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Media Release

20 April 2009

Rail strategy for recovery

Metropolitan Transport Forum (MTF) Chair, Cr Jackie Fristacky said that President Obama has demonstrated the way for Australia and Melbourne to boost jobs and the economy while reducing traffic congestion, pollution, and dependency on oil imports.

The US President has committed to spending US\$8 billion of his fiscal stimulus package on 10 new fast rail projects. He has also promised to budget an additional US\$5 billion renovating existing rail lines and facilities.

The President estimated these projects would create tens of thousands of jobs and make a huge reduction in the \$80 billion lost in the US each year because of road congestion. MTF's Cr Fristacky, highlighted the President's advice that building major new rail links would be "faster, cheaper, and easier" than building more freeways.

The President said that the US could learn from the great success of fast rail projects in France, Japan, China, and Spain. The fast rail from Madrid to Seville now carries more passengers per week than the road and air links to those cities.

The Victorian Government could learn from the US President and immediately start building the Epping -South Morang rail line and extend this to Mernda. It should also immediately start building other rail extensions - to Cranbourne East, Wyndham Vale and Caroline Springs as well as planning the Doncaster and Rowville rail corridors.

The MTF representing 19 Melbourne metropolitan councils, also points out that the Australian Government is one of the few central governments in the world which makes no significant contribution to urban passenger rail. This is despite a national road congestion bill estimated to exceed \$20 billion by 2020.

The MTF looks forward to the responses of Mr Rudd and Mr Brumby to the ambitious rail plans of the US President, said Cr Fristacky.

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You can view President Obama's announcement at the pt4me2 blog
<http://www.pt4me2.blogspot.com/>

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