

Connect Melbourne's north: deliver an efficient bus network



A total revision of and targeted investment in the northern bus network is the fastest, lowest-cost way to close critical transport gaps, support growth and improve regional access to jobs, education and services.

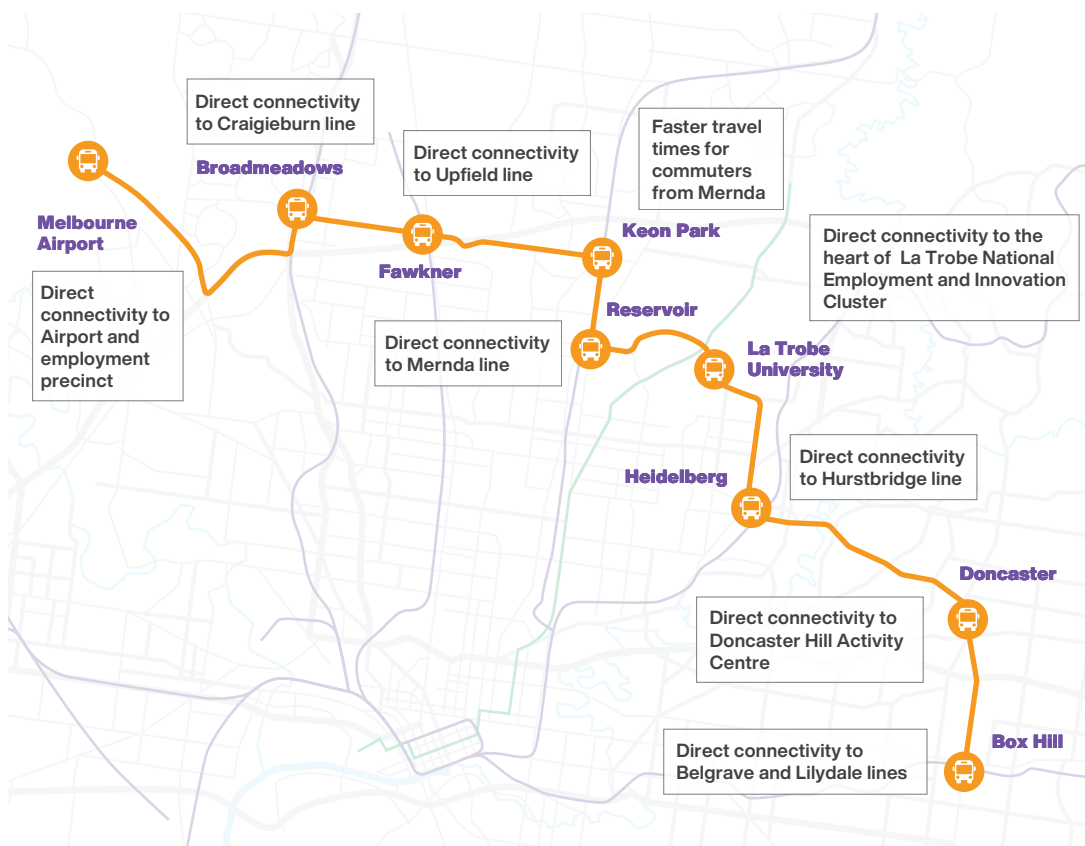
Our ask (deliverables)

We urgently need a connected, reliable and high-frequency bus network that fills critical gaps in Melbourne's northern public transport system and supports population growth, major employment hubs and education precincts.

Our priority deliverables include:

- a **Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) bus** providing fast, continuous east-west connections from Melbourne Airport to Box Hill, aligned to the proposed SRL north corridor
- **SmartBus network reforms** to improve coverage, reliability and access to key destinations
- **improved bus access** to our education providers, ensuring access for our young people
- **high quality bus connections to employment precincts** such as Melbourne Airport, including tailoring to the needs of shift workers
- **new and upgraded services to support growth areas**, reducing long-distance car dependence
- **targeted improvements** within municipalities for weekend and off-peak services
- **better timetable integration** with other public transport modes.

Proposed east to west rapid bus route



It's ready to go

Through our comprehensive *Northern Region Transport Study*, we have:

- identified clear network deficiencies and priority corridors
- developed tested, practical bus network solutions that can be staged and scaled
- focused on reforms that can be delivered much faster and at lower cost than rail, while delivering immediate benefits
- aligned proposals with future SRL planning to ensure current investment supports long-term outcomes.

Our proposed bus reforms build on existing infrastructure, routes and service models, making them ready for immediate investment and implementation.

Why we need it

Melbourne's north is home to over 1 million people, projected to grow to 1.5 million over the coming decades. Despite this growth our region remains underserved by public transport, resulting in:

- congestion on our key road corridors
- poor access to jobs, education, health and essential services
- high car dependence in our growth areas
- inequitable outcomes for our residents without access to a private vehicle
- critical gaps, which include weak east-west connections, unreliable services in growth areas, poor integration with train services and limited access to major employment hubs such as Melbourne Airport and La Trobe University.

Without targeted bus network investment, our population and employment growth will further entrench congestion, reduce economic participation and undermine the effectiveness of future rail investment.

A trip that takes 30–40 minutes by car can take up to 2 hours on public transport. Long waits between services and unreliable timetables make the journey frustrating and unpredictable, especially for students. Because of this, many of us end up driving, even though we would prefer a faster and more reliable public transport option.

Emily, Whittlesea

Benefits of a stronger bus network across Melbourne's north

• Access and equity

- Affordable, reliable transport for communities currently underserved.
- Better access to employment, education and health services.

• Economic productivity

- Improved access to Melbourne Airport, La Trobe University and major employment precincts.
- Reduced congestion on strategic freight and commuter corridors.

• Growth area outcomes

- Real alternatives to car travel in growth corridors.
- Better alignment between bus and rail services to support commuting patterns.

• Future ready transport

- Immediate benefits while supporting longer-term investments.
- A scalable, flexible network that can grow with the region.

We live in the Bend of Islands and it is a 7 to 8 kilometre walk on major roads with no footpath just to reach the nearest bus stop. Accessing public transport is almost impossible for young people in our area who need to get to school or community facilities.

Carmen, Bend of Islands