

Summary Report on the MTF Transport Forum

Wednesday 5 July 2026 at Merlynston Hall, Coburg North.

60+ people

Video: https://youtu.be/s1W0_TlfQFc

Chair: Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor of Merri-bek

Speakers: Anthony Cianflone ALP MLA Pascoe Vale

Angelica Panopoulos, Greens candidate for Pascoe Vale

Yasemin Shamsili, Vic Socialist candidate for Pascoe Vale

The MTF Transport Forum, hosted by the Merri-bek City Council and chaired by Mayor Councillor Nata Boot, brought together local candidates to discuss the future of transport in the Pascoe Vale electorate. The discussion highlighted contrasting political priorities, infrastructure demands, and differing approaches to public versus private management of the transport network.

Yasemin Shamsili (Victorian Socialists)

Yasemin Shamsili opened by emphasizing that Melbourne's rapid growth, particularly in Coburg, requires massive statewide investment. However, she argued that the current model prioritizes private profit over public need. Shamsili advocated for reversing decades of privatization, establishing a \$50 billion fund to bring services back into public hands, and canceling public-private partnerships. She proposed taking over the Metro train contract when it expires in 2027 to save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. Shamsili also criticized the government's financial backing of private corporations like Transurban, pointing to toll road monopolies and cost blowouts on the Westgate Tunnel project as misallocated resources that should instead fund active transport, bus expansions, and accessible tram stops.

Angelica Panopoulos (Greens)

Angelica Panopoulos focused on the need for systemic political change, arguing that decades of Labor representation in the seat had left the community with undelivered promises, such as an unduplicated Upfield line and a lack of accessible tram stops on Sydney Road. She highlighted that transport is set to become the largest source of emissions by 2030, making clean, cheap transport options a necessity. Panopoulos advocated for free and frequent public transport, cheaper electric vehicles, accessible tram stops, and safe, separated bike lanes. She emphasized that achieving these goals requires political will and a departure from "politics as usual."

Anthony Cianflone (Labor MP for Pascoe Vale)

Anthony Cianflone defended the Victorian Labor Government's record, pointing to significant investments made since 2014. He highlighted the delivery of the Metro

Tunnel as a critical step to unlocking capacity on the Upfield and Craigieburn lines. Cianflone detailed recent service uplifts, including transitioning to average 20-minute services on weekends and weeknights, removing level crossings, and upgrading local bus routes (such as the 526, 542, 561, 508, and 503). He also noted that \$10 million in joint state and federal funding has been allocated to a business case for the Northern Rail Corridor to plan for future track duplication, electrification, and signaling upgrades.

Questions from the Public

During the Q&A session, local residents and representatives raised the following questions and concerns:

1. Jacob Andrewartha (Socialist Alliance): Why is the state Labor government not offering more ambitious public transport fare initiatives, such as Queensland's \$0.50 fares, following the temporary free public transport period earlier this year?
2. Nick McLellan (Brunswick Residents Network): Regarding Sydney Road, why is further consultation needed when extensive work has already been done, when will this consultation occur, and how can it proceed effectively without addressing the new activity center planning?
3. Jesse (Merri-bek Bicycle User Group): Do the candidates support allocating at least 5% of the state transport budget (approximately \$50 million annually) to Strategic Cycling Corridors?
4. Andrea Bunting (Walk on Merri-bek/ Climate Action Merri-bek): Why have multiple promised safety and service improvements—such as eliminating 40-minute Upfield line gaps, Nicholson Street safety infrastructure, and speed limit reductions on Melville and Moreland Roads—not yet been delivered?
5. Emilio Savla (Local Resident): Why has the installation of shelters at the front of train boarding areas on the Upfield line been delayed, leaving wheelchair users and others with disabilities exposed to the weather?
6. Fran (Local Resident): What will the candidates do to ensure that the \$1.3 million allocated in the 2024-25 state budget for road safety infrastructure along Nicholson Street is delivered without further delay?
7. Helen (Local Resident): How can creative thinking be used to draw transport infrastructure attention and funding further north to communities like Fawkner and Coburg North, rather than just Brunswick and Coburg?
8. Nancy (Local Resident): Will the candidates push for a standalone ministerial portfolio for active transport (walking and cycling)?

9. Helen K. (Local Resident): What strategic action will candidates take to make arterial roads safer and more accessible for vulnerable road users, including children on e-bikes, tram passengers, and people with disabilities?

10. Kate Hall (SWARM - Safer Walking and Riding for Murray Road): Do the candidates support reverting Murray Road to two lanes, adding a protected bike lane, and implementing an all-day speed limit reduction?

11. Jane (Upgrade Upfield Train Line): What will candidates do to make the duplication of the Upfield line by 2030 a part of their party's election platform, given past delays and shelved promises like the Gowrie turnback?

12. Yianni (Local Resident): Why has the state government consistently subsidized private transport corporations that delay maintenance and underpay workers, rather than taking on these private interests?

13. Councillor Sue Bolton (Merri-bek Council): Will the candidates guarantee that they will do everything possible to ensure accessible tram stops are built before the Upfield train line closes for level crossing removals?