



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Minister for Roads and Ports

Thursday, 4 December, 2008

WEST GATE BRIDGE STRENGTHENED AND INCREASED TO FIVE LANES

The number of lanes on the West Gate Bridge will be increased from four to five in both directions to address traffic congestion as part of the \$240 million West Gate Bridge strengthening project.

Roads and Ports Minister Tim Pallas said strengthening the West Gate Bridge was one of Melbourne's critical infrastructure projects.

"The West Gate Bridge is the largest bridge in Melbourne and is a vital link between the city and Melbourne's west," Mr Pallas said.

"The West Gate Bridge strengthening project will ensure the long term sustainability of the structure and increase traffic capacity from four to five lanes in each direction."

A team of national and international experts have carried out complex structural analysis and bridge modelling to determine the most appropriate way to strengthen the structure and increase its capacity.

To achieve five lanes in both directions, the outer edges of the bridge will be strengthened allowing the existing shoulders to carry traffic and the lane width will be reconfigured from 3.5m to 3.1m with 0.5m shoulders.

Mr Pallas said this option was the most suitable for a piece of infrastructure which serves a broad range of industrial, commuter and recreational users.

"Reconfiguring the bridge to ten lanes was a more cost effective and safer option than running contra flow which required substantial transition road works and a complicated road management system.

"It will also limit the amount of disruption to motorists and deliver more efficient travel well into the future."

The West Gate Bridge Strengthening Project is part of the Brumby Government's \$1.39 billion upgrade to the M1 corridor.

Mr Pallas said that once complete, the M1 upgrade will reduce congestion, improve reliability along the freeway, increase traffic throughput by 50 per cent and reduce the incidence of casualty crashes by up to 20 per cent.

"The Brumby Government is taking appropriate action to get the most out of our existing transport infrastructure and improve our transport network."

Mr Pallas said that the West Gate Bridge strengthening project allowed for safety upgrades including suicide prevention barriers to be installed.

"Suicide prevention barriers will ensure that safety on the bridge is world-class," Mr Pallas said.

The West Gate Bridge strengthening project is jointly funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments.

Media contact: Fiona Macrae 9651 5799 / 0412 693 182 www.premier.vic.gov.au