

## **EASTERN TRANSPORT COALITION**

Incorporating Greater Dandenong, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges Councils.



Postal Address: **Eastern Transport Coalition, Knox City Council, 511 Burwood Highway, Wantirna South 3152**

23 January 2008

**The Hon Wayne Swan  
Treasurer  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600**

Dear Minister

### **2008-2009 Federal Budget Submission**

The Eastern Transport Coalition (ETC) is comprised of seven municipal Councils in Melbourne's East (City of Greater Dandenong, City of Knox, City of Manningham, City of Maroondah, City of Monash, City of Whitehorse and the Shire of Yarra Ranges) and represents nearly one million people. The Coalition's Mission Statement is:

*"The Eastern Transport Coalition will advocate for sustainable and integrated transport services in the eastern region of Melbourne, which focus on the travel needs of the community and reduce the level of car dependency."*

The purpose of this letter is to present our input for consideration as the Government frames its 2008-2009 Budget.

Our key two requests are:

1. The Federal Government allow urban public transport to be funded under AusLink or through the creation of specific programs.
2. The Federal Government provide funding for a number of urban public transport initiatives in Melbourne's east.

Australia is facing immense challenges to create sustainable cities for the future. The nation faces water shortages, transport congestion and high energy demands and it is important to consider how we might tackle these issues in the future. Families are also facing rising fuel costs; a cost of living increase that you are aware is impacting their abilities to make ends meet. In many ways the answers to these challenges and issues is in public transport.

The local community knows this, their attitudes to local transport issues and the problems of climate change and congestion are contained in the attached research.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage published a report on Sustainable Cities in August 2005 which looked at many of these concerns. The report was based on the Committee's vision for Australian cities to be vibrant and environmentally, socially and economically healthy. Many individuals and organizations hold similar views. The Committee concluded that what was missing was a coordinated and concerted action plan, with the Federal Government leading.

Of particular interest and note are the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 5.**

*The committee recommends that the Department of Transport and Regional Services, in consultation with the Department of the Environment and Heritage, investigate options to extend the Roads to Recovery programme to include other modes of transport as a step towards including sustainability in the funding criteria.*

**Recommendation 6.**

*The committee recommends that:*

- *Transport infrastructure planning decisions be benchmarked against the recommended Australian Sustainability Charter; and*
- *The Australian Government significantly boost its funding commitment for public transport systems, particularly light and heavy rail, in the major cities.*

**Recommendation 7.**

*The committee recommends that the provision of Australian Government transport infrastructure funds include provision of funding specifically for sustainable public transport infrastructure for suburbs and developments on the outer fringes of our cities.*

This is a position that was also neatly encapsulated by the Federal ALP's platform which stated:

*"...ensure that Australians have access to adequate transport services by providing appropriate financial assistance to State governments to improve and extend public transport systems in urban areas."*

This budget will be an opportunity to begin improving and extending transport systems in urban areas.

This is also a policy that was put into action by the last Federal Labor Government. Under that government's 'Better Cities' cooperative funding arrangements were struck with the Victorian Coalition Government to fund extensions to light rail and upgrades to heavy rail.

Whilst it is agreed that the State Government carry the responsibility for the operation and maintenance of urban public transport, there is an opportunity for the Federal Government to set a national framework for sustainable transport, including public transport.

Under a national framework the Federal Government could provide funding for urban public transport infrastructure. The current infrastructure supporting public transport has been allowed to run down over successive governments and needs to be upgraded and extended to provide a safe and efficient service to the community. The cost of transport infrastructure is high and consideration should be given to a funding scheme similar to the Roads of National Importance whereby public transport meeting criteria in the Federal framework are funded by the Federal and State Governments. There is a real need for a whole of transport approach and the Federal Government can lead the way.

Public transport has the ability to reduce the number of private vehicles on our roads - this results in less congestion, reduced energy usage, lower pollution levels, improves performance for freight and, overall, a more sustainable outcome for the community. Federal Government assistance for infrastructure for urban public transport is essential and required now. Costs to upgrade and extend both light and heavy rail in our major cities is very high and this is an area which should be targeted.

Below are a number of significant projects that the ETC believes would reduce congestion on our road network and have a positive impact on the sustainability of our transport choices.

We request that the Federal Government fund these projects. The first step would be the development of feasibility studies for each project. The ETC would appreciate the consideration of funding the studies as well.

**Projects in the Eastern Metropolitan Area of Melbourne where Infrastructure Funding Assistance would help reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.**

Progress on these projects in our view would integrate with and contribute to the improvements being made in the State Government's Meeting our Transport Challenges program. The outlines of the projects below can be backed up with a greater level of detail if that is required.

**Rail to Rowville**

Providing a heavy rail connection from Huntingdale station to Rowville along the median of Wellington Road to Stud Park Shopping Centre at Rowville would remove thousands of private vehicles off the road network. The project has been proposed for 40 years and not proceeded with. The City of Knox has undertaken a pre-feasibility for the project which is attached.

**Belgrave and Lilydale Lines beyond Ringwood**

Duplication of single lines and the addition of a third track in other locations along the Belgrave and Lilydale will assist flexibilities in train operations, improve safety and service levels.

**Rail to Doncaster**

There is space along the Eastern Freeway median to provide heavy rail from Victoria Park to Doncaster and beyond. It should be noted that extra capacity on the Clifton Hill group of lines and upgrade of the City Loop are required first.

**Transport Interchanges**

Improved coordination and transfer of passengers at transport interchanges is required. Commuters hate changing modes and little is done to assist with protection from the weather, directions and real time information. The current network of public transport requires greater coordination between modes and better passenger facilities are required where train/tram and bus services meet.

**Dedicated bus lanes**

Provision of bus lanes along major roads, to ensure efficient public transport services in areas that cannot be served by fixed rail infrastructure.

We hope that these projects and this request meets with your favorable consideration. If you would like further information or to discuss this letter please do not hesitate to contact me on 0438 029 932.

I would also appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our submission.

Yours sincerely

**Cr Mick Van De Vreede**  
**Chairperson**

Enc. ARG Research  
ETC Fact Sheets

cc.

Anthony Albanese  
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