



Ahead of schedule and tipped to open in June, could EastLink be the last freeway built in Victoria?

Ban new freeways: transport group

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AUSTRALIA must halt construction of freeways if drastic cuts in emissions from vehicles are to be achieved, a submission to the Garnaut Climate Change Review has said.

The Public Transport Users Association has backed its recommendation with a document showing that expansion of freeways does nothing to alleviate congestion. Instead, the report says, new freeways encourage car use and worsen gridlock.

"The existence of congestion indicates high latent demand, so an increase in road capacity quickly induces additional traffic," the report says.

"The need to shift a large proportion of motor vehicle journeys to walking, cycling and public transport, as well as the counter-

productive effects of road capacity expansion, both demonstrate the need for a moratorium on new roads."

French President Nicolas Sarkozy in October pledged that France would stop building motorways and airports to tackle pollution from transport. Instead, Mr Sarkozy said, there would be more investment in the French rail network, to shift freight traffic away from the roads.

More than 25% of French carbon dioxide gas emissions are from transport. In Australia, transport makes up 14% of greenhouse gas emissions.

The public transport group's submission to the transport strand of Professor Ross Garnaut's climate change review follows a recommendation to the

State Government by Sir Rod Eddington that a \$9 billion road tunnel linking Footscray with Clifton Hill be built. The 18-kilometre east-west tunnel would be one of the largest road projects in Australia's history.

Sir Rod's recommendation has infuriated many transport experts who believe a road tunnel would do little to relieve congestion and instead would encourage Melbourne's continued reliance on the car. Critics also argue the financial benefits to the community of building the road do not justify the expense.

COMMENT & DEBATE

- ▶ Letters **PAGE 12**
- ▶ Freight on right rail **BUSINESSDAY 1**



EastLink is in its final days of preparation, with safety checks, tolling tests and construction works nearing completion. The 39-kilometre road, originally scheduled to open in November, is now anticipated to open in the last week of June. Road industry sources have told *The Age* that EastLink is likely to be toll-free for the first month of operation. PICTURE: MICHAEL CLAYTON-JONES