



CONNECTING

PEOPLE

VICTORIA



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INTRODUCTION

Melbourne and Victoria have faced an unprecedented set of challenges over the past four years. Bushfires, a pandemic and the need for multiple society-wide lockdowns and responsive government spending have created a very different environment in which all political parties must operate as we approach the 2022 election.

While the pandemic has seen a decline in the rate of population growth in Victoria, the recovery phase is likely to see a return to major population growth and demographic shifts over the next 35 years, according to forecasts.

Significant growth continues in Melbourne's fringe or Interface Councils, as well as in key regional centres along the north, east and western corridors that link with Melbourne. Many of these Interface Councils will have populations exceeding quarter of a million, with some approaching half a million residents.

The State Government will need to implement and fund key strategies to support the transition to a Victoria with more than eight million people in Melbourne and ten million people state-wide, to maintain the high social, economic and environmental conditions enjoyed (and expected) by Victorians.

Simply stated, a strong and growing economy, and a liveable Melbourne and country Victoria, will be high priority issues for Victorian voters at the coming election. The next State Government will be expected to address these issues, and a commitment to do so will be vital.

An efficient and integrated transport network, with the timely provision of bus services in growth areas, will need to be at the core of the State Government's approach to delivering thriving communities, along with the necessary social and economic infrastructure to house, employ, entertain, educate and stay healthy.

The importance of this objective in relation to public transport, and more specifically, the bus network, has been highlighted by the reliance on this mode of public transport by Victorians throughout the pandemic and the recovery.

A commitment to the staged implementation of the objectives, recommendations and initiatives set out in this policy document will support the transition to a fully integrated transport network, and in a budgetary context that will support positive economic growth and liveability, at a moderate cost to government.

TEN POLICY DIRECTIONS

This paper provides support and direction to all who are contesting the 2022 State election by identifying and committing to invest in strategic bus-related public transport projects that will achieve economic, social and environmental benefits.

In line with a triple bottom line sustainability focus, these various priorities have been prepared starting from the value position that a city, or other region, whose land use and transport systems, and the technologies on which they depend, supports the following outcomes:

- Increased economic productivity
- Increased Gross Domestic Product per capita
- Reduced ecological footprint
- Passing on a stock of natural assets that will assist future generations to meet their own needs
- Increased social inclusion and reduced inequality
- Ensuring that all people can live a good life
- Improved employment outcomes
- Improved public health and safety outcomes
- Engaged and thriving communities
- Inclusive development and delivery of land use transport plans and policies
- Integrated land use transport plans and policies across sectors, levels of government and modes.

1. IMPROVE BUS SERVICES IN THE OUTER SUBURBS AND REGIONS

There is a significant divide between the availability and coverage of bus services in inner metropolitan Melbourne and the outer suburbs and the regions.

This places a significant handbrake on the capacity for positive economic, social, and environmental outcomes in our outer suburbs and regions, whose population continues to grow.

Melbourne and Victoria's reputation as one of the most liveable regions in the world is also under significant threat due to this persistent inequality.

BusVic believes the public transport network needs to be realigned to focus on delivering services that enable people to move effectively and efficiently regardless of where they live.

In our assessment, \$32m annually will fund the following quick and easy service improvements:

METROPOLITAN

Western Suburbs

1. Introduce a Sunday service for the 414 Laverton Station to Footscray via Geelong Road.
2. Introduce a Sunday service for the 415 Laverton Station to Williamstown via Altona.
3. Introduce a Sunday service for the 479 Airport West Shopping Centre to Sunbury via Melbourne Airport.

Watergardens

4. Extend Route 463 down Aspire Blvd, providing greater access to the growing population in the area.
5. Route 461: Greater frequency of delivery of this service from Watergardens Station to Caroline Springs Town Centre.

Moreland

6. Increase Route 512's span of hours of operation AND start running it on Sunday's, so it meets community demand.

Wyndham

7. Review all services in the Wyndham municipality due to significant population growth to ensure demand is being matched by supply.
8. Upgrade bus stop infrastructure in the Werribee area, including recharging infrastructure so

zero emission buses (ZEBs) can recharge along the route.

9. Harmonisation of fare zones to ensure there are no disincentives to rail users using buses.

Eastern Suburbs

10. Route 624 – Kew to Oakleigh via Caulfield and Chadstone. Increase in frequency to service delivery on weekends and greater availability during the week.
11. Introduce a Sunday service for Route 407, Avondale Heights to Highpoint Shopping Centre via Maribyrnong.

South-Eastern Suburbs

12. Increase frequency of route 841 to every 20 minutes.
13. Extend Routes 791, 795, 796 and 798 to service new residential estates between Cranbourne and Clyde.
14. Extend Route 898 to link Casey Fields with Cranbourne.

Manningham

15. Increase provision of bus services between Wonga Park and Croydon particularly during before and after school and peak periods.
16. Increased services to include an expanded route throughout Wonga Park, with the inclusion of Warrandyte, Ringwood, Doncaster and Warrandyte South as destinations.
17. Inclusion of Ringwood Station and Doncaster Park and ride in any expanded routes.

Northern Suburbs

18. Upgrade frequency on Route 542 and extend service to Pascoe Vale Station on Sundays.
19. Upgrade frequency and bus priority for route 541 and 525 to support patronage growth.
20. Upgrade span of hours on weekends on routes 536 and 538 in line with other routes.
21. Extend Route 561 to major hub/interchange (Watsonia and Greensborough) to boost patronage.
22. Upgrade frequency on Routes 517, 555, 556, 566 and 567 to match the train timetable.

23. Night services on routes 356, 381, 388 and 564 to connect with trains at Epping, South Morang and Mernda to cater for residents at Bundoora, Mill Park, Wollert East, Doreen and Mernda.
24. High frequency service connecting Epping North and Wollert to Mernda train line at Lalor Station using bus priority along Edgars Rd.
25. Introduce a bus service in Wollert East along Salt Lake Boulevard.
26. Introduce a bus service for new estates in Wollert between Boundary Rd (extension of Bridge Inn Rd) and Craigieburn Rd.
27. Introduce a bus service in Wollert East along Grovedale, Waurin Ponds Shopping Centre, Leisure link, Waurin Ponds Station and Deakin University.
28. Introduce a Route 40 weekend timetable so Breakwater, areas of Marshall, Grovedale and Waurin Ponds have a service on weekends.
29. For Routes 30/31 and 40/42, upgrade weekday service frequency to every 20 minutes, in line with other Geelong based services.
30. Increase Route 55 and 56 weekday frequency to Ocean Grove and Queenscliff to match 50/51 (Torquay) and 60/61 (Drysdale).
31. Review of timetables for all buses to ensure routes that have sufficient demand run past 5pm.
32. Greater service delivery and frequency across the Bellarine area:
 - a. Create public transport link between southern Bellarine and northern Bellarine.
 - b. Give more options for travel between Ocean Grove and Geelong through provision of additional and varied services.
 - c. Create an express route between St Leonards and Drysdale to allow greater access to Geelong.
 - d. Provide greater services to the residents of Curlewis through creation of a service into Drysdale that connects with buses to Geelong.
 - e. Creation of additional weekend services across the Bellarine region.

Healesville

27. Introduce additional evening and weekend services for Route 685 from Healesville to Lilydale to align with employment, medical, and education services as well as railway station connectivity.
28. Introduce new peak services in the Kilsyth area to service the industrial precinct and provide direct linkages with railway stations.
29. Undertake a whole of network review for the Lilydale area to introduce minimum service levels across the network (30-minute weekday frequency and 6 am to 10 pm span of operating hours) and demand-responsive public transport services to meet the needs of those sections of the community that cannot be reached with standard buses.
30. Introduce a new direct running peak hour service linking Healesville, Yarra Glen and Warburton with the Lilydale railway station.

REGIONAL

Geelong

31. For the Great Ocean Road V/Line service:
 - a. Match service provision over Easter with that experienced over the summer holidays and Australia Day.
 - b. An additional round trip between Geelong and Lorne on weekdays, and more additional round trips on weekends throughout the year.
 - c. Greater investment in school bus services in the vicinity of Armstrong Creek, which is experiencing significant population growth, putting pressure on existing services.
32. For Route 40:
 - a. Increase frequency of services to improve connections between Geelong, Gordon TAFE, Breakwater, Marshall Station,
33. Extend Jan Juc services to Anglesea or initiate a shuttle service between Anglesea and Torquay to connect with Geelong-bound buses to meet demand from growing population.
34. Increase school services on the following routes to cope with increased demand:
 - a. Ocean Grove - Drysdale return
 - b. Ocean Grove - Geelong return
 - c. Armstrong Creek - Geelong school's return
 - d. Drysdale - Geelong school's return
 - e. Anakie Rd - Newton schools
35. Provision of more dedicated bus lanes in the Geelong area, including but not limited to, Ryrie Street westbound between Swanston Street and Union Street.

40. Increase frequency of services so all operate on 20-minute (peak) and 40-minute (off-peak) timetable to match the rail timetable.

Ballarat

41. Increase frequency of services so buses operate every 20 minutes in the peak and every 40 minutes in the off-peak, to match the rail timetable.
42. Implement new services to the growth areas to the south-west of Ballarat which are currently without any services.

Mildura

43. Increase the frequency and span of operating hours of existing services in Mildura and for services that feed into Mildura, such as Robinvale, so supply can meet demand. Currently the services feeding into Mildura are overcrowded.

Wangaratta and Surrounds

44. Undertake a root and branch review for Wangaratta to ensure that the current service provision is sufficient to meet community demand.
45. Create a dedicated route bus for the town of Yarrawonga to replace existing taxi service in recognition of rapid population growth.
46. Expand the Cobram town service to five days a week during school hours to allow for greater access to the community for residents.
47. Introduce uniformity across the V/Line midweek timetable.
48. Introduce a weekend service from Bright, Myrtleford, Beechworth to Wangaratta and Melbourne.
49. Increase Wangaratta—Bendigo via Shepparton service to five days a week to allow for return trips by overnight visitors and hospital visitors.
50. Increase the frequency of service on the Bright—Mt Hotham ALPS LINK service.

Wodonga

51. Undertake a root and branch review of existing services and demand factors in the Wodonga area, including the growing demand in the south, east and west areas of Wodonga.
52. Introduce a dedicated bus route for the Riverside Estate in Killara to take advantage of existing bus stop infrastructure provided by the developer.
53. Increase the frequency of services between Wodonga and Albury.

Shepparton

54. Undertake a root and branch review of the span, area and frequency of services.
55. Increase services to meet the first three departures from the railway station on weekdays.
56. Increase the frequency of Saturday services and introduce services on Sundays.
57. Introduce new routes and increase service on existing routes for new developments in Kialla, Shepparton North and Shepparton East and adjoining town in Tatura which are currently underserved.

Swan Hill

58. Amend existing route bus services to start and finish at the Swan Hill Railway Station so buses meet the train.
59. Split the existing two route bus services into four, so the local primary and high schools, aged care facilities, Swan Hill TAFE and the Riverside precinct can be serviced by the route bus.

Bairnsdale

60. The Paynesville – Eagle Point – Newlands Arm area is experiencing relentless growth and the frequency and span of the bus services need to be increased to meet the communities need. There are presently only 5 services Monday to Friday between 9am-6pm, 1 service on a Saturday and no services on a Sunday. These should be increased to 8 services Monday to Friday, and operate from 5.30am to 10.30pm so as to meet each train, and 4 services on both Saturdays and Sundays.



2. INTRODUCE A SUBURBAN BUS LOOP AS A LEAD-IN TO THE SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP

BACKGROUND

The Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) is a 90km rail corridor connecting Melbourne's southeast through to the north, then to the airport, and across to Melbourne's largest growth corridor in the west. The corridor will be developed through established suburbs in Melbourne's middle ring, linking with key activity centres and railway stations.

The SRL will be delivered in three stages: SRL East, SRL North and SRL West (excluding the Airport Rail Link service between Sunshine and Melbourne Airport). The first stage, SRL East is not due for completion until approximately 2035, with SRL North to be delivered by approximately 2053. There is no specific business case for the delivery of SRL West. The cost estimate from the business case for the first two stages of the project, SRL East and SRL North, is estimated to be up to \$67.4 billion. There is no information available with regard to final cost and project timing for SRL West.

Melbourne's middle ring of suburbs is quite transport poor when it comes to cross town services and the ability to rapidly connect people with non-CBD destinations. Travellers are heavily car dependent to undertake these journeys which on public transport can range well over one and a half hours for some connecting services. The project aims to remove approximately 600,000 daily car trips when fully operational with an estimated half a million new passenger trips generated daily on the new corridor.

The trouble with the SRL is that it is cost prohibitive and we won't enjoy the benefit of it for decades. There is a more cost effective and demand responsive solution.

THE PROPOSITION

We propose that the State Government establish a high-capacity bus corridor called the Suburban Bus Loop (SBL) along the proposed corridor to function as a public transport demand lead-in for the SRL project prior to and during the 30-year delivery phase.

The purpose of this is to provide initial high-capacity public transport access to the local communities to enable efficient and effective public transport journey's now whilst the SRL is being built over the next 30 years.

The high-capacity bus services should be delivered by hydrogen fuel cell electric buses that provide reliable, comfortable, zero emission, high value services linking the communities along the proposed SRL with key activity centres and existing rail corridors.

The hydrogen fuel cell electric buses would be manufactured in Melbourne, creating new jobs and the opportunity to ***create a high value manufacturing sector in Victoria.*** Buses will be truly smart buses, having the latest in-vehicle telematics and customer display screens to deliver dependable, on time running services and keep the customer informed of their journey from start to destination.

Bus services will be designed to provide similar operating capacities as the proposed SRL corridor, with high-capacity vehicles operating at high frequencies during peak and off-peak periods to offer a ***turn up and go*** style service to create a highly efficient public transport network for the middle ring of Melbourne.



For the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and high-capacity service options, bus service frequency will be set at 5–7 minutes during the peak period and 10 minutes in the off-peak. For the orbital style service, frequency will be at 10 minutes during both peak and off-peak periods. The service will operate between 5am and 1am seven days a week to align with the rail network to offer a seamless turn up and go interface at all times.

Suburban Bus Loop Service Parameters

Route	Suburban Bus Loop Section	Service Type	Route Length (km)	Bus No.	Frequency (peak/off-peak)	Pax/Hr	Bus Lane
1	Southland to Monash University	BRT	13.2	8	5 / 10 mins	2,880	Bus Lane
2	Monash University to Glen Waverley	High-capacity	7	5	6 / 10 mins	1,600	Virtual
3	Glen Waverley to Box Hill	High-capacity	12.7	9	6 / 10 mins	1,600	Virtual
4	Box Hill to Latrobe University	High-capacity	17.1	12	6 / 10 mins	1,600	Virtual
5	Latrobe University to Melbourne Airport	Orbital	23	8	10 / 10 mins	800	Virtual
6	Werribee to Sunshine	BRT	27.2	17	5 / 10 mins	2,880	Bus Lane

Service reliability and schedule adherence will be delivered through the creation of dedicated bus corridors on those section of the road network that have the physical capacity for an additional lane. On those corridors that have 2 lanes in each direction, part time bus lanes will be established that will operate during the peak period, based on similar standards as the part time tram lanes currently in operation.

The bus corridor will rely on latest technology to provide traffic signal and intersection priority based on GPS location, passenger loading of the vehicle, and schedule adherence so as to only activate traffic lights when required. Dedicated bus jump lanes and bus turning lanes will further facilitate reliability in service delivery. Bus stops will be designed to be universally accessible and have appropriate features to ensure customer safety is at the centre of every journey. Bus stops will be designed for all door boarding to minimise dwell time. Stops will typically be spaced between 800m and 1200m to maximise operational efficiency, passenger access, and align with key destinations along the corridor. The overall corridor length is approximately 100km.

We propose the SBL be segmented similar to the structure to the SRL, with key interchanges established along the corridor – Southland, Monash Medical Centre, Monash University, Glen Waverley, Box Hill, Doncaster, Heidelberg, Latrobe University, Broadmeadows, Melbourne Airport, Werribee, and Sunshine.

As the SRL comes online, bus services can readily be transitioned to other corridors in the network, however existing bus stop infrastructure can effectively be used to maintain an efficient and accessible local bus network.



HOW MUCH WOULD THE INTRODUCE OF A SUBURBAN BUS LOOP COST?

Suburban Bus Loop Costings Table

Year	Infrastructure Cost	Operational Cost	Total Annual Cost	Cumulative Total
1	\$111,693,750	\$5,000,000	\$116,693,750	\$116,693,750
2	\$198,942,188	\$5,250,000	\$204,192,188	\$320,885,938
3	\$168,289,734	\$37,202,173	\$205,491,907	\$526,377,845
4	\$82,542,797	\$68,233,390	\$150,776,187	\$677,154,032
5		\$105,832,252	\$105,832,252	\$782,986,284
6		\$111,123,865	\$111,123,865	\$894,110,149
7		\$116,680,058	\$116,680,058	\$1,010,790,207
8		\$122,514,061	\$122,514,061	\$1,133,304,268
9		\$128,639,764	\$128,639,764	\$1,261,944,032
10		\$135,071,753	\$135,071,753	\$1,397,015,785
11		\$141,825,340	\$141,825,340	\$1,538,841,125
12		\$148,916,607	\$148,916,607	\$1,687,757,732
13		\$156,362,438	\$156,362,438	\$1,844,120,170
14		\$164,180,559	\$164,180,559	\$2,008,300,729
15		\$172,389,587	\$172,389,587	\$2,180,690,316
16		\$181,009,067	\$181,009,067	\$2,361,699,383
17		\$190,059,520	\$190,059,520	\$2,551,758,903
18		\$199,562,496	\$199,562,496	\$2,751,321,399
19		\$209,540,621	\$209,540,621	\$2,960,862,020
20		\$220,017,652	\$220,017,652	\$3,180,879,672

HOW WOULD A SUBURBAN BUS LOOP BE IMPLEMENTED?

The proposed SBL can be developed either as a single project to provide the community and investors with the public transport infrastructure now to support the longer term SRL project; it can be implemented in a staged manner, aligned with the sections identified in the SRL project: SRL East, SRL North, and SRL West; or as a mix of these service options.

Vehicle manufacturing and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure will require a lead time of approximately 18–24 months from contract approval to enable establishment of facilities of scale to enable manufacturing in Melbourne to meet the demand.

Infrastructure works (on road, bus stops, depots, and refuelling facilities) for each package will take

between 24–36 months from contract approval, which includes local and state planning approvals, design, procurement and construction.

For the purpose of this proposal, the project will be delivered in stages, with the first stage being the east corridor, then north and west, with construction for each project commencing approximately 12 months after the previous stage is underway. Adopting this approach, the East corridor will come online at the start of Year 3, the North corridor at the start of Year 4, and the west corridor at the start of Year 5. Developing the SBL will enable the delivery of a fully operational high-capacity bus service in Melbourne's key growth suburbs within four years from project commencement, acting as an effective public transport lead into the development of the future SRL.

SERVICE LEVELS

1. Bus Rapid Transit

To be offered between Southland and Monash University and Werribee and Sunshine. Dedicated bus lanes with superstops at key locations, traffic light priority to support schedule adherence to deliver service reliability to customers. Vehicles have a capacity of 120 passengers, with a peak frequency of 5 minutes and off-peak frequency of 10 minutes. The service will operate between 5 am and 1 am seven days a week to align with peak demand and rail connectivity. Opportunities to provide connecting services between 1am and 5am to align with the night train services.

2. High-capacity Services

To be offered between Monash University and Latrobe University. Vehicles will be 12.5–13.5 m in length to reflect road conditions along sections of the corridor. Vehicles will have a capacity of up to 80 passengers. Service frequency will be 6–7 minutes in the peak and 10 minutes in the off-peak. The service will operate 5 am to 1 am seven days a week. Due to road capacity (significant sections of two-lane carriageway), it is proposed to introduce virtual bus lanes during peak periods to support service reliability. Virtual lanes will operate between 7 am and 9.30 am and 3.30 pm and 6.30 pm. There will be dedicated superstops at key locations, traffic light priority, and appropriate parking and turn bans to support schedule adherence in the peak periods.

3. Orbital Services

To be offered between Latrobe University and Melbourne Airport. These services will mirror the high-capacity services, however they will operate at a slightly reduced frequency of 10 minutes for both peak and off-peak services. Where demand along this section of the corridor dictates, frequency levels can be increased to align with high-capacity status.

On Road Priority

- Where the road network allows – create dedicated bus lanes. This will allow the creation of a BRT-style service between Southland and Monash University, as well as Werribee and Sunshine, two proposed high-capacity corridors.

Cost Assumptions

5% annual operating/service delivery cost indexation. \$5 million annual PTV overheads. Capital costs (infrastructure) indexed by 50% to allow for escalation of construction costs. That each section of the proposed network will be serviced from different depots, that is, six depots in total. It is proposed to use existing depots, and that each depot will require an infrastructure upgrade to house

refuelling facilities. Vehicle costs have been allocated a 10% tolerance at current market prices for hydrogen vehicles to allow for market volatility (however it is anticipated that a procurement process for the quantum of vehicles needed for the service will deliver a significantly lower capital cost). Creation of dedicated bus lanes will use existing road corridors. These will only apply where there are at least three lanes in each direction. Virtual bus lanes will be built along the same principles as virtual tram lanes.

- For dual carriageways, provide virtual bus lanes (based on the tram part-time corridors) that operate during peak periods and are supported by appropriate signage, parking and turning bans, as well as intersection priority.
- Introduce intersection bus jump lanes and virtual traffic light bus priority to support on-time running (i.e., only activates when bus is behind schedule/full of passengers).

Bus Stops

- Spacing of 800 m to 1.2 km typical: focus on key destination locations; i.e., shopping centres, hospitals etc.
- All stops accessible, elevated, support all door boarding, and next stop information.
- Superstops and interchanges supported by off vehicle ticket validation, lighting, ticket machines.

Vehicles

- Hydrogen fuel cell buses, based on Australian vehicle manufacture.
- High-capacity / orbital type buses – 12.5–13.5 m in length offering capacity of up to 80 passengers.
- Articulated BRT-style buses, 120 passenger capacity and up to 19.0m in length.
- Like-for-like operation to diesel buses.

Infrastructure

- Deploy hydrogen refuelling facilities at depots. This reduces the need for further infrastructure investment other than refuelling facility: bowzers and storage and some electrical work.



3. GREATER INVESTMENT IN ON ROAD BUS SERVICE PRIORITISATION

Across Australia, state and local governments have invested in prioritising the operation of their bus networks on major roads and thoroughfares and have received significant reliability benefits.

Some of the measures introduced in these jurisdictions include, but are not limited to:

- Peak periods bus lanes for high occupancy vehicles and permanent bus lanes
- Intersection priority for buses
- Bus jump lanes at intersections
- On-street parking management during peak periods
- Shared corridors with trams where practical

Victoria is lagging behind the rest of the country in introducing these measures, with limited provision for priority lanes for bus services or other measures across metropolitan and regional Victoria.

BusVic submits that the government should work with operators, local councils, VicRoads, PTV/DOT to identify and invest in infrastructure upgrades along transport corridors that give priority to on-road public transport to improve the reliability of the service.

To achieve ongoing benefits, and infrastructure upgrade programme should be a recurring budget item linked to an agreed network enhancement strategy for the bus network.

To support the implementation of this priority, we recommend the creation of a broader congestion management strategy, of which public transport is a key cornerstone of the solution. As is currently being demonstrated in a number of European cities, congestion management needs to be an integrated approach involving many facets, of which public and active transport are critical components.

BusVic calls on the Government to:

- Establish an on-road implementation steering committee to identify and implement an on-road priority program for public transport.
- Fund a recurrent capital expenditure programme of \$40 million per annum for five years to target on low-hanging fruit infrastructure upgrades such as bus jump lanes at intersections, introducing peak period high occupancy vehicle lanes along congested sections of corridors, bus priority signals at intersections, and improved management and design of on-street parking.
- Develop a strategy to manage the growing impact on Melbourne's roads, including allocation of public transport corridors on all new and upgrade projects for the arterial road network in Melbourne's outer suburbs (Interface Council Areas).



4. MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO FOR SPECIALIST SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Most States and Territories base their system for transporting children with disabilities to and from school around buses designed and approved for that purpose. Bus-based systems are able to ensure adherence to standards which maximise the interests of the children and their parents. They also provide certainty, continuity and consistency which are important for these children. That is why this system has the support of most parents and the relevant schools. Bus-based systems are also efficient from a school perspective, as they avoid queueing of vehicles both on school property and in neighbouring streets when children are dropped off and picked up and facilitates schools' meeting their health and safety obligations to the children.

From 2015, NDIS sought to develop a nationally centralised, taxi/Uber model to replace the long-standing and proven current model. The alternative NDIS sought to develop was opposed by parents and schools and not supported by parliamentary committees including the federal, joint parliamentary committee on NDIS. In 2021, the Department of Social security undertook a comprehensive consultation of stakeholders on the transporting of children with disabilities to and from schools and concluded that it was not appropriate for NDIS to assume responsibility for this function. Changing to any other model, like taxi's/Uber's, or centralising the administration, coordination and funding of these networks nationally would see the systems deteriorate immeasurably. The quality and safety of the services would diminish, children's routines would be obliterated, the efficient operation of the specialist schools would deteriorate and, if the current standards and monitoring of those

standards were maintained, costs would need to increase substantially.

Consequently, the Department of Social Security concluded that it is in the best interests of children with disabilities, their parents, and the schools, that the procurement, co-ordination, administration and funding of these bus-based, specialist school transportation services remain the responsibility of each State or Territory Government, not the NDIS.

BusVic calls on all those seeking election in November 2022 to agree to maintain the status quo so the delivery of bus-based, specialist school transportation services will continue to be procured, co-ordinated/administered and funded by State and Territory Governments.



5. MAKE RURAL SCHOOL BUS ELIGIBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY EASIER

In November 2021, a bipartisan Victorian Parliamentary Committee undertook a long-range inquiry into the Victorian School Bus Network tracking to be installed on new school buses and transport disadvantage in rural and regional Victoria. Following this investigation, they made a series of recommendations regarding the future of the Victorian school bus network.

BusVic welcomes the important work undertaken by this Committee and calls on all political parties to enact the following recommendations of the Committee to increase accessibility to rural transport.

- That the Victorian Government explore options to inform local communities of spare capacity on buses before downsizing buses on school bus programmes routes with declining patronage.
- Convert underutilised school bus programme services to public transport routes in areas with high demand, where the school buses comply with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002.
- That the Victorian Government direct individual school bus networks to allocate seating for the general public at the front of the bus where capacity allows. This policy should only be pursued where it does not impact student access to the bus.
- That the Victorian Government mandate a requirement for CCTV cameras and GPS tracking to be installed on new school buses as they come into operation on the school bus programme, to improve customer satisfaction and safety.
- That the Victorian Government streamline the application process for the general public to use the school bus programme, looking in particular at whether both a Working with Children Check and verbal reference are required.
- That the Victorian Government ensure the School Bus Management System allows members of the public to know if there is spare capacity on their desired school bus programme route before they begin an application to use a bus.
- That the Victorian Government oblige all contracted school bus operators to use innovative technology to further mitigate the risk of leaving children unattended on a school bus.



6. REVIVE RURAL ROADS

Victorians who have spent their lives in metropolitan areas, migrating to the regions during the pandemic, found many things - great climate, great communities and more space for them and their families. One of their less pleasant discoveries would have been the parlous state of the local rural road networks, many of which require significant investment from all levels of government to bring them up to the standard considered acceptable in metropolitan Melbourne. The poor state of rural roads creates additional costs for bus operators who must address the greater wear and tear inflicted on their vehicles.

BusVic calls on all sides of politics to commit to introducing a fund materially and significantly greater than any previous roads budget, to be accessible to local governments, which will allow for the rehabilitation of rural roads and thoroughfares.

This will allow greater reliability of the public transport network and reduce operating costs for operators and government.



7. IMPROVE FIRST-LAST MILE OPTIONS AND BUS STOP ACCESSIBILITY, SAFETY AND AMENITY

Walking is the main way people access bus stops in Melbourne, with 94% of users walking all or part of the way. However, walkable areas are not evenly distributed and do not necessarily align with public transport provision. Inner city suburbs are more likely to have both good walkability and quality public transport services than other urban areas.

Only a basic level of infrastructure is common to most bus stops in Victoria - 87% are identified by a sign on a pole and 84% have a concrete base. However, three quarters have no formal shelter. Shelters are more common in metropolitan Melbourne (29% of stops) than in regional and rural areas (16%).

Pedestrian crossings are not generally provided at bus stops. More than half of bus patrons use a bus stop that has pedestrian crossing infrastructure.

Everyone, regardless of ability, suburb, or gender, should be able to get to the bus safely and comfortably, but that is not currently the case.

The government should provide funding to implement the following recommendations that will improve the accessibility, safety and amenity of bus stops:

- Ensure there are connecting footpaths between bus stops and pedestrian walkways.
- Upgrade bus stops so they are all DDA compliant.
- Investigate funding options in addition to bus stop advertising to increase the number of bus stops with shelters and seating.
- Local councils should continue with tree planting and urban greening programmes, recognising not only the environmental benefits but also that improvements to walkability lead to better health, communities, equality and local economies. Walking paths near bus stops and other local destinations such as activity centres should be prioritised for tree planting.
- Collaborate with local councils to review the level and consistency of lighting within 50 metres walk of bus stops serviced by the Night Network and routes with high patronage that operate early in the morning and into the evening and night.

Further, the Government should expedite the roll-out of bike racks on route buses and include them in the ceiling price for route buses.

Over the last two years, bike racks have been affixed to the front of buses that service a handful of regional bus routes in Healesville, Warburton, Lilydale, Castlemaine, Bendigo, Heathcote, Strathfieldsaye, Wonthaggi, and Kyneton. However, the roll-out has stalled and the benefits of the deployment of this great public and active transport infrastructure and first-last mile initiative are being foregone in every other part of the state.

The state-wide roll-out of bike racks on buses should recommence, namely on buses that service the Latrobe Valley, Geelong, Ballarat, Shepparton, Darebin, Moonee Valley, Werribee, Mildura, Doncaster, Clayton, the inner south-east and the inner west, and the Mornington Peninsula over the next two years.

Further, the price for the supply and installation of bike racks on new route buses should not be an extra expense subject to normal approval protocols. The price for the supply and installation of the bike racks on new route buses should be added to the ceiling price calculation, to achieve a more timely and seamless installation and service to patrons.

Deploying bike racks on buses is a great way to increase first mile/last mile options and accessibility for the travelling public. The locally produced racks are simple to use, do not require any straps or cords, and allow for the independent loading and unloading of the bicycle by the bus passenger.



8. GIVE COACH TOURISM A BOOST

COVID-19 decimated coach tourism in 2020 and 2021: all school charter work, school camps, day tours to popular sites like the Phillip Island penguins, airport transfers, inbound sightseeing tours, domestic inter-state express coach tours, cruise ship transfers, sporting tours and events and, arts tours stopped. As a result, many accredited coach tourism operators went out of business and their staff were laid off. Worse, many orders for new coaches were deferred or cancelled, causing even more layoffs for the manufacturing sector.

While demand for coach tourism services is returning now, albeit very slowly, there is still a hesitancy on behalf of some of the public to travel by coach.

To overcome this situation and stimulate more coach demand, ***BusVic calls on the government to offer \$10,000 grants to schools and community organisations such as Probis clubs, to be used exclusively as part-payment for bus and coach charter trips, camps, tours and excursions, especially to historical and cultural attractions.***

Dispensing grants to these types of organisations will make tours, charter trips and excursions more affordable for them, bring forward the employment benefits associated with a more resilient coach tourism sector and give regional development a booster shot.



9. INTRODUCE HARSHER PUNISHMENTS FOR PEOPLE WHO ASSAULT BUS DRIVERS

The Victorian community has been rightly outraged by the conduct of members of the public against front line workers during the pandemic. Whether they be nurses, paramedics, shop assistants or bus drivers, workers deserve to feel safe and supported at work.

Given the added difficulty of dealing with passengers and enforcing Government imposed mandates on behalf of the community, bus drivers are at additional risk of experiencing mistreatment at the hands of commuters.

To help dissuade these activities, BusVic calls on the government to legislate tougher sentences for those who assault bus drivers.



10. HAVE ONE STATE-WIDE TICKETING SYSTEM

Regional and rural public transport commuters have endured a third-rate ticketing system for decades. It beggars' belief that in 2022 we are still using ticketing systems on some coach services that are manual, clunky and archaic. Drivers are required to ask what type of ticket the passenger needs (full or concession fare), where the passenger is going, look up the price manually, calculate and process the fare and take cash only, give the passengers change, hand-write the date, departure point, destination, ticket type and how many people travelling on the ticket, and do manual load counts.

The disadvantages of the current system are that:

- There is no possibility of paying your fare by credit or debit card, or even over the phone on some services;
- Customers who cannot pay by cash are allowed to travel on the coach and pay when they reach the railway station. This fosters fare evasion;
- Customers do not receive any confirmation of V-Net booking numbers, which again fosters fare evasion;

- It increases the likelihood of over loading or getting a seat on the train, as the manifest does not include tickets sold since the manifest was printed;
- The actual time required to physically process and write the tickets increases the chances of the coach missing the train connection;
- Coach drivers are storing too much cash, which creates driver safety and security issues;
- There is no real-time load counting, which has emergency management implications for both operators AND V/Line, now the procurer is in the chain of responsibility;
- Wheelchair customers have no visibility if a scheduled coach has spare capacity to enable them to board.

The optimal solution to this is for the entire state to have one ticketing solution. Such a measure would dramatically improve the customer experience, streamline both operator's, and government's front-and-back-of-house administrative requirements, and afford regional and rural public transport patrons the same degree of amenity as metropolitan passengers.







Bus Association Victoria Inc is the voluntary professional association for Victoria's accredited bus and coach operators. We represent the best interests of members in respect of their relationship with Government and its Agencies, including contract negotiation, industrial relations, and legislative and regulatory compliance. We also deliver a suite of products and services to the industry that add value to member operators' businesses.

BusVic also extensively and strategically invests in research and development on procurement, social, economic, environmental, governance and safety factors on behalf of a 'community of interest', a collective of like-minded family businesses that mostly form the Victorian bus and coach industry. BusVic is owned and controlled by its members and it applies 'co-op' principles and values in its day-to-day operation.

BusVic's members' have a trans-generational commitment to getting their customers home safely. This is the ultimate promise member operators make to each other, to their customers, to their staff, and to the various stakeholders in the communities in which they operate. Safety is at the heart of everything that BusVic member operators do.

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