

MEDIA RELEASE



L>R Cr Mark Riley (Mayor, Merri-bek City Council), Cr Elizabeth Nealy (Mayor, Banyule City Council), Cr Lina Messina (Mayor, City of Darebin), Cr Francis Eyre (Mayor, Nillumbik Shire Council), Lydia Wilson (Chair of Administrators, City of Whittlesea), Cr Bill Chisholm (Mayor, Mitchell Shire Council) Absent from photo: Cr Carly Moore (Mayor, Hume City Council).

28 September 2022

NORTHERN COUNCILS UNITE IN CALL FOR BETTER TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

The Northern Councils Alliance is proud to release the *Northern Region Transport Strategy* and *Northern Region Transport Study Stage 2: Bus Networks*, as important guidance documents for improved transport infrastructure across Melbourne's north.

Melbourne's north is home to one million people or 20% of the population of Greater Melbourne. It's one of the fastest growing regions, with a population of 1.5 million forecast by 2036 – a growth rate of 2.8% compared to 1.6% for Greater Melbourne. One in six Victorians live in the northern Melbourne region.

But this population growth has not been matched with the necessary investment in transport infrastructure. Over the years this has caused massive road congestion and delays in connecting between transport options – limiting business growth and access to employment, education and health services.

The *Northern Region Transport Strategy* and *Bus Networks Study* are the result of a collaborative effort to arrive at a joint list of transport priorities for the region, developed by the municipalities of Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Mitchell, Moreland, Nillumbik and Whittlesea in conjunction with regional partners, and was funded by the Northern Metropolitan Partnership.

The next step is advocating to Commonwealth and State Governments for support and funding to achieve the strategy's goals.

Melbourne's north is the engine room of Victoria's economy, but it needs a vastly improved and interconnected transport system if it is to reach its full potential.

Investment to planning and improved road, rail and bus networks, as outlined in the *Northern Region Transport Strategy* and *Bus Networks Study*, is essential for precinct development (as outlined in *Plan Melbourne*), business and employment growth, access to education and health services, future proofing the economic and social development of Melbourne's north, and ensuring equality for the community.

"Investment in transport infrastructure for our region was urgently needed before COVID-19 ... and it's even more critical today," said **Cr Elizabeth Nealy**, Mayor, Banyule City Council and Chair of the Northern Councils Alliance.

Cr Nealy said this is a great example of Councils working together and providing a blueprint for the future of their region. "The *Northern Region Transport Strategy* and *Bus Networks Study* provide comprehensive analysis of the transport needs of the region and were designed to align government and stakeholders in improving the transport network and to help fully release the potential of the region."

Cr Lina Messina, Mayor, City of Darebin said "With the population in Melbourne's north tipped to reach 1.5 million by 2036, we need to kickstart the economy in this region. Investing in the right transport infrastructure will be key to doing just that."

Cr Bill Chisholm, Mayor, Mitchell Shire Council added: “This population growth has not been matched with the necessary investment in transport infrastructure and so, over the years, our region has experienced massive road congestion and delays in connecting between transport options. This limits access to employment, education and health services.”

Cr Frances Eyre, Mayor, Nillumbik Shire Council said: “Moving people in and out of the city every day is not a recipe for growing local jobs. Being able to move people between our precincts, will be the key to allowing residents to access employment, education and health precincts, and will reduce congestion.”

Cr Carly Moore, Mayor, Hume City Council said: “Melbourne’s north is the engine room of Victoria’s economy. But it needs a vastly improved and interconnected transport system if it is to reach its full potential and support the northern region’s economic importance to the state.”

Cr Mark Riley, Mayor of Merri-bek City Council said: “If we don’t take a long-term view to strategic planning and investment, we will be playing catch up forever. Major infrastructure projects require significant lead time and planning needs to happen now.”

“For our state to succeed, Melbourne’s north needs to succeed. Investment in the north will be critical to the economic response to, and recovery from, COVID-19 – not just for our region, but for the state, and for the country,” **said Lydia Wilson, Chair of Administrators at the City of Whittlesea.**

To read the *Northern Region Transport Strategy and Northern Region Transport Study Stage 2: Bus Networks (Bus Networks Study)*, visit:
www.northerncouncils.org.au.

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