

Make East Doncaster railway state's top priority: Melbourne Uni transport centre

The long-awaited East Doncaster railway should be a top priority for vital new rail extensions in Victoria, according to research by the University of Melbourne's new Centre for the Governance and Management of Urban Transport (GAMUT).

Experts from GAMUT have analysed Melbourne's traffic congestion and say that traffic "chaos" will ensue if priority projects such as this are not completed.

The researchers, led by Professor Bill Russell and Professor Nick Low from the University's Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, say that completion of the Connect East freeway from Mitcham to Frankston will result in gridlock on the Eastern Freeway, isolating Doncaster residents.

"Construction of the Doncaster Railway, for which a reservation was provided in the median strip of the freeway, must now proceed," Professor Russell said.

Professor Russell undertook a planning study of the line in 1991 and believes construction can no longer be delayed.

He says that the rail line was first recommended at a 1929 Metropolitan Town Planning Commission, was recommended again in 1969 and 1991, and was tabled most recently by the Northern Central City Corridor Strategy in 2003.

"The line will relieve pressure on the already gridlocked freeway, while providing Doncaster residents with an alternative way to move around Melbourne," Professor Russell said.

"Manningham has a population comparable with Geelong, but while Geelong has a frequent train service to the city with 160 kilometre an hour trains, Manningham residents have no such service.

"They also face a longer journey by bus if they choose not to use their cars."

With a 44% growth in the number of residents aged over sixty years forecast by 2011, the GAMUT researchers say urgent action is needed.

The \$4.3 million International Centre for the Governance and Management of Urban Transport, funded by the Volvo Research and Education Foundation, is a collaborative venture involving partners around Australia as well as in Japan, China and Singapore.

It connects Australia with ideas about urban transport emerging in the Asia-Pacific region, and develops policy and management ideas for Australia's transport governance.

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