

New rail lines in outer suburbs crucial to easing traffic chaos

Priority rail lines which must be built to ease Melbourne's traffic chaos have been identified by University of Melbourne researchers.

The University's new \$4.3 million Centre for Governance and Management of Urban Transport (GAMUT) has developed the priority list based on factors such as travel times, socio-economic need, benefit to the city as a whole, and feasibility.

The priorities are:

- A line from East Doncaster to the City, serving Doncaster, North Box Hill and Bulleen
- A line from Rowville to Huntingdale, providing links to Rowville, Scoresby, Monash University and parts of Clayton
- Extensions from Epping to South Morang and to Aurora, serving the rapidly developing Plenty Corridor and Whittlesea municipality, including the new environmental suburb at Aurora
- Significantly improved rail services for Melbourne's West, including electrification of the Melton line, better services for Wyndham, and bringing forward the airport link so as to provide rail services for suburbs such as Mickleham and Greenvale.

Co-director of GAMUT, Professor Bill Russell from the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, said the list will be regularly reviewed and updated.

"These projects are imperative for Melbourne, as the city continues to grow and suburban populations change," he said.

"Some say that these investments can't be afforded. They can. A staged program is needed based on clear priorities. There is always money for new roads but our lack of rail investment can't be allowed to continue."

The researchers noted that completion of the Connect East freeway from Mitcham to Frankston will result in gridlock on the Eastern Freeway, seriously affecting Manningham residents.

"The same project will create extra traffic congestion on the road and freeway system serving Rowville, while population growth in the Plenty Corridor and Whittlesea area mean Epping extensions are vital," Professor Russell said.

Professor Russell said that studies are also needed for the Mornington Peninsula and Bass Coast areas, where public transport is now slower and less frequent than in the 1950s despite significant population growth.

The Centre for Governance and Management of Urban Transport (GAMUT) is funded by the Volvo Research and Educational Foundations, and focuses on finding innovative and sustainable urban transport solutions for Australia and its region. GAMUT has links with universities and research centres around Australia and in China, Japan and Singapore.

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