

Summary Report on the MTF Transport Forum Box Hill

Wednesday 2 September, 6.30 – 8.00 pm, Whitehorse Room, Box Hill Town Hall

Attendance: 105 +

Chair: Professor Graham Currie

Speakers:

Paul Hamer MLA, Labor;

Aaron Qin, Greens;

and Sally Houguet, Liberals.

Based on the transcript of the Metropolitan Transport Forum, here is a summary of the messages from each of the three key speakers, followed by the questions asked by members of the public.

Summaries of Key Speakers

Aaron Quinn

(Greens Candidate for Box Hill)

* Core Principle: Transport policy should be about giving people real choices (walking, cycling, catching frequent public transport, or driving with less congestion).

* Cycling Infrastructure: Strongly advocates for completing the Box Hill to Hawthorn Cycling Corridor and finding a safe north-to-south connection around Nelson Road. He believes 5% of the state's transport budget should be dedicated to building safe cycling networks.

* Buses and Public Transport: Campaigns for free and frequent public transport. He emphasizes that making transit free is not enough if it is not frequent and well-coordinated. This policy is independently costed, with revenue proposed to come from taxing highly profitable major corporations, big banks, and the gambling industry.

* Suburban Rail Loop (SRL): Supports the orbital rail connection but demands transparency, proper screening, early delivery of community infrastructure, and meaningful community involvement rather than giving the government a "blank check".

* Closing Message: Transport is ultimately about accessibility for vulnerable groups, such as older residents getting to medical appointments, students traveling safely, and workers getting home without long delays.

Paul Hamer

(Labor MLA for Box Hill & Minister for Roads and Road Safety)

* Core Principle: Transport is a means to an end—getting people to work, education, health services, and home safely through a balanced mix of roads, public transport, and cycling networks.

- * Road Investment: Highlights a \$352 million "road blitz" to fix existing roads and promises a complete system revamp to increase transparency, standards, and accountability in road management if re-elected.
- * Public Transport Improvements: Points to Labor's record of upgrading local bus frequencies (such as routes 201, 903, 767, 733, and 766). He also highlights funded budget commitments to increase evening train frequencies on the Belgrave/Lilydale line to every 20 minutes beyond Ringwood (resulting in a 10-minute frequency between the city and Ringwood) starting next year.
- * Suburban Rail Loop (SRL): Strongly supports the SRL as a transformational project for the Eastern suburbs to support Box Hill's growth. He notes that the project is delivering critical community open spaces, such as a new linear park on Whitehorse Road.
- * Closing Message: He has a strong record of advocating for the local community since 2018, successfully protecting special landscape overlays in Blackburn and delivering major level crossing removals.

Sally Huggett

(Liberal Candidate for Box Hill)

- * Core Principle: There needs to be a change in government to address project mismanagement, restore community consultation, and build a better-integrated transport system.
- * Professional Background: Emphasizes her 15+ years of experience as an IT/technology engineer working in the transport and logistics industry, giving her a deep understanding of connected transport networks.
- * Project Management and Cost Control: Criticizes the current government for massive budget overruns, citing \$15 billion lost to waste and corruption on major builds like the Northeast Link. She calls for a Royal Commission to investigate where the money has gone and advocates for pausing and reviewing SRL contracts to ensure financial transparency.
- * Community Consultation: Argues that the current government has failed to listen to locals during major builds. She commits to returning planning authority back to local councils and promises to deliver parkland at the Box Hill Brick Works in response to a 10,000-signature community petition.
- * Closing Message: Urges voters to choose a new direction in November to stop rising debt, fix pothole-ridden roads, and restore basic service delivery.

Questions from the Public

1. Hena (Independent Candidate): Will each candidate commit to a funded timetable for more frequent/better-connected buses and the delivery of the Box Hill to Hawthorn strategic cycling corridor? What would be completed by the end of their first term?
2. Abraham Sabelo Glo: How does the Liberal Party/Sally Huggett intend to change the ongoing issue of projects coming in late and over budget, which has historically affected both major political parties?
3. Chris Davis: What will Sally Huggett/the Liberal Party definitively do regarding the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) after November, especially if tunneling has already commenced?
4. Audience Member (Monash University Worker): What are the candidates' policies for making bus trips competitive with driving, given that current buses get stuck in the same traffic as cars?
5. Amanda (Former Whitehorse City Councillor): When will the government deliver a specific date for the promised 20-minute evening service on the Belgrave and Lilydale lines?
6. Audience Member (Min): Why is there still no direct bus connection from Box Hill to the Glen Waverley Centre, which seems like a low-cost solution compared to multi-billion dollar projects?
7. Patty Campbell (Boroondara Bicycle User Group): Will each candidate commit to allocating 5% of the annual transport budget (excluding major projects) to active transport, including walking and cycling?
8. Peter Parker: Will the candidates commit to extending the 10-minute evening train service frequency to Sunday mornings and weekend services on the Ringwood corridor?
9. Audience Member: Will the candidates commit to improving major road safety standards, specifically by linking and retrofitting service lanes to protect cyclists and pedestrians?
10. Audience Member (Former Manningham/Current Whitehorse Resident): What are the candidates' thoughts on progressing the upcoming SRL tunneling to continue from Box Hill to Doncaster?
11. Wendy: What are the plans for improving evening and weekend services on the 302 and 304 bus routes along Belmore Road?
12. Irene: Can the state government do anything to address the safety hazards and road damage (potholes) caused by increasingly large, heavy private vehicles (like 3-ton Silverados) sharing roads with cyclists?

13. Finn: Why did the Labor government make the decision to cut costs/services on the SRL (which he feels makes the project worse), and what is the Greens' position on these savings?

14. Michael (Box Hill Hospital Representative): Where will parking be located for the estimated 1,300 cars a day taking patients to Box Hill Hospital if Nelson Road is converted to cycle lanes, and who will pay for it?

15. Kevin Earl: How are the candidates prioritizing the many local infrastructure items promised over the last 10 years (such as Nelson Road parking and the unused bridge across Whitehorse Road)?

16. Audience Member: What impact would pausing the SRL project have on existing contracts, contractors, and workers, and would it increase sovereign risk?

17. Philip: Is overturning local council planning authority in favor of the SRL in the spirit of the Victorian Constitution, or is it challengeable in law?

18. Ian Huntley: Can bus interchanges be installed at Springvale Road, Blackburn Road, Elgar Road, and Burke Road on the Eastern Freeway as part of the Northeast Link project?

19. Audience Member (Burwood Resident): How will the parties support the rollout of quieter electric buses and charging facilities in the electorate?

20. Audience Member: Will the candidates commit to upgrading "smart buses" (like routes 903 and 703) to meet the minimum 20-minute weekend standards of newer growth-area bus routes, rather than leaving them at 30-minute frequencies?

21. Audience Member: How will residents living south of Doncaster Road benefit from the new Eastern Freeway busway, given that current connections (like route 284) are inefficient and routes 302/304 take an hour to reach the city?

22. Audience Member: Will the candidates commit to prioritizing active transport projects within activity centers, specifically citing the long-delayed Thurston Street Bridge crossing?