

Next stop Marvel Station. Plans for new underground rail route

By [Patrick Hatch](#) and [Kieran Rooney](#)

June 10, 2024 — 5.00am

The Age

An underground train station would be built next to Marvel Stadium in Docklands and two more in Fishermans Bend as part of long-awaited plans for mass transit to the fledging precinct.

The state government has revived hopes that stalled plans for major [public transport links to Fishermans Bend](#) may eventually be delivered by confirming a preferred route for a new cross-city rail line, dubbed Melbourne Metro 2.



The state government has outlined plans for a station below Bourke Street in Docklands. *CREDIT: WAYNE TAYLOR*

Fishermans Bend is the country's [largest urban renewal area](#) and is forecast to be home to 80,000 residents, 80,000 workers and 20,000 students by 2050. But a failure to deliver promised tram or train connections has delayed housing and commercial developments.

The Department of Transport and Planning said in an update published online at the weekend that it had endorsed a preferred route for a “possible” rail tunnel below Bourke Street in Docklands with a station between Wurundjeri Way and Harbour Esplanade, next to Marvel Stadium.

That is a departure from the state government’s 2018 Fishermans Bend Framework, which flagged the tunnel running below Wurundjeri Way, with a station parallel to Southern Cross Station.

[From Docklands](#), the rail tunnel would dip under the Yarra to Fishermans Bend with stations at the future Sandridge commercial and residential precinct, and the planned employment and research precinct at the old GM Holden site.

Fishermans Bend Business Forum secretary Linda Norman said developers were delaying projects in the area because of uncertainty about plans for tram and train connections. “After six years of hearing nothing, we welcome the news that there’s been progress,” she said.

“This is the key issue for Fishermans Bend, so we look forward to hearing more information particularly around the timing: we need an idea about when might this happen.”

The government’s 2018 framework said there would be a new tram line from the CBD to Fishermans Bend’s employment and residential areas by 2025, but that has not materialised. A state government spokesperson declined to comment on when the rail or tram lines might be built.

Locking in a rail route would allow “work on complementary surface public transport, and detailed precinct planning”, like trams and buses, and give landowners, businesses and developers certainty. “Planning work for complementary surface public transport is also well advanced”, the department said. The spokesperson said the state government had added 1500 extra bus services a week to Fishermans Bend since 2022.

The Melbourne Metro 2, or MM2, is a proposed underground tunnel from Clifton Hill to Newport with stations at Fitzroy or Carlton, Parkville, Flagstaff, Southern Cross and Fishermans Bend. From Newport, trains would connect to the Werribee line to service the booming western suburbs.

Government transport planners added the project to long-term transport plans in 2012 and it was expected to be a follow-up project after the Metro Tunnel opens in 2025.

But transport experts and local councils who desperately want the MM2 built have feared it has been [pushed aside](#) in favour of Labor's flagship \$34.5 billion Suburban Rail Loop East between Cheltenham and Box Hill.

John Hearsch, president of the Rail Futures Institute, a transport advocacy group, said locking in part of the MM2 route was a positive step forward for a project "which should be being built now".

The MM2 would provide badly needed rail capacity to the western suburbs, he said, and connect residents there to employment precincts such as Fishermans Bend, Docklands and Parkville and through to the north-east suburbs.

"It provides the missing half of the core network," Hearsch said. "The [Metro Tunnel] connects from the north-west of Melbourne through the CBD to the south-east and MM2 effectively does the opposite, from the south-west to the north-east."

The University of Melbourne bought a 7.2-hectare site at the old Holden site in Fishermans Bend from the state government in 2019 and plans to build a \$400 million engineering and design campus there.

But, as [The Age revealed in January](#), the university has been frustrated by the lack of progress on tram and train links, which underpinned its decision to build the campus there. It told the state last year that the train line was needed within 15 years for the precinct to be successful.