



The Hon Catherine King MP
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Local
Government



The Hon Danny Pearson MP
Minister for Transport Infrastructure
Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop

MEDIA RELEASE

GETTING READY FOR TUNNEL BORING ON NORTH EAST LINK

The Albanese and Allan Labor Governments' North East Link is one step closer to slashing travel times and taking trucks off local roads, as segments of the first tunnel boring machine (TBM) to dig the twin road tunnels are lowered into the ground.

Victorian Minister for Transport Infrastructure Danny Pearson and Federal Member for Jagajaga Kate Thwaites today visited the Watsonia site, where two of the largest TBMs in the southern hemisphere will start digging the 6.5-kilometre tunnels in mid-2024.

The first pieces of the machines were lowered into the ground by a 550-tonne gantry crane. When assembled, each 4,000-tonne TBM will be 90 metres long and more than 15 metres wide.

The TBMs will soon work their way south from Watsonia toward Bulleen, while crews begin installing tunnel walls made of almost 44,000 individual concrete segments, manufactured locally in Benalla.

Across the north-east, a significant level of work is underway to prepare for tunnelling. A 200-metre-long TBM launch box in Watsonia has been completed, and work has started on the underground box structures near Lower Plenty Road and Manningham Road where the TBMs will excavate into on their journey south.

From late March, drivers in Bulleen will notice changes to how they use Bulleen Road, Manningham Road and Bridge Street to allow for further works to continue on the Manningham interchange. These changes will stay in place for up to two years to keep traffic moving during construction.

Barriers and worksites are being set up along the Eastern Freeway and M80 Ring Road, so crews can upgrade the freeways that will connect to the North East Link tunnels – cutting travel times by up to 35 minutes.

The North East Link, the M80 Ring Road Completion and the Eastern Freeway Upgrades are expected to open in 2028 and are funded in joint partnership by the Albanese and Allan Labor governments.

Quotes attributable to Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government Minister Catherine King:

“This is a valuable step towards constructing a new motorway between the M80 Ring Road at Greensborough and the Eastern Freeway at Bulleen Road.

“The project will provide Melbourne with a complete orbital road connection for the first time, reducing travel times for both freight and commuter traffic and taking trucks off the local streets in Melbourne’s northern suburbs.”

Quotes attributable to Victorian Transport Infrastructure Minister Danny Pearson:

“This is another significant milestone for North East Link – getting us closer to moving trucks off local roads and slashing travel times across the north-east.

“We’re getting on with assembling TBMs on site so tunnelling can kick off in the coming months – building the longer 6.5-kilometre tunnels the community asked for.”

Quotes attributable to Federal Member for Jagajaga Kate Thwaites:

“Not only will this project be a game-changer for commuters, it’s also providing a welcome jobs and economic boost for the region during construction.

“More than 5,000 workers are already working across North East Link, the Eastern Freeway Upgrade and M80 Ring Road– with an incredible 12,000 jobs to be created over the life of the projects.”

Quote attributable to Member for Ivanhoe Anthony Carbines:

“We are powering ahead with North East Link as we assemble two of the largest TBMs in the southern hemisphere.”

Quote attributable to Member for Bundoora Colin Brooks:

“More than 5,000 workers are on the ground now helping deliver North East Link, which will transform the way people move around Melbourne’s north east.”

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