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MTF Submission to the State Budget 2012/13

The MTF commends the State government for honouring election commitments for public transport and its recognition of the fundamental role public transport plays in the economy, liveability and sustainability of Melbourne as a city. The MTF submits that better transport options serve to increase State domestic product and government revenues.

State Submission to Infrastructure Australia

Clearly the Government has focused on Melbourne's strategic transport network and MTF welcomes its detailed submission to Infrastructure Australia (IA). MTF supports the following projects in the State's submission:

- Melbourne Metro;
- Avalon airport rail link;
- Removing Level Crossings;
- Dandenong Rail Capacity;
- High Capacity Signalling;
- Tram Route 86 Demonstration Project;
- Western Integrated Freight Terminal;
- Integrated Urban Renewal.

Regarding the submission on an East West link, the MTF takes a cautious view of major road projects, particularly while public transport investment lags so far behind Melbourne's development. Continual investment in road space creates high transport costs for individuals and society, encourages inefficient land use through sprawl, longer trips and car dependency which in turn creates more congestion. Costly and self-defeating, this also adds to Melbourne's vulnerability with rising oil prices. The negative benefit cost ratio of the East West road link project, ascertained by two professional studies, reinforces this assessment.

It is well established that road building is no solution to city congestion. In the case of the East West Link, congestion at the end of the Eastern Freeway would transfer into the inner suburbs and city (which already struggle under peak traffic loads) as most of these trips are inner city bound. The MTF view is that the priority for managing congestion on Alexandra Parade and Hoddle Street is a

Doncaster corridor rail service, staged to Ringwood, catering for travel demand from the eastern suburbs.

The MTF notes that the IA project submissions, with the exception of Tram Route 86, are for planning and project development work. If not funded by Infrastructure Australia, these should be included in the State transport budget and progressed to the next stage. Tram Route 86 is the only project at construction stage. If IA funding is not forthcoming for this tram project, it is also submitted that the State government should fund the necessary \$70 million for implementation.

A. SMALLER SCALE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT PROJECTS

As the State government has focused on the big picture, there are many smaller scale projects that will complement large infrastructure developments and play a role to achieve desired outcomes. The MTF raises the following in this context.

1. Better Stations

Engagement with MTF member councils and communities on rail station quality has generated a list of stations in urgent need of basic but essential improvements – shelter, access, toilets, signage, maintenance. Accordingly, the **MTF seeks \$5 - \$10 million allocated in the Budget for rail station upgrades to enable smaller scale but useful improvements to 10 – 20 stations per annum**. This is proposed as a partnership opportunity with local governments prepared to add value to the work by undertaking local complementary projects in the nearby domain in conjunction with local communities.

Attached is an ancillary budget submission previously provided regarding station projects from MTF's Better Stations community survey and MTF member councils' proposals. These projects are 'shovel-ready' and could be underway quickly while the PTDA is being established. This project would complement the government's commendable interest in stations through its Station Users' Panel, attention to improved platform access, and station safety.

2. Cycling infrastructure

The value of cycling as congestion relief is significant; but growth in cyclist numbers can only be achieved by investment in dedicated road space. Reportedly, 10% of commuters in inner Melbourne are now cyclists. There are goals to increase this substantially – the National Cycling Strategy seeks to double cyclists on Australian roads. MTF Councils, Bicycle Network (formerly Bicycle Victoria), the Cycling Promotion Fund all have similar goals to substantially increase the take-up of cycling.

The growth of cycling depends heavily upon a safe cycling environment. The recent Coroner's report on the death of a student in Hawthorn from 'dooring', included a statement that his unfortunate death was preventable and called on VicRoads and councils to work on the configuration of bicycle and parking lanes.

Closely allied to cyclist and pedestrian safety, is reduced vehicle speed. Inner Melbourne Action Plan (IMAP) councils have advocated for a consistent 40km/h in inner Melbourne. Gil Penelosa, Executive Director of 8-80 Cities, speaking at the 2011 Bike Futures conference in Melbourne, highlighted that the two absolute 'must haves' to support cycling are a 30 km/h speed limit, and a well integrated segregated bicycle network. Many Canadian, and European cities have 30 km/h limits in built up areas. While 30km/h is a longer term goal in areas of high cyclist and pedestrian activity, MTF supports the IMAP council representations for 40 km/h.

Investment in cycle paths, bicycle parking and other cycling infrastructure provides very positive return for very modest expenditure and greater effectiveness of existing road widths, when looking at moving people and goods, rather than providing solely for vehicles. State funding for cycling is negligible compared with budget allocations for buses or other modes. Research undertaken by AECOM for the City of Sydney has ascertained that every dollar spent building an Inner Sydney Regional Bike Network, generates an economic return of \$3.88 in congestion, health and environmental benefits.¹

The MTF thus seeks a substantially increased annual allocation for cycle infrastructure in the State budget to complete the principal bike network (PBN) and for improved cycle safety through segregated cycle paths.

St Kilda Road is a prime example of a key PBN route where greater space needs to be allocated to a separated bike rider facility. This is required to cope with increased ridership as well as to comprehensively address the high prevalence of 'dooring' of riders occurring between St Kilda Junction and Park Street.

3. Walking Infrastructure

Walking is recognised as the glue of the urban fabric and comprises at least the first and last parts of travel by all modes of transport. In this respect, the MTF commends the establishment of a Walking Advisory Council for Victoria.

There is however, no dedicated funding by the State for walking infrastructure improvements. Like cycling infrastructure projects, these provide a high return on investment. Funding of walking infrastructure can also assist in increasing public transport patronage by focussing on the catchment of public transport stops and interchanges.

Evidence of the benefits of investment in walking can be seen in the Heart Foundation's paper "Good for Business" where well designed streets that provide for walking and bike riding are more economically viable streets for commerce which can be completed with a high benefit cost return.²

¹<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/AboutSydney/ParkingAndTransport/Cycling/EconomicResearchCycling.aspx>

² http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/MR_RodneyTolley_Nov22_FINAL.pdf

Compare this with the adverse health impacts of high car use that is not considered and not costed in infrastructure decisions. Inadequate physical activity is a significant societal cost which increases the risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, low bone density, diabetes and cancer. The economic impact of sedentary lifestyles is estimated to be approximately \$13 billion a year. By 2025, it is estimated that the number of obese Australians will surpass those of a healthy weight: only 28% of adults will be at a healthy weight whilst 34% will be obese.³ The State's contribution to walking infrastructure is a sound investment to reduce the substantial cost to the health budget from the effects of obesity and sedentary travel.

4. Electronic opportunities for transport

The MTF refers to potentially revolutionary opportunities for transport in Melbourne through communications technology enabled by new generation smart phones. Particularly transformative is the ability to track train, tram and bus via real-time displays on a mobile phone to improve transfer between modes. The technology can also support improved taxi operations and niche market car pooling. The MTF appreciates caution with new technology, but urges the government to fund investigations into the transformative opportunities for transport from new communications technology.

The State government has taken a commendably proactive approach to electric cars; the MTF urges a similar proactive attitude to advances to be gained for transport from new technologies.

5. Travel Demand Management

While much is made of Melbourne's congestion and associated costs, alternatives to costly road infrastructure are often overlooked. The single occupant car uses a disproportionate share of road space to its value. This adds to congestion, impedes more efficient forms of transport and creates pressure for costly investment in yet more road space. The MTF strongly supports measures to increase car occupancy and deliver priority roadspace to the most efficient vehicles. High occupancy lanes and car pooling programs have been trialled but need to be developed as an integrated package with driver education.

Without attention to more efficient forms of transport, the MTF emphasises the negative impacts of a transport system reliant on private vehicles, the bulk of which are single occupant. This is at the expense of all other transport users in the system. Every freight vehicle, public transport user, cyclist and pedestrian is delayed and endangered by the excess of single occupant cars creating economic costs that run into billions and an infrastructure backlog of similar proportions. The MTF urges the State to take this seriously. Relatively small investments in travel demand management through use of new technology as

³ Australian Vision for Active Transport, 2010, Monash epidemiological study, Diabetes Obesity and Lifestyle Study

above, would achieve greater road space efficiencies to reduce drains on the state economy.

B. TAXI INDUSTRY

The MTF has taken a keen interest in the Victorian Taxi Industry Inquiry due to report mid 2012. The level of unmet demand and customer dissatisfaction coupled with all-time low taxi occupancy (reduced from 38% in 2009 to 26% currently) demonstrates industry failure of significant proportions.

Given the range of issues, and opportunities to deliver improvements for both drivers and users, the MTF submits that budget funding be allocated for implementation of the review recommendations to avoid a year passing before action is taken.

C. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Regarding the backlog in public transport service and infrastructure provision, the MTF submission turns to deal with this issue.

The MTF appreciates that the Public Transport Development Authority (PTDA) is being established, and that it will doubtless assess the network and priority of local projects. However, there are a number of outstanding projects for which funding is sought while the PTDA is getting underway.

1. Rail

Infrastructure to Growth Corridors

Melbourne's rapid growth is exacerbating its infrastructure backlog. This will be further exacerbated if Growth Corridor Plans do not include high quality public transport commensurate with residential growth.

The links between sustainable transport and household economics, community health, environmental values and general liveability have been well documented. High quality public transport should be an automatic part of development – as for all other household infrastructure connections such as sewerage, electricity, gas, telephone, drainage etc. This would enable transit oriented development generating considerable efficiencies by reducing vehicular travel, land, parking and travel costs.

The unacceptably high transport costs, coupled with distance from jobs and vulnerability to peak oil, are such that the MTF is firmly of the view that growth corridor development should not proceed until the government commits to the public transport infrastructure necessary to support that development.

The MTF appreciates the significant upfront cost. It suggests that the government pursue options to better fund public transport including developer contributions, road user charges, infrastructure bonds, and the Commonwealth substantially increasing the State share of national revenue for public transport infrastructure.

More specifically, the MTF seeks that the Budget fund planning for public transport infrastructure development in growth areas as follows:

- **Extending rail to Mernda, and Epping North in Whittlesea** to complement the South Morang rail due to be completed by 2012. The planning amendment to incorporate the Mernda Strategy Plan in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, providing for extension of rail to the Mernda Town Centre, was formally gazetted on 21 October 2004. The planning amendment to incorporate the Epping North Strategic Plan in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, with extension of rail services to Epping North, was gazetted on 13 September 2002. Budget allocations to plan implementation of these rail extensions are sought. Planning for Epping North should be integrated with a rail reservation to link to Craigieburn.
- **Planning for the northern Hume/Mitchell Growth Corridor:** These new northern growth areas require reliable public transport to link people to jobs, and offer opportunities for transit oriented development. A budget allocation is sought to plan for effective utilisation of the 16 metre transit reservation along Aitken Boulevard through Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), SmartBus, or light rail to link the Broadmeadows CAD, Craigieburn Town Centre and the northern employment and residential precincts to Donnybrook.
- **Casey Cardinia Growth Corridor:** this area has experienced extensive growth over the past 20 years with an existing backlog in public transport and other community infrastructure, yet is projected to have a population of 600,000 by 2031. Located 45-55 kms from Melbourne's CAD and employment opportunities, the Casey Community is highly vulnerable to changes in mortgage rates, fuel costs and is highly car dependant. Budget commitment is sought to upgrade the Dandenong – Pakenham and Cranbourne lines with the Cranbourne line extended to Cranbourne East and Clyde. Bus services are sought as estates are developed, with frequent service levels early morning to late at night, 7 days per week.

MTF is strongly of the view that land development should not alienate highly productive agricultural activities, as in the Casey prime food bowl area serving Melbourne. Productive peri-urban farmland is to be protected to maintain local food supplies and reduce transportation costs.

2. Buses

Metropolitan Bus reviews

The metropolitan bus network was thoroughly reviewed in 2009 in conjunction with extensive community and local council consultation, developing a comprehensive list of 'shovel-ready' projects. Establishing a regular funding allocation is essential to progress the projects identified in this review.

The bus network has not been subject to the patronage pressures of rail and tram. Relatively small investments to capitalise on spare capacity in the bus network would be an easy win.

The MTF refers the government to the recent report *Better Bus Access* by VCOSS (Victorian Council for Social Services). This researched bus users, in particular, those dependent on bus for their only means of transport, and made many useful recommendations.⁴

Get the bus to meet the train

The MTF understands this is an election commitment and stated objective of the new government. It emphasises the value to passengers and transport operators alike of improved connections between public transport modes of rail, tram and bus, in particular, rail and bus.

Standardised and integrated timetables and better information systems are two vital ingredients to make this happen, as are transport interchanges designed to facilitate and support users changing modes.

Getting the bus to meet the train would improve access to rail by bus and relieve major parking pressures at many Melbourne rail stations. It would also take advantage of the considerable spare capacity on the bus network. Much could be achieved for relatively little expenditure.

Again, the MTF refers the government to the advantages of new technology to facilitate more efficient transport interchange.

SmartBus

A new SmartBus service is sought for the inner metropolitan suburbs including Highpoint, Maribyrnong to Williamstown. This route, included in SmartBus planning, links major commercial centres in the inner west with residential areas across municipalities. The MTF seeks implementation through funding in the 2012/13 budget for this route. SmartBus services are also sought for growth corridors, as set out above.

⁴ www.vco.org.au

3. Trams

The MTF re-iterates previous submissions for examining tram extensions on the following routes:

- Route 75 beyond Vermont South to Knox City transport interchange;
- Route 48 beyond North Balwyn to Doncaster Shopping Town;
- Route 86 from Clifton Hill along Hoddle Street to Bridge Road/Swan Street;
- Route 57 beyond West Maribyrnong to Avondale Heights;
- Route 59 beyond Airport West to Tullamarine;
- Route 112 beyond West Preston to Reservoir;
- Extension of tram tracks along Park Street in South Melbourne over Kings Way to connect western parts of the Melbourne CBD to St Kilda Road and South Yarra (referred to as the 'Park Street Tram Link');
- Relocate some Melbourne University tram shuttles to Brunswick Road;
- Route 109 to have trams shuttling from Victoria Gardens;
- Route 82 tram priority improvements and realignment at Highpoint;
- Route 72 to integrate with rail connections at Caulfield Station and with Doncaster Rail (on completion).

4. Integrated Land Use and Transport

Cross government collaboration is sought at key stations for transport integration with activity centre planning, offering multiple benefits of higher density, social housing, accessibility, amenity and economic development. MTF councils have undertaken extensive structure planning focusing on development around rail stations in line with the principles of transit oriented development. The success of proposals around the Glen Waverly Station in Monash, demonstrate the demand for such development.

Funding to support further transit oriented development around rail stations is sought across Melbourne, with the following as priorities:

- Greensborough Station;
- Coburg Station;
- Richmond Station;
- Sunshine Station;
- Footscray Station;
- Box Hill transport interchange;
- South Yarra Station.

The MTF welcomes the design principle from the Growth Areas Authority to plan for local employment creation and appropriate zoning. Also needed are incentives to encourage businesses to locate in growth areas. By serving to decrease trip lengths and provide work opportunities close to population, this is transport investment well spent.

D. FREIGHT

The MTF recognises that freight is intrinsic to the Victorian economy. Consolidation of businesses, just-in-time processing and globalisation driving more trade, coupled with rapid population growth, intensify demands on the freight transport system. The MTF also values the structure and liveability of local communities and emphasises the importance of protecting residential environments from excessive noise, danger and intrusion of freight systems.

The MTF has long advocated for more freight to be carried by rail and urges the State government to take a longer term strategic approach, prioritising a strategic network of freight corridors and distribution centres, and well integrated delivery systems throughout the supply chain. The potential of rail to relieve truck congestion is behind the recently announced NSW upgrade to its freight rail system, anticipated to take 200,000 trucks off the road and reduce carbon emissions by 100,000 tonnes per annum. The project is expected to increase rail freight corridor capacity by 50% by 2016 with commensurate increase in NSW domestic product. The MTF seeks that Victoria follow this lead to reduce road congestion, reduce truck collisions/health costs, improve road safety, and increase Victoria's state domestic product.

The MTF anticipates vigorous debate on this topic. It also sees that a priority for freight is to protect roadspace for commercial purposes from over-use by single occupant cars, as discussed above.

Finally: A more creative approach

The MTF urges the state government to look more creatively at solving Melbourne's transport problems. There are many techniques available that can make significant differences to transport without additional infrastructure. Firstly, there is a lot of underutilised transport capacity in Melbourne – buses are empty when nearby trams are full; there is huge capacity potential in utilising off-peak direction for both train and tram; and in increasing car and taxi occupancy. Secondly, the positioning of key land uses is essential to minimise transport costs. Major destinations such as shopping centres, universities, hospitals, airports and employment hubs must be located at railways stations. The evidence of not doing so is there for all to see and retrofitting enormously difficult if not impossible – e.g. rail to Monash University, rail station at Southland have been decades in discussion. And why are primary schools and other key public facilities still being located well away from the student population, despite statements in the Victorian Planning Provisions and years of advocacy for walking and health?

There are tools to resolve these issues in the planning scheme and pricing mechanisms; the MTF requests the budget allocate funds to explore these 'no-build' transport solutions.

The MTF looks forward to the State budget addressing these matters.