



For Immediate Release
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Major Boost Proposed for Melbourne's Public Transport

A \$2 billion program to "breathe new life" into Melbourne's public transport services has been proposed by the Committee for Melbourne.

In June this year, a specially convened Committee for Melbourne Transport Taskforce identified three major challenges for the Federal and Victorian State Governments:

- Exploring alternative funding models for transportation infrastructure;
- Completing Melbourne's major road network; and
- Significantly improving Melbourne's bus services, particularly in the city's outer suburbs.

The Committee's public transport package, released today, lays out the taskforce's public transport priorities for the next five years. It represents additional work undertaken by the Committee's Transport Taskforce to focus on the important role public transport plays in reducing congestion, and improving the mobility of all Melburnians and Victorians.

"Melbourne's liveability is threatened by increasing levels of traffic congestion and by the difficulties faced by people without private cars, especially those living in the fast-growing outer areas," said the Committee's Chairman, Mr George Pappas, in releasing the proposals.

"Melbourne's trains are becoming crowded in the peaks, traffic congestion is progressively slowing our trams, and our middle and outer urban bus service levels are inadequate. The Committee's proposals will substantially improve public transport services, increase public transport patronage, limit road congestion and reduce social exclusion in Melbourne's outer suburbs", said Mr Pappas.

The Committee's Public Transport proposals recommend the following actions over the next five years:

- Substantial improvements in local bus services and an expanded trunk *SmartBus* network, to ensure services are available seven days a week until at least 10.00pm most nights;
- Expanding the Think Tram program to all routes, to protect trams from the impact of traffic congestion and to improve tram journey times; and
- Expanding the capacity of Melbourne's rail network, to enable it to handle the growing numbers of passengers.

The total package will cost about \$2 billion in capital cost over five years, plus \$150 million per annum in additional service costs by 2011.

The State Government has set a 'mode share' target that 20% of motorised trips in Melbourne will be made by public transport by 2020, up from the present 9%. The Committee has designed its proposed initiatives to make significant progress towards this goal, increasing public transport mode share by an estimated 3 percentage points by 2011. Additional investment, not addressed in this five year package, will be required from 2011 onwards to achieve a further 8% growth to meet the Government's stated target.

"This represents a public transport patronage increase of one-third by 2011, an extra 140 million trips per year", said Mr Pappas.

Traffic congestion is estimated by the Committee to cost Melburnians about \$4 billion annually, with over 60% of these costs being business costs. Committee Transport Taskforce Co-Chair, Mr Roger Poole, points out that small reductions in road traffic volumes produce major reductions in congestion costs – a phenomenon car drivers are familiar with during school holidays, when traffic flows more easily with a net reduction of less than 5% of road users. The proposed initiatives, in conjunction with commitments already put in place by the State Government, are estimated by the Committee to cut Melbourne's traffic congestion costs by at least \$0.5 billion annually.

Melbourne's economic growth in recent years has seen a stronger central business district emerge, an essential part of the city's commercial vitality, and also its liveability. The Committee believes that a healthy public transport system is integral to ensure that this growth continues.

An important aspect of the Committee's proposals, according to Mr Pappas, is that they draw on the combined expertise and experience of all the major train, tram and bus operators and thereby provide a unique system-wide approach.

"2006 is a State-election year. The Committee for Melbourne has put these proposals forward well in advance of the election, to enable all political parties to understand their scope and significance", said Mr Pappas. The Committee will be seeking bi-partisan support for its proposals. "Our analyses show they will generate benefits of about three times the level of costs involved. Sydney and Brisbane and Perth are actively improving their public transport services. Melbourne's future liveability will be substantially enhanced by these proposals".

The Committee for Melbourne Transport Taskforce is a broad based collaboration of Committee for Melbourne members with senior representatives drawn from bus, rail and train operators, engineering and consulting firms, legal and finance experts, universities and urban planners, road and construction companies. In addition to the funding and roads issues identified in the Committee's June Transport Statement, the Taskforce will continue to address other major challenges facing Melbourne's transport system including freight/ports and logistics.

Ends

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