

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Thursday, 28 October 2021

LONGER TUNNEL AND A GREEN LIGHT FOR NORTH EAST LINK

The North East Link project will deliver a longer tunnel to Watsonia, a new tree-lined boulevard for Greensborough Road and more than 50 MCGs of new, revived and reconnected parklands, with the major contract now awarded.

The North East Link is the missing link in Melbourne's freeway network – taking thousands of trucks off local roads and slashing travel times. For a tradie in Bundoora, it will open up jobs in Doncaster. A small business in Dandenong can access warehousing in Tullamarine or a kid from Glen Waverley can get to university at La Trobe.

On top of boasting Victoria's longest road tunnels, the North East Link Program will overhaul the Eastern Freeway with six express lanes from Chandler Highway to Middleborough Road.

It will also deliver Melbourne's first dedicated busway, complete the Ring Road in Greensborough and build a North East Trail with more than 34 kilometres of walking and cycling paths – nine more than originally planned.

The North East Link tunnels will be 1.9 kilometres longer than originally planned, reducing disruption during construction and creating more room for parklands and wetlands including a ten-hectare community park along Banyule Creek in Yallambie.

After four years of consultation with the local community, the longer tunnel paves the way for Greensborough Road to be transformed into a tree-lined boulevard, forming a green gateway to Watsonia with new multi-level train station parking and new community spaces.

In Bulleen, a new Yarra Link green bridge near the Eastern Freeway interchange will connect the Koonung Creek Trail to Bulleen Park and a new cultural precinct along the banks of Birrarung (the Yarra River).

Revitalised wetlands will re-establish a landscape of significant importance to the Wurundjeri people and create an exciting new cultural space.

The Spark consortium has signed a \$11.1 billion Public Private Partnership contract, subject to financial close, that locks in a 25-year deal to build, operate and maintain the tunnels, with tolls to go back to the state.

The tunnelling package alone will generate 8,000 jobs, with thousands more jobs for the rest of the North East Link program. As construction begins the project will continue to work closely with the community, with opportunities for locals to comment on local elements of the design for their area when local plans are exhibited from next year.

A Voluntary Purchase Scheme will also be offered to homes most impacted by construction and design with further details to be released as the project progresses.

North East Link will connect the M80 Ring Road to an upgraded Eastern Freeway, providing an efficient connection for up to 135,000 vehicles each day, slashing travel times by up to 35 minutes, taking 15,000 trucks off local roads, and skipping 18 traffic lights on a trip to the airport.

North East Link is jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian governments. Early works are well underway, and the project will be complete in 2028.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"A project the size of North East Link doesn't come around very often. It's been long talked about – and is the largest ever investment into Melbourne's north-east – supporting 10,000 jobs and we're getting on with it."

Media contact: Jamila Fontana 0409 741 279 | Jamila.fontana@minstaff.vic.gov.au

“Projects like these are exactly what our economy needs right now – and deliver faster journeys and more choice for where Victorians want to live, work and spend time with those they love.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Transport Infrastructure Jacinta Allan

“This design released today is the result of extensive community consultation and delivers the project people have asked for - with a longer tunnel, quality design and community and environmental outcomes.”

“Half a million Victorians live within two kilometres of a North East Link interchange. The tunnels are just one part of a massive investment in the north east – this project will change the way people move around Melbourne and deliver the road, bus, walking and cycling upgrades.”