

RACV- Victorian State Government 2013-14 Budget Submission

RACV has undertaken market research with our membership and through this has identified a number of major transport projects and initiatives which we believe should be considered as the State's highest priority needs, with funding allocated to them in the 2013/14 State Budget.

Road Maintenance

RACV is concerned that the 2012 State Budget provided inadequate funding to maintain the State funded road network. This has important safety and economic implications, particularly for Victoria's rural communities. Although a small additional sum was approved in late 2012 for resurfacing and restoration works, the total budget is still totally inadequate. An additional \$160 million per annum is needed. The 2013/14 State Budget must budget for an improvement in the condition of Victoria's roads, including reducing the length that is in a distressed condition, and be sufficient to reseal and rehabilitate about 10% of the network each year. Without this, RACV believes that the State's roads will deteriorate to such a poor condition that the only option will be to totally reconstruct them – something the State will not be able to afford. Costs to the community and industry will increase, from increased road crashes, increased wear on vehicles, increased fuel consumption and damage to goods being transported (e.g. bruised produce).

Redspots

The 2012 RACV Redspot Survey attracted a record number of submissions from our members that identified the top ten locations that frustrated motorists. The top three Redspots are submitted for inclusion in the 2013/14 budget:

- **Murrumbeena Road/Neerim Road, Murrumbeena**, at the level crossing. Grade separation of this level crossing, as part of a program for the Dandenong Rail Corridor, is urgently needed.
- **Chandler Highway, from Heidelberg Road to Princess Street, Alphington/Kew**. A duplicate bridge is needed to remove the bottleneck across the Yarra River.
- **Point Cook Road, Princes Freeway to Dunnings Road, Seabrook**. Continuing development in the Point Cook Road corridor is generating traffic that clearly exceeds the capacity of the existing transport infrastructure. The only viable option that provides additional capacity is to finish constructing the Seabrook 'bypass', namely:
 - duplicating Point Cook Road south off Dunnings Road
 - duplicating Dunnings Road from Point Cook Road to Palmers Road
 - duplicating Palmers Road from Dunnings Road to Geelong Road, with bicycle and bus lanes for more reliable access to the new Williams Landing Railway Station.

This route should be considered as the first phase of better access, whilst longer term initiatives like the development and infrastructure proposed in the neighbouring Werribee Employment Precinct get underway.

RACV acknowledges the State Government's announcement of funding for traffic signals at another Top 10 Redspot, namely Forsyth Road and Old Geelong Road, Hoppers Crossing/Williams Landing in 2012. Details of the remaining Top 10 Redspots are available at www.redspotsurvey.com.au.

Level Crossings Removal Program

The 2012 RACV Redspot Survey found that six of the top 10 locations in Victoria that frustrated drivers were at or near level crossings. The previous Redspot programs have also featured a majority of level crossings. Collisions between trains and vehicles at level crossings are increasing, and this is a key safety and congestion issue for communities across Victoria. RACV acknowledges that the Government has committed to remove three crossings in its first term, plus two on the Regional Rail Link, together with commitments to the planning of a further seven.

Within Melbourne, RACV is calling for an accelerated and ongoing program to remove all level crossings on the electrified train network. In addition to the crossings included in the current program those between Caulfield and Dandenong on the Dandenong Rail Corridor should be the next priority. RACV also believes that the State Government should pursue opportunities for funding from urban development at grade separation locations. In inner and middle suburban locations it could be by selling or leasing 'air' or 'land' rights above and below lowered or elevated tracks, and it could also be by incorporating redeveloped railway stations within commercial developments rather than as standalone facilities. A program along a major corridor may also achieve significant construction efficiencies.

Outer suburban transport infrastructure and services

RACV has identified a backlog of over 150 projects, worth over \$7B that are needed in Melbourne's outer suburban Councils, Geelong and the Surf Coast Shire. These same areas remain the focus for Melbourne's urban growth; even though they are the most poorly supported and serviced areas of the city. RACV documented the extent of the backlog in Growing Pains (www.racvgrowingpains.com.au), which is included with this submission. Many of the infrastructure gaps lie in the suburbs between the newly emerging planned outer suburban communities and the established inner suburbs. It is critical that the State Government budgets for a sustained and increased program of road and public transport infrastructure works, and public transport services, in outer suburban Melbourne from 2013/14.

Major infrastructure projects

RACV seeks a strong financial commitment from the State Government to commence work on several major infrastructure projects of state and national significance that form key connections in Victoria's transport network.

- **East-West Link**

A tunnel from the Eastern Freeway to the Tullamarine Freeway/Citylink, with an extension to the Western Ring Road via the Port, is essential to provide an alternative to the M1 West Gate Freeway-Monash Freeway corridor and relieve inner area congestion. The project will remove 'through' traffic from surface roads in the inner-north, enabling more capacity at intersections to be used for north-south public transport, cycling and walking movements. With the Federal Coalition publicly committed to contributing funding to the tunnel as an important first stage of the longer link, the State Budget should similarly support the project with a significant commitment to commencing the construction tender process in 2013/14.

- **Metro Rail Tunnel**

Construction of a nine-kilometre rail tunnel between South Kensington and South Yarra and the development of five new stations. This will improve train punctuality and increase passenger and freight capacity across the network, enabling the full benefits of other projects like infrastructure and service improvements in the Dandenong Rail Corridor and potentially the Rowville Rail Link in the long term.

- **Missing North-East Link**
The 'missing link' connection between the Metropolitan Ring Road (Greensborough) and the Eastern Freeway/Eastlink is essential to complete the ring road and relieve congestion in the north-eastern suburbs. This link is also of critical importance to the freight sector as it will complete the route from the south east industrial sites; especially around the Dandenong area, to the Hume Freeway and the Western Highway. Alternative alignments for this link must be considered.
- **Melbourne Airport Rail Link**
A dedicated fast rail line between Melbourne Airport and the city is required to improve access to and from the airport
- **Duplication of regional interstate highways**
The duplication of Victoria's major highways must continue – including the Princes Highway East and West, and the Western Highway. These duplication projects should be designed to result in four or five star roads, which have been shown to have better safety records through reduced frequency and severity of crashes. These roads are critical for the intrastate and interstate transport of goods and people. The State Budget should allocate funds to continue construction of their duplication in 2013/14, and planning of further stages.
- **Construction of the Shepparton Bypass**
The Shepparton Bypass is very important, both to provide safer travel for through traffic on the Goulburn Valley Highway and significant relief from through traffic and congestion for the residents in Shepparton. The completion of the Nagambie Bypass now makes this last major project on the Goulburn Valley Highway an extremely high priority project.

Funding for infrastructure and services

RACV recognises that the State Government faces challenges with funding. RACV believes that a long term investment strategy must be developed to address these challenges. This approach would include:

- Securing financial support from the Federal Government, including proposing the establishment of a National Transport Infrastructure Investment Fund;
- Long term borrowing at a state and federal level to fund infrastructure;
- Engagement of the private sector through Public Private Partnerships;
- Value capture arrangements based on development opportunities; and
- Taxation reform, including motoring taxes.