

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Thursday, 14 April 2022

WAVING GOODBYE TO FOUR MORE LEVEL CROSSINGS

Four dangerous and congested level crossings in Preston will be gone for good next month, with trains running on a new elevated rail bridge along the Mernda line in May.

Passengers and road users are asked to plan ahead as construction nears the finish line.

The level crossings at Oakover Road, Bell Street, Cramer Street and Murray Road will be a thing of the past in late May, improving safety and easing congestion for the 82,000 vehicles passing through these intersections each day. Previously, boom gates were down for up to 40 per cent of the morning peak.

These works will also make Bell Street boom gate-free, boosting safety for motorists using one of Melbourne's most notoriously congested roads.

The four level crossings are being removed by building elevated rail, with one side of the track now complete. Hundreds of locally-made concrete segments have been dropped into place, and ballast, rail and concrete sleepers have been installed to form the new rail bridge, which will be used by trains from late May.

Raising the Mernda line over the roads will make room for three MCGs' worth of new open space, including landscaping with more than 700 trees, new playgrounds, and a shared walking and cycling path to connect the new Preston and Bell stations. The open space underneath the elevated rail line will open to the community next year.

To allow crews to remove these four sets of boom gates and get the elevated rail bridge ready for train services, buses will replace trains on sections of the Mernda line from 9pm Tuesday 17 May until last service Sunday 29 May.

When trains return to the line on Monday 30 May, they will use a single section of track between Bell and Preston for around three months, while crews complete the second elevated rail bridge.

Trains will also run express through Preston and Bell stations during this time, with minor impacts to the Hurstbridge line as construction continues to build the new stations.

This means trains can continue running while construction is underway, minimising disruption for passengers and reducing the need for longer rail closures.

During this time, passengers can use a nearby station or take a shuttle bus to and from the closed stations to get them where they need to go. There will also be some changes to the Mernda line timetable, with more information to be provided closer to the time.

Trains will run on both tracks and new modern stations at Preston and Bell will open to passengers in September. Passengers can look forward to better station facilities including a comfortable waiting room at ground level, lift and stairs access, undercover seating areas and improved lighting.

The Andrews Labor Government is getting rid of 85 level crossings by 2025, with 59 already gone for good, to improve safety, reduce congestion and allow for more trains, more often.

Passengers and road users are asked to allow extra time as the construction team works around the clock on the rail line. To find out if you're affected and to plan your journey, visit bigbuild.vic.gov.au

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Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“We’ve smashed our level crossings target – with 59 gone for good – and these four are next, freeing up traffic, delivering more open space and slashing travel times.”

“Whether it’s removing level crossings, delivering the North East Link or upgrading suburban roads – we’re delivering what we promised and creating thousands of jobs along the way.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Transport Infrastructure Jacinta Allan

“Bell Street is one of Melbourne’s most congested level crossing and it’s great to see so much progress on site to get rid of it for good – improving safety, keeping cars moving and freeing up traffic.”

Quote attributable to Member for Northcote Kat Theophanous

“Our community have watched this remarkable rail structure and new stations being built from the ground up – now we’re about to see the boom gates gone and experience the benefits of smoother, safer journeys. I’d like to thank locals for their patience as we get on with these works.”

Quote attributable to Member for Preston Robin Scott

“No longer will the rail line divide two sides of Preston. Whether you’re shopping at Preston Market, going to school or TAFE, or heading to High Street for a meal, we’re making it easier for people to get where they need to go, without being delayed by boom gates.”