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Tunnel tipped to be shafted

ONLY half the east-west road tunnel proposed by the Eddington report will be built, a leading transport expert predicts.

Prof Nick Low, of Melbourne University's urban planning program, said the economic crisis would force the Government to drop the eastern half, which would have tunnelled under Carlton and Royal Park.

But he said a tunnel from the Tullamarine Freeway to the Western Ring Rd at Sunshine would still ease traffic problems.

The eastern half would be left for a future government.

Speaking at the Melbourne Conversations transport forum, Prof Low said the Government's plans were no secret.

"The Government has given a lot of parties (an idea of) where their thinking has been," he said.

"They think they have heard what the different lobbies want. It's not a secret. So I can put it all together."

Prof Low said the Government would also commit to:

BUILDING the railway

Ashley Gardiner

transport reporter

line from Epping to South Morang.

EXTENDING electrified train services to Melton.

CONNECTING Greensborough to East-Link.

No commitment would be made to rail extensions to Doncaster or Rowville.

Prof Low said the "half" tunnel would transfer congestion from the West Gate into the heart of the city.

"Road building is only really justified by the aggregate of time savings in journeys," Prof Low said.

"With all the road building that has occurred over the last 20 years, one should expect to see some reduction in the time spent in travel, especially in Melbourne.

"Instead we see an increase. Not only that, we see an even bigger increase in distance travelled.

"So what building roads does, and this is true almost everywhere in the world, is it increases the distance people travel per year by car."

The State Government is expected to release its plan by early next month.