



MEDIA RELEASE

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VTA urges non-tunnelling options be considered for North East Link

The Victorian Transport Association (VTA), the peak industry association for Victorian and national freight and transport companies, is encouraging the Victorian Government, VicRoads and others tasked with investigating routes for the North East Link (NEL) to consider options that avoid expensive tunnels.

With the Government committed to NEL, and a North East Link Authority being established to co-ordinate the project, the public conversation about NEL will soon pivot to where the road should go.

VTA CEO Peter Anderson said there are pros and cons to the two current options on the table in terms of cost, time and community impacts, but that with or without a tunnel, Melbourne needs the NEL.

“From a freight perspective, the VTA encourages options be considered that do not require tunnelling,” Mr Anderson said.

“Tunnels are expensive to build, prolong construction timelines, and cannot accommodate dangerous goods vehicles, which forces them onto other roads, impacting community amenity.”

Mr Anderson said a variation to the northern option via Eltham could see the road extended further east to Chirnside Park and connect with the Maroondah Highway, which could be converted into a “Maroondah Freeway”, hooking back up with Eastlink at Ringwood and bypassing the Eastlink tunnels.

“While an ‘out there’ idea, it could mitigate the need for expensive tunnels and appeal to the broadest variety of heavy vehicle types, as well as cater for population growth in the outer east,” Mr Anderson said.

“The idea is also indicative of the outside the box thinking that should be applied to the project to get the most time- and cost-effective solution for Victorian motorists. Tunnels or no tunnels, the connection is needed and we are thrilled the government is taking it on.”

Mr Anderson said that the eventual routing will inevitably be a matter for government, and that the VTA looked forward to contributing to future consultation about the project.

“Our job as an industry group is to ensure every option is considered that delivers the best-possible long-term productivity improvements for freight operators, which will inevitably flow through to the broader economy. We look forward to being a part of important future discussions about the North East Link,” he said.

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