

Train plan derailed

Trains | Sandro Olivo

THE need for rail extensions to Mernda and Epping North was identified by the State Government in 2007 but were dropped from the Victorian Transport Plan just 12 months later.

The South Morang and Mernda Rail Alliance received documents released under Freedom of Information last week which show the government commissioned a re-

Secret report identified track options

port, completed in December 2007, titled Whittlesea Public Transport Corridor Strategy Options Assessment Final Report.

As first reported at whittlesealeader.com.au last Wednesday, the secret document states that the population of Mernda and Epping North would

skyrocket between 2011 and 2021 and identified several public transport options for each corridor, including bus routes and train lines.

But the crucial section of conclusions and recommendations was not released by the FoI officer because it did "not follow through thoroughly enough to be adopted"

and was "no longer indicative of current thinking".

One of the report's objectives was to recommend the preferred transport option within each corridor.

South Morang and Mernda Rail Alliance spokesman Darren Peters said residents should be told why the Government investigated the

two rail links but failed to include them in the Victorian Transport Plan.

"The State Government has ignored the facts stipulated in their own report that they commissioned about projected growth in Mernda and Epping North and has catastrophically failed to plan effectively for these suburbs," he said.

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The Labor Party has since promised to build a busway to ferry passengers between Mernda to the future South Morang railway station at a cost of \$48.5 million instead of committing to a rail link.

A rail extension to Epping North is off the Labor agenda.

Aurora Community Association member Tony Francis said he believed the government had decided not to build a rail extension to Epping North because of the cost involved.

"My guess is that the unreleased parts of the report sufficiently indicate the

need for more planning and action at a cost that the State Government does not want to know about," he said.

While the State Government has been lambasted over its decisions on Mernda and Epping North, the Liberal Party also is yet to commit to either extension.

Opposition public transport spokesman Terry Mulder would not say if the extensions would be announced in the lead up to the election.

"Ted Baillieu will be making many more public transport and roads policy announcements prior to November 27," he said.

The *Whittlesea Leader*

asked the State Government why it decided not to build the extensions to Mernda and Epping North.

Spokesman Stephen Moynihan did not answer the question, instead reiterating the Government's investment for the Mernda busway and upgrades of bus routes in Epping North.

 **Do we deserve to know why the government decided not to build railway extensions to Epping North and Mernda? Post your comment at whittlesealeader.com.au**

Road and rail needs

TO date there has been a lack of acknowledgment from the State Government of Epping North's transport needs.

These include a rail extension to Epping North, two lanes each way for High St/ Epping Rd from McDonalds Rd to Craigieburn Rd, an intersection with traffic lights instead of a roundabout at Findon Rd/High St next to the Epping fire station, O'Herns Rd connected to the Hume Freeway and completion of Edgars Rd from Cooper St to Craigieburn Rd.

Can I suggest it might be time for real estate developers in Epping North to be involved if they wish to continue selling house and land packages which are accessible.

I have VicUrban especially in mind with its plans for an 8000 home Aurora Estate.

These developers could benefit by emphatically and collectively presenting Epping North transport needs to the 'Minister for Freeways' and the 'Minister for Abandoning Railway Lines' in the hope these ministers may justify their more traditional ministerial titles.

Tony Francis, Epping.
