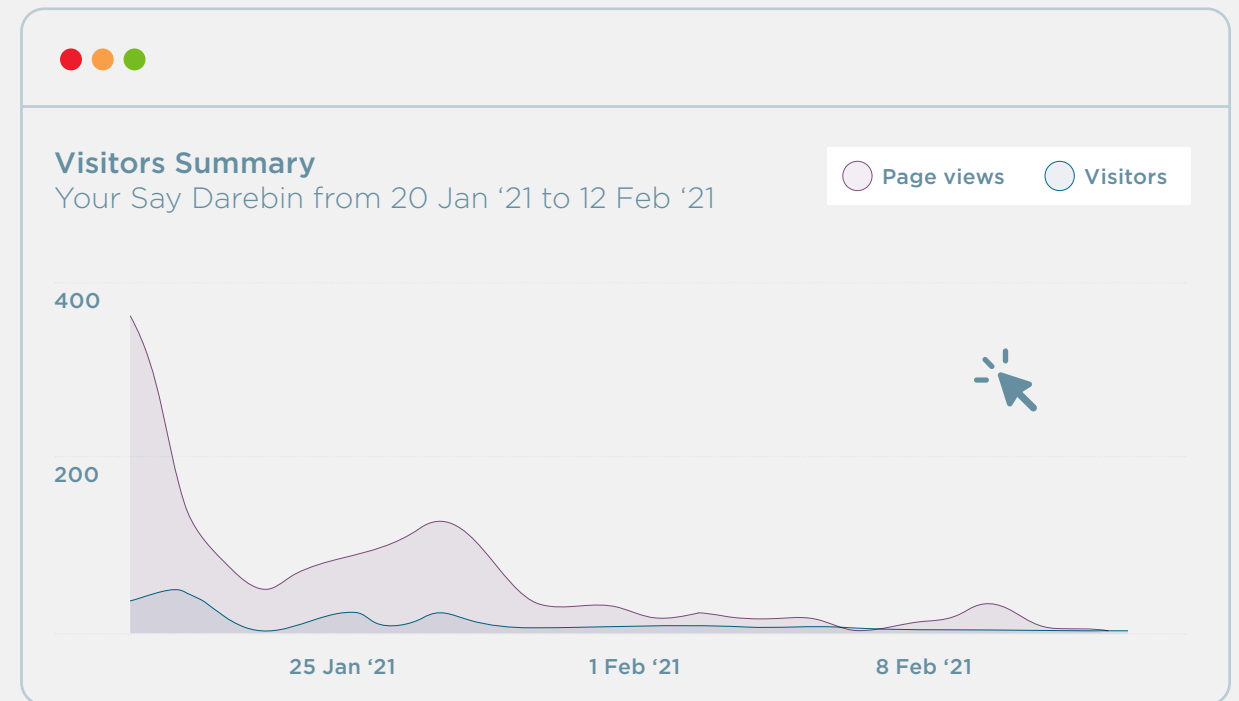
I live on Blanch Street

91%

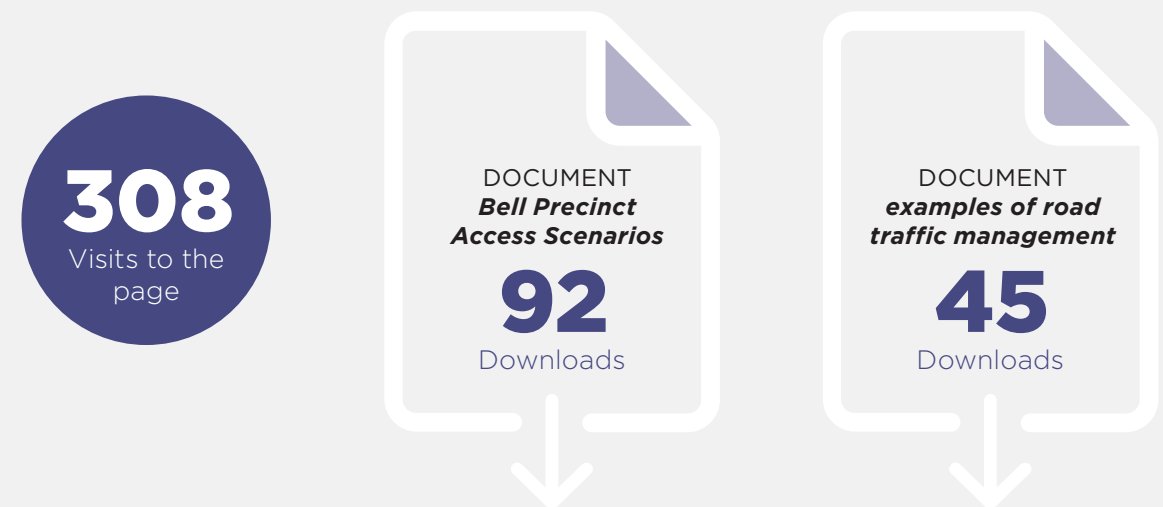
of respondents said they visited the precinct more than four times per week.

Engagement Results

The engagement website was hosted on Council's Your Say Darebin Page.



During the engagement period:



To understand who was reached through engagement, we asked a series of demographic questions such as age, place of residence and gender.

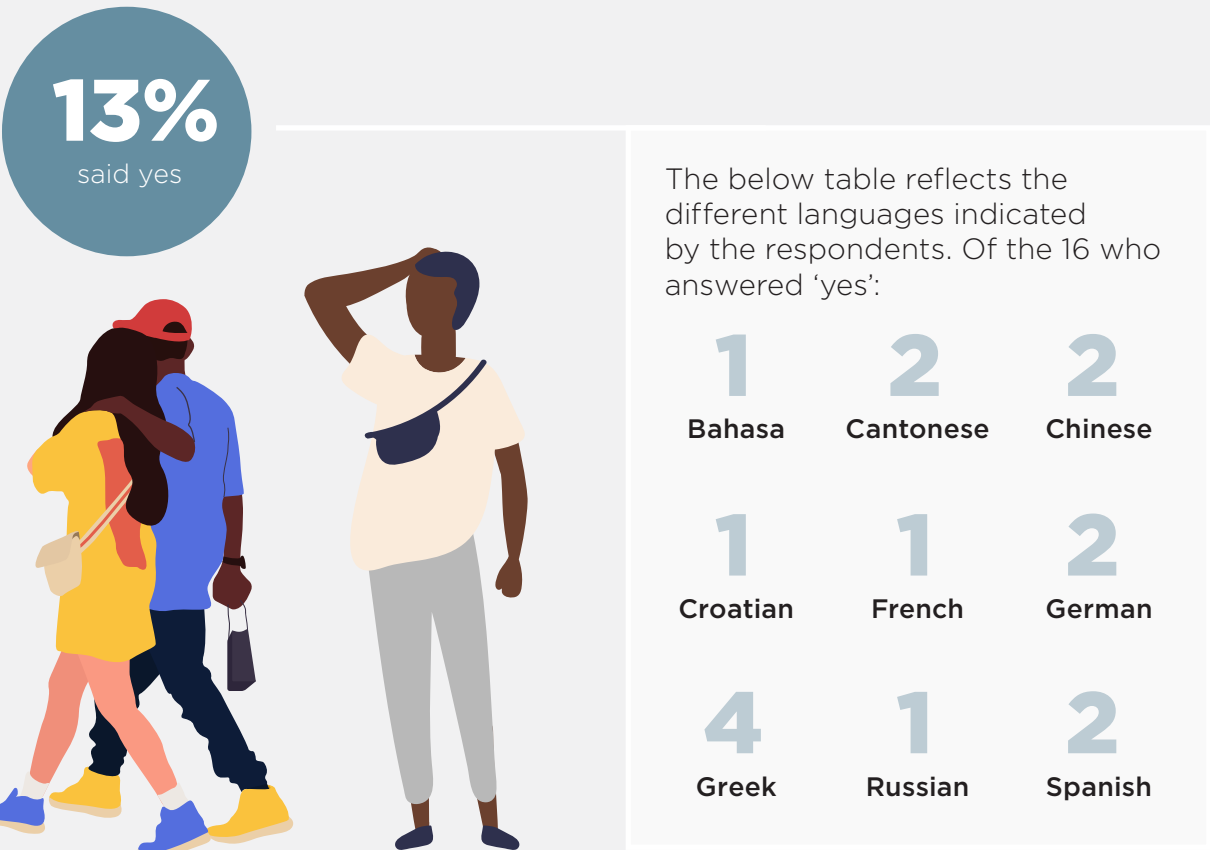
DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the 93% of the respondents who indicated their gender, 54% were male and 46% female. 8 respondents preferred not to provide a response to the question.

We asked participants “if they identify as having a disability”.
Of the 122 respondents:



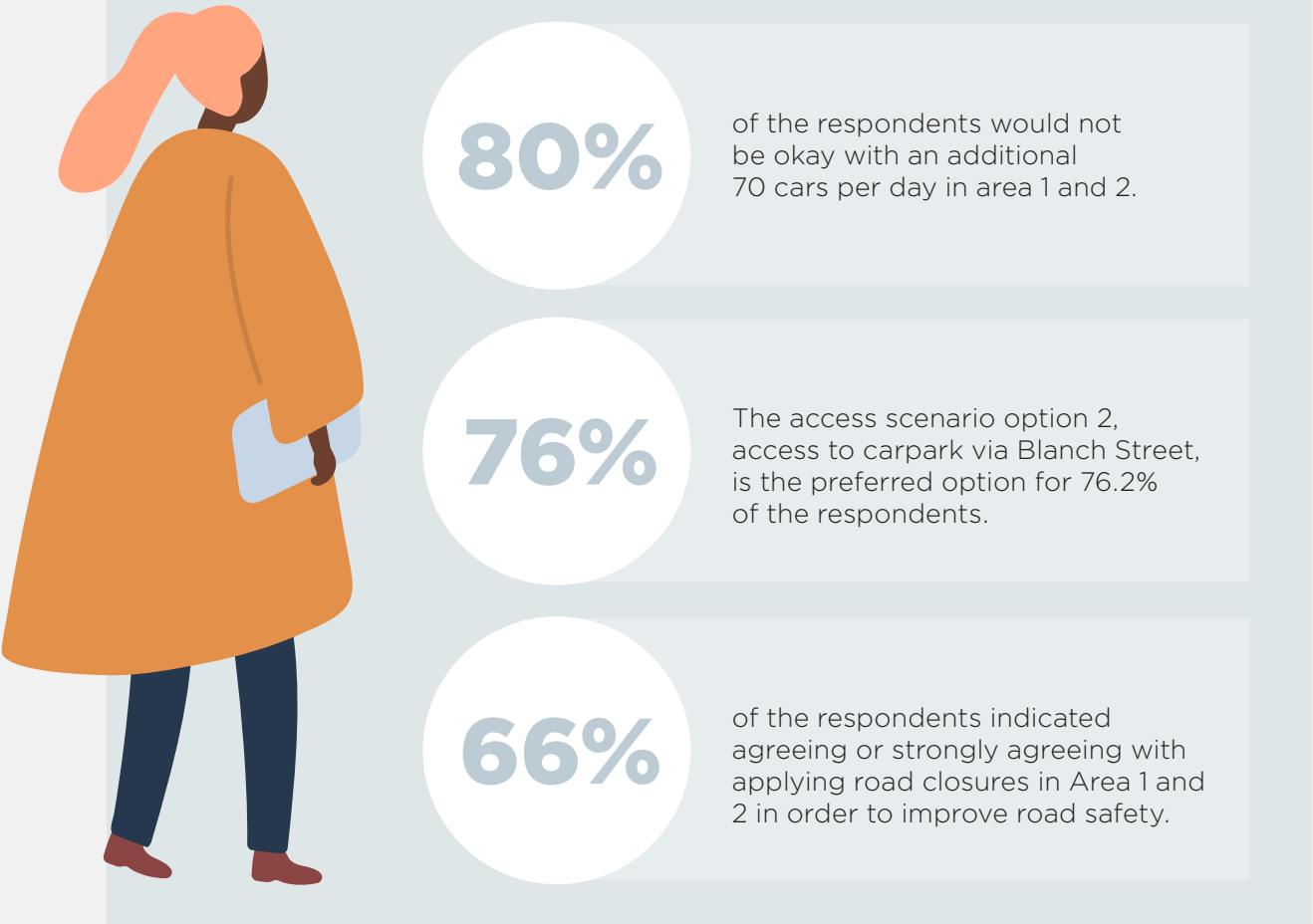
We asked participants “Do you speak a language other than English at home?”
Out of the 122 respondents:



Using the feedback gathered, it was determined the previous consideration of closing Railway Place East from Oakover Road and Bell Street would create challenges for some residents.



Throughout the responses, there is a strong support for new road treatments being trialled for a period of 12 months on Gertrude, Esther and Adeline Street. The overall results of the engagement demonstrate that:



These are tiny residential streets and the entry and exits to High Street will be chaotic and dangerous.



Participants who completed the survey online were asked to indicate their relationship to the Bell Station precinct by indicating where they live based on the map provided in the survey.

74% of the respondents are local residents and live in Area 1 or Area 2. Note, Council recognises that participants having their place of residence in the precinct have a higher level of impact.

Most of participants strongly agree or agree with below two statements:

The station car park should be easily accessible from a main road.

Strongly agree
50.8%

Agree
36.1%

Priority should be given to people walking, wheeling or cycling throughout Area 2: area bounded by Bell street (North) and Esther street (South) and Railway Place East and Garnet Street (West) and High Street (East).

Strongly agree
67.2%

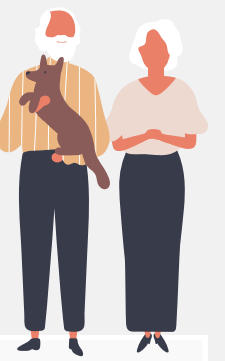
Agree
13.1%

And strongly disagree with one statement:

I would be okay with an additional 70 cars per day in area 1 and 2.

Strongly disagree
64.8%

Disagree
14.8%



The majority of participants are in agreement with below statement:

I'm happy to apply road closures in Area 1 and 2 if safety can be improved.

Strongly agree
41%

Agree
25%

Strongly disagree
9%

Disagree
8%

Note that 17% of the respondents neither agree or disagree or cannot take a position on this statement.

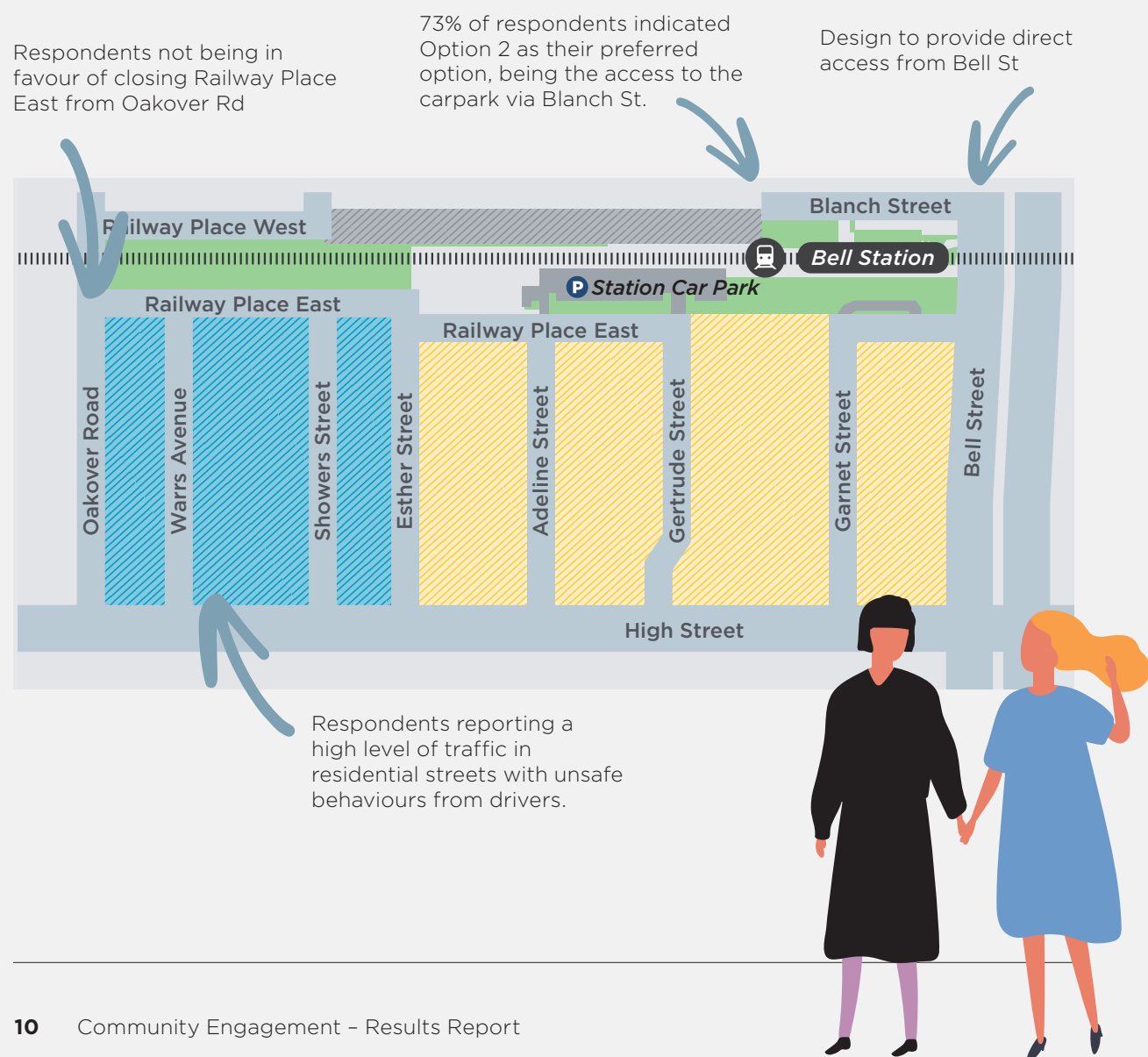
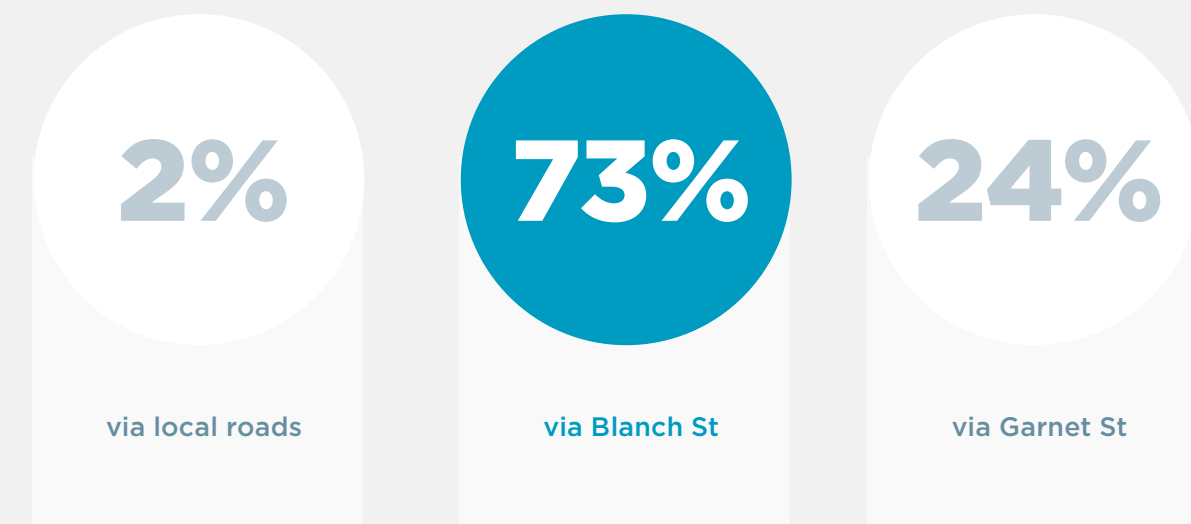
The respondents are from:

Area 1
38%

Area 2
29%

Outside
33%

When participants were asked about the location of the carpark, the preferred option is the access via Blanch St. This is a decision that will need to be made by the State Government.



Feedback collected about level of community engagement

Officers provided different scenarios to obtain comments from the community on a diverse range of options and to keep the engagement fair and objective. Members of the Bell Residents Group and residents who submitted the petition expressed their dissatisfaction with some of the traffic management

scenarios proposed as part of the engagement as the scenarios did not include the one provided in the petition.

Officers provided different traffic management scenarios to obtain comments from the community on a diverse range of options and to keep the engagement fair and objective.

Very supportive of Council's wider vision for the area particularly aspirations for improved greening and canopy. Thanks for supporting local residents with all your work to date!

Please protect our quiet streets from becoming thoroughfares to the car park.

Access to car park should not be off residential streets.

The design proposed by LXRP appears to put people last.

This whole process from beginning to end with LXRP has ignored the communities wishes.

I commute to school from this station and sometimes cycle and I live locally. The idea of all the cars on the street makes me feel unsafe and would make me less likely to cycle.

Recommendations

Based on the first round of engagement, it is apparent that the final decision on the location and type of local road management measures still requires technical input, followed by further public consultation.

Residents are united about the access of the Bell Station commuter car park being from Bell Street via Blanch Street (preferably), or Garnet Street, to ensure local streets to the East prioritise pedestrians.



Local road management measures

While the option of closing Railway Place East is not preferred by respondents, the technical review of closing Adeline and Gertrude Street indicates that this is a more suitable option from a community perspective.

In order to evaluate the impact of any traffic management solution, additional traffic surveys in the precinct (outside of public holiday, end of term breaks, and COVID-19 related restrictions) will provide a base to evaluate the effectiveness of the trial, to support analysis and traffic management solution design.

Council will undertake these traffic surveys. The traffic surveys will include the following streets:

- Railway Place East (between Esther and Adeline)
- Railway Place East (Between Warrs and Oakover)
- Showers Street
- Warrs Avenue
- Gertrude Street
- Adeline Street
- Esther Street

In support of local residents, Council will advocate to the State Government for a change to the design, and start the formal process to fully block access to the future Bell Station commuter car park entirely.

Council's position

Council will continue to advocate for the local community, and call on the Victorian Minister for Transport Infrastructure to:

- change the design in line with the community feedback
- to protect the local character of the residential streets
- obtain detailed traffic modelling and road safety audit report.

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