

## Doncaster Rail Report is “Topsy-Turvy Planning”, says PTUA

Making the Doncaster rail extension conditional on undergrounding the South Morang line is unnecessary and an excuse to kill the project, the Public Transport Users Association said today.

“The government all but promised to build the Doncaster extension in 2010, but they failed to confront a bureaucracy that’s too fond of making excuses to do nothing,” said PTUA President Tony Morton.

The [study report](#) released today recommends a route following the Eastern Freeway median, in accordance with the ‘Option 1’ route identified in 2012. However, it suggests terminating the line at the Doncaster Park and Ride car park, short of the major and growing activity centre at Doncaster Hill.

“They are actually proposing running a train line to a car park,” Dr Morton said. “This is not how you plan a major public transport corridor. It was always intended the line would serve the major activity centre at Doncaster Hill, and not just be a single-purpose commuter service for CBD office workers.”

“The consultants have ignored the need for transport infrastructure to support land use planning in the City of Manningham, and have been too quick to write off the potential for buses to feed the rail backbone,” said Dr Morton.

The PTUA has also taken issue with the suggestion that major work is required to ‘decouple’ the South Morang, Hurstbridge and Doncaster lines before the extension can proceed.

“Just imagine the road lobby saying we can’t build a new motorway because the road network won’t cope with the traffic,” Dr Morton said. “Just as with the Rowville and Airport lines, the way to proceed is in stages: you build the part you can afford, and explain how you’ll plan the future stages to cope with expected patronage 20 years in the future. What you don’t do is use future patronage growth as an excuse to not extend the network now.”

The government made a strong commitment to the line in November 2010. “The first step is to plan it, and find a route in detail, with the community, then find the funds, and then build it. We are committed to proceeding down that path,” former Premier Baillieu said at the time, also stating that if a route was identified within two years, construction could commence within the term of the next

government.\*

Dr Morton said “Doncaster Rail Stage 1” should run between Victoria Park and a bus interchange at Bulleen, with trains running every ten minutes. “This part could now proceed immediately. You could build it in two years at a cost of \$100 million, and give everyone a fast ride from Bulleen to the city which is what cripples the DART buses at the moment. We know there is room to fit these trains in the existing network until at least 2020, and that will take a lot of cars off the Eastern Freeway. Meanwhile, you plan for the tunnelling required to get to Doncaster and look at the options to boost capacity on the Clifton Hill lines after 2020.”

“We also need to temper this obsession with expensive tunnels,” Dr Morton said. “With up-to-date signalling on our existing train lines, we could boost the capacity of every line by at least 50 per cent, which gives us decades’ worth of growth and doesn’t require finding billions of dollars we don’t have. There is a pilot project now being considered on the Dandenong corridor: it should be funded in the upcoming Budget alongside Doncaster Rail Stage 1, so we can all see what cost-effective capacity building looks like sooner rather than later.”