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News

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Labor stalls on rail pledge, ignores train upgrades

- by: *Matt Johnston*
- From: *Herald Sun*
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Committee for Melbourne chief executive Kate Roffey. *Source:* News Limited

A \$2 BILLION upgrade of Melbourne’s busiest rail corridor is yet to be adopted by the Andrews Government weeks after a revised plan was submitted by the project proponent.

The major public transport project to upgrade the Cranbourne-Pakenham Rail Corridor was proposed last year by the Rail Transformation Consortium, which includes rail operator Metro and construction giant John Holland.

An interim offer was submitted in January to the new Andrews Government.

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Sources have told the Herald Sun an announcement on the project was expected last month, but it was delayed.

The project includes four level crossing removals and three rebuilt stations, as well as major signalling upgrades that should enable millions of extra passenger movements each year.

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Under the original proposal, the upgrades would have allowed 25 new high-capacity trains to be added to the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines along the Dandenong Rail corridor.

Public transport advocates and business groups have called for the project to be endorsed by Labor, which last year voiced “serious concerns” about the nature of the unsolicited proposal that came from the consortium.

Committee for Melbourne chief executive Kate Roffey said large-scale public-private partnerships were vital for fixing congestion, boosting productivity and creating jobs.

“The Dandenong Rail Corridor project ... needs to be resolved,” she said.

A spokesman for RTC confirmed that the interim offer had been submitted to the Andrews Government early this year.

“We are unable to comment further,” he said.

It is understood the government is not opposed to the project, but wants to ensure it has been tested via a rigorous assessment process.

A spokesman for Public Transport Minister Jacinta Allan said the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources was continuing to assess the interim offer.

He said the department would then provide recommendations.

Opposition public transport spokesman David Hodgett said Daniel Andrews needed to “stop making excuses and get on with it”.

“Daniel Andrews should sign up to this important project and support more trains and more services for commuters in the southeast.”