

End of the line Call for a change to the quiet suburban terminus

Lobby urges tram extensions to

Adam Carey
Transport Reporter

It's mid-morning in East Malvern, and another route three tram lumbers into the terminus at the small shopping strip at the intersection of Waverley and Darling roads, just as they have for the past 99 years. One passenger alights and three get on board.

Just a kilometre further up the road is East Malvern station on the Glen Waverley railway line, transporting thousands of passengers in and out of the city each day, and two kilometres beyond that is Chadstone, Australia's biggest shopping centre.

The failure of the route three tram to connect to the nearby train line and retail hub – instead fizzling out at a quiet intersection – is a wasted opportunity to open up the range of journeys tram passengers could take, the Public Transport Users Association argues.

In its recent budget submission to the Baillieu government, the volunteer lobby group called for 15 “modest” extensions to Melbourne's tram network that would connect routes with nearby trains, buses and activity centres.

“Where a tram line terminates in the suburbs, it makes sense for it to have a logical ending point which allows people to either

Bike lanes draw women riders

More women than ever were counted riding into the city centre on Tuesday morning.

Bicycle Network Victoria, which counted cyclists at 374 spots in Melbourne over a two-hour period, said the growing number of female cyclists was a sign that Melbourne's network of bike paths was getting safer.

Women made up 32 per cent of riders on Swanston Street, a 22 per cent increase since separated “Copenhagen lanes” were put there in 2007, “clearly showing that women will flock to bike commuting when the routes are made bike friendly”, Bicycle Network Victoria said. Adam Carey

transfer to a train or to get to a popular destination,” association president Tony Morton said.

“Instead of the patronage on that line petering out the closer you get to the terminus until it's practically empty, you would actually get people using the tram to get to the railway station.”

Also on the association's wish-list is a call to complete the 2005 extension of tram route 75 from Vermont South to Knox City – still

the most recent extension to the suburban tram network.

Dr Morton said some of the proposed extensions would require laying a kilometre of new track or less.

However, Ian Dobbs, the chief of Public Transport Victoria, said the biggest priority for Melbourne's tram network was increasing its capacity.

“Fixing capacity constraints on the system is the priority, and route extensions would have little effect there,” Mr Dobbs said.

“The people who can't squeeze onto a tram on St Kilda Road won't thank me because there's a new kilometre of track at the end of the line.”

Mr Dobbs said the city needed more and bigger trams.

The first of 50 new, low-floor trams is due to arrive in late July, more than six months late. The E-class trams can carry up to 210 passengers, more than any at present in the Yarra Trams fleet.

Professor Graham Currie, chair of public transport at Monash University faculty of engineering, said many of the proposed extensions were logical and worth completing but that separating trams and traffic was more urgent.

“The biggest tram problem is still interference with traffic,” he said.



avoid dead-end trips

This train leaving for Rowville... one day

Adam Carey

A railway line to Rowville can be built, but not for at least another decade and not before two other major rail projects are completed, the Baillieu government says.

The first stage of a feasibility study into building the Rowville railway line – first mooted in 1969 – found that the line must wait until the Melbourne Metro tunnel is built under the city centre and the Dandenong corridor has its level crossings removed and gets high-speed signalling.

The line would branch off from Huntingdale station on the Dandenong line, past Monash University and on to Rowville. It would have five stations and a mix of above-ground and tunnelled sections. By 2046, 68,000 people are projected to use the line each day.

But Premier Ted Baillieu said the report by engineering consultants Sinclair Knight Merz made it clear the line could not be built before the Melbourne Metro tunnel and the Dandenong rail capacity project were completed because the existing rail network lacks the capacity to run a frequent train service to Rowville.

Ian Dobbs, the head of Public Transport Victoria, also said the Melbourne Metro tunnel would not be built until at least 2022-23, depending on funding from Infra-

structure Australia, which advises the federal government on major projects.

Tony Morton, president of the Public Transport Users Association, said the study showed that “we need to get cracking” on level crossing removals and signalling upgrades on the Dandenong line. But he rejected the study’s finding that the line could not be built without Melbourne Metro, saying there were already enough tracks running into the city to run 24 trains an hour along the Dandenong corridor.

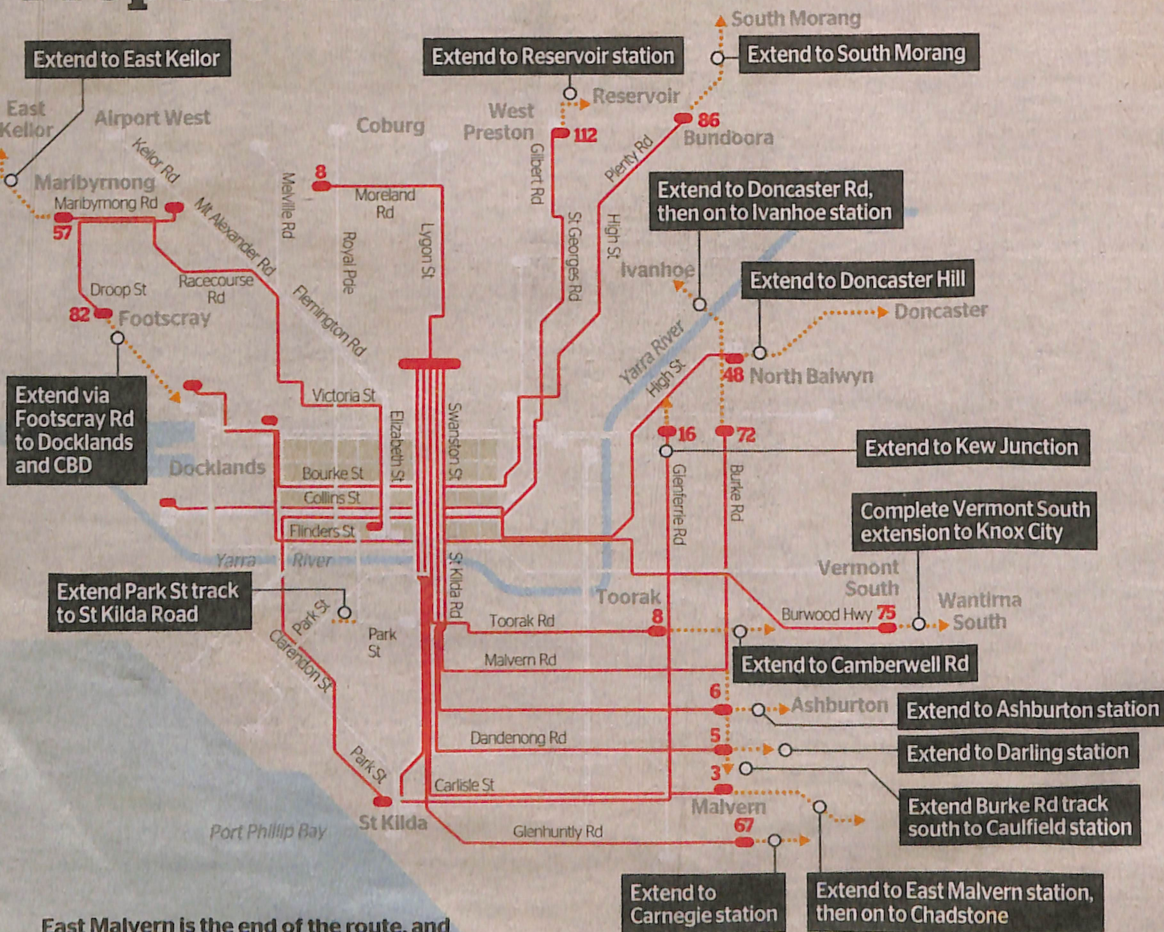
“The idea that you need to provide additional tracks into the city to run 24 trains per hour on the Dandenong line is utter nonsense,” Dr Morton said.

Samantha Dunn, spokeswoman for the Eastern Transport Coalition, a group of seven eastern-suburbs councils, said Rowville could not afford to wait another decade or more for a train.

“There’s been delay after delay and we need to just get cracking on building public transport infrastructure,” Cr Dunn, a Greens councillor with the Shire of Yarra Ranges, said.

Opposition transport spokeswoman Fiona Richardson said the government had “over-promised and under-delivered” on Rowville, with the report showing it was at least another 20 years away.

Proposed tram route extensions



East Malvern is the end of the route, and it's a 15-minute walk to the train station. Photo: Justin McManus