

Your vision for Victoria

These questions are open-ended and give you a chance to outline your vision for transport in Victoria. Keywords will be pulled out of each response for the scorecard. If you have preferred keywords or slogans, please highlight them. Your full response will be available on our website.

- a. What is your **vision for transport** in Victoria?

Melbourne needs a revolution in public transport funding to end its failed 50-year journey to becoming a second-rate, freeway-ridden Los Angeles. It's worst of all in the north and west of Melbourne, where safe Labor seats get a few scraps thrown at them every four years.

Reverse privatisation

We are campaigning to reverse the privatisation of the public transport system. Metro Trains, a global consortium, receives \$900 million a year from the state government. The Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) estimates that it has made over \$230 million in profit in the last five years. (The figure is not disclosed due to an undemocratic "commercial-in-confidence" clause in the contract with the state government – something the Victorian Socialists would fight to scrap in all state government contracts with private corporations.) Under the contract the Andrews government renewed last year, Metro will receive a \$1.25 million bonus every month that it meets performance targets – that is, for doing the job it's paid to do. Trains, trams and buses should be returned to the public sector and public-private partnerships abolished.

Free public transport

Free public transport. The cost of running the Myki system isn't worth it. The state pays \$100 million per year for the clunky, privately subcontracted Myki system, as well as funding the army of inspectors to enforce it. The levels of surveillance, intimidation and victimisation of that system are a disaster for public life.

Free public transport in the greater Melbourne metro area is simply a long overdue extension of the public principle, which applies to schools, to most roads, and other public utilities. Because the transport system was assembled from separate private companies a century ago, we have inherited their ticketing. It's time to integrate public transport into a full public system.

Free public transport – with an initial period of flat-fee \$1 for all trips ticketing – would prompt a steady transfer of car-users to the public system, and remove the need for vastly expensive blow-out projects such as the North-East Link. The roads budget would be a reduced one for maintenance and upgrade of existing routes, and the billions allocated for "new" roads –

which are really the last roads, suggested in the now discredited 1969 Bolte freeways plan – would be transferred to the rapid expansion of public transport to take up the new demand.

Frequent services

Ten-minute all-day and five-minute peak hour trains on all northern lines. Service on the northern lines – especially Mernda and Hurstbridge – is appalling and has been for decades. The additional services announced are welcome, but are insufficient. Five-minute peak and 10-minute off-peak services is achievable. Andrews says nothing can be done until after 2026 when Metro II opens, but there are simple fixes that can be done now.

1. The Upfield line has one of the least frequent peak services, at 18 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the evening. We call for the line to be duplicated to allow more frequent services.
2. New train-to-train signalling systems can overcome historic problems with fixed signalling systems.
3. A “temporary” bridge built at Clifton Hill. This would increase flow through from 18 to 32 trains per hour, easing overcrowding significantly.
4. Extend the Craigieburn line to Wallan as fully electrified.
5. Extend the South Morang/Mernda line to Whittlesea.
6. Trams on the northern lines should be taken up to two- and three-minute frequency in peak hour, and five-six minutes all day.
7. Line extensions should be built to connect Reservoir and South Morang railway stations.
8. Extend the 72 line from Camberwell into Ivanhoe and beyond, to create a north-south service.
9. Extend Route 19 up Sydney Road to Fawkner.

It is relatively cheap to extend tram systems, and to increase rolling stock; Melbourne has the largest tram system in the world. Let's invest in it for all.

The private bus companies rort the public purse, yet Andrews chose to renew their contracts for another 10 years for an undisclosed figure. We need rapid bus systems along direct routes connecting to rail stations, to remove the need for a car for outer suburban commuters, and make local journeys fast and easy without a car. It's not enough to introduce rapid systems, and then have 10-minute and 20-minute frequencies. We need 10-minute and five-minute peak hour buses, with dedicated lanes, and an average five-minute and two-minute (peak hour) wait at interchanges.

In addition, providing frequent public transport services throughout the night would help ensure people – particularly women – have a safe passage home.

b. How will you support Melbourne's **growing population** to move 8 million people by 2050?

We welcome migrants and refugees who choose to make Melbourne home. We call on the major parties to expand the public transport network, require developers to include low cost housing in all new, large developments and ensure sufficient childcare, health centres and schools to meet the needs of a growing population. The major parties stoke fears of high migration to distract people from their own parties' unwillingness to demand corporations and the rich pay higher taxes to ensure communities have the infrastructure they need.

c. How will you support better public and active transport in Victoria's **regional centres**?

Melbourne's public transport system is antiquated, but the service is much worse in regional Victoria. The poor public transport services contribute to the greater isolation people feel in regional areas, particularly older people who cannot drive long distances.

The fastest growing regional areas in Victoria are Geelong, Ballarat and Warrnambool, yet they have the slowest growing public transport systems. Victorian Socialists call for:

1. An electrified rail loop in Geelong from Waurn Ponds to service the growing car dependent populations of the Bellarine Peninsular and Torquay.
2. Dual electrified rail lines between Melbourne and Ballarat and reopening the train line between Ballarat and Geelong.
3. An upgrade of the Warrnambool line to support a high-speed train service.

d. How will you **improve connectivity** across the urban fringe and into the city?

We support the Public Transport Users' Association call to create a "ten minute city", where no one waits more than 10 minutes for a tram, train or bus. For the outer areas we are for:

1. Extending the Craigieburn line to Wallan;
2. Duplicating the Upfield line between Gowrie station to Upfield, essential to boost services from every 20 minutes at peak.
3. A bus network designed for direct travel between central stops with less than 5 minute wait times at stops and shorter, more direct routes.
4. A better bus network and more frequent trains would address the chronic shortage of parking at suburban train stations and encourage people to take public transport.

5. We support the Andrews' government proposed underground rail link to connect services to different lines. However, we call on the next government to commit to greater funding to enable the project to be built more rapidly to keep up with Melbourne's population growth.
- e. How will you **combat congestion** and help people get where they're going cheaply and on time?

We can reduce road congestion by getting more people off the roads, and into trains, trams, buses or on a bike. We are for creating a fast, free and frequent public transport network. If the service was renationalised, the public subsidies that go to Metro and the other operators could be redirected into expanding the system instead of the profit margins of private corporations.

More roads are not the answer. The government's own modelling of the proposed North East link says it will actually increase the number of commuters using cars instead of trains as a result. This is at the cost of building the Doncaster train line, putting in more buses, and generally boosting public transport. Instead Labor will waste billions on a toll road that will actually increase congestion, and within five years any benefits to driving travel time will be lost.

We do support works to expand the existing road network in the outer suburbs. In areas where there has been significant population growth in the outer suburbs there needs to be road widening operations to support the traffic growth through these areas.

We also support the program to remove level crossings – though in many instances, there should have been greater community consultation and consideration of residents' concerns to ensure that whether the solution is sky rails or underpasses, the residents' amenity was amenity.

Our big asks

Stopping bad projects

1. Will you oppose the construction of the **West Gate Tunnel** ?

We do not oppose the construction of the West Gate Tunnel but we are disturbed by the Andrews' government's decision to award the contract for the construction of the tunnel to John Holland, which has repeatedly engaged in anti-union tactics.

2. Will you oppose the construction of the **North East Link** ?

Yes, the \$10 billion North East link will not fix congestion. The government's own modelling says it will actually increase the number of commuters using cars instead of trains as a result. This is at the cost of building the Doncaster train line, putting in more buses, and generally boosting public transport. Instead Labor will waste billions on a toll road that will actually increase congestion, and within five years any benefits to driving travel time will be lost. We can reduce road congestion by getting more people off the roads, and into trains.

3. Will you oppose the construction of the **East-West Link** ?

Yes, our lead candidate for the upper house seat of the Northern Metro, Stephen Jolly, led the campaign to stop the East-West Link. He picketed the early excavation work and the campaign was instrumental in building public opposition to the project, such that the Andrews government scrapped it early in its term. The Liberals are proposing to revive the project. If they're elected we are confident that having beat them once, we can beat them again.

4. Will you commit to a **phase-out of private tolls** on existing roads by 2030?

Yes, we think that roads should not be for private property. We note that the corporate structure of Transurban – which control 13 of Australia's 15 toll roads - is opaque. It is estimated that the tolls on the CityLink have generated \$5.7 billion in revenue since 1999 on a project which cost \$1.8 billion to build, yet year after year pays virtually no tax.

We understand that congestion is a problem and it is necessary to cut down the use of cars. We believe the best way to do so is to invest in a public transport system to move people efficiently around the city so people become less reliant on roads.

Stronger and more accountable local industry

5. Will you commit to an **independent inquiry** into the performance of Transdev who have been accused of running unsafe and unreliable services despite managing nearly 30% of Melbourne's bus network?

Yes. It is regrettable that Andrews renewed the bus licenses of most private operators during his term for another 10 years instead of taking the opportunity not to renew their contracts.

We need rapid bus systems along direct routes connecting to rail stations, to remove the need for a car for outer suburban commuters, and make local journeys fast and easy without a car. It's not enough to introduce rapid systems, and then have 10-minute and 20-minute frequencies. We need 10-minute and five-minute peak hour buses, with dedicated lanes, and an average five-minute and two-minute (peak hour) wait at interchanges.

6. Will you commit to higher **local content quotas** for industry including the manufacturing of, where possible, all future rail, bus and tram stock to be built in Victoria?

We think that the manufacture of rail, bus and tram stock can provide jobs to people in working class areas that suffer from high unemployment since many factories were closed in the last 25 years.

7. Will you commit to not accept any **unsolicited bids** from private corporations and take all projects through a public and open tender and through the Infrastructure Australia assessment process?

Yes, there needs to be full transparency of the tendering process, however, in our view public private partnerships have gone too far. We advocate a return to public investment, public ownership and public service jobs. For the many projects our community needs, people should be employed directly by the government to build, run or deliver the service.

8. Will you commit to **reversing privatisation** of transport infrastructure, services and operations?

Yes, this is one of the main policies we have campaigned about. Privatisation of public services has failed. The government gives in excess of \$100 million per year to Metro to operate the train system. The Rail, Tram & Bus Union (RTBU) estimate that Metro has collected \$230 million in the last 5 years. The government money currently subsidising Metro's profits should be ploughed back into the system to make it fast, frequent and free.

Building a 21st century rail network

9. Will you commit to an extended and expanded **level crossing removal** program, focusing on roadways that are important for tram and route bus movements?

Yes, we recognise that removing the level crossings can facilitate having more buses on the road. We think that there should be genuine consultation with residents about the proposals in their area. For example, it seems that there are places where building an underpass would have been better than an overpass for residents, but that such plans were dismissed as being more expensive.

9. Will you finish Melbourne Metro 1 on time and start the construction of **Melbourne Metro 2**?

We support both projects. These projects cannot be an excuse to not increase the number of train services on existing lines, upgrades and modernisation, and new and improved bus services to make public transport a fast and reliable service. We believe that greater funding of the projects could see them finished sooner, which is warranted given the chronic inability of the existing network to keep up with population growth.

10. Will you finish the Airport Rail Link and start the construction of the **Melbourne Suburban Rail Loop** ?

We support better public transport options available between the airport and the city. However, this could have been achieved through priority bus lanes along the Tullamarine freeway rather than the \$10 billion spent on the Airport Rail Link. This funding is badly needed to put more services on the metropolitan network and complete the Metro 2 and underground rail link faster.

11. Will you commit to finally building the **Doncaster Rail Line** to connect Doncaster and Kew to the CBD?

Yes, this is a long standing proposal with much community support that has been overlooked yet again in favour of building another road.

Connecting our city

12. Will you commit to **expanding the inner city tram network** to urban renewal precincts like Fishermans Bend and a new cross-city route linking the train stations in North Melbourne and North Richmond?

Yes, it is concerning that the Fishermans Bend plans currently do not include new tram stops or bus stops. The rezoning of land at Fishermans Bend from industrial to residential under then Planning Minister, Matthew Guy, resulted in the land being bought rapidly by developers. The current Planning Minister, Richard Wynne, put a moratorium on the building permits in an attempt to introduce some planning in the redevelopment. However, the current plans appear to have inadequate provision for schools, childcare facilities, public transport, green space, sporting facilities and green space. It is at risk of becoming another concrete jungle like Docklands.

13. Will you investigate **building inter-suburban tram and SmartBus links** in suburban Melbourne linking key rail corridors and commercial precincts with people's homes?

It is relatively cheap to extend tram systems, and to increase rolling stock; Melbourne has the largest tram system in the world. We are for investment in:

- Trams on the northern lines should be taken up to two- and three-minute frequency in peak hour, and five-six minutes all day;
- Extend the 72 line from Camberwell into Ivanhoe and beyond, to create a north-south service;
- Extend Route 19 up Sydney Road to Fawkner.

We need rapid bus systems along direct routes connecting to rail stations, to remove the need for a car for outer suburban commuters, and make local journeys fast and easy without a car. It's not enough to introduce rapid systems, and then have 10-minute and 20-minute frequencies. We need 10-minute and five-minute peak hour buses, with dedicated lanes, and an average five-minute and two-minute (peak hour) wait at interchanges.

14. Will you commit additional funding to building more and safer **outer suburban cycling** and active transport links?

In 2017, 967,000 Victorians rode bikes each week. More people would ride if they felt safe. Currently, there are too many gaps in the bicycle network and some bike paths are overcrowded. Paths like the Upfield shared path are overcrowded, putting many cyclists onto busy streets like Sydney Road. There's a need to extend the Upfield bike path to Upfield.

The Victorian Socialists call for:

1. Building missing links in the bicycle network.
2. Expanding the bicycle corridors with off-road, protected bike paths.
3. Creating new bicycle corridors where existing corridors are overcrowded.
4. Developing safe bicycle connections to employment hubs, transport hubs, schools and universities.
5. Investing \$20 per person per year, or \$126 million, into cycling infrastructure.
6. Expanding secure bike parking at public transport hubs such as train stations.

16. Will you commit to a publicly-accessible, costed and **integrated transport plan** with a hard target of 35% of all trips by public or active transport by 2030?

Yes. We would work with the PTUV and RTBU and other groups with a stake in boosting use of public transport to determine the best paths to achieve this outcome.

Get trucks off our local streets

17. Will you commit to a legislated target of 30% of all **heavy freight by rail** by 2030?

Yes, we support increasing freight rail for three reasons. First it is better for the environment (over 3 times more fuel efficient than trucks). Second, it costs less. Third, it is less dangerous (the increasing reliance on trucking over recent years has increased pressure on truck drivers to speed and drive long shifts without sleep and hence increased chance of accidents).

18. Will you develop and fund a five-year **rail modernisation project** to complete standard gauge conversion, increase track running speeds, upgrade rail signalling and improve rail network utilisation?

Yes, we support a massive investment in public transport, including the reversal of privatisation. Rail requires modernisation to be able to deliver on the needs of a growing population.

19. Will you investigate a **publicly-owned freight rail network** for Victoria, with open access intermodal terminals at key locations across the state including at the Port of Melbourne?

Yes, a core principle of Victorian Socialists is to oppose privatisation. Rail should be brought back into public hands. As a key infrastructure that is necessary for our state, it should be publicly-owned. This would also allow a simplification of access to intermodal terminals and a prioritisation of rail freight over trucks for a more efficient and environmentally friendly freight system.

20. Will you **strengthen enforcement** of road freight time, noise and environmental restrictions including setting stronger penalties and the creation of a new stronger State Environmental Protection Policy?

We will work with stakeholders to strengthen the SEPPs. We are concerned that many truck drivers have been forced to operate as subcontractors instead of employees. They work under pressure from freight companies to complete journeys faster, which leads to unsafe practices. Any punishment of infringements needs to be directed at the large operators rather than subcontractors or employees.

We'd love to be able to provide links to your specific election initiatives and transport, urban planning and housing affordability policies. Feel free to include links to those with your response.

Our policies can be accessed in our Manifesto online at <https://www.victoriansocialists.org.au/manifesto>