



MEDIA RELEASE

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Include freight-intense bridges in \$2.8 billion network upgrade: VTA

The Victorian Transport Association is urging the Andrews Labor Government to include strengthening and upgrades to bridges on the state's freight network in \$2.8 billion of road maintenance and renewal and flood recovery works contained in the [2023-24 Victorian Budget](#).

Treasurer Tim Pallas delivered his ninth budget yesterday amidst precarious economic circumstances that threaten to undermine economic growth next year. The budget acknowledged the need to start to repay pandemic-related and other state debt, with savings to be realised through several initiatives including the reduction to the public sector workforce, a temporary COVID levy on medium and large businesses, land tax increases on investment properties valued at over \$50,000, and the cancellation or suspension of some infrastructure programs under review by the Commonwealth.

The good news for the freight industry is the retention of investments in productivity-boosting road, rail, and training programs. These include:

- \$694 million upgrading key roads and intersections;
- \$62 million to deliver local road upgrades;
- \$32 million for West Gate Bridge maintenance;
- \$20 million to assist the conversion to low emission heavy vehicles;
- \$15 million to modernise heavy vehicles operating in the inner west; and
- \$5 million to seal gravel and dirt roads in Inner West communities.

Notwithstanding the suspension of some infrastructure projects like Geelong Fast Rail and the Melbourne Airport rail link, the budget has maintained investments in critical projects like North East Link, which the VTA has long advocated for. The budget has allocated \$7.3 billion to keep delivering this and other Big Build transport projects.

The budget also includes several economic reforms that will help offset the impact of the temporary levy medium and large business will be required to pay, including increasing the payroll tax-free threshold to \$900,000, transitioning upfront stamp duty on commercial and industrial properties to an annual property tax, and abolishing business insurance duties.

VTA CEO Peter Anderson said:

“As an industry, we are used to paying higher fees and charges, but that won't make this budget any easier or more palatable for some operators. Inflationary and interest rate pressures have not helped to contain increases in raw material, fuel, labour, and other costs. However, it's important operators resist any temptation to absorb these higher charges, and instead pass them on through the supply chain to freight customers and consumers in full.

“The transport industry has been resilient and has maintained exceptional service levels to customers and consumers during some of the most confronting circumstances for several generations. I thank operators for maintaining and improving such high standards set in the face of such adversity.”

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For further information please contact Brian O'Neil on 0411 055 284