Construction update
SPRING 2020

Avon River Bridge
The new rail bridge over the Avon River in Stratford will be completed ahead of schedule, with trains able to travel on the new structure from December.

Trains will begin using the new bridge following a construction blitz to bring the new bridge into operation.

Coaches will replace trains on sections of the Gippsland Line from Saturday 28 November to Sunday 6 December while we undertake critical works.

During the construction blitz, crews will work approximately 3,500 hours to complete the track and signalling works required to connect the new bridge to the rail line, as well as removing sections of old railway track and sleepers and undertaking landscaping works.

The McAlister Street level crossing near the new bridge is also being upgraded to feature boom gates and a pedestrian crossing, improving safety for passengers, motorists and pedestrians.

Over the past few months, we have undertaken major construction to bring the 504-metre-long bridge to the verge of completion.

Once complete trains will be able to travel at up to 90km/h on the new structure rather than the 10km/h limit on the existing bridge.

We would like to thank you for your ongoing patience while this important work is underway.

Gippsland Line Upgrade
The new bridge over the Avon River is part of the half-a-billion dollar Gippsland Line Upgrade. The project will enable more frequent and reliable services for passengers by duplicating track, extending the Morwell crossing loop, upgrading level crossings and signalling, and adding second platforms at four stations on the line.

The Gippsland Line Upgrade is being delivered as part of the Regional Rail Revival program, which is upgrading every regional passenger rail line in Victoria.
By the numbers

86 concrete and 16 steel piles have been used to create the foundations of the bridge.

18 pairs of beams have been lifted into place by 250-tonne and 450-tonne crawler cranes, with the walls of the bridge attached and concrete slab poured.

The concrete beams that form the superstructure of the new bridge are almost 30 metres long and each weigh 60 tonnes.

Over 1,100 tonnes of concrete has been poured for the bridge deck.

102,000 work hours have been worked on the project (approximate as of 30 October).

Over 15,000 m³ of earth has been moved to make the new embankment.
Your feedback on the Apex Park improvements

During May we sought feedback from the community on the concept design for the improvements to Apex Park.

We engaged with locals through an online survey and a series of webinars held with the local primary schools and members of the community.

The climbing rope nets was one of the most popular playground features, with many local children requesting an even more challenging climbing ropes course.

Ensuring that our improvements are accessible to all children was a high priority for Stratford locals. As such, creating a park that caters to all ages and abilities is a key focus for final design.

Other feedback included requests for more seating, bins and a water fountain in Apex Park.

The BMX/pump track was a hit with the community, especially the local children. You told us to include plenty of rollers, jumps and corners and supported the inclusion of circuits for beginner, intermediate and advanced riders.

The new nature-based playground and BMX/pump track, combined with the existing Shakespeare-themed playground which will remain in place, will provide a fun and challenging play space for all visitors to Apex Park.

We would like to thank you for your feedback.

The final design of the new nature-based playground and BMX/pump track will be released later this year and construction of the improvements to Apex Park is targeted for completion in early 2021.

Public artwork for Apex Park

Acclaimed Gunaikurnai artist Ray Thomas has been commissioned to paint a mural on the wall of the new rail bridge facing Apex Park.

Ray was selected from a shortlist of Gippsland-based artists by our creative advisory panel, and his mural will incorporate the theme chosen by Stratford locals earlier this year: the Avon River.

Through his artwork, Ray will tell the shared story of local Indigenous and non-Indigenous culture.

The left side of the mural honours the traditional custodians, the Brayakaulung clan, and their connection to Dooyeedang (Avon River).

It features Gunaikurnai ancestral totems, Borun the Pelican and Tuk the Female Musk Duck, and cultural practices including scarred canoe trees, stone grinding grooves (like those found at the nearby Knob Reserve) and bush foods.

There are also images of the Brayakaulung travelling the river in grees (canoes) and using the river to fish. The image of the old mission church is a reference to the artist’s own family connection to the Ramahyuck Aboriginal Mission near Stratford.

The right-hand side of the mural reveals significant elements of Gippsland’s European history, and shows the Avon River as a favourite family gathering place in the holiday seasons. This panel will display historical photos of Stratford submitted by members of the community.

Ray will commence the artwork in November and you can come down to Apex Park and watch the installation of this exciting mural from our viewing platform.
The historic Avon River bridge

As construction of the new bridge nears completion, the last train will travel over the existing Avon River bridge later this year.

The 130-year-old bridge is a historically significant part of the railway network, which was originally constructed in the 1880s to provide links between cities and towns throughout Victoria. The bridge allowed for the extension of the Gippsland Line to Bairnsdale, connecting the region with Melbourne and expanding trade and population growth in Victoria.

The first train passed over the bridge on 8 May 1888. The Avon River rail bridge was added to the Victorian Heritage Register in December 2018 due to its architectural and historical significance to Victoria.

Local suppliers

We are proud to support local businesses and social enterprises who are providing a range of goods and services during construction of the new rail bridge over the Avon River. We would like to thank:

- Avon Landcare Group
- Badger and Hare
- Beveridge Williams
- Eastern Victoria Construction Group
- Gippsland Concrete Recyclers
- Graham Chalmer Real Estate
- GunaiKurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
- Jones Electrical
- Latrobe Valley Enterprises
- Matthews Quarry
- McAllister Earthmoving
- McInnes Earthmoving
- Moogji Aboriginal Council
- Olssons Sand and Gravel Supplies
- Rivex Cranes
- Silver Electrical
- Stratford Bakery
- Stratford Hotel
- Stratford IGA
- Stratford Medical Centre
- Stratford Motel
- Stratford on the River Tourist Park
- Stratford Pharmacy
- T&S Welding
- The SWF group
- Valley Sweep
- Wellington Real Estate
- Whelan’s Group
- WR Cleaning Services

Health and safety

Avon River Bridge works are progressing safely under the restrictions in regional Victoria. Large-scale public infrastructure projects are critical and strict COVID-safe Plans are in place on all project sites across Victoria. The health and safety of our workforce and community remains our top priority. Workers on all of Victoria’s Big Build sites are required to wear face masks unless they meet any of the criteria for exception – such as a medical condition for Occupational Health and Safety guidelines. Physical distancing measures are in place as well as increased hygiene practices.

For more information and advice about the coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au

More information

To find out more about Regional Rail Revival:

- Visit regionalrailrevival.vic.gov.au
- Call 1800 105 105 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- Write to Rail Projects Victoria, PO Box 4509, Melbourne, VIC 3001

It should be noted that this information is current at the time of printing, however due to unforeseen circumstances, changes may occur. Please visit regionalrailrevival.vic.gov.au for the latest updates.