

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Tuesday, 23 February 2021

DIGGING DEEP ON NORTH EAST LINK THIS AUTUMN

The state's largest ever road project, North East Link, will make significant progress as part of a packed calendar of Autumn transport infrastructure works with the first of three mini-tunnel boring machines (TBMs) arriving on site.

The 40-tonne mini-TBM, which was transported from Queensland to Melbourne, will tunnel up to six-storeys underground to help move the 1.8-kilometre Yarra East Main Sewer in Bulleen out of the way to allow for North East Link.

As works take place, there will be a range of lane and road closures on the Eastern Freeway, Greensborough Road, Bulleen Road and other roads in and around Bulleen throughout autumn. Two water mains in Bulleen and Balwyn North will be moved to make way for big upgrades to the Eastern Freeway as part of the project.

North East Link will connect the M80 to an upgraded Eastern Freeway, slashing travel times by up to 35 minutes, taking trucks off local roads and creating 10,000 jobs.

In a first for Victoria, each mini-TBM will have remote access functions to allow overseas-based technicians to provide technical support for the TBMs during works, while Australia's borders remain closed.

On top of this significant milestone for North East Link, a massive amount of work will intensify during autumn on transport projects across Victoria including the Metro Tunnel, the West Gate Tunnel, the Cranbourne Line Upgrade and more than 20 different level crossing removals.

Cherry Street, Werribee, will be the next level crossing to go on 11 March, when a new road bridge is opened to traffic. Buses will replace trains at times on the Ballarat, Geelong, Werribee, Mernda, Craigieburn, Seymour and Cranbourne lines while we get on with these works.

There will be delays for six weeks on the Monash Freeway as part of the second stage of the \$1.4 billion upgrade with Forster Road closing under the freeway for the safe installation of beams to widen the freeway overpass.

Nightly asphaltting will result in lane closures between Warrigal Road and EastLink as part of a huge maintenance program.

In Epping, the O'Herns Road Upgrade, which will add three new intersections as well as extra lanes to the Hume Freeway, will see the freeway close at the end of March and for two weekends in April and May.

In the south-east, buses will replace trains between Dandenong and Cranbourne for a week in March as part of the huge Cranbourne Line Upgrade which will remove the last four level crossings along the line as well as build a brand new Merinda Park Station.

The Metro Tunnel is set for several breakthroughs, with the main tunnelling works focused on the heart of the CBD. TBMs Joan and Meg will travel from State Library Station to Town Hall Station in the coming months, while TBMs Millie and Alice are travelling the 1.8 kilometres from the Anzac Station box towards Town Hall Station.

Work on the Sunbury Line Upgrade – which will maximise the benefits of the Metro Tunnel – will see buses replace trains between the city and Sunbury over the Easter long weekend, and on May 15-19.

Tram track renewal works will take place along Plenty Road, Preston as well as Spencer Street and La Trobe Streets in the CBD to deliver a smoother ride on Routes 86, 30 and 35.

Upgrades to Victoria's regional passenger rail lines as part of the more than \$4 billion Regional Rail Revival program will see coaches replace trains on sections of the Geelong, Warrnambool, Shepparton and Gippsland.

V/Line's annual maintenance program will focus on the Warrnambool and Geelong lines for 10 days from 26 February, the Ballarat line from 27 April to 7 May and the Bairnsdale line in late May.

As more major events are expected to be rescheduled throughout 2021, extra services will be added to the public transport timetable where possible to ensure passengers can travel safely and keep their distance.

A range of measures are in place across the transport network to keep people safe as we emerge from the pandemic, including adding more than 450 extra train services to the timetable.

For more information about the changes today, for better transport tomorrow visit bigbuild.vic.gov.au

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"The North East Link not only slashes travel times in Melbourne's north, south and east – it is creating thousands of jobs and time when Victoria needs them most."

"Over autumn, our massive infrastructure works continue across the state – from the TBM underground in the city centre to the roundabout at the end of your street, we're getting it done."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Transport Infrastructure Jacinta Allan

"Our first mini-TBM is getting to work as we get on and build Victoria's biggest road project."

"Our \$80 billion road and rail big build is critical to our recovery from the pandemic – delivering the projects we need for the future, supporting thousands of jobs."