

Late trams to go before flow

Trams will soon get a power that has long eluded motorists – the ability to sail through traffic lights when running late.

Trams will be given the green light over cars in a trial of the new technology on the 75 route that runs along Toorak Road and the Burwood Highway. The GPS technology will trigger an early switch of the traffic lights from red to green to allow the late-running trams to proceed through the intersections.

The information from the GPS systems will be sent to a central traffic control centre to change the lights sequence and prioritise the late-running trams. Trams spend about 16 per cent of their time stuck at traffic lights. Twenty-five trams will be fitted with the new technology.

The trial will run between March and May this year.

Roads Minister Jaala Pulford said the move would allow “real-time synchronisation” with lights so that late trams would gain right of way.

“The lights will work more smoothly. We’ll be able to have more people moving around more readily,” she said. “When the tram’s on time, it will just work as normal.”

Ms Pulford said about 75 per cent of tram routes shared with roads.

VicRoads network performance and improvement director Brian Fletcher said the new technology would be “bolted on” to the current automated traffic lights system. There will also be a link to Yarra Trams’ operation centre.

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