



13 March 2024

Hon Tim Pallas MP
Treasurer
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Dear Treasurer

2024/25 Pre-Budget Submission

NORTH Link is the pre-eminent organisation representing – and advocating for – economic development in northern metropolitan Melbourne. Members span the education, health, research, industry and government sectors, all with a shared desire to attract and create jobs, innovation, investment and opportunity in Melbourne's North.

This pre-budget submission is informed by NORTH Link's members and Partners/Supporters and seeks planning, infrastructure and policy support to progress transformative job and investment-creating projects.

Context – Strong Population and Growth with Growing Pains

One in five Melburnians live in Melbourne's North – around one million people. In the 10 years to 2016, the region's population grew by 200,000. Pre-pandemic projections show that by 2036, the region's population will rise to 1.5 million, more than the current population of Adelaide.

Research has shown that historically Melbourne's north has experienced a substantial level of private and public underinvestment in comparison to other metropolitan regions. Attracting new investment and supporting existing businesses to expand and grow delivers substantial benefits to Melbourne's north, and the State more broadly, through a variety of channels:

NORTH Link's recently released Melbourne's North Regional Investment Strategy finds that Melbourne's North is an attractive place for the private sector to invest, but planning certainty and infrastructure support is needed. The report underlines that Melbourne's North has the following features attracting investors:

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Melbourne's Northern Economic Wedge Inc. (trading as NORTH Link)

Australian Registered Body Number (ARBN) - 669 523 086

Registered office: NORTH Link, Suite 120, John Scott Meeting House, Building MH, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY VICTORIA 3086

Place of origin: Victoria

Under section 52(1) of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (VIC), except as provided in its rules, a member of NORTH Link is not liable to contribute towards the payment of the debts and liabilities of the association or any costs, charges and expenses of the winding up of the association.

- Ideally located, on the doorstep of Melbourne's CBD and the gateway to regional Victoria and closest to Sydney and Brisbane by truck and train
- Proximity to Essendon Fields Airport (domestic) and the Melbourne Airport (international)
- Key transport links including Hume Freeway, Metropolitan Ring Road, Calder Freeway, Eastern Freeway and, in the future, the North-East Link and the Outer Metropolitan Ring Road
- A spectrum of world class health services, multiple hospitals, aged care facilities and allied health services supported by a leading collection of medical research facilities
- Significant rail connectivity to metropolitan and regional rail services
- An increased profile in the logistics space, with Somerton and Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal investments forthcoming
- Vocational and higher education choices, including La Trobe and RMIT Universities, Melbourne Polytechnic and Kangan Institute
- Greenfield sites or urban development opportunities available at competitive rents
- The potential to share space and collaborate with similar businesses, access to an established network of business services, equipment, and expertise
- Supportive Local Governments and industry organisations
- A vibrant and culturally diverse community fostering a rich social fabric that celebrates inclusivity and creates memorable experiences
- A blend of green spaces and urban hubs that provide recreational areas, promoting health and wellbeing, and reflecting the commitment to a sustainable and liveable region
- A number of investment-ready precincts ready to be developed

However, common themes emerge of investment being held back by:

- Lack of good quality, affordable housing for residents and workers.
- Additional energy, water infrastructure and broadband needs as population and business activity increases.
- Lack of public transport to job hubs, especially on east-west routes

NORTH Link's *Future Workforce – Melbourne's North 2022-2032* report found:

- COVID's economic impact was most severe in Melbourne's North, where high unemployment persists
- There was a residual impact on Melbourne's inner north, including the prolonged unemployment of tourism, hospitality and creative professionals and permanent loss of some of those employees to these industries
- Manufacturing provides many jobs but automation could lead to job losses without corrective action to boost manufacturing sovereign capability
- Lack of transport options is a major issue for young people seeking work
- Support for employment precincts in the suburbs must include local transport links to increase access to jobs and ensure these precincts grow
- Most significantly, the report found that there are more workers living in Melbourne's North than there are jobs to service the region. For the gap between local jobs and local workers to close, 182,000 more local jobs are needed by 2031.

- By 2036 there will be 908,202 individuals in the prime employment bracket of 15 – 60 years a 31.2% percentage increase in this cohort from 2021

Submission structure

This submission will examine:

- the key precincts in Melbourne’s North and the Government assistance required to bring them to life
- transport-specific investment required
- health-specific investment required
- education-specific investment required
- taxation and regulatory reform and attention to energy issues required

Key precincts

1. La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster - NEIC) – including La Trobe University Redevelopment

A revitalised La Trobe NEIC will transform Melbourne’s North through coordinated place-based planning, design and investment attraction. It includes the La Trobe University expansion (*University City of the Future*), the Warringal Hospital redevelopment, Northland redevelopment and the Australian Food Innovation Centre (AFIC) – a collaboration between La Trobe University and CSIRO.

The under-construction North East Link and current and planned improvements along the Hurstbridge rail line and the proposed SRL stations are highly relevant to this opportunity.

Of the seven innovation clusters in Melbourne, La Trobe is the worst connected by public transport. Infrastructure investment, including new transport links through the Suburban Rail Loop, bus priority lanes and pedestrian and cycling links will create local jobs and growth.

There will also be a focus on incorporating the circular economy and renewable energy opportunities.

Despite being backed by a large number of education, health and business Partners/Supporters, the La Trobe NEIC will reach its full potential with support from the Commonwealth/Victorian Governments.

a) Partners/Supporters

The La Trobe NEIC is supported by Banyule and Darebin councils, La Trobe University, Austin Health, Mercy Health, Warringal Hospital, Northland, Melbourne Polytechnic, West Heidelberg Business Park Association, NORTH Link and the Northern Councils Alliance.

b) Return on investment

Master planning for the Precinct will unlock public and private investment, jobs and economic activity with support from the Victorian Government working with Councils and industry.

- La Trobe’s University City of the Future redevelopment is valued at a total of \$5 billion (most of which is to be invested by the university or private sector) and will generate 20,000 jobs overall, directly and indirectly.
- Within this, currently valued at \$300 million, AFIC will generate \$6.9 billion of economic activity over 15 years, create up to 3,000 jobs over its first decade and boost Australia’s exports by up to \$100 million a year.
- Funding is being sought from the state and federal governments to progress AFIC, with the remainder to be funded by La Trobe University.
- The roughly \$1 billion redevelopment of Northland by owners Vicinity Centres will create 3,480 direct ongoing jobs.
- A potential \$4 billion investment will be made at Austin Health over the next 10 years, as well as \$200 million in works privately invested in the Warringal Private Hospital by Ramsay Health to help meet the growing demand for health services in Melbourne’s North and currently underway.
- The National Institute of Economic and Industry Research found that should plans for La Trobe University’s University City of the Future not proceed, 3,000 construction jobs for each year of the project and 20,000 ongoing jobs would be lost – many of which are high-skilled and high-income – and the Victorian economy would lose up to \$4 billion over 10 years.

c) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is calling for:

- The La Trobe NEIC to be made a priority precinct
- A Council and industry stakeholder group to be supported to work with the Victorian Government on master planning
- That the Victorian Government support any application for funds under the Commonwealth Government’s Urban Precincts and Partnerships Program to develop a business case for funding to develop the La Trobe NEIC
- Commonwealth and State Government financial support for progression of the La Trobe University City of the Future expansion, particularly AFIC
- Support a transport planning study and delivery of on demand transport services which considers a range of concepts such as 20- minute city solutions
- Support for sustainable energy generation investment including battery systems to support future energy needs
- Investment in social and key worker housing in the precinct including West Heidelberg and East Preston to support future workforce needs.

2. Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT)

The freight and logistics hub and intermodal terminal proposed for Beveridge is strategically located to maximise Australia’s freight network productivity, with trains double-stacked with containers able to arrive at and depart from this facility.

Once operational, freight to and from Victoria’s two largest ports – Melbourne and Geelong – will transfer through the terminal using the local links and network upgrades provided by interstate rail, the

Hume Freeway and the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring Road, towards destinations such as Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

BIFT will relieve pressure on the current West Melbourne freight terminal and ease congestion, taking thousands of trucks off Victoria's roads by transferring cargo onto double-stacked trains using the Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane inland rail line, set for completion in 2027.

We support a two-terminal strategy developing both the Western Intermodal Freight Terminal and BIFT. They are complementary and, with a projected major increase in freight volumes by 2050 and emissions reductions needed in the transport sector obviating the need for rail, both will be needed.

The project will proceed as follows:

Stage 1

Early Works (operational 2025): • Rail access and marshalling yard • Preliminary basic terminal, manual handling (capacity 100,000 - 200,000 TEU)

Stage 1b

Integrated Terminal Precinct (operational 2028/29): • Full service ~500,000 TEU capacity, automated • – 400 ha enabling 1.2 million sqm co-located warehousing

Stage 1c - tbc

a) Partners/Supporters

Supporters of BIFT include Hume City Council, City of Whittlesea, Mitchell Shire Council, NORTH Link and the Northern Councils Alliance.

b) Return on investment

Research by the National Intermodal Corporation suggest that the BIFT will create 6,800 direct and up to 20,000 associated jobs.

The project has been endorsed by the Schott Review into Inland Rail.

c) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is calling for:

- Planning certainty from the Victorian Government for the BIFT because development around the precinct may compromise this opportunity without master planning in place
- Victorian Government to work with local Councils and industry to this end
- The Victorian Government to match the Commonwealth Government's investment of \$150 million to fund the Camerons Lane / Hume Freeway diamond interchange and, with the Commonwealth, and set a date for construction which will enable the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal

3. Epping MAC, including Melbourne (Epping) Market Redevelopment / MFIX

The Epping MAC is an emerging precinct of economic significance hosting significant health, retail, education, manufacturing and logistics assets.

It is located 19 km from the CBD, 16 km from Melbourne Airport and is an emerging commercial and industrial centre in the Whittlesea LGA. The precinct is an important centre with accessibility throughout the region via rail and road. The MAC comprises approximately 230,300 square metres of commercial floorspace and provides a range of retailing and food and drink premises with a small but growing residential population. It also includes health and education facilities and there are large areas of land available for expansion. It has a major hospital presence in Northern Health and its associated Northern Centre for Health and Education Research, two proposed private hospitals, allied health (DPV Health) and Melbourne Polytechnic Epping campus. Other key job generators are the Melbourne Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Market and Pacific Epping Shopping Centre, the largest shopping centre in Melbourne's north.

Key current and planned investments underway include:

- Pacific Epping, owned jointly by QIC and the Salta Group, is the area's retail hub and is currently undergoing \$80m worth of investment in an upgrade to its fresh food core
- Northern Hospital – \$162.2 million funded investment in Northern Hospital. The hospital already supports 5,000 staff on site, which will grow with the planned investment. In 2022, it was announced that the Northern Hospital will receive an investment of up to \$880 million for a new emergency department with an extra 70 treatment spaces
- Northern Private Hospital - 127 bed private hospital next to Northern Hospital and now operational
- New Epping development- \$2 billion mixed use precinct in proximity to Epping MAC includes new residential development, 110,000 m² of commercial floorspace. New Epping is expected to provide \$3.4 billion in economic benefit to Victoria, generating approximately 9,330 jobs during construction and approximately 7,209 jobs at completion
- Melbourne Polytechnic Epping campus
- DPV Health – Epping Health Hub, including \$4.1 million to support relocation of Epping Dental Chairs
- Proposed private mental health hospital.

The Epping MAC and its job generators, however, are poorly connected to public transport, with much of the new economic activity and jobs out of walking range of Epping station.

In short, in relation to the Epping MAC, NORTH Link and its Partners/Supporters are calling on the Victorian Government to do the following:

- Support for rail extension to Wollert.
- Exploration of rapid transit links such as Trackless Rapid Transit (TRT) and buses

- State Government support, planning and establishment of Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub at the 51-hectare vacant site adjoining the Melbourne Market
- Bus transport links from Epping MAC to industrial and employment precincts
- Energy grid assessment and solution – renewable energy opportunity with battery support and Electric Vehicle infrastructure.
- Government recognition as a key economic and employment precinct and assistance required in investing in projects identified as a part of precinct planning.
- Continued investment to reduce coverage issues relating to mobile and broadband connectivity.

Epping MAC - Wollert Rail

The 2002 Epping North Strategic Plan identified a planned public transport corridor. This influenced the decision of many residents to purchase property in these areas. The integration of a train line was a key feature of this transport corridor. It was to encourage high density development and activity centres around the proposed transport interchanges. Residents now expect the State Government to deliver the Wollert train line to improve the area's liveability, support their housing investment and their livelihoods. Projections demonstrate that Wollert Rail will be well used, with approximately 15,000 daily trips from day one and 40,000 daily trips by 2040.

More recently, the New Epping development which includes over 150 social housing dwellings have begun to welcome new residents and the Northern Private Hospital is now operational, as well as existing investments supporting thousands of jobs, such as Pacific Epping, Northern Health and the Melbourne Wholesale Market. Additionally, Epping has been identified in the State Government's Housing Statement as a priority location for new planning controls to support housing growth. Whilst these are being prepared by the Department of Transport and Planning and Victorian Planning Authority, Epping as a location for high density housing and other investment is contingent on improved transport connections - namely Wollert Rail.

a) Partners/Supporters

City of Whittlesea, Northern Health, New Epping (Riverlee), Pacific Epping, NORTH Link, Northern Councils Alliance

b) Return on investment

The population in the Epping North and Wollert growth corridor is projected to increase by 101% by 2041. Wollert Rail will connect this growth corridor to jobs and opportunities in the Melbourne CBD and local precincts such as the Cooper Street employment area, the Northern Hospital, and Pacific Epping. It will remove at least 2,000 cars per hour from heavily congested roads and improve liveability in one of Australia's fastest growing areas.

It will also:

- increase property values by \$2.44 billion by 2030
- reduce congestion and generate approximately 500,000 hours and \$522.8 million in travel time savings to road users by 2030

- generate 2,000,000 hours and \$1.5 billion in travel savings to rail users each year by 2040; and
- make it easier for staff and visitors to get to the Northern Hospital, which has one of the busiest emergency departments in the state, treating nearly 90,000 patients each year and employing around 3,000 people.

c) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is calling for the State Government to invest \$250,000 this year and next year for a feasibility study on the Wollert Rail corridor and construct the rail line by 2030, matching the Commonwealth Government’s \$500,000 pledge for a feasibility study (\$250,000 over each of two years).

Epping MAC - Melbourne Wholesale Market – development of 51 hectares of vacant land (MFIx)

Melbourne’s North is fast becoming a world-class food and agricultural hub. With more than 400 large food and beverage manufacturers based in the region, the sector employs 11,000 Victorians and generates \$3.7 billion each year.

a) Partners/Supporters

The Melbourne Market Redevelopment / MFIx is supported by the Melbourne Market Authority, the City of Whittlesea, Northern Councils Alliance and NORTH Link.

b) Return on investment

Already a nationally significant food hub – home to world class agriculture and bioscience research and education facilities – master planning support from government for MFIx will help cement Melbourne’s North as the food and beverage manufacturing capital of Australia.

The National Institute of Economic and Industry Research estimates that MFIx would create 6,500 ongoing jobs in Victoria by 2027, as well as 3,500 construction jobs and approximately \$3 billion of value added to the Victorian economy over a 10-year period.

c) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is calling for the State Government to:

- Work with Councils and industry to activate planning for this opportunity
- Share the findings of the business case studies that DJSIR undertook in 2020 and 2021
- Include key stakeholders including the City of Whittlesea and NORTH Link in current and future scoping and study processes
- Work with industry and local government to identify and prioritise infrastructure needed to activate the site.
- Appoint an industry stakeholder group to input into master planning of the site including the City of Whittlesea and NORTH Link
- Incentivise a major industry player to locate to the Epping site as an anchor tenant to attract other suitable investors.

- Consider retaining a level of control of the adjacent Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market and the adjacent 51 hectares of land via the existing Melbourne Market Authority, which knows the site well, to ensure competitiveness in the food economy is retained and synergies are captured and maintained with the newly developed site.

Appendix 1 outlines the arguments around the Melbourne Wholesale Market in greater detail.

4. Broadmeadows Revitalisation

Only 16 kilometres from Melbourne with two rail lines, the Tullamarine Freeway, a ring road, and Melbourne’s curfew-free international airport all nearby, Broadmeadows has what it takes to be an international economic hub.

The Broadmeadows Revitalisation includes the much-needed Kangan Institute redevelopment and the integration and connection of Broadmeadows Railway Station with the Broadmeadows Town Centre and Broadmeadows Central.

Given the likely delay in the Suburban Rail Loop running through Melbourne’s North, these projects provide an opportunity to generate economic activity and attract private sector investment in Broadmeadows within a shorter timeframe.

The \$60 million first stage of Kangan Institute’s Broadmeadows campus redevelopment was allocated in the Victorian Budget 2021/2022 to fund the construction of a Health and Community Centre of Excellence and is underway and should be completed in late 2024. A further \$225 million investment is required for Stage 2 of Kangan Broadmeadows Campus Redevelopment, which includes the Trades + Skills Centre of Excellence and Foundations and Pathways Centre. These Training Centres aligns with high demand courses in Construction and Education and Training and the emerging clean energy *and green skills sectors.*”

Hume City Council has also pushed ahead with Expression of Interest for investment in the Broadmeadows Town Centre.

Previous recent investments have included the revitalisation of Broadmeadows Town Hall into a community and function space and the Start North incubator and co-working space.

a) Partners/Supporters

Supporters of the Broadmeadows Revitalisation include Hume City Council, Kangan Institute, DPV Health and NORTH Link

b) Return on investment

To further Broadmeadows’ potential as a vibrant place to live, learn and work, these projects if fully funded by the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Program, will create 1,500 local jobs and have broader community benefits.

The long-promised Broadmeadows Railway Station redevelopment with a walkway to Broadmeadows Central has the potential to trigger job-creating investment.

c) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is calling for:

- The Victorian Government to commit to Stage 2 of Kangan Broadmeadows Campus Redevelopment, valued at approximately \$225 million.
- The Victorian Government to commit to a refresh of Broadmeadows Railway Station as soon as possible as a gateway to Broadmeadows MAC
- Investment in social and worker housing in proximity to Broadmeadows MAC to support future jobs
- Investment in east-west transport/ bus routes to better link employment precincts, airport and Broadmeadows MAC
- Continued support for further DPV Health investment stages to support its community and health role.

5. Coburg, Brunswick, Northcote, Preston, Reservoir and the Inner North

a) Partners/Supporters

Merri-bek City Council, City of Darebin, Melbourne Polytechnic, NORTH Link, Northern Councils Alliance

b) Return on Investment and Action Sought

The Inner North does not need further significant road investment but requires investment and improvement in existing and future public transport links, such as enhancement of the Upfield Line and better east-west bus links.

Coburg activity precinct has great potential to be a major jobs hub for white collar, food and advanced manufacturing, health and the creative industries. It includes two distinct zones: Coburg Activity Centre and Coburg North Industrial Areas at both Newlands Road and northwest of Batman Train Station.

Coburg Activity Centre has recently grown as a result of the major investment in the redevelopment of the former Pentridge Prison site. The Bell and Moreland level crossing removal project has also delivered new stations and open space. However, the centre of Coburg remains underutilised and there are substantial Merri-bek City Council landholdings in the precinct that will support future redevelopment and investment. The Coburg North Newlands Road Industrial Area is home to a growing food cluster including several medium size enterprises. These businesses are supported by purpose built industrial accommodation, which provides them with the space and facilities they need to operate efficiently. There is also a strong and growing number of creative and cultural businesses, supporting over 1,000 creative and cultural sector jobs, in the Coburg Activity Precinct. Overall, there is a potential for \$3.6 billion in economic output per annum and 9,876 jobs.

The soon to be developed Coburg Health Precinct will greatly strengthen the precinct's role in Melbourne's north. The new health hub will house an extensive range of health care and social assistance services, and support over 1,000 new construction and health care jobs and will be complemented by investments in retirement living.

The duplication of the Upfield Rail Line and a link to the Craigieburn Line at Somerton will enable potential workers to better access the expanded precinct from the Outer North and take pressure off the CBD.

The Upfield Rail Corridor has very poor peak frequency, with train services historically running every 20 minutes during peak periods. Our growing community, particularly in the north of Merri-bek, urgently need the duplication and upgrade works to improve train frequency, accessibility, passenger experience and station amenity, which can in turn support job and socio-economic outcomes for Merri-bek and Melbourne's growing northern region.

We welcome and acknowledge that both the Brunswick level crossing removals and completion of the metro tunnel - which will free up slots at North Melbourne that could be allocated to Upfield Line trains - and could possibly enable trains to run faster on the Upfield rail line.

However, the single-track service between Gowrie and Upfield Stations will continue to create significant bottlenecks and constraints for the length of Upfield line – the duplication of this section is key to running more trains more often.

The Inner North economy overall is driven by the following range of businesses: creative industries, incubation and coworking, design digital, health, Bio MedTech, boutique manufacturing, and servicing of Outer North manufacturing and logistics. Historically, there is a strong presence and a high concentration of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO's), as well as many Aboriginal owned and operated businesses.

Brunswick, Alphington, Preston, Thornbury, Northcote and Reservoir are categorised by their eclectic mix of industrial and commercial land. These areas have been identified to be retained for industry and employment uses and are increasingly supporting a range of creative industries including makers spaces, film studios, recording studios and specialist 3D artwork production. A designated 'Brunswick Design District' has been identified centred around RMIT University's Brunswick Campus and is a Partnership between Merri-bek Council, RMIT University and Creative Victoria. This project is a cornerstone to positioning Brunswick and Melbourne's inner north as a nationally significant incubator for creative industries and design.

The social enterprise sector is currently strong in the Inner North and has been elevated further by government social procurement policies.

Significant education assets exist in this region including RMIT Brunswick, Melbourne Polytechnic (Preston, Fairfield, Collingwood and nearby Heidelberg) and the nearby La Trobe University, as well as the BRUDI incubator in Victoria St, Brunswick.

To progress economic development in the Inner North, we recommend:

- Utilise public assets anchoring the Brunswick Design District such as RMIT University Brunswick Campus and Dawson Street Police Complex site (future creative/manufacturing redevelopment potential). In terms of the Dawson Street police complex, we are seeking a commitment to providing a new site for the police to free up Dawson Street, so that its potential in supporting creatives/start ups and the emerging biomed tech scene in Brunswick can be realised
- Feasibility work for the duplication the Upfield rail line and extending it the via the Upfield Somerton link to Roxburgh Park and Craigieburn, which would double Coburg and Brunswick's catchment of workers, students and consumers overnight
- Support the development of commercial office and employment space including for Bio MedTech uses complementary to the Parkville Biomedical Precinct
- Connect Preston to La Trobe NEIC with innovative transport solutions such as rapid bus transit

- Protect live music venues and affordable space for creatives, with a focus on live music venues, musicians, music manufacturing companies and independent labels
- Work to make the contribution of creative industries more visible and elevate the link with the digital and tech sectors
- Collaborate with Reservoir Revitalisation Board and track and monitor outputs
- Progress 'Vibrant Brunswick' Activity Centre Plan for Brunswick
- Central Coburg – fund the significant drainage upgrades that are required as part of bringing this major revitalisation project to fruition
- Key worker housing – a commitment from the State to utilising their land to deliver much need affordable housing targeted at key workers who work in the main employment industries in the north
- Further develop Coburg as an arts precinct – with additional creative and co-working spaces; funding studio spaces for creatives as per the 'making space' program in 2021.
- Improve links to Central Coburg with nearby sub-precincts such as Coburg Health Precinct, Pentridge and Coburg Lake
- Higher capacity, more frequent trains (north -south) and buses (east –west); make use of Bell St arterial road for east-west buses and look at a fast bus route mimicking the Suburban Rail Loop

6. Melbourne Airport

Melbourne Airport is the region's largest employer with key industrial precincts located to its south and east. The Melbourne Airport will continue to play an important role in providing for a range of aviation and non -aviation uses. East and south of the airport are established precincts, that combined with the Tullamarine and Keilor Park Industrial Precinct, form a large cluster of industrial land located adjacent to the airport, that support a range of transport and logistics, wholesale trade and other sectors that require easy access to the airport. This premier logistics and warehousing hub is home to tenants such as DHL, Toll IPEC and TNT Express. Melbourne Airport Business Park provides only leasehold property. The 410ha business park comprises a mix of large and small lots. Businesses positioned at Melbourne Airport benefit from: the city's largest airfreight terminal, 24/7 curfew free flight operations, fast track planning process and bespoke buildings.

Melbourne Airport is one of the primary employment precincts for Melbourne's north-west and directly employs more than 18,000 employees, and indirectly supports a further 146,000 jobs.

NORTH Link and its Partners/Supporters are seeking support for:

- Melbourne Airport Rail project, including an underground station to ensure future proofing of the rail line and terminal precinct. If the rail line is ever to be extended beyond the airport, it must be built below ground, as building over the top of the runways is impossible.
- improvements to the airport's public bus links to provide passengers and airport workers with better connections to nearby towns and suburbs.

- the proposed third runway, which is essential to ensure Melbourne Airport has sufficient capacity to service Victoria's growth.
- Connection of Melbourne Airport Rail, which runs west from the Airport into the northern suburbs

7. Manufacturing Precincts in the Outer North

Key manufacturing precincts across the Cities of Hume and Whittlesea (and soon to include Mitchell Shire) employ thousands of people in the manufacturing and supply chain sectors. Logistics is becoming an increasingly important given the region's proximity to Sydney by truck (8-hour drive) and rail (presence of national rail freight network). Current and planned logistics investments include Melbourne Airport, Melbourne Wholesale Market, Amazon (two major investments) and BIFT.

These precincts include:

- Campbellfield/Somerton Industrial Precinct
- Thomastown and Epping
- Craigieburn North Industrial Precinct
- Merrifield
- Future Precincts such as Cloverton, Fusion Business Park, Wollert Industrial Precinct and Beveridge

Transport issues are paramount for these precincts with a lack of public transport for residents seeking to get to and from work – east-west bus networks at manufacturing start-times are particularly poor, especially public transport links to industrial estates. The Wallan Rail duplication and Upfield-Somerton Link/Upfield Line duplication are particular rail priorities.

Road investment will be required as population increases exponentially out to Wallan, with the possibility of investment in the Hume Freeway and various interchanges to precincts vital, as well as the duplication of former farm roads such as Mickleham Road and Donnybrook Road.

The E6 and Outer Metropolitan Ring Road will also be required and planning should commence now.

Supporting public and private infrastructure requirements will be paramount around a new public hospital in the Outer North, further primary care investment, university/TAFE facilities, water and power upgrades and adequate broadband infrastructure, as well as schools and childcare.

In short, the following is required:

- Expanded capacity of Hume Freeway to support future need
- Upfield-Somerton Link/Upfield Line duplication and exploration of on-demand transport for industrial estates, particularly for shift workers
- E6/Outer Metropolitan Ring Road planning and investment to link this precinct to the North East Link and the western suburbs in the future

- Plan and deliver Bus Rapid Transit and public bus network expansion for improved workforce access
- Investment in Wallan Rail Electrification including new stations at Cloverton MAC and Beveridge.
- Investment in transport upgrades including east-west road network such as Donnybrook Road, Gunns Gully Road and Beveridge Road.
- Planning for health, education and other social infrastructure to be located at Cloverton MAC, including a new Outer North Hospital, as well as power, water and telecommunications utilities for new suburbs and business precincts
- Victorian Government share of funding to Cameron’s Lane interchange at Beveridge to fully enable BIFT – Commonwealth share is already committed

Public Transport and Roads

From a policy point of view, these priorities are informed strongly by reports and advocacy positions produced by the Northern Councils Alliance and our partners. In particular:

- Regional transport strategy - Development of a Victorian Transport Plan by the Victorian Government that takes into consideration the Northern Region Transport Strategy and Northern Region Transport Study Stage 2: Bus Networks
- Approval and funding support for large-scale transport infrastructure investments with significant regional benefits, as identified in the Northern Horizons.

Specifically, we are seeking:

- Upfield Rail Corridor duplication and upgrade, Clifton Hill Rail Exchange, Wollert Rail Extension, Wallan Rail Electrification, Melbourne Metro 2 and OMR/E6.
- Improve the network of buses that connect the Melbourne’s north community to major precincts and health and education facilities, as outlined in the Northern Region Transport Study Stage 2: Bus Networks. This includes improved services to Melbourne Airport and La Trobe University, improved SmartBus access, increased northern growth corridor services and buses replicating the future Suburban Rail Loop route
- Funding for transition to electric vehicles and support for implementation of recommendations resulting from the evidence-based Community Electric Vehicle Transition Plan – particularly financially supporting transition of Council fleet vehicles to electric (particularly heavy fleet), and grid connection and grid stability upgrades for Council depots, offices and community facilities.
- Liveability funding for northern trails, specifically a 10-year pipeline of funding (estimated \$110 million) to complete all stages of the Northern Trails project, including delivery. Northern Trails 2022 provides a planning framework and action plan to establish a network of integrated and connected shared trails (primarily for walking and cycling) that link communities, destinations and a range of urban and natural environments across the region.

- In addition, Victorian Government share of funding to Cameron’s Lane interchange at Beveridge to fully enable BIFT – Commonwealth share is already committed

Fact sheets on public transport are at Appendix 2

Public Transport and Roads - Planning for the E6/OMR

The proposed E6 Freeway will connect the Hume Freeway to the M80 Ring Road, providing a much needed north-south corridor through the City of Whittlesea. The Federal Government has already shown strong support for this project, announcing substantial funding in its 2021-22 Budget. The City of Whittlesea’s population is projected to increase by 43.9% to 360,692 from 2024-41. During this same period, strong population growth is also projected in neighbouring LGAs. Mitchell Shire is expected to grow by 187.3% to 176,261 people, and Banyule by 20% to 160,176 people. This rapid growth makes it imperative that construction of the E6 is brought forward so the freeway is complete and traffic ready by 2032-33, including:

- a business case by 2024-25
- construction commenced by 2027-28; and
- construction completed by 2032-33. Land along the designated route is already reserved and no known impediments to this timeline exist.

a) Partners/Supporters

City of Whittlesea, National Intermodal Corporation, NORTH Link

b) Return on investment

The E6 is a freeway of national significance, providing a key national-scale road corridor for NSW, ACT, Queensland, and Victoria. Capable of carrying more than 80,000 vehicles each day, the E6 will:

- connect planned and existing trade gateways and national manufacturing and distribution clusters;
- connect established suburbs and growth areas and improve access to regional employment centres for residents from the outer north; and
- with land now secured for the development of the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT), the E6 will facilitate increased capacity for future freight movements. This project would help to better connect the BIFT and state significant employment land in the northern growth corridor.
- At the local level, the E6 will:
 - create more liveable communities by supporting the delivery of future passenger and freight rail services to Melbourne’s north and west, reducing the freight network’s overall impact on local communities and environments;
 - increase the mobility and participation of residents by providing an essential north-south road connection along the Northern Growth Corridor, especially for residents of Epping North, Wollert, Donnybrook, Kalkallo, Beveridge, and Wallan

- provide accessibility to jobs, education, and other social and economic opportunities for residents;
- streamline commuting by increasing road capacity; and
- reduce traffic congestion on arterial roads including Epping Road/High Street, Dalton Road, Edgars Road, Cooper Street, Plenty Road, and Yan Yean Road.

c) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is calling for the State Government to bring forward construction of the E6 Freeway to 2027-28 to ensure it is complete by 2032-33 and also accelerate planning for the rest of the Outer Metropolitan Ring Road (OMR) project.

Public Transport and Roads - Wallan electrification and connections

Electrifying between Craigieburn and Wallan is fundamental to the success of the metropolitan growth strategy and to connecting residents in the Northern Growth Corridor (including Donnybrook) to employment, education, health and recreation. Released in 2002, Melbourne 2030: Planning for sustainable growth established an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) around Melbourne to manage outward expansion in a coordinated way. The Northern Growth Corridor is projected to accommodate 30% of Melbourne's future growth over the coming decades, with the region becoming home to more than 1.5 million people. Growth area communities experience a significant service deficit compared to established areas, particularly in respect of public transport services.

a) Partners/Supporters

Merri-bek City Council, City of Whittlesea, Hume City Council, Mitchell Shire Council, NORTH Link, Northern Councils Alliance

b) Return on investment

New suburbs in the Northern Growth Corridor are currently serviced by infrequent V-Line services. Electrifying the metropolitan rail network through to Wallan will connect and integrate these suburbs and fast growing developments. Donnybrook is forecast to experience major population growth over the next two decades. Therefore, connection into the metropolitan rail network will provide additional capacity and service frequency for the large growth in rail passengers. Improved access to public transport services will also alleviate the health, wellbeing and other social issues our residents currently face through social isolation and poor access to education, employment and health services. Extension and electrification of the Upfield line to Wallan will support the need for increased capacity at Wallan and Donnybrook stations. Electrification will facilitate improved service frequencies for Donnybrook residents to connect to the CBD.

c) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is calling for the State Government to extend and electrify the Upfield line to Wallan to support the rapidly growing residential, commercial and industrial development in the region.

Health, Well-Being and Environment

As informed strongly by the Northern Councils Alliance advocacy priorities document 2023-24 and our partners, NORTH Link are seeking support for:

- A new public hospital in Melbourne's north to cater for the growing population and increasing health needs in our community, providing emergency care with provision for specialist services such as oncology, maternal, neonatal and paediatric services. Major public hospitals in the north (Northern Hospital and Austin/Mercy) are at capacity, with the Northern Hospital in particular under significant pressure.
- A funding plan for primary care in Melbourne's North, with consideration of planning for population growth in the Outer North
- Better support to end family violence in communities across Melbourne's north and increase early intervention to support children and young people's wellbeing, including commitment to improving the service system in each Council area, four years of funding to establish a Northern Councils Violence-Free Team and four years of funding to deliver Gender Equity Action Plans and Gender Impact Assessments.
- Support for a greener north Victorian Government support to meet canopy cover and biodiversity targets set within the Plan Melbourne: Northern Metro Land Use Framework Plan. Tree canopy cover in this region is the second lowest of any region in metro Melbourne. Funding of \$25 million per annum for four years will support delivery of canopy plans in areas of community vulnerability, tree planting programs and biodiversity actions along waterways.
- Funding and services to improve and support mental health and wellbeing, and an increased focus on mental health prevention across the region. This can be achieved by funding Councils to engage in mental wellbeing activities, Council representation on key governance structures and in planning processes, funding for current promotion and prevention work, and to improve availability of local mental healthcare services.

Education and Skills

We are seeking support for the following initiatives:

Centre for Urban Electrification

The establishment of the Centre for Urban Electrification at Melbourne Polytechnic's Heidelberg Campus strategically aligns with the Victorian Government's commitment to revitalising the State Electricity Commission (SEC) and achieving 95% renewable energy by 2035 and net-zero emissions by 2045. Recognising the pivotal role that certain regions in Victoria will play in renewable energy generation, the project focuses on the urban areas, particularly metropolitan Melbourne, for the crucial task of retrofitting and electrifying homes, businesses, and industries. This ambitious initiative positions Melbourne Polytechnic as a leader in urban electrification education and training, pivotal in supporting the state's transition towards cleaner energy solutions and meeting ambitious net-zero targets.

Advanced Manufacturing Centre of Excellence (AMCOE) – next stage

The next stage of growth for the Advanced Manufacturing Centre of Excellence (AMCOE) at Melbourne Polytechnic's Heidelberg Campus holds significant implications for the priorities of Melbourne's north, especially in fostering economic competitiveness and innovation. The decision by Australia to scale back advanced manufacturing training underscores the urgency for regions like Melbourne's north to strategically invest in education and facilities that cater to evolving industry demands. The AMCOE, launched in June 2022, has seen remarkable growth, boasting a 280% surge in student enrolment. This success, predominantly created by positive word-of-mouth, positions AMCOE as pivotal in navigating the educational challenges faced by VET Engineering in Australia. The proposed funding for the upcoming phase of AMCOE aligns seamlessly with the overarching priorities for Melbourne's north. The goal is to create an enlarged and technologically advanced centre catering to various engineering disciplines, such as fabrication and locksmithing.

Kangan Institute – Broadmeadows (Stage 2)

A \$60m injection that will deliver the stage one redevelopment of Kangan Institute's Broadmeadows campus will deliver a range of new training opportunities in Melbourne's north and importantly, critical post-COVID economic stimulation, with new buildings.

NORTH Link is seeking a \$225 million investment in Phase 2 of the Broadmeadows campus development which includes the Trades + Skills Centre of Excellence and Foundations and Pathways Centre. These Training Centres will focus on high demand courses in Construction and Education and Training and the emerging clean energy and green skills sectors.

Business Costs, Energy Costs and Regulatory and Taxation Reform

Melbourne's North manufacturing businesses in particular are reporting increased cost and time in complying with increased Commonwealth, State Government and agency regulations. Furthermore, rises in land tax, WorkCover premiums and the Superannuation Guarantee Charge are also taking their toll on the business bottom line, concomitant with increases in costs associated with labour due to skills and labour shortages, as well as energy, insurance, freight, fuel (including levies) and materials.

There needs to be a revived focus on the part of Governments on "taking costs out" to ensure our businesses are more competitive with those in other States and internationally and so that business owner and manager time is spent in a more balanced way.

In terms of energy policy, some local processors use gas as part of the manufacturing production processes, including those in the food processing sector. Gas provides a high level of energy intensity for these production processes and there is industry confusion over the pathway to a replacement fuel. Electricity-based substitutes are costly to implement and operate at this stage, according to key manufacturers. Attention needs to be paid to this issue urgently, so key manufacturing processes are retained onshore in any transition.

A new education program with simple steps is also required to help businesses, especially manufacturers, to look at least cost steps towards energy efficiency with particularly reference to electricity use.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this submission in greater detail. In the meantime, if you or your office should require further information, please contact me on 0417 353 650 or via email at c.james@latrobe.edu.au .

Yours sincerely,



Chris James

Executive Director

(0417) 353-650

c.james@latrobe.edu.au

More information can be found in NORTH Link' Investment Attraction Strategy and Prospectus [here](#) and in *The Future Workforce – Melbourne's North* (<https://northlink.org.au/future-workforce-2022/>).

We acknowledge the work of the Northern Councils Alliance, particularly in the area of public transport , health and environment, including the document [Northern Region Transport Strategy and Bus Networks](#)

NORTH Link is an independent association that seeks to promote and improve the economy and liveability of Melbourne's north. We communicate regularly with local businesses and organisations of all sizes. Key Partners include the municipalities of Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Mitchell, Merri-bek, Nillumbik and Whittlesea, universities and TAFEs, Melbourne Airport, Jemena, Yarra Valley Water, hospitals and health providers and large and small businesses in the region.

Appendix 1



25 October 2023

The Hon. Tim Pallas MP
Treasurer
Office of the Treasurer
Level 4, 1 Treasury Place,
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Treasurer

Government Owned Land Parcel, Epping

NORTH Link and the City of Whittlesea are jointly writing to you to seek a meeting about Government-owned land at and around the Melbourne Wholesale Market site at Epping.

There are two key issues:

1. Government retaining a level of control over the Melbourne Wholesale Market to ensure shared value strategic uses for the State and the region
2. Relatedly, the once in a generation opportunity to develop 51 hectares of Government owned industrial land strategically located next to the Melbourne Wholesale Market at Epping, sitting within a food strategy for the wider Melbourne's North region and Victoria itself.

Background

Control of the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market

The Victorian Budget 2023/24 stated that the Victorian Government will be seeking new commercial arrangements for the Melbourne Wholesale Market site with the aim of bolstering the Victorian Future Fund.

NORTH Link and the City of Whittlesea are requesting the Victorian Government retain a level of strategic governmental control over the Melbourne Wholesale Market and the 51ha next door and believe the current arrangements with the Melbourne Market Authority in control can achieve just that.

We would like the Melbourne Wholesale Market site and the adjoining 51ha site safeguarded so they are strategically utilised to drive the broader policy objectives of future growth in the State's agri-food sector as well as maximum investment, economic development and jobs in Melbourne's North, including shared value uses that a private sector player may not support due to a possible lower-than-commercial rate of return.

Postal Address & Location

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*Melbourne's Northern Economic Wedge Inc. (trading as NORTH Link)
Australian Registered Body Number (ARBN) - 669 523 086
Registered office: NORTH Link, Suite 120, John Scott Meeting House, Building MH, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY VICTORIA 3086
Place of origin: Victoria*

Under section 52(1) of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (VIC), except as provided in its rules, a member of NORTH Link is not liable to contribute towards the payment of the debts and liabilities of the association or any costs, charges and expenses of the winding up of the association.

Adjacent 51 hectares of land next to the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market

This communication follows our 2023/24 Pre-Budget Submissions addressed to the Treasurer and follow-up letters to the Premier, Treasurer and Industry Minister and seeks planning and policy support to progress a transformative job and investment-creating project for Victoria. It is informed by the City of Whittlesea and its business community and NORTH Link's members and partners as well food manufacturing and related companies that comprise NORTH Link's Melbourne's North Food Group.

Food and beverage manufacturing is a key focus area for the City of Whittlesea and NORTH Link and is important to the Victorian economy:

- The sector is a significant employer in Australia with some 72,000 employees with over 30% of the national share working within the sector in Victoria.
- Food manufacturing represents approximately 34% of all manufacturing in the state and contributes over \$28 billion in revenue to the state.

Although Victoria has traditionally enjoyed a prominent position in Australia's food sector, more needs to be done to ensure that Victoria remains competitive in the agri-food industry in Australia and internationally.

A unique opportunity exists to add further value to major existing and future agri-food investments in the region. Master planning support from government for the Epping site will help cement Melbourne's North as the food and beverage manufacturing capital of Australia.

We further suggest the Government enter into partnership arrangements with the private sector to quickly unlock industrial land use for the site and have arrangements in place to ensure that agri-food manufacturing, processing and distribution activity is assured for the site into the future. Without a commitment to the development of strategic assets, that support innovation, coordination and productivity in agri-foods, Victoria runs a real risk of losing market share, missing out on future growth opportunities and creating much needed jobs in the northern suburbs.

NORTH Link is calling for the State Government to:

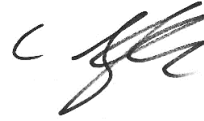
- Work with Councils and industry to activate planning for this opportunity
- Share the findings of the business case studies that DJSIR undertook in 2020 and 2021
- Include key stakeholders including the City of Whittlesea and NORTH Link in current and future scoping and study processes
- Work with industry and local government to identify and prioritise infrastructure needed to activate the site.
- Appoint an industry stakeholder group to input into master planning of the site including the City of Whittlesea and NORTH Link
- Incentivise a major industry player to locate to the Epping site as an anchor tenant to attract other suitable investors.
- Consider retaining a level of control of the adjacent Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market and the adjacent 51 hectares of land via the existing Melbourne Market Authority, which knows the site well, to ensure competitiveness in the food economy is retained and synergies are captured and maintained with the newly developed site.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or a member of your policy team to discuss this submission in greater detail. In the meantime, if you or your office should require further information, please contact me on 0417 353-650 or via email at c.james@latrobe.edu.au

Yours sincerely,



Chris James
Executive Director
NORTH Link



Craig Lloyd
Chief Executive Officer
City of Whittlesea

Context for Government owned land parcel in Epping

Overall economy, employment and competitive landscape

- Other jurisdictions such as Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania have already committed or are considering major investments to grow their agri-food industries, including:
 - The Western Australian Food Innovation Precinct and the Northern Adelaide Food Park which are already under development; and
 - New South Wales has ambitious plans for the Western Sydney Airport Agribusiness Precinct, which could pose a significant threat to Victoria with a stated aim for Western Sydney International Airport to become a food export hub - <https://www.agriinvestor.com/western-sydney-international-airport-home-agtech-cluster-report/>
- Increased prominence of Melbourne’s North as a logistics centre with competitively-priced industrial land and the shortest freight travel times to Sydney in particular e.g. Melbourne Wholesale Market, Melbourne Airport, Somerton Intermodal Terminal, the future Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal, and recent Amazon investments
- Need to preserve competition (and effective and cost-efficient access to supply chains for Victorian growers, both small and large) and keep prices affordable for consumers and assist horticultural sector in fresh food markets
- Looming industrial land shortages in Melbourne concomitant with growth of food manufacturing and logistics (*Unlocking high value jobs in Melbourne’s north - a plan for activating industrial land*, NORTH Link and EY, 2020) – correspondingly, the need to develop remainder of Epping Market site, especially 51 hectares of spare land adjacent to market with an agri-food sector and food and beverage manufacturing related activity focus
- Lack of government resources to develop the site - in the absence of direct funding, the Government, through clearly stated contractual obligations, still has the opportunity to encourage private sector investment to ensure Victoria remains at the forefront of the agri-food sector while retaining shared value uses.
- Corresponding interest from long-term investors in such a site, including those backed by superannuation funds with a 25-year plus investment horizon
- Need for a strategic “controlling brain” to unlock the strategic economic value of the site and its strategic positioning in the agri-food supply chain – especially shared value uses such as trading floor, export facility, events space – see below; in contrast, a developer without constraints could divide the site into small lots and erode value
- The need for jobs in a region with rapidly rising population growth: the 2022 Future Workforce – Melbourne’s North report found that there are more workers living in Melbourne’s North than there are jobs to service the region. For the gap between local jobs and local workers to close, 182,000 more local jobs are needed by 2031.

Melbourne's North as a growing food and beverage region of importance

- Melbourne's North is one of Australia's leading food and beverage manufacturing regions with high growth potential.
- There are over 400 food and beverage manufacturers in the region, turning over approximately \$1 million each.
- There are approximately 9,000 people employed in the food and beverage manufacturing space in Melbourne's North
- Melbourne's North has a strong food and beverage ecosystem with two food research universities (La Trobe and RMIT Universities), two TAFEs, the Melbourne Wholesale Food Market, Melbourne Airport, Hume Freeway, Metropolitan Ring Road, two planned intermodal freight terminals (Beveridge and Somerton) and a food incubator, FoodINC in Preston
- Stated desire by CSIRO to relocate national food research headquarters to La Trobe University and work in collaboration with the university as part of the planned Australian Food Innovation Centre (AFIC)
- Presence of 51 hectares of scarce industrial land next to the Market
- Multicultural food heritage, particularly post World War Two

What this means for Melbourne Wholesale Market site

- Opportunity to add economic value in the food and beverage sector, especially with 51 hectares of spare land
- Need for a strategic controlling body to unlock the strategic economic value of the site and its strategic positioning in the agri-food supply chain
- Corresponding danger of giving over the site to a developer who could split it into small lots for maximum short-term profit, compromising the overall economic value of the site
- 51 hectare site can provide a location for a critical mass of highly valued international and national agri-food businesses, leveraging on the location proximity to port, airport and major arterials connecting to Western and Northern districts, Gippsland and interstate
- Site is also desired by food manufacturing SMEs that have outgrown inner city locations – opportunity to re-zone (in some cases, not all) inner city land as residential easing the housing crisis
- Functions such as trading floor, export facility and events space may not generate desired return for developer, thus need to examine a level of public control over aspects of the site.
- Space for strategic shared used activities needs to be preserved:
 - Preservation of the trading floor at the market good competition in food economy and thus for horticulture and consumers
 - Possibility of the Market playing a greater role in the export of food and beverage (fresh food and manufactured product)
 - Possibility of a visitor or events space for hosting overseas food industry visitors/delegations
 - Possibility of Provenance Hub - promote provenance certification, regulatory compliance and traceability for food products preferably combined with an Export Facility
- 51 hectare site has the potential to be part of the Government's clean economy agenda through use of solar panels or hydrogen energy at the Melbourne Market site, as a cutting edge application in the food and beverage sector
- A redeveloped Melbourne Market site (including the 51 hectares of vacant land) will be able to plug into and give practical expression to innovation and research networks such as universities (especially La Trobe University's proposed Australian Food Innovation Centre

collaboration with CSIRO), RTO's, business incubators and accelerators that can support businesses with commercialisation and expansion

- The National Institute of Economic and Industry Research estimates that the redeveloped Epping site would create 6,500 ongoing jobs in Victoria by 2027, as well as 3,500 construction jobs and approximately \$3 billion of value added to the Victorian economy over a 10-year period.

Shared Uses (apart from trading floor)

Export Facility

- Develop freight consolidation capabilities for key players in the supply chain from national and international buyers, through to freight forwarders and exporters e.g. put containers together with products from a variety of producers
- A facility that provides a location for growers, food manufacturers, freight aggregators, consolidators and forwarders to come together for efficient freight aggregation purposes.
 - The Melbourne Market is already the central hub for fresh produce distribution in Victoria and is ideally located in convenient distance and proximity to the Melbourne air and sea ports
 - It is also ideally located adjacent to major road and rail via interstate transport connections
 - While the facility would build on current market operations, it would not be limited to fresh produce
 - The key proposition is Aggregation and Consolidation for successful international export trade, and for the development of new competitiveness in the domestic market.
 - Provide a path to market for the food production that cannot be consumed in Australia
 - Smaller “boutique” growers are priced out of the export market due to significant freight rates
 - By aggregating product from a number of growers and intermediaries as exporters (i.e. bringing it together), they can better justify the freight cost, improve value and achieve a greater return on their product (through consolidation of mass).
- Provision of common-use facilities
 - State of the art cool rooms with a range of temperature zones
 - Facilities for freight forwarders to load and unload freight containers
 - Cross docking efficiency
 - Biosecurity inspection and documentation
 - A secure biosecurity and customs clearance area so that producers could go direct to the cargo terminal operator
- Stakeholders/tenants could include;
 - Exporters, growers and food producers
 - Both international and domestic buyers
 - Freight consolidators and aggregators
 - Freight forwarders
- Improves the integrity of the cold chain through more efficient handling of produce by reducing time exposed to ambient temperatures and applying the latest cool chain technology

- Generates synergies and achieves cost savings by reducing double handling, improving the flow of product and achieving economies of scale by increased volumes
- Provides a new opportunity to reduce our export market reliance on perishable food through aggregating supply and distribution at one location where food processing and manufacturing is also possible
- Reduction in fixed overhead costs through sharing of infrastructure and facilities
- Aligns with the State Government's strategic vision to grow exports of agrifood from Victorian producers.

Provenance Hub and Events Centre

- Creation of a hub to promote provenance certification, regulatory compliance and traceability for food products, preferably combined with an Export Facility.
- Data Collection: A hub can support the collection of data from various sources such as farmers, suppliers, and distributors to ensure that all the necessary information is available for provenance certification, regulatory compliance, and traceability.
- The hub can verify the authenticity of the data collected by cross-checking it with other sources and ensuring that it meets the required standards.
- The hub can track the movement of food products from the farm to the consumer, ensuring that all the necessary information is available at every stage of the supply chain.
- The hub can provide transparency to consumers by making all the information available to them, including the origin of the food product, the production process, and any certifications or regulatory compliance.
- The hub can provide certification for food products that meet the required standards for provenance, regulatory compliance, and traceability including niche attributes such as sustainability claims, indigenous food claims, or a focus on particular markets for example: Halal where a hub could provide efficiency gains to businesses.
- The hub can facilitate collaboration between different stakeholders in the food supply chain, such as farmers, suppliers, distributors, and regulators, to ensure that all the necessary information is available and that everyone is working towards the same goal.
- The hub can help to manage risks associated with food products by identifying potential issues and taking appropriate action to mitigate them.
- The hub can ensure that food products meet the required quality standards by monitoring the production process and verifying that all the necessary steps have been taken to ensure quality.

Better bus connections to Melbourne Airport

Context

- Tullamarine Airport and Business Park hosts over 20,000 jobs
- Over 80% of local employees drive to work
- It is currently served by four bus routes, but most run once an hour for less than half the day

Issues

- The precinct relies on shift workers, and shift times are not supported by the bus service span
- The Airport Rail Project will not improve connectivity for local employees
- Employees living in Sunbury and Craigieburn need better public transport connections
- Improving these bus services will improve access to jobs and services for those who need it most

Recommendations

1. Create a new service between Craigieburn and Melbourne Airport via Aitken Boulevard
2. Rationalise existing routes to create a service between Craigieburn and Melbourne Airport via Mickleham Road
3. Improve service levels on Route 479 to Sunbury
4. Extend Route 482 to Sunbury
5. Extend Route 561 to Melbourne Airport
6. Introduce a direct shuttle from Broadmeadows Station to Melbourne Airport (or implement the Suburban Rail Loop Bus - a rapid, direct service from Melbourne Airport to Box Hill)
7. Extend Route 490 to Melbourne Airport via Tullamarine Business Park
8. Run SmartBus 902 to Melbourne Airport and SmartBus 901 to Airport West shopping centre

Rationale

*Craigieburn is a key employee catchment area for Melbourne Airport. A direct service would eliminate the need for multiple transfers
In addition, a more penetrative service is needed to improve connectivity for Craigieburn residents to Melbourne Airport*

Sunbury is the top employee catchment area for Melbourne Airport. Current services are too infrequent and do not directly connect to Sunbury's residential areas

Establishes a direct east-west connection between the Melbourne Airport and La Trobe NEICs. Creates new potential employee catchment areas for both NEICs

Strengthens the rail connection to Melbourne Airport, reducing travel time by 7-9 minutes from Broadmeadows Station

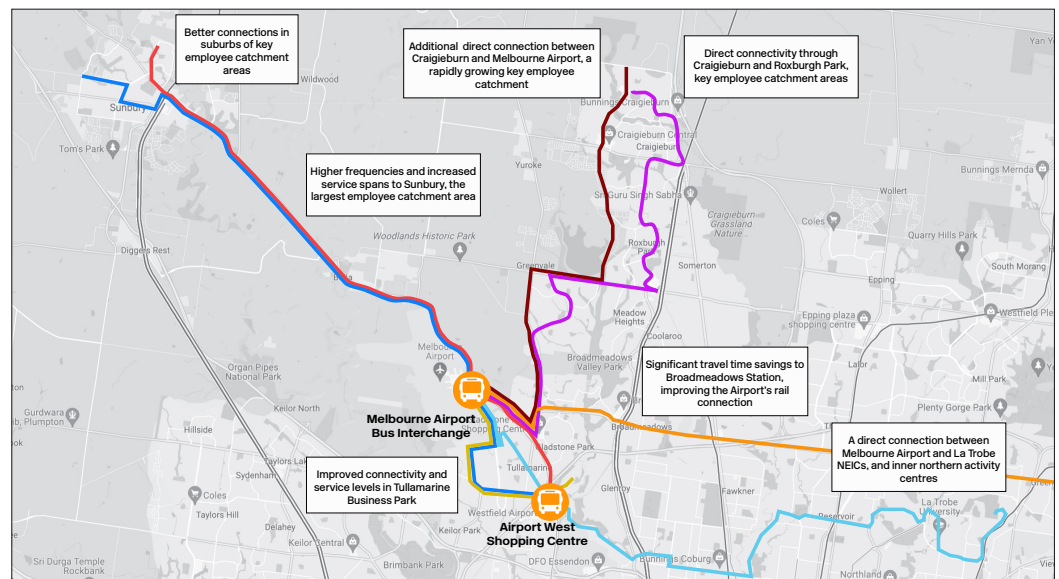
Adds significant employment destinations to Route 490 and improves public transport connectivity to Tullamarine Business Park

Improves employee access to Melbourne Airport

Potential benefits

By improving public transport's attractiveness in the area, there should be:

- An increase in public transport trips per day
- A decrease of up to 7,000 vehicle kilometres per day



Better bus connections to La Trobe University

Context

- La Trobe University (LTU) currently employs over 5,000 staff and has an enrolment of over 40,000 students
- A significant number of students live in Melbourne’s northeast and east
- Car trips to LTU contribute to traffic congestion on regional links, such as Banksia Street & Rosanna Road
- LTU is investing \$5bn into a new University City, which will result in an additional 12,000 residents, 40,000 students and 20,000 employees

Issues

- The express shuttle, Route 301 from Reservoir Station to LTU, only operates during the University semester
- Residents to the east, north-west and or north of LTU cannot get a direct bus to campus
- LTU receives significantly fewer public transport services than other universities
- Recent increases in public transport services at other universities have been highly successful
- Service levels on LTU bus routes do not meet student needs in terms of frequency and span

Recommendations

1. Operate Route 301 throughout the year at higher service levels
2. Extend Route 301 to Heidelberg Station (or implement the Suburban Rail Loop Bus - a rapid, direct service from Melbourne Airport to Box Hill)
3. Reroute Route 382 to LTU
4. Connect Routes 513G and 343 and reroute them through LTU
5. Establish a new service between LTU and Viewbank & Yallambie
6. Re-align Route 609 and extend it across the Yarra River to LTU
7. Investigate bus priority at the intersection of Waterdale Road & Kingsbury Drive

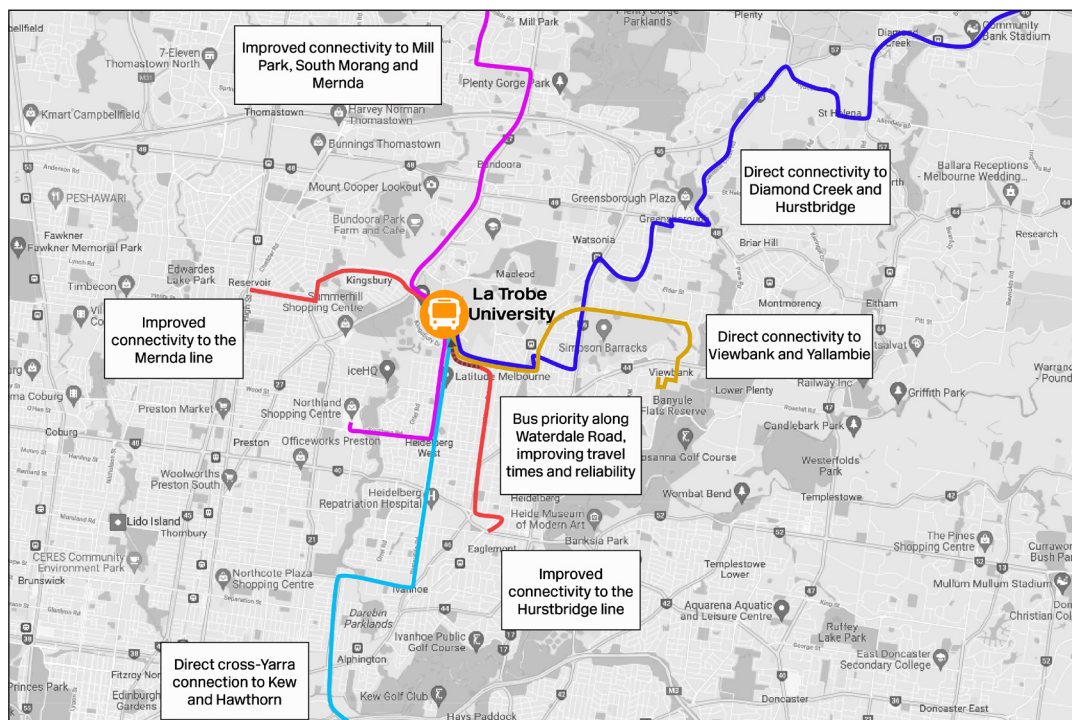
Rationale

- Strengthens LTU's key link to the rail network. Connecting to Heidelberg station will increase connectivity to LTU from the Hurstbridge line*
- Improves connectivity to northern suburbs, such as Mill Park, South Morang and Mernda*
- Improves connectivity to north-eastern suburbs, such as Diamond Creek and Hurstbridge*
- Establishes a direct connection to Viewbank and Yallambie, increasing LTU's potential employee and enrolment catchment*
- Establishes a direct cross-Yarra connection to eastern suburbs, such as Kew and Hawthorn*
- Improves bus service reliability without impacting car travel times*

Potential benefits

By improving public transport's attractiveness in the area, there should be:

- An increase in public transport trips per day
- A decrease of up to 13,000 vehicle kilometres per day



Getting there faster with Suburban Rail Loop Bus

Context

- Rapid population growth is straining the transport network in Melbourne’s north. Mitchell Shire, Whittlesea and Hume are some of the fastest-growing municipalities in Australia
- The \$18bn North East Link – Victoria’s most expensive transport infrastructure project to date – is being built because congestion in the north is already significant
- Population growth is putting great strain on the north’s transport network

Issues

- East-west public transport connectivity is poor in Melbourne’s north, impacting people’s ability to access to education and employment in the same way as the rest of Melbourne
- It will be at least two decades before Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) North is complete
- Strong east-west connectivity is needed now. Communities in Melbourne’s North should not need to wait until Suburban Rail Loop North is delivered for connectivity improvements to be made

Benefits include:

- 1 A direct connection between all rail corridors in Melbourne’s north, improving cross-corridor connectivity
- 2 Creation of a strong cross-Yarra connection between Melbourne’s north and east
- 3 Building the ‘SRL’ brand ahead of the rail launch, whilst increasing public transport patronage
- 4 Up to 15,000 vehicle kilometres saved per day

An SRL bus (SRLB) which mimics SRL North will create a direct public transport connection between key activity hubs in Melbourne’s northern region, facilitating new travel patterns and increasing public transport patronage

SRLB would service all proposed rail stops along SRL North, with an additional stop at Keon Park to save travel time for commuters travelling on the Mernda line

