

News

Newsletter of the
Public Transport Users Association

ISSN 0817 - 0347

Volume 22 No. 5 November 1998

Printed on recycled paper

03 DEC 1998

Scoresby Hearings Underway

PTUA slams anti-public-transport claims

Panel hearings have commenced on the Scoresby Transport Corridor Environmental Effects Statement. This is the culmination of a three-year process through which the road lobby has sought to justify construction of the Scoresby Freeway over the cost-effective public transport alternatives supported by the PTUA and the Outer East community.

A summary of the PTUA's submission to the panel hearings appeared in the previous edition of PTUA News. We argue that the EES has not considered feasible alternatives to the freeway, which could generate the same economic benefits at a fraction of the cost, and has not considered the effect of the Scoresby Freeway on the Yarra Valley 'Green Wedge'.

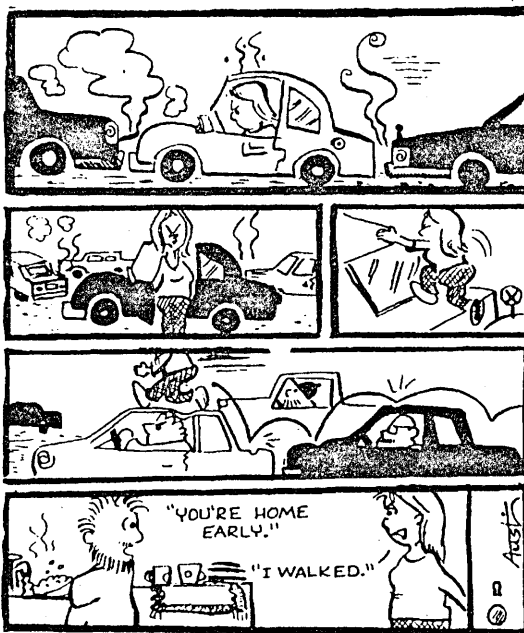
The popular proposal for a rail extension to Rowville has been rejected on the basis of misleading cost estimates, while the public transport improvements that are considered do not match actual travel needs. The submission was coordinated by the PTUA on behalf of 41 community and environment groups.

The hearings commenced on Tuesday 10 November with a 'primary submission' on behalf of the Department of Infrastructure. The primary submission included an official statement from the Department that its preferred option was the Scoresby Freeway with no public transport improvements, apart from the painting of a bus lane on Springvale Road. As might be ex-

pected, the community has reacted in anger.

The PTUA has taken the opportunity to cross-examine a series of expert witnesses brought forward by the proponents of the freeway. The witnesses were evasive, and when pressed were unable to offer supporting evidence for the arguments put forward. The public transport expert, for example, failed to explain why the last bus from Dandenong to Keysborough left Dandenong at 4:35pm, even though the population density in Keysborough is higher than Mont Albert which has an evening tram service!

The hearings continue until Friday 11 December at the Panel Hearing Room, Ground Floor West, 477 Collins Street Melbourne. Two days—Tuesday 8 December and Wednesday 9 December—have been devoted to hearing the PTUA submission and expert witnesses. All PTUA members are encouraged to attend.



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Public Transport Options PTUA Scrapped for Scoresby

The State Government has scrapped proposed public transport improvements for the Scoresby Corridor, including the extension of the East Burwood tramline to Knox City and an express rail line to Ringwood which would improve train services to Lilydale and Belgrave.

Panel hearings recently began into the Environmental Effects Statement on transport options for the Scoresby Corridor which include the \$800 million Scoresby Freeway, part of Melbourne's ring road concept.

In their opening submission to the hearing the Department of Infrastructure and VicRoads effectively ruled out significant public transport improvements for the area—leaving only the freeway.

As the PTUA has suspected for many months, the proposal for an 'integrated' transport strategy including new roads and new public transport services was never genuine. The position taken by the Department of Infrastructure and VicRoads has now been exposed as a sham.

In the department's submission public transport improvements which would cost any money at all have been dropped, put on the back burner or left

for cash-strapped local councils to pick up. These include:

- The East Burwood tram extension (effectively scrapped)
- Glen Waverley rail extension (scrapped)
- Bus feeder services (left to local councils)
- Express rail tracks on Ringwood and Dandenong Lines (effectively scrapped)

The only public transport initiative supported by the Department and VicRoads is the painting of a line on Springvale Rd to designate a bus lane.

In fact, there is little demand in the area for a freeway that would cost the Victorian community eight hundred million dollars, but massive support for tram and train extensions and better bus services.

"Throughout the months of this EES process the Department of Infrastructure and VicRoads have used public transport like a bag of lollies, like a sweetener to string the community along," said PTUA President Paul Mees.

"Now they withdraw the lollies thinking it's too late for the community to get angry. But they are wrong and we are more than angry. We are livid."

PTUA Stringybark Stall Success

For the second year running, the PTUA held a successful stall at the Stringybark Festival in Rowville.

Public interest in the stall was overwhelming, with many questions asked about the public transport options proposed as part of our Scoresby campaign. Most people we spoke to confirmed the gross inadequacy of the existing bus service, and indicated strong support for a rail extension to Rowville, either from Glen Waverley or from Huntingdale along Wellington Road.

The high degree of community interest, and that of local councillor Chris Pearce, points to the massive support that exists in the community for useful public transport alternatives to the Scoresby Freeway.



KALIS

International Planning Expert to Represent PTUA

Appeal to Members

Professor Robert Cervero, lecturer in urban planning at the University of California at Berkeley and the world's leading authority on urban impacts of ring-freeways and edge-city development, will present expert evidence on behalf of the PTUA at the Scoresby Transport Corridor EES panel hearings.

Professor Cervero's evidence will form a vital part of the case for alternatives to the Scoresby Freeway. He will be able to describe the freeway's devastating impact on Melbourne's long-term future as a livable city, and will be appearing for the media as well as before the Panel. Professor Cervero has kindly waived any fees for undertaking an exhausting journey made solely to support our cause.

You can assist in this by donating toward the cost of airfares and accommodation. The PTUA is relying on members' assistance to fund this expensive but important project, which will focus decision-makers' attention on the PTUA's vision of sustainable transport for Melbourne. Please help by making a donation if you can. Any sum, no matter how small, will be gratefully accepted.

Please detach the slip below and return with your donation to the PTUA Office, Ground Floor, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000.

To: The Treasurer, PTUA

I enclose my donation to the PTUA to help pay Robert Cervero's travel costs.

Name: _____ Amount: \$ _____

Address: _____

_____ P/code: _____

A-G Reports Disastrous Metcard Performance

Victoria's Auditor General, Ches Baragwanath, has just released a report on automated ticketing performance, which comes to a number of negative conclusions about the disastrous Metcard system.

The PTUA has had grave concerns about automated fare collection since it was involved in the Met Ticketing Taskforce in the early 1990s. Our success in convincing the State government to drop its unpopular plans for automated ticketing did not, unfortunately, survive the election of the Kennett government. In 1993, the PTC was able to convince the government to go ahead with a scheme, and the following year the Onelink consortium won the contract for installation and operation, at a total cost of \$332 million.

Some of the main Audit Report findings were:

- The final commissioning was running 32 months late.
- Fast-tracking development and unrealistic implementation dates contributed to a number of disputes about whether system problems had been resolved.
- Audit warned government of the risks of outsourcing the total responsibility for complex projects to a single contractor.

From a user perspective the Auditor General commented on a drop in maintenance response times by Onelink,

from a 90% response in one hour (in January 1998) to only 45% response in one hour (in July 1998). Two public surveys by Audit showed high levels of user dissatisfaction and lack of awareness about the automated system, indicating poor public education. Users reported up to 46% of vending machines sometimes out of order. Audit felt the resulting revenue drop should be of major concern to the PTC.

But what worries me more is that every ride on public transport is now a temptation to sin.

A temptation to steal a free ride. To be a thief.

There are no conductors now to look you in the eye and say:

'Fares, please.'

**— Andrew Bolt
Herald Sun 19/11/98**

The poor retail network was identified as having allowed the long-standing pattern of on-vehicle ticket purchase for trams and buses to continue. Audit is concerned the stagnation in 1997-98 revenue levels suggests major fare evasion, on the tram system in particular.

Validation on every change of vehicle remains a major challenge for the PTC to achieve. Even Onelink's Year 2000 compliance program may have inbuilt problems. Several important matters arising from the new automated system with direct implications for the Government's privatisation plans for public transport are currently being investigated by the PTC and the Department of Treasury and Finance.

The PTUA believes the automated system has been a disaster for public transport. Casual users have been frightened away. Regular users feel less safe and secure without conductors and station staff. Enforcement methods have become more harsh, with potential for more disputes between users and PTC personnel.

The conservative estimate by Audit of the loss in revenue through fare evasion per year is currently \$8 million, but we emphasise this does not include any fare evasion involving the two most popular ticket classes (daily and two hourly) because these can be held for unlawful multiple trips. The ambience of the whole system has unfortunately become more uncaring. This is extremely bad for the long term survival of a viable public transport system.

The PTUA president, secretary and vice president had input to this report through a one and a half hour consultation session with senior Audit staff.



Seven Day Service Returns to Upfield Line

Starting from 6 December, the Upfield rail line returns to seven-day service for the first time since 1957, according to a recent announcement by Transport Minister Cooper. This will complete the extensive upgrade process that has taken place over the last 18 months, and provide evening as well as Sunday services

to Upfield passengers.

Congratulations go to the Upgrade Upfield Coordinating Committee and the many campaigners in the community for their unending effort in support of the Upfield line.

Former Transport Minister Alan Brown initiated the upgrade.

UK Passengers 'Damn' Rail Operators

Britain's privatised rail system has been condemned once again, logging a 103 per cent increase in passenger complaints, according to a report in the *Guardian*. After receiving 9,753 complaints between April 1996 and March 1997, the rail passenger watchdog received a record 19,792 complaints in the year to March 1998.

Not only is the absolute number of complaints soaring to record levels; the complaints are coming from four times as many passengers as before. Complaints on overcrowding rose by 149 per cent, punctuality by 134 per cent, reliability by 149 per cent, and the telephone enquiry service by 258 per cent.

The same period saw 46,891 trains cancelled and a further 257,843 delayed, with delays worsening on 17 of the 66 routes operated by the 25 private rail companies. Punctuality worsened on 35 routes and reliability on 22 routes.

Jimmy Knapp, leader of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union, said: "The report is yet more evidence that rail privatisation is not working. It has not solved the problem of under-resourcing, and things have been made worse by the fragmentation of the industry."

But it seems not all have lost out from the rail privatisation, according to *Modern Railways*' September issue. In particular, the Railtrack infrastructure company has become a licence to print money, as its share price continues to skyrocket.

In the government's effort to reduce rail subsidies toward the old British Rail levels (subsidies increased to £2 billion in 1997, compared with £1 billion to British Rail before 1994), the subsidies to rail operators are to be cut by 15%, while Railtrack's income is to reduce by only 2%.

As has been plain to see in the UK over the past few years, it really depends on your point of view whether privatisation of public transport is good or bad. If you're lucky enough to be a company shareholder, you can expect to make a tidy sum in taxpayer-funded dividends. A mere passenger, on the other hand, can expect to be charged twice as much for half as many services in this zero-sum game.

The moral of this story? When the Kennett government talks about the gains to be had from UK-style privatisation, it's not necessarily the users they have in mind.

• PTUA Vice President John McPherson recently met with three of the consortia bidding for public transport franchises. He explained the PTUA position and reassured them that we will still be around to evaluate their performance!

Rail for \$100 million or freeway for \$800 million?

Time for a rethink on Scoresby Corridor

A senior transport consultant to the State Government has conceded that a train line to Rowville may be installed for as little as \$100 million—a massive \$225 million less than the rail option costed by the Department of Infrastructure.

Evidence presented by transport consultant Mr Graham Currie to the Scoresby Transport Corridor EES panel hearing on 17 November discredits the Department of Infrastructure role in the EES process. The PTUA has called for an evaluation of rail options to Rowville by independent rail engineers.

For many years the State Government has been looking at extending rail services to Rowville, and the 1969 Melbourne Transportation Plan proposed a route from Huntingdale via Waverley and Monash University. A more recent alternative included the partial

undergrounding of an extended Glen Waverley line.

In 1996, Mr Currie prepared preliminary cost estimates for the two routes, calculating them at \$85 million for Glen Waverley and \$100 million for Huntingdale. The Department then reexamined the Glen Waverley line to find it would cost more than \$325 million—the figure used to discredit the rail extension in the EES.

The Huntingdale option, however, was never reexamined. On cross-examination before the panel on 17 November, Mr Currie acknowledged that a rail extension from Huntingdale may only cost \$100 million.

While the PTUA believes the Glen Waverley figure is grossly inflated, we are more concerned that the cheaper route via Huntingdale was completely ignored by the Department. The department's failure to consider the Huntingdale rail option exposed its real agenda—to push through the Scoresby

Freeway at the expense of public transport.

The \$100 million rail extension must now be evaluated as an option and compared to the \$800 million freeway. The fine detail of the EES report shows that a mere 1.2 per cent increase in public transport patronage would have the same economic impact, through the reduction of traffic on local roads, as the Scoresby Freeway. There is no doubt that a train to Rowville would help achieve that 1.2 per cent increase, and the benefits would come at a cost to taxpayers of only \$100 million as compared to \$800 million for a freeway.

"Blind Freddie and even the government's own adviser can see that the train wins over the freeway on both economic and environmental grounds, yet this option was not considered," said PTUA President Paul Mees. "We now call on the government to commission an independent firm of rail engineers to evaluate the rail options to Rowville."

PTUA welcomes new proposal on tram terminus

A proposal to redesign the disastrous tram terminus in Swanston Street, outside Melbourne University, is being considered by the University.

According to Uni News of 23 October, final submissions are being sought on the proposal which will be submitted to Met Trams, Vicroads, Melbourne City Council, the Carlton Residents Association and the Carlton Traders Association for consideration.

The proposal includes:

- the introduction of a 40kph speed limit on Swanston Street between Grattan and Elgin Streets;
- extension of the crossing time, and reduction in waiting time for pedestrians at the Swanston Street / Faraday Street intersection;
- relocation of the northern pedestrian crossing and northbound tram stop closer to the major flow of pedestrians at Masson Way; and
- a ban on right-hand turns at the intersection and closure of direct vehicle access between Faraday Street and Monash Road, to facilitate relocation of the tram stop.

Future negotiations will consider the relocation of the tram shunting area

around the corner in Elgin Street.

The PTUA welcomes the proposal and recognises that, while not perfect, it will greatly help to rectify an unsatisfactory situation. The existing design has been responsible for a number of pedestrian deaths in the two years it has been in place.

The new design will, admittedly, involve some restrictions on the very small number of people accessing the University by car, who will have to go via Grattan Street instead of Faraday Street. This is the same situation faced by motorists prior to the reconstruction of the tram terminus, whose aim was the improvement of services for tram passengers, not of access for motorists. Unfortunately, as long as the shunting area remains in its present location, it is impossible to provide such a high level of access for motorists while maintaining adequate facilities for the pedestrians and tram users who make up the vast majority of the University community.

If this proposal becomes reality it will be a victory for the tens of thousands of people who travel by tram to Melbourne University and Lygon Street.

Trams to be extended!


But let's not have a repeat of Swanston Street

Recently, the Minister announced a condition on the privatised tram operation contract involving the Mont Albert tram route: the long overdue 2km tram extension to Box Hill. This extension (among many others) has been PTUA policy for many years, and would be a positive step for public transport in Melbourne.

Unfortunately we hear current plans involve a terminus in the Whitehorse Road median, a truly dangerous and inconvenient site. The already pedestrianised Market St nearby would enable a Bourke St mall type solution, where the trams go up to the doors of the shopping centre and as close as possible to bus and train stations.

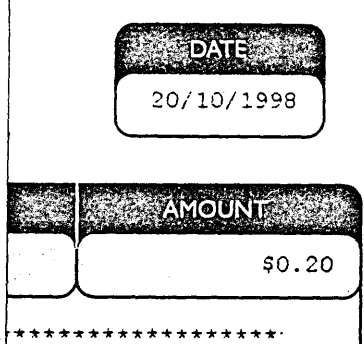
Also announced was the possibility of Bourke St and Collins St trams proceeding down Spencer Street and across the river to a new terminus in Clarendon Street near Southbank, the casino and the new exhibition centre. While this sounds excellent, its success will rely on competent design of the actual terminal tracks, cross-overs and waiting areas, and the traffic signal system will need to give trams high priority over cars in the area. If this is not accomplished the result could be congestion and confusion, as exists at present at the Whiteman Street interchange. Tram passengers to Docklands also need consideration.

A problem for both these projects can be expected to be the attitude of Vicroads who bitterly resist any priority for public transport over the car, irrespective of the environmental advantages our trams confer on the city.



Refunds are getting expensive these days – conductors would have money in the bag.

At left: refund cheque for \$0.20 due to ticket machine malfunction



Letters to the PTUA

Bizarre Track Walking

Simon Fraser wrote to Transport Minister Cooper about his experiences with an 'ad hoc' train evacuation. We print an edited extract.

I wish to draw your attention to an experience I had along with my fellow commuters on Wednesday 21 October while travelling to work on the 7:54am Belgrave to Melbourne train.

All was going well until our train came to an abrupt stop between Canterbury and East Camberwell at approximately 8:42. We then sat stationary for about 20 minutes. All the time trains were passing us on the centre of three tracks. During this period, there was no communication from the driver or any other rail staff.

After a further 10 minutes a railway employee (possibly the driver) was seen walking near the train and as the doors were now disabled, some asked him what was happening. He told them that a train in front had torn down the overhead wires and that we would be able to get off the train and the trains on the other tracks would be alerted to people being on the tracks. By now passengers were climbing off the train onto the track and walking up to East Camberwell station. Passengers assisted each other to climb down onto the tracks and then when they got up to the platform someone got a big rubbish bin so that it could be used as a step up onto the platform.

Approximately 500 people would have been on the train and many put their lives at risk by wandering onto tracks. A driver of a down train even stopped and yelled at the people to get off the tracks. At no time did any other rail employees make an appearance or give any direction in the 40 minutes that I was there.

The experience has left me (and other commuters) deeply concerned about the PTC response to what was in this case not a particularly unusual occurrence. The lines had been damaged earlier enough to have given time to provide for the passengers in some way.

What are the normal procedures for such an occurrence?

I would hope that you would be able to assure me and all passengers that the PTC will examine some issues of passenger safety and the PTC will not

conduct a witch hunt to find scapegoats in their organisation. We are not sure where we stand now with the advent of Hillside Trains and what the chain of authority is concerning passenger safety.

Back in the old days there would have been a stationmaster at East Camberwell who would have taken charge of the situation along with a guard (whose main concern is passenger safety).

Guards have been removed from trains to cut costs — ed.

Talkfests

Dear Editor,

I read with astonishment the article titled "The Dangers of Talkfests" in the last issue of PTUA News. As a worker with Environs Australia, a convenor of the Roundtable discussions and a member of the PTUA I wish to comment on the dangers of not talking!

The Roundtable discussions represent the combined resources and efforts of Environs — the local government environment network, the Melbourne City Council and Melbourne University's Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning. The roundtables have been designed to develop an effective dialogue between government, business, industry and the community on 8 topics which focus on Melbourne's urban future — toward a sustainable city. The dialogue that takes place at each roundtable will be recorded and presented to the Melbourne Passive and Low Energy Architecture Symposium in September 1999. This symposium will be followed by the PLEA International Conference in Brisbane. The symposium will focus on the issues and opportunities identified by the roundtables and will look at a range of case studies in the cities of Port Phillip and Melbourne. Site visits and on-site presentations will be a feature of the symposium and international participants will present their experiences in corresponding areas.

The roundtables have been held on Sustainable Design; Accessibility, Urban Spaces and Urban Form. The discussion at the Roundtable on Accessibility identified a range of suggestions for improving Melbourne's accessibility including:

- seeing transport as an issue of demand management (similar to the

shifting of attitudes towards consumption of water and electricity);

- the need for a further attitudinal shift, extending our 'mental garage' to a range of fast, cheap, comfortable modes of transport;

- implementation of the Melbourne Transport Strategy so that the increased parking facilities in the CBD are for servicing business needs—casual parking at a reasonable price—rather than encouraging commuter parking;

- government encouragement of fair public debate around major projects;

- provision of resources to community groups to represent community views;

- independent panels including community representatives rather than just members who are on the side of the proponent;

- Environmental Effects Statements to be funded by the proponent but conducted independently;

- a broadening of training for engineers and architects so that they are better equipped to grapple with the complexities of city design; and

- continued implementation of strategies to make the city pedestrian-friendly.

If you wish to receive a copy of the Roundtable papers, or would like to attend the Roundtable Plenary and be forwarded information on the PLEA Symposium then please contact me at Environs Australia on 9654 1322.

Whilst talk can be 'expensive' or 'cheap' we cannot afford not to talk about Melbourne's urban future. What it's worth depends on you, John McPherson, and the PTUA!

Yours sincerely,

Martin Brennan

The PTUA appreciates Martin's comments, and regrets that in our view the Roundtable discussion we attended was less than productive. We agree with Martin that it should be possible for people with differing interests to deliberate and discuss and reach a satisfactory consensus, on which useful decisions can be based. Sadly, in reality a lot of discussions fail to achieve this noble aim. This does not reflect on the organisers so much as on the entrenched nature of political divisions. The PTUA would be most happy to participate in discussions where we can be assured of an active outcome.

Boronia Station Opens

Amid great fanfare, the new Boronia railway station was opened on Monday 9 November by Premier Jeff Kennett, marking the completion of a \$28 million project to eliminate the level crossing at Boronia Road and construct a new public transport interchange. (See PTUA News, May 1997).

Surrounded by local MPs, councillors and locals, Mr Kennett acknowledged the importance of Boronia station to transport in the outer east. "More than 5000 rail commuters use Boronia Station each weekday and I have no

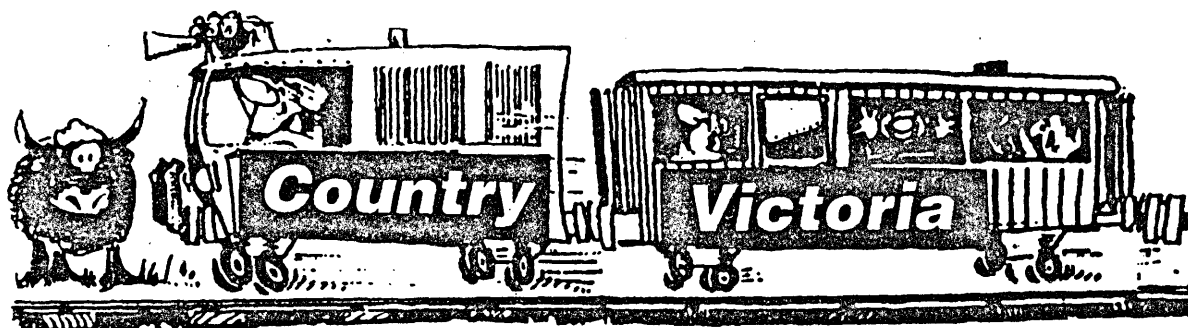
doubt they will welcome the new facilities," he said.

Transport Minister Robin Cooper added that "a feature of the new station will be the enlarged bus interchange area that will improve train and bus transfers to surrounding suburbs such as The Basin, Knoxfield, Wheelers Hill, Scoresby and Mountain Gate."

Removal of the Boronia Road crossing involved building a 230m rail tunnel and realigning 1.5km of rail track to a depth of 7 metres below ground level. The station now has a new eastern

entrance, an air-conditioned waiting room and lifts to provide access between the platform and concourse. The station will be staffed from first to last train, seven days a week.

Now that superior interchange facilities have been provided at Boronia, the time has come to provide feeder bus services that are usable. The best bus interchange in the world is no use if the last bus leaves before 5pm, and no buses at all run on weekends. Buses should be timed to meet every train on every day of the week.



VLine reservations return

Transport Minister Cooper appears to have reversed his earlier decision to abolish reservations on country trains.

Speaking on Melbourne radio he made an announcement approximately two weeks ago. This has not been followed by a media release, but we have been informed by the Minister's office that from December 6, optional reservations will return to trains on the Albury, Swan Hill, Echuca and Sale lines.

We are assured the reservation system can be recommissioned without difficulty.

The reaction from the bush after the original announcement was loud and angry. It shocked country politicians who apparently pushed Cooper into action. We hear the Albury/Wodonga and Goulburn Valley corridors were particularly vociferous.

The abolition of reservations was a major downgrade of service quality. Many people, the elderly, those with a disability and families or groups who wish to sit together can be anxious about a seat at busy travel times such as Fridays and holiday periods.

New country services

One hundred new train and bus services for country lines were announced recently. This was preceded by a blizzard of press publicity, although the new timetables are not available yet.

The PTUA believes the time has come for hourly services all day to Ballarat and Bendigo at least — similar to Geelong.

Most European systems have long since adopted regular interval services, particularly the Swiss railways with an interconnecting 'pulse' timetable for the whole country.

Copy Deadline for the next PTUA News is 26 February 1999

Newsletter Production Team:

Tony Morton, Tony Fuery and John McPherson

Printed on recycled paper by Pulp & Pigment, Collingwood

PTUA News

Newsletter of the Public Transport Users' Association Inc., A-6256L

Print Post: Publication No. PP 331088/00009

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