

Summary Report on the MTF Transport Forum Port Phillip
Monday 14 September, St Kilda Town Hall

Attendance: 90 +

Video: <https://youtu.be/4Chxf6f-HVA>

Chair: Mayor Cr Alex Makin

Speakers:

Nina Taylor, ALP MLA for Albert Park

Katherine Copsey, MLC for Southern Metropolitan

David Southwick, MLA for Caulfield.

Based on the provided transcript of the Metropolitan Transport Forum, here is a summary of the main speakers followed by a list of the questions asked by the audience.

Main Speakers

Catherine Copsey (The Greens)

Catherine Copsey, the Greens spokesperson for public transport, active transport, and roads, focused her presentation on accessibility, affordability, and dedicated funding for active transport.

* **Accessibility:** Copsey highlighted the critical need to improve the accessibility of Victoria's public transport network, particularly the tram system, noting that the state has passed its legislative deadline to meet Disability Discrimination Act requirements. She proposed an initial \$225 million investment to build accessible tram stops.

* **Fares and Services:** She advocated for free and frequent public transport across Victoria. She proposed increasing train and tram service frequencies to every 10 minutes across most of the network to create a reliable "turn up and go" system.

* **Bus Reform:** Copsey expressed strong support for the community-led "Better Buses" campaign. She proposed a \$270 million investment to progressively reform bus networks into fast, frequent grids, starting with three regions over three years.

* **Active Transport:** She endorsed the "Gimme Five" campaign, which calls for 5% of the state's transport budget (outside of major projects) to be allocated to active transport (walking and cycling infrastructure). She also advocated for state-level coordination of micro-mobility (like e-bikes) rather than leaving it to individual councils.

* **Funding and Planning:** To fund these initiatives, the Greens propose taxing banks and large gambling corporations. Copsey also emphasized the need for an integrated transport plan for Victoria and stronger, independent planning guided by transport experts and Infrastructure Victoria.

David Southwick (Liberal Party)

David Southwick, the Liberal member for Caulfield and Shadow Minister for Planning, focused his presentation on equitable statewide planning, fiscal responsibility, and local community consultation.

- * **Statewide Equity and Planning:** Southwick argued that transport planning must look across the entire state, pointing out that fast-growing metropolitan outer suburbs (like Wyndham Vale and Melton) still rely on diesel trains and suffer from long peak-hour wait times.

- * **Independent Oversight:** He strongly supported utilizing Infrastructure Victoria as an independent umpire to remove political bias from infrastructure decisions. He criticized the current government's plan to scrap the independent body.

- * **Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) vs. Local Projects:** Southwick heavily criticized the Suburban Rail Loop, calling it an poorly planned election promise that consumes too much of the state's budget. The Liberal policy is to pause, review, and redirect those funds into local, accessible, and affordable transport options, such as Metro 2 and transport connections for Fisherman's Bend.

- * **Fisherman's Bend:** He highlighted the lack of a funded, deliverable transport plan (beyond substandard bus services) for Fisherman's Bend as a major deficiency, promising to prioritize transport options for the area under a Liberal government.

- * **Safety and Services:** He committed to delivering 200 Protective Services Officers (PSOs) to train stations to ensure safe travel. He also supported ongoing reviews of bus and tram routes to ensure they are responsive to changing community needs.

- * **Fiscal Responsibility:** Southwick emphasized that a Liberal government would focus on managing projects properly the first time, ensuring business cases are established, and maintaining budget transparency rather than over-promising funds the state does not have.

Nina Taylor (Australian Labor Party)

Nina Taylor, the Labor member for Albert Park, presented the government's vision of providing Victorians with genuine choices for how they move around, highlighting the Labor government's record of major project delivery and ongoing investments.

- * **Network Investment and Major Projects:** Taylor pointed to the success of the Metro Tunnel, noting it has added 1,200 extra services per week since February. She defended these large-scale, "city-shaping" projects as essential for connecting workers to major employment, hospital, and activity centers across the state.

- * **Active Transport:** She highlighted that the government has delivered approximately 410 kilometers of new and upgraded walking and riding paths over the past decade,

pointing to the St Kilda Road bike lanes as a prime example. She referenced the *Victorian Active Transport Plan 2026*, which focuses on building connected networks rather than isolated infrastructure.

* Tram Network and Accessibility: Taylor acknowledged the challenges of modernizing Melbourne's century-old tram network. She highlighted ongoing investments in substation upgrades, low-floor trams, and accessible stops. She announced that the next tranche of priority accessible tram stop upgrades would include Route 12 to support Next Generation (G-Class) trams.

* Bus Services: She noted that the government has added almost 1,500 additional weekly services to the Fisherman's Bend network since 2022, including service uplifts on routes 235, 237, 236, and the 606. She stated that these improvements are guided by the statewide bus plan to refine routes to meet modern neighborhood needs.

* Cost of Living Measures: Taylor highlighted existing transport concessions, including permanent half-price fares for under-18s for the rest of the year, and free weekend travel for seniors, carers, and disability support pensioners.

Questions from the Audience

1. Endorsement of the "Gimme Five" Campaign:

Asked by Alison McCormack (Resident of St Kilda and CEO of Bicycle Network):* Would the candidates endorse the "Gimme Five" campaign, which asks for 5% of the state transport budget (outside of major projects) to be allocated as a recurrent active travel budget line to deliver strategic cycling corridors?

2. Service Improvements for Bus Route 606:

Asked by Jenny Roper (Resident of St Kilda):* Will there be more buses or services added specifically to the 606 bus route, and if so, when will these additional services actually commence?

3. Safe Cycling and Pedestrian Access to the Town Hall:

Asked by Catherine:* Will the panel support a safe cycling connection from the St Kilda Town Hall building to the St Kilda Road bike lanes, and what can be done to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility at the tram stop directly in front of the building?

4. Filling the "Missing Link" in the Park Street Tram Network:

Asked by Michael Pearson (Resident of South Melbourne):* What are the parties' plans regarding filling in the recommended 500-meter "missing link" in the tram network on Park Street, South Melbourne, to connect with the Anzac station?

5. Pedestrian Crossing at Cheltenham Station / Suburban Rail Loop:

Asked by the Mayor of Bayside (Councillor Debbie Taylor-Haynes):* Following the government's announcement to remove the pedestrian bridge from Cheltenham station to Southland (connecting to the Frankston line) as a "bell and whistle," what is proposed to help commuters cross this major arterial road safely?

6. Funding Transport Improvements in a Debt-Ridden State:

Asked by Tim Norman (Resident of Port Melbourne):* Given that the state is heavily in debt, if more money is put into transport, where will each of the parties take those funds from?

7. Reducing Car Dependence for School and Sports Commutes:

Asked by Jose (Resident of Albert Park):* What are the plans to reduce the number of people driving their kids to school, sports, and recreation (such as MSAC), and how can safety be improved at dangerous crossings, such as Williamstown Road near Murphy Reserve?

8. Delays and Timelines for Tram Lines into Fisherman's Bend:

Asked by a resident of Port Melbourne:* Why has nothing happened regarding the delivery of two tram lines into Fisherman's Bend, which were originally promised with clear dates in the 2018 Fisherman's Bend framework?

9. Impact of a Potential Coalition with One Nation:

Asked by John Martino (Local resident):* Directed primarily to David Southwick: If the Liberal Party forms a coalition with One Nation, what impact will that have on transport services, and will it dilute or scrap any of their current plans?

10. Guarantees on the Implementation of the Active Travel Plan:

Asked by Adele (Resident of Elwood):* Directed to Nina Taylor: Given that improvements to the bus network have been piecemeal rather than taking a network reform approach, what guarantees can be given that the Active Travel Plan will actually be implemented in a coherent fashion rather than just remaining on paper?

11. Timeline for an Airport Train:

Asked by Councillor Serge Thomann (St Kilda Ward):* When will we finally see a train built to the airport?

12. Permanent Crossings Over Queens Road:

Asked by Petrina Alexander (Community 3004):* What permanent crossing arrangements can be made across Queens Road to connect the fast-growing Lakeside Ward (Queens Road/St Kilda Road apartments) to Albert Park, given that the road is currently only easily crossable during the three weeks of the Grand Prix?

13. Lower Speed Limits in Local Streets and School Zones:

Asked by Dan Mandram (Resident of St Kilda):* Would the panelists support or commit to lower speed limits on local council streets, particularly around school zones and shopping centers, to drive behavior change and improve safety?

14. Affordable Bus Transport to the Airport:

Asked by an audience member:* Until an airport rail link is built, is there a way to provide more affordable bus transport to the airport, given that the SkyBus is currently too expensive for families?

15. Communication Regarding Bus Disruptions:

Asked by Alex (Resident of Port Melbourne):* What can be done to improve communication and news feeds regarding bus disruptions caused by basic maintenance works, which often prevent buses from reaching the curb or cause stops to be skipped without adequate notice?