

# BOX HILL TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE UPGRADE

## BACKGROUND

- Box Hill is one of nine Metropolitan Activity Centres (MACs), designated by the Victorian State Government and is the most significant centre in the eastern region of metropolitan Melbourne for jobs, services, infrastructure and housing.
- A significant amount of strategic planning for the Box Hill MAC has been completed. The Box Hill Structure Plan contains the shared vision of Council, Government, businesses and the community for the future of Box Hill and provides valuable guidance to advance this vision. There is a long history of planning for Box Hill and many past successes as a result.
- Further strategic work has been undertaken by various levels of Government for Box Hill regarding transport, land economics and community infrastructure. Council has actively participated in this work and business case planning with the expectation that funding would be forthcoming. To date there has been no funding committed by State Government to implement the strategic work.
- Whitehorse Council continues to invest substantial funds in Box Hill. In recent years Council has invested over \$50 Million in public works projects to improve Box Hill, including the redevelopment of the Aqualink Box Hill facility, major upgrades to the Box Hill Gardens, urban realm improvements and place making initiatives.
- **Box Hill First Group:** In 2014 Council established a group of major Box Hill stakeholders around a united objective - revitalisation of the Box Hill town centre and transport interchange. The group includes Vicinity (the shopping centre owner), Box Hill Institute, Deakin University, Box Hill Hospital, Epworth Eastern Hospital, ATO, transport operators and representatives from various government agencies. The Box Hill First group has met regularly since 2014 to discuss the importance of Box Hill to their organizations and explore opportunities for shared outcomes and resolve existing barriers.
- The Box Hill First Group appointed a leading transport infrastructure consultancy to prepare a report that served as a preliminary business case for Box Hill Interchange investment. The Hale Consulting 2015 report outlines the significant economic benefits associated with a more effective transport interchange in Box Hill (**these are highlighted in bold with an \***). There are a number of other reports like the Hale report that outline the importance of an upgraded Box Hill Transport Interchange.
- **Box Hill Interchange Ministerial Advisory Group:** In June 2015 State Government established a Ministerial Advisory Group to create a clear direction for the Box Hill Interchange, investigating potential interchange upgrades, as well as commercial development and job creation opportunities.
- In August 2017 the **Box Hill Transit Interchange Steering Committee** was announced to build on the work of the Ministerial Advisory Group developing a business case for the project.
- Council has continued to seek a commitment from Government to address issues which are well documented and deliver on much needed public works and government investment. No substantive commitments have been made and the approaching 2018 election is an opportunity to raise the upgrade of the Box Hill Transport Interchange again.

## KEY ISSUES

- Growth in Box Hill is progressing at a far greater rate than the improvements in major public infrastructure required to support it.
  - In recent years significant mixed used development has occurred e.g. Whitehorse Towers - two towers of 36 and 26 storeys, including over 500

apartments and the Chen Hotel, a 20 storey office building for the ATO and a \$457 Million redevelopment of the Box Hill Hospital as well as new retail, cafes and restaurants.

- Numerous residential apartment buildings and student accommodation have been developed. Some larger mixed use development work now underway includes 12-14 Nelson Road (20 storeys), 545 Station street (36 storeys).
  - There are a number significant developments being actively considered or being confirmed within the Box Hill MAC including; a 14 storey Epworth Hospital development, 845 Whitehorse Road (37 Storeys), as well as several 30 storey mixed use developments in the Whitehorse Road / Prospect Street area.
  - Vicinity Centres are investigating a large scale redevelopment of their site surrounding the public transport interchange. Some clarification of their intentions is needed to determine the optimal outcome of a Box Hill Interchange upgrade.
- The importance and success of Box Hill should not be underestimated. Development interest remains strong and retail/commercial vacancy rates are low. Box Hill attracts and supports 30,000 daily workers as well as visitors from the broader region, has a host of regionally significant health, education and community services, brings together three modes of public transport and has formed a niche for availability of fresh food, specialty Asian produce and cuisine. **Over the next 12 years \$4.2 Billion of identifiable property and institutional investment prospects are planned in the Box Hill MAC.\***
  - The Box Hill Transport Interchange is one of Melbourne's busiest public transport interchanges, yet this ageing and inadequate facility prevents Box Hill MAC from becoming a world class activity centre and demonstration of sustainable urban development. There has been significant local media campaigns in regard to the poor performing transport network in Box Hill, there has also been an marked increase in discussion and complaint from the community. **Delay in improvements may place a wide array of developmental opportunities and job opportunities at risk. Over \$3 Billion of investment is contingent on interchange improvement.\***
  - Transport interchanges play a crucial role in expanding the base for employers to create jobs Government funding, investment and action is required to support the current and future growth of Box Hill and realise Box Hill's full potential in supporting Melbourne's growth. **An additional 4,600 ongoing jobs could be created in Box Hill through an improved transport interchange.\***
  - Government investment in improved transport infrastructure, will have wider benefits for the increasing number of local residents, businesses, workers, students, visitors and commuters as well as less tangible benefits for the wider community accessing services in Box Hill by enabling comfortable, safe, rapid and efficient journeys, it is suggested that "the first easy commute creates a lifelong dedicated commuter."

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Council seek a commitment from groups contesting the 2018 election to an upgrade of the Box Hill Transport Interchange.