

Wednesday, 26 August, 2009

NEW RAMPS TRANSFORM DRIVING ON THE WEST GATE FWY

New ramps on the M1 are scheduled to open to traffic over coming months, starting this weekend, transforming the way motorists travel on the state's busiest traffic corridor.

Roads and Ports Minister Tim Pallas announced today that the first exit-ramp, eastbound onto Montague Street from West Gate Freeway, was expected to open on Sunday.

He said it was a major milestone in the \$1.39 billion Monash-CityLink-West Gate Upgrade, that with further ramp openings in coming months, would alter driving conditions along the freeway.

"The Brumby Labor Government is taking action now to improve Victoria's roads, investing in important projects to reduce congestion, create jobs and deliver a world-class transport network for all Victorians," Mr Pallas said.

"This new ramp provides motorists with direct access to Montague Street from the West Gate Bridge and reduces the need to weave across lanes to get to the Lorimer Street exit-ramp.

"New sections of the freeway will open in stages over the next two months. Several new ramps are nearing completion and we're planning staged openings around early to mid October, subject to weather."

Mr Pallas said the new ramps would separate traffic according to the destination point, including: Bolte Bridge traffic heading to the CityLink tunnels; Kings Way traffic heading to the Bolte Bridge and West Gate Bridge; and CityLink tunnels traffic heading towards the Bolte Bridge.

"Motorists should pay particular attention to the new signs to ensure they make the correct decision regarding their route. As part of the changed traffic conditions drivers will need to look up, pick a lane depending on destination and stick to it," he said.

"This M1 project will alter the way Melburnians drive on freeways – motorists will need to get into the correct lane in advance of their intended exit. By separating lanes we're removing some of the merging making it safer and easier for all."

Mr Pallas also launched an online interactive drive-through simulation today, aimed at helping drivers understand and experience the changes to the M1.

"Drivers can view what it will be like to drive the new sections of road on the M1 website. From the web page users can pick their start and destination points along the freeway and the simulation will allow you to drive the route," Mr Pallas said.

M1 Project Director John Cunningham said the opening of the ramps was an important milestone for the project, but he said there were still substantial works to come.

"During the spring and summer months we will be resurfacing the M1 including in sections all the way from Dandenong to Port Melbourne," Mr Cunningham said.

"While most of the resurfacing will happen at night or on weekends, some works will be required during the daytime non-peak hours in order to avoid the pre-Christmas peaks.

“Motorists should be aware that these resurfacing works will cause further disruptions on the M1, however, when complete this massive upgrade will significantly improve traffic flow and safety along Melbourne’s most critical road link.

“We thank drivers for their patience and ask all motorists to take care when travelling on the corridor during construction – for their own safety and for the safety of workers and road users.”

A map of the traffic changes on the West Gate Freeway and further information is available on project website at www.m1upgrade.com.au or by calling the project hotline on 1300 881 137.