

# Media Release



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## GOVERNMENT “TRAM PLAN” A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

The Victorian Government’s “Tram Plan” released last week is a missed opportunity to pro-actively plan for the future of Melbourne’s tram network according to independent rail advocacy group *The Rail Futures Institute*.

Whilst the Government’s Tram Plan focuses on acquisition of new trams, improvements to tram stops and use of improved technology, it is devoid of any detailed proposals to revitalize and expand the network to help meet the challenges arising from Melbourne’s rapid population growth. This need is now more urgent than ever given the Government’s mooted reforms of the planning system to facilitate increased densification in established areas. The tram network is already struggling to cope with patronage growth, and some hard decisions will also have to be made about prioritizing trams over cars in the re-allocation of the limited available road space.

Melbourne’s 250 route-km tram network (the world’s largest) is key to Melbourne’s famed livability and the envy of other cities around the world. Trams are the “*Jewel in the Crown*” of Melbourne’s public transport system. The tram network carries almost as many passengers annually as the train network despite serving a much smaller geographic area. It is an irreplaceable asset with a current replacement value of over \$55 billion. Outside of Docklands, the network has seen only limited expansion since the 1950s, with many routes terminating at “nowhere in particular.” It now needs major redevelopment to match Melbourne’s current size and projected growth by expanding coverage beyond established and inner suburbs, to serve new activity centres, employment hubs and better connecting with the train and bus networks.

Several short distance extensions of existing tram routes would add greatly in enhancing public transport connectivity. Addition of short missing sections of tram track in Park Street, South Melbourne, Victoria and Arden Streets coupled with a restructure of tram routes within the Hoddle Grid would increase network capacity and offer a range of new tram travel opportunities. The CBD tram network also needs early extension into the Fishermans Bend precinct and west along Spencer Street to serve both North Melbourne and Arden stations.

Tram operations also need attention, with 75 % of the tram network on-street, with low speeds averaging 6 - 16 km/h due to sharing road space with cars. Only 18 % of the tram network has a segregated right-of-way. Trams are hampered by road congestion (adding up to 40% to trip times) and current traffic management policies that prioritize cars over people. This diminishes benefits, increases tram operating costs and results in poor tram fleet utilization. A modern E class tram with a capacity of 210 passengers occupies around 40 metres of road space and has the same passenger capacity as 190 cars each carrying on average just 1.1 persons and occupying over one kilometre of road space.

The Rail Futures *2020 - 2050 Melbourne Rail Plan* (the only comprehensive blueprint for Melbourne’s public transport in the absence of an overall Government Transport Plan), contains detailed recommendations for Melbourne’s Tram network. The RFI Tram Plan includes short and longer distance route extensions and an enhanced CBD tram network largely segregated from other traffic. It would transform the existing largely radial tram network into part of a future grid network of DDA compliant multi-modal public transport services operating to turn up and go frequencies with extended hours of operation, and connecting with the train and bus networks at new enhanced interchanges.

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Rail Futures Institute Inc. is an independent non-partisan group formed to advocate cost effective rail and intermodal solutions for public transport and freight problems based on sound commercial, economic, environmental and social reasoning. Rail Futures members include experienced rail professionals, engineers, urban planners and economists.

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