Box Hill has experienced rapid growth over the last ten years, a trend that is expected to continue. By 2036, the population is projected to double from its 2016 level of 8,500 to 17,000. It’s expected that an additional 11,000 new jobs will also have been added, increasing from 18,000 to 29,000 jobs. A key challenge facing Box Hill is ensuring its transport infrastructure can keep pace with this growth.

To address this issue, Whitehorse Council is preparing an Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) for the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC). The Strategy is intended to guide the future direction and development of the transport system to help achieve the overall vision that has been developed for (and with) the community.

This is one of five papers designed to generate discussion and seek the community’s views on key issues and ideas that will help inform the ITS. The draft ITS will be released for consultation in early 2020.

What are the issues and opportunities for public transport in Box Hill?

Box Hill represents a major focal point on the public transport network, with trains, trams and buses all meeting in the central shopping precinct. Furthermore, the planned Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) by the State Government is expected to be added into this mix, with construction planned to begin around 2022.

The current bus/train interchange is constrained within a 35-year-old facility, which has several key issues:

- Connections between the train and bus are indirect and congested due to their mixing with shoppers and other visitors.
- Personal safety is compromised by an outdated design with poor sight lines and a lack of passive surveillance (see top image on right).
- Disability access is poor and does not meet the current requirements.
- Bus access into the interchange is slow and unreliable due to its location in the congested heart of the shopping precinct (see bottom image on right).

Trams are offset from the bus/train interchange by approximately 150 metres, yet benefit from a direct traffic-free walking connection along the Market Street Pedestrian Mall. Opportunities for tram network enhancement may include its eastward extension to Middleborough Road, acknowledging the competing priorities for space along Whitehorse Road.

“Connection between the bus and train is terrible, you need to walk around the shopping centre (when closed) and are exposed to the elements, or you need to walk through crowds of shoppers when it is open.”

Anonymous community comment
What has been done elsewhere?

Box Hill is not alone in facing these types of challenges. Whilst the solutions to be developed for Box Hill will be specific to the local community and context, general precedents from elsewhere can often point the way forward in terms of what may be possible (and help to visualise the outcome).

**Case study 1: Bus interchange as catalyst to revitalising the city, Christchurch**

Following the 2011 Christchurch earthquake, a Recovery Plan to rebuild the city was developed in coordination with a strategy to re-envision Christchurch as ‘An Accessible City’. A new bus interchange was one of the anchor projects in this coordinated approach, focusing on an integrated transport and land use solution that ‘put people first’. The result was a flexible, tiered, multi-modal hub that enables access to buses, intercity coaches, taxis and a central bike parking area. The new interchange also transformed the overall public transport experience with its airport-style lounge and high level of amenity.

**Case study 2: Frankston Station Precinct and Young Street bus interchange, Frankston**

Rather than having buses turn off the road into a separate off-street bus facility, the Frankston Station bus interchange utilises a series of bus stops located on-street, directly adjacent to the train station entrance. This allows both an easy and direct bus-train transfer, while also avoiding long delays for passengers travelling through Box Hill.

Further to this, works are currently being undertaken on Young Street to create a safer pedestrian environment, and to improve bus connections within the precinct. This includes a new landscaped boulevard, wider footpaths, safer crossings, improved manoeuvrability for buses into and out of the on-street bus bays, new bus shelters and waiting areas, and improved lighting and security measures.

What does your community value?

As part of the early stages of development of the ITS, the project team has reached out to the Box Hill community to gather input on what aspects of Box Hill are most highly valued by residents, businesses and visitors. With respect to public transport, the feedback gathered to date has emphasised the following priorities:

1. **Invest** in increasing public transport options as alternatives to private vehicle use.
2. Encourage **change of travel behaviour** from use of private vehicles to public transport.
3. Improve **pedestrian connections** between destinations and transport modes to create a seamless experience.
4. Provide **information** to aid **wayfinding** and support public transport use.
5. Envision the interchange as a **hub of the community**.

In addition, ‘walking, cycling and public transport options’ was ranked #14 out of 50 attributes for what the overall Box Hill community most cares about.

What could be done in Box Hill?

The approach to enhancing the public transport experience in Box Hill will be designed to reflect the priorities of the community. It may include elements of the strategies exhibited by the case studies cited here, or it may rely on an alternative approach.

A generally upgraded interchange (in one form or another) has emerged as a key priority for public transport in Box Hill, along with better legibility and enhanced safety.

Have your say!

We seek your support in helping us to develop the most suitable possible solutions for public transport in the Box Hill community, including redesign of the interchange along with realignment or extension of services (bus and tram) that serve the precinct.

**In person:** At our Street Stand in the Box Hill Mall – Thursday 10 October 12-2pm or Saturday 12 October 12-2pm – on Main Street (corner of Market Street) near the entrance to the train station.

**Online:** oursay.org/whitehorsecitycouncil/its