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MIDDLEBOROUGH ROAD GRADE SEPARATION FUNDING

Under the State Government's major transport strategy, to be released later this month, traffic congestion in Melbourne's east will be significantly reduced and safety improved with the \$54.3 million grade separation of the Middleborough Road level crossing in Box Hill.

Transport Minister Peter Batchelor and the Member for Mitcham, Tony Robinson, announced today that a new road overpass will remove the current interface with trains at the busy level crossing.

Mr Batchelor said a \$2.2 million feasibility investigation had been undertaken over the past three years involving VicRoads, the Department of Infrastructure, VicTrack, Connex, the Box Hill Public Cemetery, Box Hill High School and the City of Whitehorse.

"The investigation showed that the option to run the railway tracks underneath the road has significantly less impact on local residents and businesses than other options that were considered," Mr Batchelor said.

"The Belgrave Lilydale railway line will be lowered by up to by six metres, and Middleborough Road will pass over the railway line at a slightly raised level.

"Laburnum Station will be reconstructed, safety on the tight bend on Laburnum Street will be improved, and a pedestrian underpass will be built under the Middleborough Road bridge," Mr Batchelor said.

"By separating the road from the railway line, we will significantly improve safety and reduce traffic delays," Mr Batchelor said.

Member for Mitcham, Tony Robinson, said preparatory works would start on the project before the middle of the year with the major works beginning in January, 2007.

"This project is great news for anyone who uses Middleborough Rd and anyone who uses the Belgrave Lilydale train line," Mr Robinson said.

"As well as safety issues, the Middleborough Road level crossing causes delays to road traffic and public transport which pose an economic and social cost to commuters, local residents and businesses."

The works will be undertaken in as short a time-frame as possible, minimising the length of disruption to rail services. The rail line will be shut down from early January, 2007, for a six week period, with train passengers being bussed between Blackburn and Box Hill Train Stations. This provides the least overall impact to the rail network and is safest for rail commuters and construction workers. The alternative was to sporadically interrupt services over an 18 month period and to construct deep excavations within 1m of operating trains.

The Middleborough Road grade separation will:

- Provide free-flowing transport routes in and around Middleborough Road;
- Improve travel times and reliability for eastern suburbs residents and public transport commuters;
- Improve safety;
- Reduce the environmental effects of vehicle emissions; and
- Provide potential for integration of activity centres and commercial development in Box Hill.

"The Government is committed to providing transport solutions both now and into the future to ensure this state's high standard of liveability is maintained for all Victorians, for generations," Mr Batchelor said.

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