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Media release

From the Minister for Roads and Ports

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NEW BOLTE BRIDGE EXIT RAMP NEXT STEP ON MAJOR M1 UPGRADE

Work is to start on the new Bolte off ramp onto the West Gate Freeway as part of the major \$1.39 billion upgrade of the M1, Roads and Ports Minister Tim Pallas said today.

Mr Pallas said the new off ramp was a major step forward for the project - the biggest ever state funded road upgrade.

"The new ramp has been designed to untangle this section of the freeway and stop any dangerous weaving and merging taking place as traffic from the Bolte Bridge joins the West Gate Freeway," Mr Pallas said.

"To start construction, traffic will need to be switched on to new lanes on the West Gate Freeway. From next week, traffic will be switched to the new widened section of the freeway to allow more room for road-works in the centre median.

"This is the second stage of works on the West Gate Freeway. The first stage was the temporary closure of the Montague Street ramp for the construction of the additional freeway lanes to Kings Way.

"Already we can see significant progress in the Montague Street area as 17 metre-high columns are being put into place to secure the new elevated structure part of the freeway."

Mr Pallas said the new off ramp from the Bolte would be a dedicated lane taking traffic directly to the Burnley Tunnel.

"Building this new ramp and separating the traffic is similar to works successfully undertaken at the Tulla-Calder, which has reduced the dangerous weaving and merging," he said.

Mr Pallas said that with 160,000 vehicles each day, the M1 was the State's busiest road and is getting busier.

"When completed, this upgrade will not only improve safety but also increase the road's efficiency and reliability," Mr Pallas said.

"Some temporary traffic changes have been required during these works to provide a safe environment for workers and freeway users, and these will continue."

Mr Pallas took the opportunity to thank motorists for their patience during construction and urged them to drive safely through all work sites.

"Major works are planned on the M1 in the next few weeks on CityLink and the Monash Freeway so motorists should be aware of detours and delays," he said.

The M1 upgrade project includes design improvements to the Monash, CityLink and West Gate Freeway, an integrated freeway management system and a construction approach that minimises the impact on traffic.

The entire M1 Project is on schedule to be completed in 2010.

Media contact: Jessica Harris 9651 5799 / 0409 188 743 www.vic.gov.au