

2026/27 Victorian Budget Submission



Eastern Transport Coalition 2026/27 Budget Submission

Introduction

We want Melbourne's east to be Australia's most liveable urban region, where people build the best future for themselves, their families, and their businesses.

To realise this vision, Melbourne's east needs government investment in better public transport, so our communities and businesses are connected by world class transport links that protect liveability, ensure sustainability, and promote economic growth.

That's why the cities of Greater Dandenong, Knox, Manningham, Monash, and the Yarra Ranges shire work together through the Eastern Transport Coalition (ETC).

The ETC advocates for sustainable and integrated transport services that reduce the level of car dependency and secure the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of Melbourne's east.

The Transport Challenge

Like most urban areas in Australia, Melbourne's east is facing compounding major challenges, including the need to accommodate a growing population and an ageing community.

Population growth is forecast to bring the region's population to well over 1.2 million by 2031. This will see an increase to the region's existing 400,000 plus jobs. To preserve the region's economic promise, Melbourne's east needs improvements in our transport network that can handle the expected increase in both freight and commuter movement.

Without investment that recognises the changing patterns of commuting within and to our region, our communities and businesses will become increasingly isolated by outdated and disjointed public and private transport networks.

Further to this, too many residents are reliant on private cars because safe and convenient alternatives are limited. Gaps in pedestrian connectivity and missing links in off-road active transport paths make it harder for people to choose walking or cycling for short local trips. Unless addressed, this will entrench car dependency – worsening congestion and increasing household costs.

Meeting these challenges requires a more connected, modern and balanced transport system that supports population and job growth, reduces car dependency, and secures the long-term economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Melbourne's east.

1. Bus Service Improvements

Sustained investment by the Victorian Government in heavy rail projects linked to the level crossing removal program has delivered benefits to Melbourne's east. However, the maximum productivity uplift of these projects will not be realised until first/last mile connections are improved. People in Melbourne's east need faster and more reliable ways to get to train stations and key activity centres.

In a briefing provided by senior Department of Transport & Planning Executives, the following insights were shared:

- 89% of consulted Victorians said that frequency was the most important factor for buses
- Changes to Yarra Valley bus routes (684, 685, 686 & 687) in 2023 which simplified the network resulted in significant patronage growth: weekday (10%), weekend (75%)
- Only 19% of consulted Victorians are confident that a bus will come when scheduled

Currently, too many local residents rely on private cars because bus routes are outdated, infrequent, unreliable, or simply unavailable. The ETC has identified several key bus projects that, through targeted state investment, will uplift patronage and better connect those living and working in the region.

ETC Asks:

- **\$4 million** in funding for the provision of signals at Waverley Road/Watsons Road intersection in Glen Waverley. Currently, buses have difficulty turning due to traffic volumes and children find it challenging to access nearby bus stops.
- **\$800,000** in funding for Manningham Council to undertake a feasibility study into a high frequency busway along the Doncaster Road Corridor, between Mitcham Station and the Doncaster Park and Ride.
- Fund a feasibility study and business case to redesign route 745 to address the complicated daily route variations and provide a direct connection between Tram Route 75 termination and Boronia along Mountain Hwy. Currently this bus route has four variant routes which provide only one service every day, Monday to Friday, with no set timetable.
- Fund a 12-month pilot program to trial a Mount Dandenong bus route for Belgrave, Tecoma, Upwey, and Belgrave South communities. In order to reduce costs, this new trial could rely on a reallocation of underutilised services from routes 694, 696, 697 and 699.
- Fund a feasibility study and business case to establish a new bus route between Bayswater Station and Stud Park via Henderson Road & Scoresby Road to improve access through Knox. Currently, there is a significant gap in bus service coverage along Scoresby Road.
- Upgrade Templestowe Road through duplication, traffic and bus infrastructure improvements. This would include a high-frequency bus route to run along the Templestowe Road corridor from the Pines Secondary College to Heidelberg Train Station.
- Implement the Bus Network Review's north-eastern pilot area project, and investigate:
 - An orbital, high frequency bus route to follow the future SRL North route
 - A bus route to address the community need currently serviced by the 'Manningham Mover' (280 and 282 bus routes)
- Fund a review of Dandenong CBD bus routes. Currently, 22 bus services stop at the Dandenong train station bus interchange, with 20 of these terminating. There is an opportunity to combine some of these routes to provide better services by reducing the need for bus users to change between buses.

2. Shared User Paths

As part of the Victorian Government's level crossing removal program, investment has been made into shared user paths. These paths are popular with locals and support active transport.

However, the current network is fragmented, with missing links that undermine its attractiveness to both local residents and tourists. To remedy this issue, the paths must be joined up and extended.

Research shows that around 60 per cent of the general population is interested in cycling but has safety concerns that impede their willingness to participate. The construction of safe and convenient off-road shared use paths provides significant opportunities for all community members, including those using mobility devices, pushing prams and walking dogs.

The health and wellbeing outcomes from the paths are supported by social, environmental, economic and safety benefits.

ETC Asks:

- **\$24 million** in funding for the Yarra Valley Trail (Stage 2B & Stage 3). This project will create an off-road recreational and active transport link between Tarrawarra, Healesville and Woori Yallock, connecting the Yarra Valley Trail to the Lilydale-to-Warburton Rail Trail, and complete a valley-wide network of shared trails.
- **\$8 million** to extend the Djerring Trail from Yarraman Station to Dandenong CBD. The rail trail provides a safe and easy to ride cycling route along a major transport corridor and connects multiple activity centres. The current rail trail finishes at Yarraman Station, approximately 2km from Dandenong CBD.
- **\$2.5 million** to upgrade around 2.8km of Djerring Trail within the City of Monash to a 3m wide shared path. This upgrade will deliver consistency with the existing high-quality sections of the path constructed as part of the Clayton LXRA project.
- **\$1.85 million** in funding for the Pound Road to Taroona Avenue segment of the Main Yarra Trail. Providing an extension to the Warrandyte township will improve this experience and provide an additional link around the Yarra River. The existing Main Yarra Trail is a highly used link from inner-city suburbs, including Abbotsford to Templestowe and Eltham along the Yarra River.
- **\$1.2 million** in funding for the Liverpool Road Shared Path in The Basin, which will create linkages to key recreational and cycling trails, such as Dandenong Creek Trail and iconic '1 in 20' rides. Additionally, it will enhance access to local schools and activity centres in The Basin and improve connectivity to the Maroondah and Yarra Ranges areas.
- **\$400,000** in funding for the Heathmont to Belgrave Rail Trail (Upper Ferntree Gully section). This missing link will feature a 2.5-meter-wide concrete shared path that will provide a safer and more accessible connection to several key destinations, including the Upper Ferntree Gully Train Station, the Dandenong Ranges National Park, the 1,000 Steps, and various shops and services.
- **\$350,000** in funding to complete the Railway Trail Shared Path to provide a safe direct route through the Ferntree Gully Station carpark. The existing Rail Trail ends at the train station car park and cyclists have to make their way through the car park mixing with vehicles.

3. Pedestrian Safety

The Victorian Government has consistently directed investment toward improving pedestrian safety at busy intersections. Measures such as new traffic signals, raised crossings, and better lighting are already making walking safer and more convenient.

However, gaps remain. Many local centres and high-footfall precincts still rely on unsignalled or poorly marked crossings, leaving people vulnerable to traffic and reducing the appeal of walking as a regular mode of travel. To make walking truly safe and attractive, these intersections must be prioritised for signal installation and design upgrades.

The possible public health, economic and environmental gains in are significant: active lifestyles, stronger local economies through increased foot traffic, and reduced car dependence all flow from investment into pedestrian safety projects in Melbourne's east.

ETC Asks:

- **\$6 million** to fund the delivery of key pedestrian crossing upgrade projects that would support the trail networks that underpin Yarra Ranges' tourism offerings. This includes links across *ngurrak* barring trail, 2 signalised crossings along the Warburton Rail Trail, and one key signalised intersection in Healesville.
- **\$2 million** in funding for a pedestrian crossing across North Road, near Flora Road in Clayton. Access to bus stops is challenging, with pedestrians required to cross 6-lanes of traffic. Crossing points are located far apart, with signals located between 450-600m in either direction.
- **\$2 million** in funding for Pedestrian-Operated-Signal design and installation on Chandler Road, Noble Park near Yarraman Road. Access to bus stops is challenging, with pedestrians required to cross a 4-lane arterial road. New pedestrian signals near Yarraman Road will improve safety for pedestrians and bus patrons by providing a safe crossing point. This will increase transport accessibility in the area by providing greater access to nearby employment opportunities, recreation locations (such as the Mile Creek) and connected bus services.
- **\$2 million** in funding for a pedestrian signalised crossing at Scoresby Road & Kent Street in Ferntree Gully. There are no safe crossing points within a 1.7km span. This project would involve the provision of a Pedestrian Operated Signal to provide a safe crossing point for students and residents and would enable greater access to local facilities including Kent Park Primary, Knox Park Primary, local aged care facilities and Kent Park.
- Funding for Pedestrian-Operated-Signal design and installation at Reynolds Road & in Templestowe at Smiths Road. This upgrade would improve connectivity for local residents and provide greater access to the existing 309 and 901 bus routes.
- Funding for Pedestrian-Operated-Signal design and installation at Ruffey Lake Park & Rieschiecks Reserve in Doncaster East. This includes the consideration of two new pedestrian refuge islands as identified in the Waldau Precinct Masterplan, and an associated shared path (SUP) realignment on the west side of Victoria Street.

4. Road Infrastructure

Population growth is outpacing infrastructure development. Traffic congestion and the poor condition of roads impacts not only private motor vehicles, but can severely limit the efficiency of trams and buses.

Moving people and goods around efficiently and increasing productivity requires a road network that can accommodate buses and trams as well as trucks and cars. Managing the use of road space and reducing delays to buses and trams is therefore central to better overall transport system. An integrated and balanced approach is needed to address the transport needs in the region, requiring improvements to both road and public transport infrastructure.

The following road projects will reduce congestion and constraints on our roads, improve freight efficiency and assist buses.

ETC Asks:

- **\$20 million** in funding for the Burwood Hwy and Cathies Lane Intersection Upgrade in Wantirna South. This would involve the installation of traffic signals to improve the safety of vehicles entering Burwood Hwy at the crest. The project would also involve the installation of a bus jump queue on Burwood Hwy to improve bus priority and a bike lantern to improve access for cyclists.
- **\$20 million** in funding for the Ferntree Gully Road & Rushdale Street Intersection Upgrade in Knoxfield. This would involve the installation of traffic signals at the intersection to improve freight movement into and out of the industrial estate. This would see a significant boost to productivity and economic output.
- **\$2 million** in funding for road safety improvements along Jacksons Road, Elonera Road and the Chandler Road corridor in Noble Park. This arterial road corridor has a significantly high crash rate and has plenty of opportunity for low cost improvements to improve safety for drivers and pedestrians.

Conclusion

If delivered together, these transport projects would transform Melbourne's east into a region defined by connectivity, efficiency, and opportunity. Faster and more reliable buses, safer pedestrian networks, joined-up shared paths, and upgraded roads would not only move people and freight more effectively, but they would also unlock the full economic potential of a region already home to over 400,000 jobs.

For a number of these projects, Councils are willing to make a financial co-contribution to help ensure that State investment is maximised and that benefits are delivered sooner.

The uplift in productivity, healthier communities, and stronger local economies resulting from the completion of these transport projects would cement Melbourne's east as one of Australia's most liveable and competitive urban regions - well prepared to meet the demands of population growth.