



The flowing arteries of Sir Rod's vision spark fears of a car destiny

The Eddington blueprint has divided opinion, with business in favour but some experts claiming it clashes with the aim of boosting public transport use.

By **ROYCE MILLAR, CLAY LUCAS** and **SIMON MANN**

THE travel habits of Melburnians will not change in coming decades and, by 2031, the city will remain sprawling and car-dependent with only a fraction of its residents using public transport.

These are the assumptions underscoring Sir Rod Eddington's landmark call for \$18 billion of new transport infrastructure, including a \$9 billion road tunnel between the Eastern Freeway and the western suburbs.

As politicians, business groups, planners and transport experts continued to grapple with the implications of Sir Rod's 400-page report, released this week, concern mounted that its recommendations effectively sounded a death knell for the State Government's growth strategy, *Melbourne 2030*.

Commenting on the report for the first time, the Planning Institute of Australia said Sir Rod's plans were at odds with *2030*, which aims to make Melbourne a more compact and less car-reliant city.

"Eddington has looked at

how we get people from the western suburbs into the city," said the institute's Victorian president, Jason Black. "But from a planning perspective, we need to look at how we keep them in their local communities — not move them more easily across (the city).

"The report does not pick up on the climate change implications of moving people from the west to the east ... The notion that people should be able to live, work and play at least within their own region is what *Melbourne 2030* was about."

The fine print of Sir Rod's report reveal that his findings assume just 9% of all motorised trips (excluding cycling or walking) will be made by public transport in 2031.

This is the same proportion as in 2002 and is well short of the Government's stated aim of increasing public transport's share to 20% by 2020.

The expectation that 90% of trips will continue to be made by car is an important factor in Sir Rod's support for a controversial toll tunnel between Clifton Hill and the west.

Sir Rod's report says the Government should strengthen its

support for *Melbourne 2030* and urges development of "vibrant suburban hubs" in Melbourne's west — at Footscray, Sydenham, Sunshine and Werribee.

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TONY SHEPHERD, ConnectEast

But Bus Association executive director John Stanley said Sir Rod's assumptions about future travel behaviour contradicted *2030*, were "unsustainable" and would "ensure urban sprawl and low-density housing will continue to be the dominant future of Melbourne's growth".

Business groups have backed the Eddington blueprint. The Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry described it as a major step in relieving congestion.

The Property Council of Australia's executive director, Jennifer Cunich, and a key player in big-ticket infrastructure projects, ConnectEast chairman Tony Shepherd, also spoke in favour of the report yesterday.



Ms Cunich said Sir Rod's proposals would go a long way to eliminating traffic woes by removing bottlenecks at the northern end of the CBD as well as at the Eastern Freeway's Hoddle Street exit. "Moving people from east to west without drivers using the current 'rat run' through the inner suburbs and CBD will go a long way to easing congestion," Ms Cunich said.

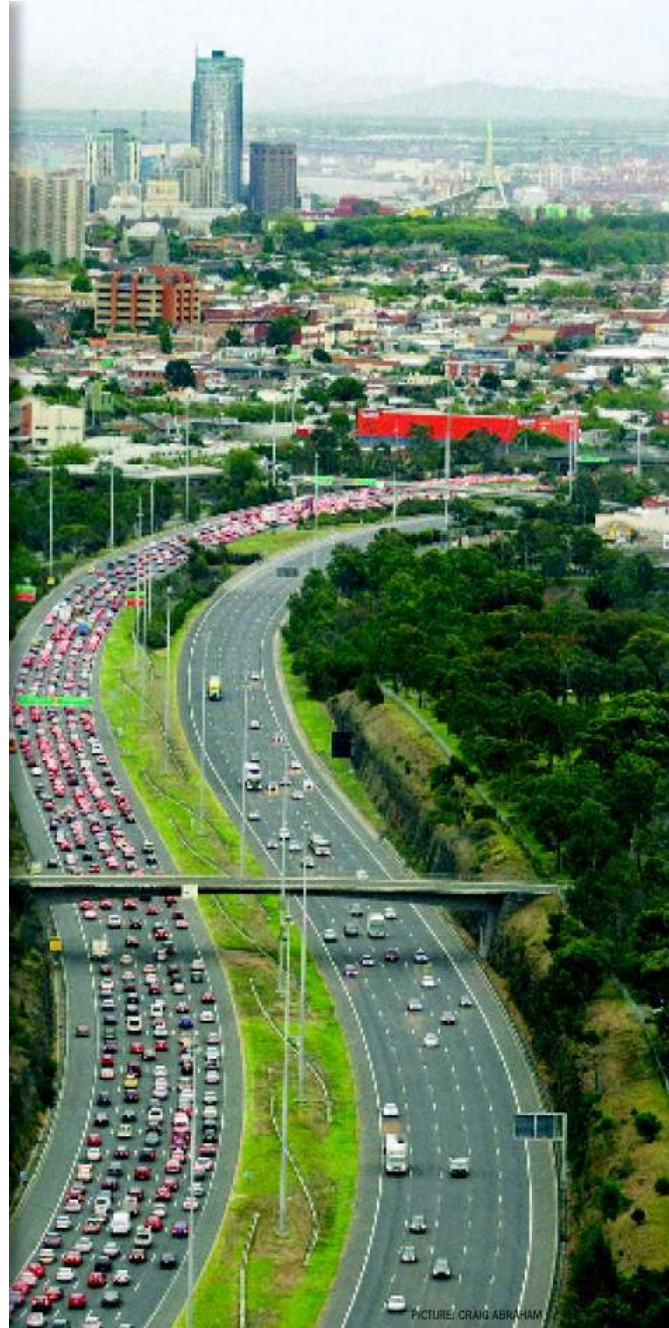
Mr Shepherd said Victoria the state needed to take a deep breath. "These projects may not look flash at the moment and the Treasury bean counters may be against them, but they are the sorts of investment you have to make."

But there are growing doubts about the viability of the tunnel. While Sir Rod's report accepts that some form of future congestion charge for central Melbourne is inevitable, his findings do not factor in the likely impact of such charges in discouraging car use.

As *The Age* revealed yesterday, the cost-benefit analysis for the \$9 billion road tunnel indicates the case for it is not strong. Lower traffic volumes as a result of a congestion charge would diminish that case further.

Professor Graeme Davison, of Monash University, said the latest thinking assumed the city still operated around movement from outer suburbs to the city. "But what's much more characteristic now is patterns of movement right across the city in all sorts of different directions."

The president of the Municipal Association of Victoria, Dick Gross, said: "Given the future of peak oil and the impact on fuel pricing and availability, plus the environmental impact of greenhouse gas emissions, communities and governments need to seriously debate future car use."





TONY SHEPHERD

ConnectEast and Transfield Services

"YOU'VE got to be very careful arguing against what Rod (Eddington) says in this report because it's been bloody well-researched. He's had such a dramatic impact on the whole configuration of the city. Every one of his recommendations makes great sense. Getting trucks off suburban streets and making the port operate more efficiently makes great sense. You can't keep building roads forever but we ought to connect our freeways up."

There are qualifications, one being the lack of city exits from the road tunnel would lessen commercial viability.

GRAEME DAVISON

Historian and urban affairs commentator, Monash University

THINKS an improved bus service to Doncaster and surrounds might be the way to go because a rail line along the Eastern Freeway would still require big car parks and feeder buses. Is uncertain, though, about the east-west road tunnel. "I've got very unresolved sorts of feelings about that." Understands the reasoning behind a tunnel without city exits but fears that once built — and with Eastlink feeding traffic onto the Eastern Freeway — that pressure for exits will steadily mount.

New rail links the most attractive aspect of the plan, including Tarnet link which can be built ahead of population growth. "You pay less money in the first place and get more value for it in the end."

PIETER NAGEL

Institute for Logistics, Victoria University

BACKS the plan forcefully because it would resolve some of the major transport challenges and "create an infrastructure framework" that would bolster economic development of the west, and in particular, Footscray. Much of the report accords with the Institute's thinking, of which the 18km east-west road tunnel is a centrepiece.

"I am excited about the fact that this tunnel proposal is included in the report, and that it clearly recommends that the tunnel should not give access to the CBD, as that is not the purpose of the tunnel in the first place as it is intended to facilitate east-west connection, rather than city access," Dr Nagel said.

CATH SMITH

Victorian Council of Social Service

"THIS is a turning point. We hope next's month budget does the same. This is a long-term plan, but no one should forget that we have a budget in three weeks."

But he says a public transport ticket levy should not be used to pay for any major infrastructure projects. "There are real equity issues — especially if we are talking about increasing concession fares," Ms Smith said.

Also questions whether a new rail tunnel had to be built before any outer Melbourne extensions to the network. "Is a new rail tunnel a precondition to extending the outer rail network?"

Calls for "a generational investment in public transport" that includes extensions to Mernda and Cranbourne East.