



## Improving bus networks

### Merri-bek

#### **Our ask:**

Prioritise the delivery of the Bus Reform project in Melbourne's North specifically:

- More frequent and improved bus services across Merri-bek, particularly through east-west connections
- More weeknight and Sunday services on buses in Merri-bek

Merri-bek residents are renowned for embracing sustainable transport options, including, walking, cycling and public transport; research indicates 83 per cent feel it is important to work towards a future where people use more sustainable transport and 66 per cent of residents claim they are likely to increase their use of sustainable transport in the future.<sup>3</sup>

Yet transport services that fail to meet community needs continue to be a barrier to higher public transport use, particularly in the north of Merri-bek.

A 2023 study into Merri-bek transport found that poor reliability of some forms of public transport, particularly buses, and difficulty travelling east to west or west to east via public transport are major barriers to people using more sustainable modes of transport.<sup>4</sup> The most frequently reported reasons why participants are currently unable to use a bus more often are that it takes too long and it is not reliable or regular.<sup>5</sup>

The issues around our bus network play out across metropolitan Melbourne, where buses on average arrive every 40 minutes on a typical weekday, extending out to 50 minutes on Sundays. And without bus reform, 84 per cent of bus routes will get slower by 2036, limiting Melburnians access to jobs, education and services.<sup>6</sup>

Infrastructure Victoria's research shows that there are immediate ways to make buses more attractive, like fast and frequent services and operating for extended hours of the day.

Higher frequency services provide estimated benefits of around \$1.20 for every dollar invested and optimising the existing bus network through fast and direct routes with competitive travel times can be achieved for no or very little additional spend.

Extending operating hours to match passenger demand and improving timetable integration to better connect buses to other public transport services like trains can increase passenger numbers. Previous bus reform in Melbourne shows that expanding operating hours can grow patronage by around 10 per cent.<sup>7</sup>

In September 2022, the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) conducted community consultation in Melbourne's northern suburbs to understand the community's aspirations for its local bus network as part of its Bus Network Reform Pilots.

Over 1600 people that live, work or play in Merri-bek, and other surrounding suburbs such as Preston, Thornbury, Northcote, Broadmeadows, Coolaroo and Campbellfield, took part in the survey. They told DTP that they want frequent and reliable buses that travel the most direct route for a faster journey.

In 2026, residents are still waiting for the delivery of the bus reform project in Melbourne's north; the Victorian Government should deliver the Bus Reform project now.