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MEDIA RELEASE

DONCASTER RAIL ONE STEP CLOSER

Manningham Council has welcomed the much awaited commencement of the Doncaster rail feasibility study, believing this is the best chance there has ever been to get a firm commitment from the State Government to extend rail services into the City.

Manningham is the only municipality in Melbourne without either train or tram services, leaving the community to rely solely on a road-based bus system in the form of public transport and the lack of public transport options has been the local community's main and growing concern for many years.

The \$6.5 million feasibility study, confirmed earlier this year, will investigate the social, economic, environmental and technical scope of extending rail services into Manningham.

Manningham Mayor, Cr Geoff Gough, said this is the first major step in realising a long held dream of residents in Manningham and neighbouring municipalities.

“Manningham Council has been advocating for rail to the municipality for many years. In fact, the quest for rail to Doncaster goes back decades, so it is exciting to see the feasibility study actually getting underway. I believe this is the greatest opportunity there has ever been to see a rail service into Manningham becoming a reality.”

“The community demand for public transport has been increasing and it continues to be the number one issue raised in Council's annual community satisfaction surveys.”

“Initial indications from the Department of Transport are that there will be several opportunities for the community to get involved to make their views heard.”

“I urge each and every member of the Manningham community, whether you live here, work here or just use some of the many wonderful parks and facilities here, to make your views, needs and frustrations known to the State Government's consultants undertaking the feasibility study.”

Manningham Council, Chief Executive, Lydia Wilson, said Manningham residents have the highest rate of private vehicle use in metropolitan Melbourne.

“Despite the recent implementation of the Doncaster Area Rapid Transport (DART) system, which increased bus services throughout the area, the current transport system remains inadequate.”

“Council will continue to advocate on behalf of the community on this important issue throughout this process and has asked the Department of Transport to actively engage with Council as a key stakeholder throughout the feasibility study,” she said.

Cr David Ellis, Chairman of the Transport Advisory Committee and Council’s representative on the Eastern Transport Coalition said Manningham has long been the poor relation in Melbourne’s public transport system.

“We need an alternative to road-based travel to reduce road congestion and free up parking space. We also need to prepare for a future of high energy costs when car travel will be the exception, not the rule.”

“The extension of rail services into Manningham will create considerable benefits by addressing the community’s heavy reliance on private transport modes; supporting State Government initiatives to manage Melbourne’s and Manningham’s growth; facilitating economic development and the creation of jobs closer to home; and reducing the dependence on oil based fuels.

“The introduction of rail into Manningham will be a more sustainable mode of transport that will help reduce the environmental and health costs associated with vehicle dependency. Add to that the level of development in the area, supported by State Government policy, and it is not difficult to see why rail for Manningham is urgently needed,” he said.