

Hon Terry Mulder,  
Minister for Public Transport,  
Level 16, 121 Exhibition Street,  
Melbourne.  
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24<sup>th</sup> November 2011

Dear Mr Mulder,

**Re: Bus Problems in Epping North**

I am writing on behalf of residents of Epping North, especially those who reside on VicUrban's Aurora Estate and those who are members of the Aurora Community Association, about a serious issue with public transport servicing the area.

Epping North is typical of growing outer Melbourne suburbs which have been neglected with regard to public transport and infrastructure. One public transport issue of immediate concern is the **Route 575** bus service from Thomastown to Epping North. Problems with this service, some of which include safety risks, are listed as follows:

1. Morning frequency (5.40am – 9.00am) of the 575 to Thomastown - on all but three out of eight services- there is a 40 minute wait. These are critical times for students and workers and the low frequency of buses means residents either must leave for work/ school earlier than required to use the service or drive to work/ school/ Epping station.
2. Coverage into the Aurora and Lyndarum Estates is limited. VicUrban have designed the Aurora Estate with homes planned to be within 400 metres of a bus stop. However only a proportion of bus stops already built within the estate are currently functioning and therefore many Aurora residents are presently at least a one kilometre walk to a bus stop.
3. Timing of bus services to facilitate train connections and visa versa is unrealistic. In the morning, the current bus drop off at Epping station can leave as little as 4 minutes for connecting passengers to make their way to the station platform to catch a city bound train. Given increasing traffic congestion around the station actually making a train connection is bordering on the

unfeasible. Running to catch a connecting train can be dangerous for those with health issues and due to the crossing of busy morning traffic on Cooper Street.

4. In the evening peak service, there is only a 4 minute window to catch the 575 bus from a train arriving at Epping Station. More often than not, trains are running late and connecting to the distant 575 bus stop is unachievable. Consequently missing this connection means waiting 40 minutes for the next 575 service. This wait is of concern for parents of adolescents, especially girls that have to wait in darkness for the next bus.
5. The current timetable is a real deterrent for residents to commit to public transport and pressures many to stick to cars. Epping North has one of the highest rates of car ownership in Melbourne at 2.07 cars per household (Reference <http://www.theage.com.au/national/outer-suburbs-forced-to-drive-20090523-bizw.html> and 2006 Census data).

Epping North (20 – 25 kilometres north from the Melbourne CBD) is predicted to have substantial population growth over the next 20 years. The City of Whittlesea expects the area to grow from 7,081 in 2011 to 44,097 in 2031. Construction of VicUrban's Aurora Estate commenced in 2006, achieved about 800 homes in 2011 and is expected to have 8000 homes completed by 20 years with a final population of around 20,000. Such population pressures will add to the already congested road network and it is essential that the 575 service be improved.

We ask that you assist in providing a solution to the points outlined above. We would appreciate an explanation as to why timetabling, frequency and route decisions have been made in the first place. We also ask that you could provide evidence of any current investigations or reviews that aim to improve public transport provisions in the Epping North area.

Further campaigning on the Route 575 bus issue is being planned and a petition signed by local residents is likely.

Yours Sincerely,



Cara Horner

President,  
Aurora Community Association

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