Tunnel alarms Greens

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Likely route will 'lead to pollution and destruction of wetlands, buildings'

MELBOURNE'S new east-west tunnel will destroy some of the city's wetlands and oldest parks and expose residents to pollution, Victorian Greens leader Greg Barber says.

Based on a State Government route animation, Mr Barber said the tunnel will emerge in Royal Park, destroying the $5 million wetlands established under the Bracks government.

The animation suggested the surface section of the road would extend further than expected from Alfred St in North Melbourne to Brunswick Rd in the north.

Mr Barber said the road could potentially destroy the Elderly Chinese Home in Parkville, parts of the Commonwealth Games Village and plough through apartments that are for sale.

"It will destroy open space and wetlands in Royal Park, expose residents to pollution and pour traffic onto Elliott Ave near Flemington Rd, making road congestion worse," Mr Barber said.

He dismissed the Government's community consultation period and said it would not change the plan.

"Clearly they have already decided which route they will take," he said.

Annika Smethurst and Michelle Ainsworth

But the Government said the animation was an indication only.

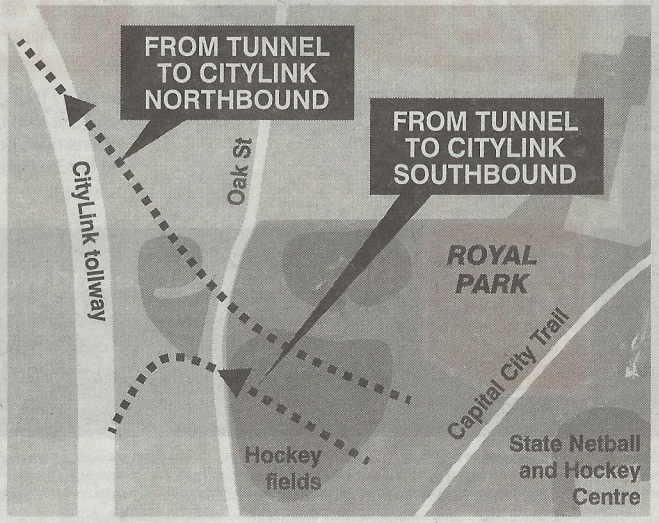
The route would not be finalised until a preferred bidder was selected.

"We'll be working over the next few months to understand how this connection might be designed, with a focus on minimising any impact to parkland by making use of things like the central median," Larissa Garvin, a spokeswoman for Transport Minister Terry Mulder, said.

In a speech to the Melbourne Press Club yesterday, Premier Denis Napthine called on the Federal Government to give Victoria its fair share of funding

"I found it interesting, annoying, frustrating and even galling that, in the Federal Budget just handed down, Julia Gillard and Wayne Swan could find $1.8 billion for a very, very similar project in Sydney and nothing for East West Link here," Dr Napthine said.

"I, Melbourne, Victoria want and need both those projects.

"I believe that both can, and will, be delivered, but what we need is a proper partnership with the Federal Government with regard to funding and timing of these vital projects."

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