

Railway Level Crossing Safety

The MAV, with support of the Department of Infrastructure (DoI), has engaged road management experts to assist councils with meeting their obligations under the *Road Management Act 2004*. The consultants will work with councils to implement Safety Interface Agreements (SIAs) for all Victorian railway level crossings, which must be in place by July 2010. In announcing the partnership, Minister for Public Transport Lynne Kosky announced that speed limits will be lowered on approach to 72 level crossings across Victoria to give motorists greater reaction time. Almost all sites will have the speed limit dropped from 100km/h to 80km/h. The Minister also outlined the Government's intention to close some remote crossings but confirmed this will not be done without consulting local government and the community. Tough new penalties will also apply for drivers who commit the following level crossing offences:

- Failing to stop at a level crossing with a stop sign;
- Failing to give way at a level crossing with a give way sign;
- Entering a level crossing when a train is approaching, the boom gate is closing, warning lights are operating;
- When the road beyond the level crossing is blocked.

Traffic fines will also increase from \$177 and three demerit points to \$430 and four demerit points.

Eddington East-West Report

Sir Rod Eddington handed the long-awaited East-West Link Needs Assessment (EWLNA) to the State Government on 2 April. Significant recommendations include a 17km 'metro style' rail tunnel stretching from Footscray to Caulfield which would carry an estimated 40,000 passengers per hour, and an 18km cross city road tunnel with an estimated capacity of 150,000 vehicles per day which would relieve pressure on the West Gate Bridge and provide an alternative crossing over the Maribyrnong River. Other recommendations include a Truck Action Plan for the inner-west to reduce volume of trucks on residential streets, and a number of initiatives aimed at improving the commute for cyclists into and out of the CBD. While the MAV believes the EWLNA has taken a balanced approach to a complex and multifaceted problem, the MAV has concerns about the mooted use of municipal rate levies as a potential source of funding for any large scale projects. Over the coming weeks, the MAV will consult local government to ascertain council views about the proposed solutions to inform representation of the sector in discussions with the State Government. The report is available at www.doi.vic.gov.au.

Public Transport Developments

• 5 x Weekend Daily Ticket

The Department of Infrastructure recently released the 5 x Weekend Daily ticket option available for use on the weekend. The ticket costs \$14.50, or \$2.90 per day for five daily uses, and is available at Premium Stations (staffed from first to last train) and all Metcard retailers. The new Metcard builds on the popularity of the Sunday Saver and Seniors' Sunday Pass which has helped increase Sunday patronage on trains by more than 50% over the past three years.

• New Rail Timetable

The Premier this month announced the biggest overhaul of Melbourne's rail timetable since the City Loop was completed in 1985, introducing more than 200 new weekly train services. The new services are part of a three-step plan to improve reliability and ease congestion in carriages. The Werribee, Sydenham, Pakenham and Cranbourne lines will be the first to benefit from additional services. Among the 200 new services are 45 evening peak services, 10 morning peak services, and 11 daily services across Dandenong, Pakenham, Glen Waverley, Sydenham, Werribee, Frankston and Craigieburn which will carry an additional 8800 passengers every day. New services will begin on Sunday 27 April.

• Re-franchising of Trains and Trams— Call for Local Government Input

The Department of Infrastructure will invite expressions of interest from potential train and tram franchisees to operate Melbourne's public transport system from mid-2009 in the coming months. The re-franchising process provides local government with the opportunity to raise issues regarding the operation of Melbourne's trains and trams for potential inclusion in the new contracts. Such issues may relate to, for example, safety, security or the environment. Please forward all suggestions to Skye Holcombe by 30 April.

For further information on all items, contact Skye Holcombe, 9667 5533, sholcombe@mav.asn.au or go to www.mav.asn.au/transport

• **Melbourne's Bus Service Expanded**

As part of a \$646 million package to boost metropolitan bus services over 10 years, the Department of Infrastructure recently expanded Melbourne's bus network by introducing new routes and extending existing operating hours and days of service. Below is a list of expanded and new services:

- Routes 551 (Heidelberg Station – La Trobe University) and 561 (Reservoir Station – Macleod Station) will run more frequently every weekday. Route 561 until 10pm each weeknight
- Route 471 (Williamstown – Sunshine), 70 extra services a week, running until 9pm seven days
- New route 401 (to Carlton and Parkville via North Melbourne Station), high frequency shuttle running weekdays from 7am-7:30pm every six minutes and every three minutes in peak hours
- Routes 781 (Mount Martha to Frankston via Mornington), 784 (Mornington to Osborne to Mornington) and 785 (Mornington to Mornington East) will run until 9pm seven days
- Route 663 (Lilydale – Belgrave), increasing the frequency of weekday off-peak services between Monbulk, Silvan and Lilydale
- Route 679 (Chirnside Park to Ringwood), increasing the frequency of weekday services to approximately one bus per 30 minutes
- Routes 406, 408, 410, 412 and 476 (Keilor, Keilor East, Sunshine, Footscray, Altona Meadows, Laverton, St Albans, Moonee Ponds, Essendon, Taylors Lakes and Avondale Heights), 158 additional weekly services and extended operating hours until 9pm seven days
- Routes 552, 553 and 567 (Northcote, Preston, Reservoir and Regent), will run more frequently seven days and until 9pm
- The Bendigo bus network has also been increased by 30 per cent with 692 new services and better connectivity with V/Line services now offered.

• **Meeting Our Transport Challenges Transport (MoTC) Legislation Review – Land Use Planning and Transport Integration Working Group**

Liz Johnstone and Skye Holcombe of the MAV have been invited to represent local government in the above working group. The Group aims to identify issues, opportunities and outcomes, particularly from a legislative perspective, relating to land use planning and transport integration. The issues raised by this group will inform the preparation of a technical paper by the review team and will inform the overall development of new public transport legislation in Victoria. To raise issues for these meetings, contact Skye Holcombe.

Safer Bike Paths

Following an inquest into the cycling death of a Nillumbik resident, the State Coroner has recommended the Government provide more funding to councils to upgrade and develop shared pathways. The MAV President has subsequently made representations to Roads Minister, Tim Pallas seeking assistance for councils to improve pathway infrastructure and has advocated the establishment of an inter-governmental task force, particularly in light of a 40 per cent increase in people riding to work. The MAV will continue to advocate for upgrades.

Saferoads 2008 Conference

The Saferoads 2008 Conference to be held from 30 September – 1 October at Hilton on the Park will bring together road safety practitioners, researchers and community representatives with an interest in road safety. Delegates will have the opportunity to share experiences, knowledge and expertise, and investigate future directions for road safety at the local level. The *arrive alive* 2008-2017 strategy will be a key focus and ways to enhance community involvement in the *arrive alive* action plans will be explored. Feedback from councils regarding the last Saferoads conference recommended a more 'local' approach to topics and presentations. Conference organisers (involving the participation of the MAV) have therefore sought to develop a more community-based program for 2008. The organising committee is now seeking abstracts and submissions. For further information, go to www.saferoadsconference.com.

Community Road Safety Grants

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) is offering community groups in Victoria the opportunity to apply for funding for road safety projects under the Community Road Safety Grants Program. The program aims to encourage community involvement in local road safety programs that are consistent with Victoria's road safety strategy, *arrive alive* and provides opportunities for community groups to develop and implement effective road safety projects targeting specific local road safety issues. A total of \$4 million will be committed over a four-year period with two funding rounds per financial year. The second round of funding will close on 2 May. The TAC will consider applications for funding of up to \$20,000. To be eligible, community groups must be not-for-profit and will need to identify the road safety issue in their community and suggest potential solutions. Further information is available at www.tac.vic.gov.au or by contacting Elizabeth Knight, Community Road Safety Grants Officer, 9664 6954, elizabeth_knight@tac.vic.gov.au.