

News

Newsletter of the
Public Transport Users Association

ISSN 0817 - 0347

Volume 21 No. 3 August 1997

Printed on recycled paper

Court blow to City Link

After the dismissal (with costs) in February of an application against the PTUA for legal costs by the firm building the City Link tollway, the Federal Court has delivered another victory for supporters of sustainable urban transport.

On 11 July the Full Court, comprised of Justices Lockhart, Sundberg and Heerey, upheld an appeal by PTUA member Phil Morey against the dismissal by Justice Northrop last year of his action against Transurban City Link, under the misleading and deceptive conduct provisions of the Trade Practices Act. The Full Court ordered a retrial of the facts on the issues Phil raised in his original action, and that Transurban pay his legal costs for the appeal. (The costs of the first trial are to be decided

by the judge hearing the new trial.)

The Full Court decided that Justice Northrop had improperly rejected Phil's application to subpoena a secret report setting out the basis on which the traffic and revenue projections for City Link were prepared. The report, of which the PTUA subsequently obtained a copy, shows that Transurban's consultant traffic experts used an incorrect definition of "light commercial vehicles," thereby

overstating the number of such vehicles that will use City Link and pay tolls at a higher rate. It also shows that the population and employment forecasts used in the calculation were not, as claimed in the Prospectus, "official published government forecasts." Again, the effect has been to overstate likely revenue levels.

The Full Court said: "It is difficult to see what is or could be confidential about projections of traffic flows, on the basis

of which the public was being asked by [Transurban] to invest almost half a billion dollars. In argument before us, counsel for [Transurban] said that his clients were 'keen to show to the market place that the prospectus was not misleading or deceptive'. The best way to have achieved this objective was to produce the report itself." We respectfully agree with their honours.

The retrial of Phil Morey's action is expected to take place before the end of the year.



And now the bad news...

Peter Allan, who has been challenging the validity of the tax breaks awarded to City Link in a separate case, has been less fortunate. On 7 August Justice Mansfield of the Federal Court dismissed Peter's action on the basis that he lacked 'standing' to sue.

Standing is a particularly technical and legalistic issue, but Peter has received legal advice that the Mansfield decision is wrong in law and could be appealed. At

the time of going to press, he is considering his options. Stay tuned!

Thanks to members

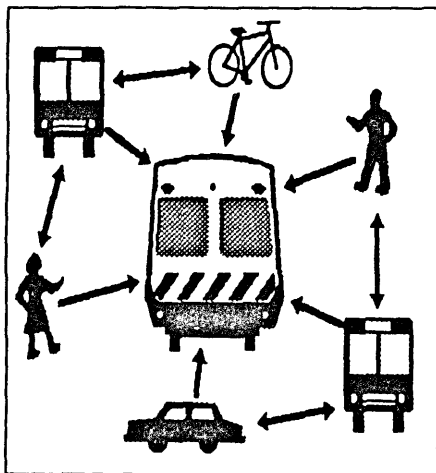
The victory in Phil Morey's case would not have been possible without the generosity of the PTUA members who have given time or money to help with these two court actions, and sincere thanks are extended to all these people. The path has been a rocky one, and Transurban has not hesitated to use its

superior financial clout in bullying exercises like its failed legal-costs application against the PTUA, and the unresolved costs application against PTUA President Paul Mees personally. But the two cases remain important, not just for their potential to avert an environmental and social disaster, but for their potential to focus public attention on the need for better policies than mindlessly building more and more roads.

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Official Recognition for Making Connections

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997 publication "Transport and the Environment" (Cat. 4605.0) makes this statement on page 179.

"Community responses to addressing the environmental impacts of transport have included: ...

- detailed analyses of specific needs and proposals for alternative solutions, such as the Public Transport Users Association's 'Environmentally Friendly Transport for Melbourne's Outer East', which examines the future transport needs of part of metropolitan Melbourne, based on population and anticipated travel need; presents criticisms of current Government proposals; provides overseas examples of successful approaches; and presents an alternative strategy based on increased use of public transport, including costing for the proposal; ..."

Making Connections is available for \$10 from the PTUA office.

Phone 9650 7898 for your copy.

Keeping in touch...

PTUA office

Ground Floor, 247 Flinders Lane, Melb.
Telephone: (03) 9650 7898
(Office volunteers are earnestly sought!)

Committee Meetings

Second Thursday of each month.
Please call the office for details.

Membership Enquiries

Graeme Gibson: (03) 9650 7898

World Wide Web

Our home page is on Vicnet at
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ptua/firstpt.htm>

Committee Members

Paul Mees—President	
Josephine Connellan—Vice President	
Les Chandra—Secretary	
James Hoffman—Treasurer	
John McPherson—Assistant Secretary	
Patrick O'Connor—Media Liaison	
Peter Dann	Demetri Pimenides
Alan Hardie	Domenica Settle
Mary Jamieson	Christina Sindt
Anthony Morton	Gerry Warren

Scoresby Update

The Environmental Effects Study process is continuing slowly in the Scoresby corridor. Consultants' reports so far have not shown the travel demand necessary to justify a north-south freeway in this corridor. If possible the figures will no doubt be massaged to show the required outcome.

Knox Council recently ran a public-transport forum. After talks from Government and council speakers, PTUA secretary Les Chandra spoke and received a rousing ovation from the 150 local people who came along at an awkward late afternoon time. The PTUA feels that Knox Council should have got the message that public transport needs to be at the top of its agenda. High-quality public transport can improve the lives of far more ratepayers and families than a \$600 million white elephant tollway.

Yarra Ranges Council has stood by its pro-environment and pro-public transport pre-election pledges and has condemned the Scoresby tollway proposal.

The PTUA proposal in our *Making Connections* report, for a rail extension from Glen Waverley to Rowville, has been debated in local papers. Local politician Ross Smith claims the \$85 million

cost is too expensive! Some Glen Waverley residents are worried by a rail tunnel near their houses; they feel vibration and building disruption may be annoying. While we understand these concerns, we note that a similar tunnel has carried freight trains under houses in Bunbury Street, Footscray, for 60 years without annoying the residents. On the whole the rail proposal has been received well, with a good response from a local Rowville estate agent who predicts increased house prices after the rail opening.

In the Shire of Nillumbik, ARRO (the Anti Ring Road Organisation) continues to apply pressure to the council. Nillumbik council has formed an advisory committee to consider the effects of the ring road and to make recommendations to the council.

The council of Greater Dandenong has arranged for PTUA president Paul Mees to give all councillors a briefing on our proposals for the Outer East, especially emphasising the importance of strengthening public transport in Dandenong, which can be expected to lose out if the Scoresby Freeway is built.

PTUA STALLS In Knox and Dandenong

The PTUA is conducting information stalls between 10am and 3pm at the following venues:

Knox City Shopping Centre	30 August
Scoresby Village Shopping Centre	6 September
Dandenong Plaza Shopping Centre	20 September
Stud Park Shopping Centre, Rowville	4 October
Stringybark Festival, Rowville	18 October

CAN YOU HELP?

The stalls will highlight the importance of improved services and encourage the already high support for a rail extension to Rowville and a tram service to Knox City, as well as improved feeder bus services, outlined in the PTUA report *Making Connections*.

If you are interested in assisting with stalls on these dates, or helping out with promotion of improved public transport, please contact Demetri at the PTUA office on 9650 7898.

Privatisation Looms

THE STATE Government has made it quite clear that it is committed to the total privatisation of our public transport system. The PTUA is opposed to this move, particularly if (as is likely) the sell-off follows the disastrous model adopted in the UK, and leads to the disintegration of the whole public-transport network.

In early June, the PTUA revealed Government plans to split up Melbourne's famous tram system in a way that could have the most damaging effect on the quality of services this century.

The plan, to divide up Melbourne's 36 tram routes into two sectors (North-South and East-West), bears no relationship to operational performance. It is designed purely to break up the system into two corporate entities, with separate maintenance and legal liabilities, to enable the eventual sell-off.

This hurried plan to split up the largest tram network in the English-speaking world would have been inconceivable to those who planned and developed the network in the early years of this century. Similar plans have been proposed for splitting up the metropolitan rail system into two competing entities, as reported recently by The Age.

Commenting on these plans in an Age article, PTUA President Paul Mees made the point that "the beauty of a unified system was that busier routes subsidised less patronised ones, giving broader access to the whole system." In a similar vein, former PTUA News editor Robin Vowles writes that, given that prospective buyers will be profit-motivated not service-orientated, we can expect that service frequencies will be reduced, and that the less profitable routes (particularly those providing cross-town services) will be cut out. This will reduce the 'catchment area'

for public transport and lead to lower patronage on the more profitable routes. Add to this the increased costs of duplicated management, timetable teams, track maintenance crews and breakdown crews, and fare rises would be an obvious result.

Our fears are confirmed by a leaked consultants' report prepared for the Transport Reform Unit of the State Treasury, which recommends a "contraction of services at the margin." The potential threat to Melbourne's public transport is at least as great as that posed by the Lonie

Report in the early 1980s, which recommended the closure of eight suburban rail lines and seven tram services.

The Government expects that subsidies to public transport will decrease as a result of privatisation, but is reluctant to

state just how much money it expects to save. The Government could certainly afford to reduce subsidies in the event of service cuts, though the users would hardly see this as an improvement. But taxpayers will never know whether money is saved in any case, since current Government practice is to conceal its accounts under the rubric of commercial confidentiality.

The cost savings made so far have resulted largely from staff cuts, a move that compromises safety and service. The replacement of staff with video cameras at Hallam railway station did not prevent the recent fatal bashing of a man on the platform, and there have since been calls for all stations to be staffed, as has been the PTUA's policy for many years. Nonetheless, more such compromises can be expected if privatisation goes ahead.

Nor can we expect private operators to make necessary investments in the future of Victoria's public transport. In the UK,

the Guardian reports that the private rail infrastructure company Railtrack has come under attack from the Government and the rail regulator for "failing to invest in the industry while enjoying a 60 per cent rise in profits on the back of the taxpayer."

Privatisation of public transport is an idea that seems to occur instinctively to those who have the least regard for public transport. If so-called 'reforms' are not to result in disaster, PTUA members will need to become involved in a campaign not dissimilar to that of the Lonie Report threat.

To this end, a gathering of interested members took place on 26 June. The participants stated their unanimous opposition to the privatisation plans, and called on the PTUA to launch a campaign against privatisation. Since then two campaign meetings have been held, attended by members of the PTUA and Environment Victoria, to help map out strategies for minimising the damage caused by privatisation if and when it occurs.

Community groups concerned about privatisation have formed the Coalition On Public Transport (COPT) to fight the move. The PTUA is sending representatives to COPT meetings, and supports COPT's action to encourage public transport users to send postcards to the Government. Members seeking to become more informed on the issue can obtain a 'privatisation kit' from the PTUA office.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

•Write to The Age, Herald Sun and your local papers. Write to your MP, to Transport Minister Robin Cooper, and to the Premier. If you can get COPT postcards, send them to Robin Cooper or the Premier:

The Hon Mr R Cooper
Minister for Public Transport
Nauru House
Melbourne 3000

The Hon Mr J Kennett
Premier of Victoria
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne 3002

•Attend public meetings (see box at left), PTUA/EV campaign meetings are held every second Thursday at 6pm; details: PTUA (03) 9650 7898.

COPT meets every Wednesday at 6pm; for details contact Dave Kerin on 9670 7661.

•Volunteer for PTUA stalls, or for leafleting at stations. Phone or write to the PTUA office to say when you can help. Ph: (03) 9650 7898.

PUBLIC MEETING

Public Transport Privatisation

Wednesday 1 October 7:30pm

at YWCA 489 Elizabeth St Melbourne

Further information call COPT on 9670 7661

Melbourne University Tram Terminus: Why it Doesn't Work

NOW THAT the new Melbourne University tram terminus in Swanston Street may be said to have gone through its 'breaking-in' period, what can one say about it? From the point of view of tram users, pedestrians, cyclists, even drivers negotiating the newly created Faraday Street intersection (see map) there can be no doubt: it has made things worse, not better. When it was originally proposed in late 1995, PTUA president Paul Mees stated in a submission to the Government that the design was unworkable. The Government nonetheless went ahead on the advice of 'experts' within the PTC and VicRoads. The result is perhaps one of the most poorly-engineered intersections in existence anywhere.

The project had the laudable goal of increasing the capacity of the tram terminus so that more Swanston Street trams could terminate at the University rather than in the city. The PTUA had long supported a redesign to improve the interaction between pedestrians, trams and cars, and maintained that the best way to do it was to retain the existing tram stop, with zebra crossings in place of safety zones, and to build a new terminus north of Elgin Street (opposite St Mary's College), to avoid interfering with the substantial flow of pedestrians across Swanston Street. Nothing remotely like this was done; instead, new track and overhead was laid on the existing line, the tram stop was shifted, and a new 'intersection' was made to encompass both the western end of Faraday Street and the Monash Road vehicle entrance to the University opposite.

As these two side streets do not in fact line up properly, the result is an extra-wide

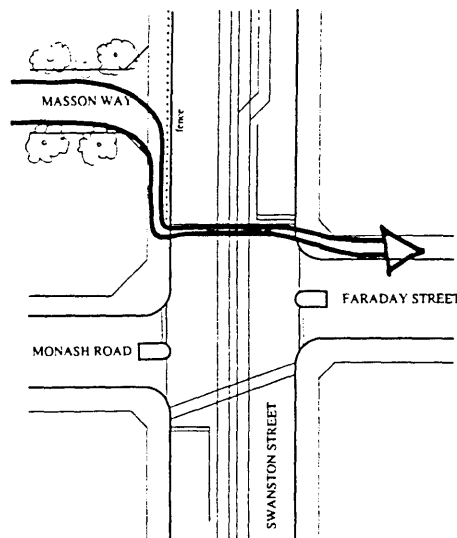
intersection which becomes blocked by heavy traffic in the evening peak. Motorists in Swanston Street invariably give themselves more time to proceed through than the lights allow, and as a result one routinely observes traffic proceeding—illegally and at speed—through the pedestrian crossing on the north side. The sheer size of the intersection can be a source of confusion to traffic turning right from Faraday Street, so that drivers sometimes almost forget to give way to pedestrians on the crossing.

This pedestrian crossing is among the most heavily used (by pedestrians) in Carlton, being the main access point for students and University staff to citybound trams in Swanston Street and to the Lygon Street precinct. In the past, a wide walkway (Masson Way) gave access straight from the centre of the campus, via reasonably cooperative signals, to the tram stop and across to Lygon Street. But now, this steady flow of pedestrians and cyclists from Masson Way is funnelled onto a footpath one-third as wide and directed 40 metres south to the new crossing. A 100-metre fence prevents pedestrians and cyclists from proceeding straight across Swanston Street as the planners intended.

Aside from the inconvenience to pedestrians, one would be hard put to find a more glaring example of the one-sided view of many traffic engineers, who are reluctant to put the slightest kink in a roadway because it reduces traffic capacity, yet are happy to place such obstacles in the way of pedestrians even when the pedestrian traffic volume at the intersection in question probably exceeds the road traffic volume by a factor of 10 or more!

At the crossing, pedestrians must contend with unfavourable signals and with traffic increasingly disposed to run the red light—not to mention stalled trams. Despite trams having been provided with what amounts to a dedicated pedestrian-free shunting yard, tram queues down Swanston Street are still a regular occurrence, as is short shunting at Queensberry Street, three stops back towards the city. And one can still stand at the terminus for as long as 15 minutes in the middle of the day without seeing a tram. It is, to say the least, not proven that the new terminus has produced any tangible benefits to tram operations, let alone passenger convenience.

Passengers from the city likewise used to stop opposite Masson Way. Now, the tram stops opposite the Monash Road entrance, at



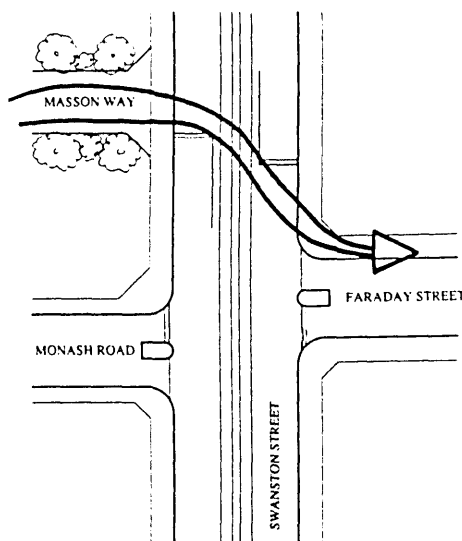
The new layout for Swanston Street. Arrow indicates principal pedestrian flow.

the approach to the new 'intersection'. Designed for vehicles rather than pedestrians, Monash Road has always been one of the uglier entrances to the University. Admittedly, the University has since widened the footpaths in Monash Road (though only slightly) and planted trees to lift the decor. Still, for pedestrian convenience Monash Road is no match for Masson Way and will remain that way as long as it remains open to vehicle traffic.

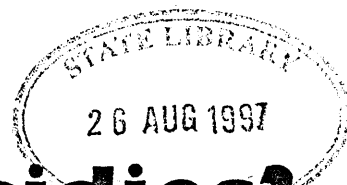
Almost precisely the same thing had already happened to the main pedestrian entrance in Royal Parade on the opposite side of the campus. In that case the tram stop was moved to bring it in line with the entrance to a new hospital car park opposite (can you spot the pattern?). As a result, tram passengers are landed not at the wide, landscaped foot entrance planned for them, but instead at Genetics Lane: a narrow access road between two bare-faced multi-storey buildings, more ugly even than Monash Road, with the barest of footpaths providing no convenient access anywhere (apart from the adjacent buildings themselves).

The redesign of this portion of Swanston Street has confirmed the PTUA's worst fears. Instead of relieving the conflict between trams and pedestrians, which was the main problem with the previous design, the engineers have perpetrated a heavy-handed non-solution. It is unworkable, unsafe, and inconvenient for most people who use it. It also strongly suggests that the so-called experts responsible for the design care only about the movement of cars and trucks, even when the real traffic is made up predominantly of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.

Tony Morton



The old layout for Swanston Street. Arrow indicates principal pedestrian flow.



Road and Rail Transport: Who Gets the Subsidies?

P TUA MEMBERS will have noticed that the crusade by the 'economic rationalist' commentators to reduce public transport subsidies has continued in the lead-up to privatisation of Melbourne and country public transport services.

Subsidies will continue to be required whether these services are run in the private or public sectors. Indeed, based on reports from the Auditor-General, it is unclear whether the subsidy level has risen or fallen for some already-privatised public transport operations such as West Coast Rail and National Bus Co. Because of the 'private and confidential' contracts between the Government and the operators, full information is unavailable even to the Auditor-General.

Road lobby resists charges

In an urban setting, the road lobby in Victoria has regarded any dollar spent on public transport as a dollar lost to road building. Pro-road commentators can point the finger at public transport because it is possible to put together a financial statement for the public-transport sector. Most of the costs and the revenue flow can be quantified in the accounts of a single organisation. By contrast, economists have wrestled with the issues of 'road pricing' for the last 30 years. The political resistance by the road lobby to direct charges for road use has been vigorous, and parallels the fight put up by the tobacco lobby regarding their product.

The road lobby holds the view that

public transport needs are of marginal importance and should be supplied by the cheapest obvious mode: the diesel bus. But Victorian Government figures show that the most popular urban public transport mode is the tram, the train next, and bus last. Subsidy per passenger is least for the tram and most for the bus. Compared with buses, trams are quiet, comfortable and can attract passengers formerly wedded to the car. Buses remain noisy, rough and polluting.

Lower subsidy in Toronto

The PTUA view is that Melbourne's public transport system should continue to rely on trams and trains, supported where

Because of the 'private and confidential' contracts between the government and the operators, full information is unavailable even to the Auditor-General.

necessary in the middle and outer suburbs by a fleet of modern, low-floor buses with the lowest possible pollution levels. Based on our study of Canadian cities (Toronto in particular) it is obvious that the Government and the community gets the best financial deal from a comprehensive and well-used public transport system. The annual Government subsidy to the Toronto system is much lower because three times more passengers per year use the network. Toronto people benefit from less destructive and costly road building, less pollution from less vehicles and a

high degree of car-free mobility.

Trucks vs rail for freight

University-based academics, the Commonwealth-supported Bureau of Transport and Communications Economics and the Australian Road Research Board, supported by the state and federal road-building authorities, have all produced studies with varying degrees of objectivity regarding the vexed issues of public transport subsidies and road charges. Road and rail are in competition for freight on the long, mainly interstate, routes between our large cities. Over the last 30 years, billions have been spent on interstate highways, mainly by the Commonwealth Government. Rail has on the whole missed out on capital funding, mostly because the railways were seen as a state responsibility. Even though rail carries between 30% and 40% of freight on the east coast between Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, only 10% of the capital funds spent on upgraded highways has been spent on rail in that period.

Currently, various new entities such as National Rail Corporation and Railtrack Australia are expected to commercialise and boost efficiency in the rail sector, with next to no capital funds available on the terms of the road-building grants that support the highway upgrades. It is these grants that permit the trucking businesses to use and degrade the roads on an almost free basis. Roads in Australia have mostly been financed by grants while railways

Continued next page

From the Bush

Struggle Continues in Mallee

Mary Jamieson from Mildura (a PTUA committee member) tells us that the campaign to return the Vineland train to the North-West of the state is still going strong. Members will remember that Russell Savage was elected as an Independent MP for Mildura at the last state election. Mr Savage displaced prominent Liberal MP Craig Bilstein, with a campaign that focussed strongly on the broken Government promise that saw the train service withdrawn soon after the Kennett Government came to power.

The potential of an upgraded Vineland to boost local tourism as well

as offer comfortable and affordable travel to Melbourne for local people is very clear to the whole Mildura and north-west community. The Train Action Group can be contacted on (03) 5021 4429.

Speedy Country Services?

The Bendigo Mayor is reported recently to be excited about the possibilities of high speed trains on the Bendigo line after privatisation. Most of the Victorian main rail lines are laid out with generous curves and gradients. With attention to localised speed restrictions and an upgrade in maintenance standards, most lines could carry 'Super Sprinter' railcars at speeds up to 160 kilometres per hour. An enterpris-

ing operator could offer journey times to Bendigo of around 1 hour 20 minutes; on the Albury line, a time of 2 hours 30 minutes or less would be possible. At last our rail system would offer journey times that leave the private car in the dust.

Frequency is an issue on the main country lines as well. Geelong has had an hourly service from Melbourne for many years now. It is time to run an hourly train on the Ballarat and Bendigo lines at least

Bairnsdale Progress

The Save Our Train group is convinced they will get a train back to Bairnsdale soon, according to their August newsletter. The group now sees their task as ensuring that the train is never lost again!

Save Our Train can be contacted on (03) 5152 3033..

Have you been short shunted lately?

The practice of short shunting (or terminating trams early to make up lost time) is on the increase in Melbourne, leading to many complaints from public transport users.

PTUA member Ron Dow has been waging a personal campaign against the PTC on this issue for some time. In his latest letter to PTC Fleet Control (a copy of which was sent to *PTUA News*), Ron reports his experience of 9 July aboard a West Coburg tram, which was running nine minutes late.

With minimal warning, the tram terminated in Moreland Road, West Brunswick, and returned to Essendon Depot. Ten passengers for West Coburg had to wait a further six minutes (in addition to the extra nine minutes in the city) in 7-degree temperatures for the next tram. The short shunt, Ron notes, was contrary to the PTC's stated policy that "a following tram to the same destination should be no more than two to three stops behind the tram to be short shunted."

To see a tram short shunt and depart with a depot destination, presumably for the crew to knock off, is "extremely poor public relations" on the part of the PTC, writes Ron. "It again raises the question of what is the charter of the PTC. Is it to provide a service for paying passengers, or to simply run up and down for the convenience of crews?...Is the nine minutes later finishing time worth the inconvenience to ten passengers?"

Ron has since received a reply from Digby Drew of the Fleet Control Centre,

stating that the tram driver disobeyed instructions and the standing rule on short shunting, and that disciplinary action has been taken. In his letter to *PTUA News*, Ron also writes:

"Mr Drew stated today [4 August] that the policy in relation to short shunting is under constant review, however the current policy is that in certain circumstances of late running Fleet Control may instruct a Driver that he is permitted to short shunt, *subject to the following conditions*:

- The tram to be short shunted is to wait at the last stop prior to the crossover for a maximum of three minutes. If a following tram to the same destination arrives within three minutes, the passengers are to be transferred and the Driver is permitted to short shunt.

- If the following tram fails to arrive within three minutes and passengers are offering, the Driver must proceed through to the original destination.

"This policy has some benefits for travellers, the intention being that they will wait on the tram, rather than being left in the cold at the tram stop. Whether or not it occurs in practice is another matter!

"My main concern with this new procedure is that a late-running tram could be delayed a further three minutes, for no good reason other than the potential convenience to crews and the PTC."

The short shunting of trams simply should not occur in a properly functioning system. Some passengers have formed the opinion that certain tram drivers, in

Ron's words, "work towards receiving a short-shunt instruction and then suddenly find a second gear." If this is correct it is symptomatic of a general lack of morale in the industry, for which the Government and the PTC must accept a large part of the blame. But the key question here is why highly-paid and well-equipped Fleet Control staff still cannot prevent trams running late. Though much can be attributed to general PTC incompetence, the operational difficulties also point to a lack of coordination, not to mention a general feeling against trams, among the wider transport bureaucracy. In particular, the PTC cannot be held entirely responsible for the lack of any real tram priority at intersections, or for the lack of enforcement of 'fairway' rules.

Tram-travelling members with bad experiences of short shunting are advised to contact PTC Fleet Control Centre on 9610 3332 (fax 9610 3350).

When is a Forum not a Forum?

Answer: When you can't have a debate or discussion. (Check your dictionary)

Minister Cooper's office was disappointed with our comments in the last issue about the elusive nature of the Public Transport Forum. The Forum is a 'Consultative Committee' set up by the Department of Infrastructure which ostensibly "advises the Minister of customer concern regarding public transport services and ensures user input into overall transport planning." In other words, it acts as a government-approved alternative to the PTUA.

We were told that the advertisement for new Forum members was placed in over 60 newspapers. Although PTUA membership covers the state, we're willing to bet very few of our newsletter readers saw the ad!

The only communication from the Forum that ordinary public transport users see is a quarterly glossy handed out at rail stations. This appears to be edited by a public relations company and the only avenue of communication offered to public transport users is a contact number and post office box. In other words, the Forum is meant to be a 'good news' outlet for the Met.

For the record, the PTUA is the recognised consumer group that speaks for public transport passengers, and we are affiliated with the Federation of Consumer Organisations.

Continued from page 5

have been built with long-term repayable loans. On the basis of tonne-kilometres (tonnage carried multiplied by distance carried), rail has about half the total freight task in Australia.

From the submission of the Australian Railway Association to a Commonwealth Parliamentary Inquiry, figures for 1992-93 show a subsidy to road expenditure over revenue collected of \$5 billion for that year. By comparison, Australian railways paid more than \$150 million in diesel fuel excise alone, and \$90 million of that was spent on roads. Rail freight operators pay six to seven times the access charge per tonne-kilometre to the rail infrastructure owner compared with their

competitor on the parallel highway.

In privatised New Zealand, the railways compete against trucks on a more level playing field. Tranzrail has done well carrying freight partly because road freight operators pay a rate per tonne kilometre three times higher than in Australia. Tranzrail's performance in the passenger rail sector has been less impressive.

The PTUA supports an efficient rail freight system for the broad environmental benefits, but also because a high quality passenger rail system will benefit from sharing upgraded infrastructure in future.

John McPherson

Note: Figures provided are from *Network Rail* magazine, published by the Australasian Railway Association bi-monthly.

In brief

Public transport fails Bledisloe Cup fans

Many visitors to Melbourne for the Bledisloe Cup on 2 August were less than impressed with the disappearance of public transport at midnight. According to all reports, Melbourne was awash with visitors that Saturday night, thousands of whom partied on into the early hours. Despite providing some special services to the MCG that evening, the PTC had not taken into account the transport needs of post-Cup revellers most of whom, being visitors from interstate or overseas, found themselves stranded in the city. The event was a windfall for the taxi industry but not for travellers or for the reputation of Melbourne public transport.

PT clear win for commuters

Public transport has again emerged as the clear winner in the annual World Environment Day Transport Race, organised by Environment Victoria. In this year's race from Wheelers Hill to the city during Thursday morning peak hour, three teams were organised: one travelling by car, one driving to Glen Waverley station and catching the train, and a third catching the bus to Glen Waverley station. The results were: car plus train, 52 minutes; bus plus train, 57 minutes; and car only, 65 minutes. As team member Rod Quantock wrote in *The Age*: "Phil and I had a big win; the environment, on this its day of days, had a minor win; and public transport, in its quiet, efficient, reliable and calm way, triumphed over the car." We eagerly await the day when the 'bus plus train' team wins and people can feel justified in leaving their cars at home altogether.

City parking concerns

A PTUA committee delegation recently met City of Melbourne corporate planner, Joe Perone. We put our concern that Melbourne city council was fixated on producing extra car parking while by far the majority of people in the central activities district come by public transport and much can be done to improve their travel experience. Since then the council has announced increases in on-street parking fees, which has invited mixed reactions from the public. We continue to urge the council to lobby for improved public transport throughout Melbourne so that people will continue to be attracted to the City.

PTUA educates

PTUA committee members recently lectured advanced degree student classes in environmental programs at both RMIT and Monash Universities.

Roads hinder wealth

In a keynote address to the international Pathways to Sustainability conference in Newcastle in early June, Professor Peter Newman of Murdoch University said Melbourne's City Link project was the embodiment of "cargo cult thinking" and would lead to a decline in prosperity. According to Prof Newman, the cities that thrive in the future will be those which have not wasted large sums of money on unsustainable freeway infrastructure. Melbourne should instead take seriously its largely ignored plan to promote intensive housing development and community infrastructure focussed on public transport points.

City Link to make winners and losers, more likely losers

According to *Property Age* of 4 June, the City Link tollway will create clear winners and losers in the real estate stakes. Adverse impacts will be most clearly seen in areas such as Port Melbourne and the Moonee Valley, where drivers can be expected to take to local roads in order to avoid tolls. On the other hand, real estate agents expect that declining traffic on other roads such as Alexandra Avenue will boost property values. In the PTUA's opinion there are no grounds for such optimism given that truck drivers were quite happy, in the days of the West Gate Bridge toll, to travel through Footscray and incur extra travel time in order to avoid a toll of \$1.60. Traffic figures published by VicRoads and Transurban also take no account of the extra trips generated by the improved road infrastructure.

Get smart about station parking, says Paul Grey

Herald Sun feature writer Paul Grey tells (4/6/) of his frustration at copping a parking fine for having caught the train instead of driving all the way to work. If we are serious about getting more people onto trains, he writes, councils must relax restrictions on car parking at suburban railway stations. Certainly we do need better station car parking as a short-to-medium-term measure. On the other hand car parking, particularly around suburban railway stations, does

occupy precious real estate which could otherwise be used for community or commercial infrastructure, situated close to public transport for added convenience and passenger safety. We feel Paul Grey's frustration would be better directed toward the gross inadequacy of our suburban bus system; after all, it was only because he missed the bus into the station (due to early running) that he felt compelled to drive at all.

Don't set your watch by Flinders Street clocks

Having fought in the early 1980s to retain the clocks at Flinders Street station, the PTUA is concerned at the PTC's claim (*Herald Sun* 26/5) that the clocks "are permanently inaccurate and cannot be fixed." The article notes that the problems have arisen since the changing of the clocks was automated in the 1980s; a cost-saving compromise that prevented the clocks being scrapped. It is disturbing that these modifications have effectively failed after barely ten years.

British trains ordered to run over body

Privatisation of public transport has its macabre side, as was shown in the UK recently. At least 20 peak-hour train drivers were ordered not to delay services and to drive over the body of a young woman lying between the rails. The woman, believed to have committed suicide, lay on the ballast for about four hours. Drivers say they were traumatised by the incident, but a rail company spokesman denied that any profit motive was involved.

Crash a symbolic gesture in road-rail debate

Network Rail magazine (Jun/Jul) reports that the journey of the first light-rail vehicle destined for Sydney's brand new system was halted when the truck hauling it from Melbourne crashed and dumped the SLR vehicle beside the Hume Highway. Damage is rumoured at \$1 million. Federal Transport Minister John Sharp, commenting on the accident, said: "It just goes to show that road transport doesn't do the job every time."

Copy Deadline for the next PTUA News is 3 October 1997

Newsletter Production Team:

Tony Morton, Tony Fuery and Dorothy Cook

Printed by Complete Print: Johnston St. Abbotsford

Our thanks to the dedicated mailout team

PTUA News

Newsletter of the Public Transport Users' Association

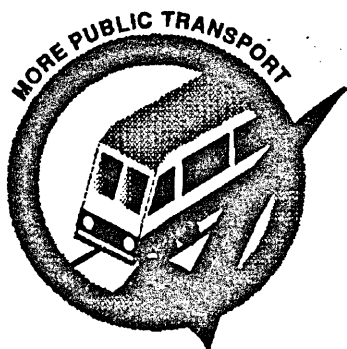
Print Post: Publication No. PP 331088/00009

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Sydney's M2 freeway a bit of a dud

The North Westerly M2 tollway opened in Sydney during July. A media personality officially opened the road, but the NSW Labor Government stayed away. Since the opening, patronage on the road has been only around half that required for the private investors to break even. About 85,000 vehicles per day must travel on the M2 before any profit is made on the road; current levels are around 45,000.

The financial press pointed out the speculative nature of some of the infrastructure projects that have received Federal Government tax concessions. When the Phil Morey appeal win (supported by the PTUA's own critique of the prospectus) was announced, the City Link stock exchange security parcels started to drop in value as investors made the connection to what now appear to be the over-optimistic revenue projections for Sydney's M2.

RACOF and Yarra Challenge City Link Vent Stacks

Local anti-City Link residents group Richmond Action Coalition on Freeways (RACOF) and the City of Yarra have taken a case to the Victorian Administrative Appeals Tribunal to object to the design and height of the vent stack at Burnley, meant to extract the fumes from the City Link tunnels under Richmond.

The plans originally had three vent stacks 40 metres high at either end and the middle of the tunnels. This has been cut back to one stack at Grant Street 46 metres high, and a dwarf stack only 20 metres high, 10 metres from the nearest house in Burnley. Local people are asking why the stack near a dense residential area—with a school—deserves less consideration than commercial South Melbourne. Advanced scrubber technology is available to clean the air; why not use it? Surely profit does not come before the health of Richmond residents.

The hearing began on 7 August. Barristers for Transurban and the Environment Protection Authority have asked for four weeks of hearings over the period up to early December. Needless to say a community group will find a hearing of this length hard to sustain. City of Yarra deserves credit for breaking ranks with other councils and challenging the shabby deal for Richmond residents.

The financial press is pointing out the large tax-subsidised profits already being made on City Link securities at the 'big end of town'.

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