

# Put South Morang and Mernda on the right track right away, say councils

**MONDAY 1 DECEMBER:** The Metropolitan Transport Forum (MTF) has welcomed the completion of the Clifton Hill rail track duplication months ahead of schedule.

'This is good news,' said MTF Chair, Cr Jackie Fristacky. 'The early completion of the Clifton Hill duplication means that extension of the rail service to South Morang and Mernda can be accelerated.'

The Government's 'Meeting our Transport Challenges' statement allowed for the South Morang rail extension to be completed by 2021. Cr Fristacky said the South Morang and Mernda project should be moved forward to be completed by 2011.

Cr Fristacky highlighted the history and imperatives of the rail service extension from Epping to South Morang and Mernda:

- a rail line ran from Epping to South Morang, Mernda and Whittlesea, until it was closed in 1959
- since then, the South Morang – Mernda – Whittlesea corridor has become one of Melbourne's major growth corridors
- the 1988 'Metplan' stated that electric trains would run to South Morang by 1992 with an extension to Mernda by 2002, and further plans for the railway to return to Whittlesea
- Labor's 1999 election platform, 'Rebuilding the Transport Network – A Better Transport Network for all Victorians', promised to extend the Epping line to South Morang by 2003
- a feasibility study was commissioned by the transport department in 2000
- in 2002, a Whittlesea Strategic Transport Infrastructure Study identified South Morang Rail as a number one priority
- the Government's 2004 'Linking Melbourne: Metropolitan Transport Plan' highlighted planning for the extension to South Morang as a priority
- the 2008/09 state budget allocated \$10 million to planning for the South Morang rail extension
- Westfield plans for a major expansion of the Plenty Valley Activity Centre at South Morang necessitate access by rail.

Cr Fristacky said the State Government must commence work immediately to meet the transport needs of the growing South Morang, Mernda and Whittlesea corridor.

The MTF represents 19 metropolitan councils servicing over 2.5 million people in Melbourne.

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