

## Media Release – Government urged to fund airport rail in Budget

The TT4e transport alliance welcomes the Premier's and the Minister for Public Transport's announcements of a \$1.4 billion package for rail initiatives for regional Victoria and the long overdue Melbourne Airport Rail. In particular, TT4e sees a fast 15-minute airport rail service from Southern Cross through Sunshine as vital for Victoria's economy and it needs to be in place by 2023. TT4e supports the proposal to commence immediate planning for the service and welcomes the input of key stakeholders – Melbourne Airport and the operators of Southern Cross Station.

TT4e also supports allocation of the newly completed extra lanes on the Tullamarine Freeway to be dedicated for SkyBus' Maxi service to meet the shorter term airport travel demand.

Melbourne Airport is a busy key air transit gateway for Victorian and national transport networks. The Melbourne Airport Master Plan 2013 forecasts passenger numbers to near double to 64 million by 2033. Airport access and egress will be deadlocked. Already widened 6 times, the Tullamarine Freeway is unable to serve that projected increase, even if combined with an enhanced SkyBus Maxi service on dedicated freeway lanes. Rail is an essential component to meet Victoria's tourism and business growth across the international, interstate and intrastate sectors.

TT4E joins the Rail Futures Think Tank in arguing that a fast rail service to Melbourne Airport is essential. State and Federal governments, with or without private enterprise, are urged to accelerate planning for the airport rail link and the Victorian Government must allocate funds for such planning in their 2017/18 budgets.

Rail to Melbourne Airport was planned by Sir Henry Bolte in 1963 before the new airport even opened. The 1990 Melbourne Airport Strategy identified the need for passenger rail. Land was reserved in May 2005 for an airport rail link via Albion and elevated rail was allowed for in the median of the Airport Drive extension which opened mid-2015.

The Rail Futures Institute *InterCity*<sup>i</sup> report proposes a new fast rail service from Southern Cross to Melbourne Airport, with a 15-minute journey time at 10-minute frequencies with a single stop at Sunshine. The superiority of this airport rail route, unlike all prior proposals, is that it provides comprehensive Statewide network connectivity to Melbourne Airport for Metro rail services as well as for all key regional cities through Sunshine or Southern Cross. The proposal would connect the airport with:

- key metropolitan nodes, including national employment and innovation clusters, and
- regional Victorian networks to support regional development and Regional Growth Plans.

The TT4e alliance urges the Victorian Government to recognise the major benefits of the RFI airport rail proposal for the State's economic development and to allocate funds in tomorrow's State budget to commence planning for an Airport to Southern Cross fast rail. With a lead time of 8-10 years, detailed planning must commence immediately for construction of the line from 2021-2025. The Victorian Communities deserve and look for Government leadership for this significant, vital major project.

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*Transforming Transport for Everyone* is a collaboration of the Inner Melbourne Planning Alliance (IMPA), Metropolitan Transport Forum (MTF), Public Transport Users Association (PTUA), Rail Futures Inc. (RFI), Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), Transport for Melbourne (TfM) and the Victorian Transport Action Group (VTAG)

<sup>i</sup> *InterCity: How Regional Rail Can Re-balance Population Growth and Create a "State of Cities" in Victoria*, Rail Futures Institute, August 2016, <http://www.railfutures.org.au>