

As Melbourne's North approaches Adelaide in size and car-making winds up urgent job-creating infrastructure investment is required

Melbourne's North is destined to become a major hub for food and beverage, advanced manufacturing, health and other rising industries, creating thousands of new jobs, if the private and government sectors co-invest in much-needed job-creating infrastructure in the region.

The *Northern Horizons Update* report, which succeeds the original 2014 *Northern Horizons - 50 Year Infrastructure Strategy for Melbourne's North*, urges job-creating infrastructure to help new industries fill the gap in the job market created by the closure of Ford's car assembly plant and the general decline of traditional manufacturing, as well as to service a region that will approach the size of Adelaide¹ over the next 15 years.

The report outlines the urgent infrastructure investment needed that is critical to job-creation in the region. Key projects include:

- completion of the North-East Link (route to be determined)
- developing a Food and Beverage Industry Park adjacent to the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit Vegetable and Flower Market
- ensuring access to high speed broadband to business and industry across the region.

The *Northern Horizons Update* report, commissioned by key Northern Councils, tertiary education institutions, the Northern Melbourne RDA and NORTH Link, has also found that job-creating infrastructure investment is also required to assist Melbourne's North take full advantage of new economic opportunities, such as the relocation of the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit Vegetable and Flower Market to Epping and the growth of Melbourne Airport.

"The conclusion of passenger motor vehicle assembly at Ford this month highlights the need to focus on jobs, with infrastructure as a key driver", says NORTH Link Executive Director Chris James.

"The region's historic dependence on the traditional manufacturing sector has resulted in significant job losses with the shift of mass production type jobs going overseas. The decline in automotive manufacturing is having a significant impact in terms of further job losses at both company level and related supply chains.

"Melbourne's North is also dealing with unprecedented population growth, with recent government data showing that it will become home to more than 300,000 additional residents by 2031, approaching Adelaide in size – this is an opportunity and a challenge. There is, therefore, an urgent need for major initiatives and the removal of blockages to create local jobs for our new and existing residents. The fast tracking of infrastructure investment to address current and future needs and drive economic benefits, productivity and jobs growth is critical to the region's future.

"One of the exciting features of Melbourne's North is the collaborative nature of relationships between industry, tertiary education institutions, the Northern RDA and local government – these stakeholders have come together to pool their strategic investment plans and knowledge and unite in creating recommendations to State and Federal Governments.

¹ The South Australia [projections](#) estimate the 'Total Adelaide SD' area to have a population of 1,206,156 in 2011 and reach 1,438,477 by 2031. [VIF 2016](#) estimates Melbourne's North to have 853,083 in 2011 and reach 1,310,279 by 2031.

Included in the short term recommendations projects such as:

of this report are a number of impactful

- **the completion of North-East Link (route to be determined)** – this will address acute traffic problems in Melbourne’s North East and enable improved access for all users of the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit Vegetable and Flower Market, the Port of Melbourne and the Airports, as well as delivering broader economic benefits. Infrastructure Victoria's 30 Year Draft Infrastructure Strategy states that the North East Link provides accessibility through some of the most congested parts of the road network and improves access to major employment centres;
- **developing a Food and Beverage industry park** adjacent to the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable and Flower Market. The Food and Beverage Growth Plan – Melbourne’s North (2014) identified the potential of the North’s more than 400 food and beverage manufacturers to double output and add 7,000 jobs over the next decade; and
- **providing access to high speed broadband** to business and industry across the region – there is an acute need for improvement, with some manufacturers competing on the global stage being forced to use slow and substandard services.

“The urgent and acute need for both public and private investment in Melbourne’s North is underpinned by a capital stock deficiency of 20 per cent. For Melbourne’s North in 2014, construction capital installed was \$43,000 per capita (2012-13 prices) as opposed to \$54,000 for the rest of Melbourne²”, says Mr James.

Background

In 2014, Melbourne North’s key municipalities, together with Northern Melbourne RDA Committee, La Trobe University and NORTH Link published the landmark strategic infrastructure report, *Northern Horizons – 50 Year Infrastructure Strategy for Melbourne’s North* (Northern Horizons).

Representing a comprehensive regional analysis of future infrastructure requirements for the next 50 years, Northern Horizons quantified the current level of social, transport, utility, economic and environmental infrastructure provision and performance, that informed the identification of short (to 2021), medium (to 2033) and long term (beyond 2033) priority infrastructure programs and projects for Melbourne’s North.

Northern Horizons Update (2016) has been prepared to ensure the original short, medium and long term infrastructure priorities remain a true representation of the needs of the region. *Northern Horizons Update (2016)* responds to and incorporates current Commonwealth and Victorian governance arrangements, infrastructure commitments and priorities, projected demand for infrastructure and observed and projected population growth.

This review and up date is critical to ensure the continued value of Northern Horizons as a consolidated and agreed view of the infrastructure priorities for Melbourne’s North. To ensure this, progress on implementation of the regional priorities over the previous two years has been documented and, together with additional sources of available data and information, such as population projections, combined to provide an updated description for each priority. In preparing the Northern Horizons Update, the opportunity has also been taken to include priorities that have emerged over the previous two years.

Over coming years, the Report’s Partners, Melbourne North’s seven municipalities (Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Mitchell, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea), together with Northern Melbourne RDA Committee, La Trobe University, Melbourne Polytechnic and NORTH Link will collaborate and work with governments to ensure the short, medium and long term infrastructure priorities are implemented. We will also continue to review and update Northern Horizons to ensure the ongoing value of the document and its priorities.

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² The Future Workforce: Melbourne’s North – NORTH Link, 2015