

Media Release

The Hon Philip Dalidakis MLC
Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade



Wednesday, 19 April, 2017

FIXING MOBILE BLACKSPOTS ON STATE'S BUSIEST V/LINE ROUTES

The Andrews Labor Government will fix mobile blackspots along the state's five busiest regional rail corridors by partnering with our largest mobile carriers – Telstra, Optus and Vodafone – in an Australian first project.

The \$18 million Regional Rail Connectivity Project will significantly improve mobile coverage and connectivity for commuters along the Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Traralgon and Seymour rail lines – which see more than 15.5 million passenger trips annually.

Having three mobile carriers work together on this project is a major win for commuters – this means that customers on all three networks will see improved mobile coverage rather than just one carrier's customer base.

As part of the solution Victoria will be the first state in Australia to implement in-train technology used to boost the signal from mobile towers outside the rail carriage to devices used inside.

Work has already begun to pilot the installation of mobile reception repeaters in VLocity trains, which is designed to boost in-train coverage from less than 50 per cent to almost full network coverage. If successful, the repeaters will be rolled out on the entire VLocity fleet in 2018.

In-train technology is used in more than 30 rail networks across Europe including Germany, Italy and Switzerland to boost the mobile signal from towers inside train carriages.

Passengers will begin to experience improved mobile coverage from the end of this year, with the construction of up to 35 new mobile towers commencing after the pilot process and set to be completed in 2018.

The Regional Rail Connectivity Project is expected to boost productivity for regional business commuters, delivering an estimated \$20 million per annum to the Victorian economy.

Quote attributable to Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade Philip Dalidakis

"This Australian-first project is a massive win for commuters on our five busiest regional rail corridors – no matter which network they use, they will see improvements."

"Regular commuters spend up to 20 hours per week on regional trains and we need to keep them connected so they can keep in touch with their loved ones and use their travel time productively."

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Jaala Pulford

"I know how frustrating it is when you can't get signal from the train and you have work or homework to do, want to send a message to a loved one or check the footy score. That's why we're getting this fixed."

Quote attributable to Minister for Transport Jacinta Allan

"This is another step in the better regional train system we're building – connecting passengers across Victoria to work, education and each other."