

News

Newsletter of the
Public Transport Users Association

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Scoresby Report Imminent

As of the end of April, the independent expert report assessing the Scoresby Transport Corridor EES has been with the Department of Infrastructure.

It is expected that the report will be released to the public by Planning Minister Rob Maclellan in the very near future. (Possibly by the time you receive this edition of *PTUA News*.) PTUA members are encouraged to respond by writing to their MPs and newspapers.

The EES, released last year, called for the construction of the Scoresby Freeway from Ringwood to Frankston at a cost of \$800 million. Despite the freeway having many adverse environmental impacts, it was defended on the grounds that average travel speeds in the corridor would increase by a whole 2 kilometres per hour.

The same amount of money would provide the outer eastern suburbs with the best public transport in Melbourne. At the panel hearings in December, the PTUA and 40 other community and environment groups argued that a public transport package costing just \$250 million would have more benefits for residents of the corridor—even motorists!

Sunday Services Improve!



The State government has largely made good its 1996 election promise to bring Sunday public transport services in line with Saturday services, bringing more than 800 new metropolitan train and tram services to Melbourne on Sundays from 4 July onwards.

Strangely, however, services beyond Ringwood to Belgrave and Lilydale will worsen, to every 40 minutes rather than the current 30 minute frequency with a Belgrave shuttle connection. Transport Minister Cooper maintains that passengers will appreciate the through service to Belgrave even if the frequency is lower; passengers' own opinions may differ.

With the new services, most train lines in Melbourne will have 20-minute service between 11am and 7pm on both Saturday and Sunday. Pakenham and Cranbourne services, however, will only be improved from every 60 minutes to every 40 minutes on Sundays.

Tram travellers will also benefit from more regular services, with most routes offering a 12 minute frequency between 11am and 6:30pm—a vast improvement given that most routes now operate only half-hourly.

Travel on public holidays will also improve. The current Saturday timetable will be used for all public holidays except Good Friday and Christmas Day, when the new Sunday timetable will apply.

The Minister acknowledges that "the biggest growth area in public transport in Melbourne for many years has been in the weekend and off peak times." The new Sunday services are a step in the right direction, although there appears to be no improvement for those who travel on Sunday evenings, or for the many people in the suburbs whose buses don't run on weekends at all.

The Kennett government went to its last election in February 1996 promising a uniform weekend timetable. After the election services were improved on the busiest train lines only, from 40 minutes to 30 minutes. The latest announcement is belated but welcome, and we congratulate the government for keeping its promises.

The Minister also announced the extension of three Dandenong services to Cranbourne on Monday to Thursday evenings, bringing this service in line with the existing Friday timetable.

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CityLink Court Action Update

This is an update on two court challenges to Transurban CityLink. In 1995 PTUA member Phil Morey challenged the traffic forecasts in the CityLink Prospectus, claiming that they are misleading and deceptive and therefore in breach of the Trade Practices Act. A Federal Court judge dismissed Phil's case, but was found on appeal to be in error. It has been two years since the Full Federal Court ordered a "speedy" retrial of Phil's case, but a hearing has now been scheduled for 21 July.

When the go-ahead for CityLink was given in 1996, West Brunswick resident Peter Allan mounted a challenge to the tax breaks granted to Transurban by the Keating Government. These tax breaks allow Transurban to pay tax-free dividends to its shareholders, and allow banks to make tax-free loans to Transurban. CityLink was the largest beneficiary of the Federal Government's Development Allowance scheme, which has since been wound up by Treasurer Peter Costello after it became evident that investors were leveraging the benefits to deprive the Government of large amounts of revenue.

Legally, an infrastructure developer is not entitled to the tax breaks if there is "a law in force...restricting the operation of competing facilities." Peter Allan argues that the Melbourne City Link Act is such a law, because it mandates restrictions in traffic capacity on arterial roads that 'compete' with CityLink. If this argument is correct, then Transurban's investors and lenders will retrospectively become liable for

millions of dollars of avoided income tax. Under the agreements between Transurban and its financiers this would constitute an 'event of default'.

However, until now Peter has not been able to argue his case before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, because Transurban have sought to deny him 'standing'. This is a legal technicality often used to deny cash-strapped individuals and community groups a hearing in cases of public concern. It revolves around the question whether Peter has a 'special' interest in the case. Early last year, a full bench of the Federal Court decided that Peter had standing because he lived next to the Tullamarine Freeway and his residential amenity was therefore affected.

During the two years it took to obtain this decision, Peter moved house. Transurban then sought to claim that because Peter moved he has thereby 'lost standing'. The AAT, once again, saw fit to throw Peter's case out on these grounds. Peter appealed to the Federal Court, and in April Justice Merkel decided in Peter's favour.

The judge began his written decision with the following observation:

"The present case is an example of the fortitude required by a citizen who wishes to draw upon administrative law procedures for enforcement of modern public statutory duties against public authorities and large corporations."

The case will now go back to the AAT a third time, with clear instructions from the Court that if Peter had standing in 1996, he has standing now, and that attention should be paid to the substantive issue: whether in fact Transurban is eligible for the tax concessions.

Transurban has since appealed the decision to a full bench of the Federal Court. However, this should not prevent the case being heard by the AAT in the interim. Stay tuned for further updates.

PTUA Involved in Hume Freeway Extension Assessment

As part of the National Highways Network a totally unnecessary extension of the Hume Freeway south for 14 kms from Craigeburn to Murray Road and the Western Ring road is proposed at a cost of \$260million, for the cheapest option. This extravagant project would replace the existing multi-lane road in the same corridor as the highway access to Melbourne.

The opposing case is being put by local environmental groups and the PTUA. We consider that the present road is adequate and that congestion relief over much of Melbourne could be obtained by the expenditure of this money on public transport upgrades such as electrification of rail lines and establishment of comprehensive feeder bus networks to rail stations plus high frequency bus services along all main roads.

Our president Paul Mees has given evidence in his role as lecturer in transport planning at Melbourne University. Any time savings from the project which will destroy rare grassland environments in the upper Merri Creek valley are tiny in comparison to the gains for users of public transport. On a strict benefit/ cost analysis the public transport improvements are far better value for money. However the comparisons are not made fairly across all modes, the Federal money is only allocated for roads.

Note: while we support Peter and Phil's cases, the PTUA is not a party to the proceedings. Members should be reassured that no financial penalties can accrue to PTUA members personally from our involvement.

Electrification to Sydenham to proceed

What About Sunbury?

In the western suburbs, the privatised train operator will be expected to finance and build an extension of the present St Albans electrified suburban service to Sydenham, approximately 6 kilometres further north. Sunbury, now a rapidly-growing outer suburb, is a further 13 kilometres, and Diggers Rest is expanding fast as well. With double track already in place, Sunbury would seem the logical terminus for the extension.

Safety concern on rail lines

The announced extension is at least 3 years away yet serious safety problems exist at former quiet country stations such as Sydenham. The PTUA has become involved in the local campaign to improve passenger safety at stations on the St Albans line. Recently a teenage boy was tragically killed by a country train at full speed; arguably the

primitive 'safety crossing' at the station contributed to his death. Thousands of school children travel via stations with totally inadequate safety provision and minimal staff. The PTUA recognises that this is a problem on most suburban and commuter lines in and around Melbourne.

Over the last 20 years PTC policy has been to remove fencing along rail lines. This has made unsafe crossing of the lines easier and has led to multiple fatalities in some instances. Vicroads, notably, securely fences all urban free-ways with 2 metre high cyclone wire.

The PTUA believes the removal of fencing is totally unacceptable for the safety of the community. We believe the minimum safety requirement for crossing the line at track level should be a 'wicket gate' closed and locked automatically or manually on approach of trains.

Making It Work

Box Hill Tram Extension

The future private operator of the Mont Albert tram line will be required to fund a tram extension to Box Hill shopping centre, according to Transport Minister Cooper.

Official plans seem to locate the terminus in the wide centre median of Whitehorse Road. Some passengers will of course gamble with three lanes of fast moving cars and trucks in an attempt to catch infrequent buses and trains. A far more convenient interchange with rail and bus would be created if the tram line terminated in pedestrianised Market Street, near the doors of the Box Hill Central complex. A short walk and an escalator would take passengers up to the buses or down to the trains.

PTUA committee member David Robertson has been approaching local interests and politicians to push for the Market Street terminus. The rooftop bus terminal at Box Hill badly needs an upgrade, if not a more convenient location. The waiting areas are exposed to the elements without heating and cooling, in stark contrast to the comfortable interior of the centre.

Members will know that Box Hill is just one of many short but important tram extensions long advocated by the PTUA, linking the tram network to convenient rail stations in the eastern suburbs.

MP Cheryl Kernot Consults PTUA

On Thursday 29 April Paul Mees and John McPherson from the PTUA committee met the ALP federal shadow minister for transport and regional development, Ms Cheryl Kernot, for an hour of wide ranging discussion.

Ms Kernot had requested the meeting and of course the PTUA was happy to respond.

As well as explaining the basis of the PTUA policy — that a public transport system combining frequency, good connections and reliability can perform effectively in Australian cities of even low density — the discussion ranged from the negative effects of the Melbourne-Adelaide rail gauge standardisation project to advisory work Paul Mees had undertaken for a Queensland Parliamentary committee into Brisbane transport infrastructure.

Ms Kernot was impressed by the positive role and policies of the PTUA and expressed interest in further meetings.

John McPherson

SuperConductor Flies High

Adrian Ferguson, alias SuperConductor, plans to stand against Tourism Minister Ms Louise Asher in her upper house province of Monash at the forthcoming State election. The I Prefer A Tram Conductor party will be raising the issue of vanished tram conductors, and other closely related issues such as the use of heritage W-class trams. Ms Asher should be a champion of trams and conductors, Mr Ferguson believes, in her role as Tourism Minister. Voters in her electorate, with over a dozen important tram routes, will now have an opportunity to vote on the issue of tram conductors directly.

Recent university research does show that the friendliness and usability of the public transport system is very important in the rating that tourists give to various tourist destination cities. Indisputably the replacement of conductors by automatic ticket machines last year made Melbourne public transport worse for tourists and casual visitors. Ms Asher, speaking on 3LO to Terry Laidler on 10 May, claimed wrongly that the City Circle trams still carried conductors and that this was the main service used by tourists. Even the City Circle conductors (actually tourist guides) have been replaced by recorded announcements (at least on those we've seen!), and the PTUA believes that tourist use of all tram services in the inner areas and to designated tourist attractions is very high.

Victorian Budget 1999

This year's state budget has been released and is again disappointing, though not surprising. The government has allocated \$255 million to destroy the Mullum Mullum Valley with an Eastern Freeway extension and has also funded about \$500 million worth of other road projects, none of which will produce the same benefits as an equivalent investment in public transport.

Indeed, there is next to nothing in the budget for public transport, save a tokenistic and misdirected \$25 million which has been allocated to bus services. Not one cent has been allocated to extending our rail network, or to putting more trains and trams on it.

Vaughan Williams

Track Maintenance is for your own good — honest!

Train and tram users will have noticed a flurry of activity on the rail network lately. It would appear the government is catching up on neglected track maintenance to get the system into a condition fit for selling off to the highest bidder. The way that the maintenance has been done is disappointing, with buses replacing trams and trains for long sections of the routes (in many cases, a lot longer than necessary).

The PTUA has had several complaints of buses not connecting properly with trains and trams, meaning a long wait—sometimes in cold, wet conditions. The buses divert from the normal route more than is necessary and there is insufficient notice of where they will go. In some cases there has been no replacement bus at all, and trains or trams simply did not run.

Of course, normal fares apply in spite of the considerably lengthened journey time and the inconvenience of changing vehicles. There has been no attempt to improve services on parallel routes for the duration of the interruption, such as putting more trains on the Epping Line while the number 86 tram is disrupted.

And finally, the notification to passengers has proved disappointing. The 'VicTrip' website had no mention at all of the disruption to services, nor did the Met information centre mention it without being prompted—and in some cases stated that there were "no changes that we've been notified of"! The posters at stations and tram stops were few and far between and were confusing and lacking in detail.

The PTUA recognises that track work is essential, but the disruption to passengers needs to be kept to a minimum and passengers must be notified in advance.

Vaughan Williams

GST Update

As this edition of PTUA News goes to press, the Australian Democrats are discussing tax reform with the Howard Government, following the rejection of the proposed GST by independent Senator Brian Harradine.

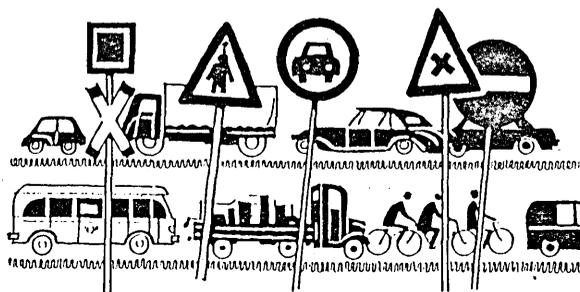
We are pleased to report a change in the Democrats policy on the exemption of public transport from a GST. Following publication of the article "Fares Will Rise" in the last newsletter, the Democrats are now supporting the PTUA position for a full GST exemption. This would mean that fares would actually fall slightly compared to their present levels, no doubt stemming the exodus from public transport that high fares and poor service promote, and the disastrous downward spiral described to the Senate enquiry by PTUA President Paul Mees. This would be exacerbated by the parallel fall in the cost of car travel.

The PTUA congratulates the Democrats on their stance on behalf of all users of public transport, which has suddenly become more significant.

The PTUA has no policy on issues not relevant to public transport. Therefore, we have no preference between there being no GST at all (The ALP/Green option) or a GST with public transport exempted (The Democrat option). However, if there is to be a GST we consider it of vital importance that public transport is exempted to avoid a catastrophic decline in patronage, revenue and ultimately service.

We encourage members to lobby Victorian Senators on this matter.

The Battle for Swanston Walk



New Melbourne Lord Mayor Peter Costigan shocked many thinking people when his first act as Lord Mayor was to call for the opening of Swanston Walk to cars again. While all the Council and even police reports indicated the Walk worked reasonably well, Lord Mayor Costigan feels it lacks the glamour only the headlights of passing cars can bring.

The one hundred thousand tram passengers who benefited from pedestrianisation of Swanston Street have been ignored. This was one of the few large projects ever undertaken by the City of Melbourne that had benefits for the 60% of CBD workers and recreational users who arrive by public transport. The councillors of the City of Melbourne seem to be obsessed by the needs of cars and their drivers.

The transit mall offered a quieter and more relaxed environment for waiting passengers and much reduced the risks of exiting a tram, as almost all other motor vehicles were banned. Pedestrians benefited from wider footpaths and less pollution. Cyclists acquired an excellent north-south route across the city.

Strenuous opposition erupted as soon as the proposal became known.

The PTUA naturally became involved. A PTUA committee member spoke to the planning committee of Council and was joined by a concerned trader, a representative of Bicycle Victoria, and environmentalist Linda Parlane in a vain attempt to sway the vote. Councillors Martin Brennan, David Ristrom and Clem Newton-Brown consistently voted against the proposal, to their credit. The Public Transport Union voiced their opposition and have threatened to boycott the route if the reopening to cars goes ahead. The corporatised Swanston Trams has made no comment in public but have, it seems, made representations in private.

The PTUA at this stage can only watch developments. We believe that even the night time opening now planned from 7pm to 7am will be dangerous to tram users and unsatisfactory in every way. Our concern is that having got a foot in the door, as it were, the pro-car lobby will attempt to force a daytime opening. Swanston Walk is not perfect and has just got worse, but remains a symbol that our city has not completely turned its back on public transport and the needs of public transport users.

John McPherson

'Internal Bypass' Fight Goes On

PTUA advises on public transport solution for Albury/Wodonga.

At the recent NSW state election an independent candidate failed by only 700 votes to win the lower house seat covering Albury. She ran mainly on the critical issue of the so-called 'internal bypass', proposed to slice through Albury along the present rail corridor.

The local official view appears to be that congestion on the present bridge/causeway that links Wodonga to Albury is so great at 40,000 vehicles per day on a 4 lane road that any price in future air and noise pollution should be paid to achieve a second river crossing to 'relieve' this situation.

A proper external bypass to carry the 2,500 to 3,000 semi-trailers and B-double trucks around Albury/Wodonga would cost \$50 million more than the 'internal bypass'. However, it would also provide a second river crossing and would permanently remove the noise and pollution of large trucks, most of which travel through the cities at night when background noise is least and the effects on amenity greatest.

As people living along the Tullamarine and Eastern freeways know, 'noise walls' do not control the engine, tyre and wind noise from large

trucks travelling in the middle of the night.

The Albury/Wodonga Environment Centre has been in contact with the PTUA, as they wish to propose a public transport vision to reduce future traffic needs in the twin cities. Central to this vision is a high quality public transport network, possibly including a light rail component. This would use the present rail bridge crossing of the Murray River and some existing rail track to north and south, with light rail extensions into the retail centres of Wodonga and Albury. Light rail vehicles would share track with mainline trains as now occurs in the German region around the city of Karlsruhe. Naturally, comprehensive feeder bus networks would also be needed.

The second river crossing within the built up area, used as the justification for the 'internal bypass', would not be needed if much of the future travel growth was taken by public transport. Of course the transfer of long distance freight back to efficient, fast container trains and intercity passenger traffic to upgraded rail would also relieve the cities of much car and truck disturbance.

A Bridge Too Far

Ballarat and Western Victoria to Suffer

With no consultation of which the PTUA is aware, the Ballarat rail line has been shut down west of Melton from 2 May for (doubtless) necessary upgrade work on the Melton Reservoir bridge. An interim timetable replaces all through train services with buses beyond Melton. Ten trains per day will be replaced by buses "until further notice". The Minister concedes that trains will be 15 minutes slower. Of course all passengers will be inconvenienced by the changeover to the bus.

The concept of best possible service has completely disappeared. Thomas the Tank Engine's Fat Controller would know (but not the Infrastructure bureaucrats) that an alternative rail line to Ballarat exists via North Geelong and is only a little slower than via Melton. A proportion of the Ballarat trains should have been rescheduled via North Geelong.

A side effect of the shutdown is

that passengers changing to buses at Ballarat for western Victoria will now have a double change of transport: first from train to bus, then to another bus at Ballarat, for an indefinite number of months or years while the bridgeworks continue. Passengers from beyond Bairnsdale already know the delights of a double change (first from bus to bus at Bairnsdale and then to train at Sale one hour later). The State budget announcement of funds to improve the bus-train interchange at Ballarat station is little comfort; passengers for destinations north and west of Ballarat should still be able to travel by train. Improved frequency of service should be the highest priority, not luxury interchange facilities.

The PTUA has remained critical of the standardisation of the Melbourne to Adelaide line: both of the indirect route and the low quality of infrastructure provided. However, the broad gauge track is still in place west of Ballarat to Ararat and broad gauge Sprinter railcars can be reintroduced as far as Ararat very easily. This would reduce bus travel distances and improve

PTUA Meets

Susan Davies MP

Independent MP Susan Davies has held the lower house seat of Gippsland West since former Transport Minister Alan Brown was eased out of Parliament and into the position of Agent-General for Victoria in London. A by-election was held and Ms Davies, with the support of preferences from other independent candidates, beat the Liberal party in one of their safest seats and sits non-aligned in the Victorian lower house.

Another independent, Russell Savage, won the seat of Mildura from the Liberal Party's Craig Bilstein at the last State election. Mr Savage ran strongly on the return of the 'Vineland' train service to Mildura. However, the government has not seen fit to address this issue during its present term of office. The government's position for the election will be interesting—as will the Opposition's.

Ms Davies regards improved public transport as a major issue for her electorate. Her seat covers Leongatha and Wonthaggi and includes portions of the Warragul/Traralgon commuter rail route. Here, a recent misguided attempt (driven by the technicalities of privatisation) to cease the Flinders Street—to—Warragul service and instead run 40-year-old railcars connecting to suburban trains has spectacularly failed. On no other route does V/Line treat passengers so badly.

South Gippsland lost its passenger trains, as did Bairnsdale, after the first Kennett government came to power. However, the track is still in place. When visited by PTUA committee members Christina Sindt and John McPherson at Parliament House on 6 May, Ms Davies said that the prospects for the return of passenger trains would be better if freight trains returned to the South Gippsland line. She believes this to be possible under the new privatised V/Line Freight.

the utilisation of Sprinters, which often layover for long periods at Ballarat against the principles of highest utilisation and of economic rationalism.

A state election is just around the corner. The return of passenger rail services to Ararat or even further west would make a cheap and attractive promise to the western Victorian community from any politician.

John McPherson

Letters to the PTUA

GST and Democrats

I wish to correct the assertion that no political party supports a zero-rating or GST exemption on public transport.

The Democrats argue strongly against a GST on public transport. We have campaigned for many years on the need to encourage public transport and minimise private car use. Indeed, the Democrats contribution to the March report of the Senate Environment Committee, which I chair, made the explicit recommendation that public transport be zero-rated under the GST.

Other recommendations included:

- petrol and diesel to remain taxed under the excise system, reducing the fuel tax cuts by \$2.5 billion;
- diesel rebates to be dependent on positive environment outcomes, particularly the encouragement of cleaner fuels such as compressed natural gas and LPG, and more tightly targeted to long, non-urban haulage;
- an additional sales tax imposed on new vehicles based on their comparative fuel (in)efficiency; and
- a 100% diesel excise rebate for rail.

A copy of the full report is available from the ECITA Committee secretariat at Parliament House Canberra, or on www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/erca/cttee/index.htm

Senator Lyn Allison

Chair, Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee.

Australian Democrats Senator for Victoria.

Editor: The PTUA recognises and approves of the Democrats record on public transport. On this issue, we were advised by the Democrats Federal Transport Spokesperson, Senator John Woodley, that "exempting public transport from the GST (was) not Democrats policy". We are very pleased to see that the Democrats have now altered their position and trust they will vote down any proposal to place a GST on public transport. (See also "GST Update", Page 4)

Greetings from America

Dear PTUA,

Thanks for sending us your spirited newsletter and encouraging us to keep up

the global fight to stop the spread of asphalt and motor vehicles.

The details on a part of the world where I've never been, regarding your struggles and triumphs, are hard for me to grasp. But we will try to glean something for the Auto-Free Times magazine to report. Any direct submissions, articles, photos, etc. are welcome. Our address is below.

I noticed one line in your newsletter that I take exception to: "Cars are here to stay." This is questionable as an attitude and as a viable prediction! Better to ask "Are cars here to stay?" and then look at the facts. Unsustainable means no, cars are not here to stay.

For more info, people can request a free issue of Auto-Free Times by writing us at PO Box 4347, Arcata, CA 95518 USA, or seeing our website [below] and emailing us.

Cheers,

Tom Lundberg

Fossil Fuels Policy Action Institute,
California, USA

<http://www.tidepool.com/alliance>

Country Vic cont'd

Independent MP Meets PTUA

Russell Savage, who won the State seat of Mildura from the Liberal party at the last State election, met John McPherson and Mary Jamieson from the PTUA committee at Parliament House on 14 May.

Mr Savage had campaigned hard for the *Vinlander* train to be re-instated between Melbourne and Mildura and assured the PTUA that the train remained a key policy for his campaign at the next election. The Mildura region has a large tourist market and many retirees who often need to travel to Melbourne for medical reasons and need a comfortable trip. As many community services have been centralised, country people need to travel further and the train is vital.

Mr Savage agreed that the overnight bus was a poor substitute for the train and that passenger numbers on the bus had remained much lower than the train had carried. The PTUA pointed out the potential for a luxury tourist service to operate as part of the *Vinlander* to help reduce the subsidy needs and also the potential of a morning Sprinter rail-car service to Swan Hill (if provided) to have a bus connection to Mildura. More time on the train less on the bus.

As a former resident of Mildura I understand the need for trains to return to all the long distance public transport routes in Victoria and Mildura is the city furthest of all from the big smoke.

Mary Jamieson

Airport rail link update

Last newsletter we reported that a Department of Infrastructure report had recommended a route using the Broadmeadows rail line for a rail link to Melbourne airport.

We indicated that we were pleased with the outcome. Since then, we have received a large amount of negative feedback, especially from residents along the proposed route. As a result, Paul Mees (President) and Les Chandra (Secretary) met with members of the Broadmeadows Progress Association and other concerned people. The number one concern of the local residents was that a plan was being pushed through that would bring considerable disbenefits without corresponding benefits for the local community.

Current proposals are for a privately operated high speed rail line, travelling at speeds up to 130 km/h through existing suburban areas and through the Broadmeadows valley park. Included is construction of a third track from Moonee Ponds to Coolaroo. Local services are not being proposed, nor will existing level crossings be abolished.

The PTUA contingent was able to reassure local residents that we in no way support the current proposals, which are badly thought out and planned. For example, the plans are for the airport railway station to be a good 5

minutes walk away from the airport terminal, and then intrusive high speed trains are proposed to save time. Inflated cost estimates also appear to have been made.

We were able to state the PTUA current position, which is that we believe the best option is for the existing suburban rail system to be extended from Broadmeadows to Coolaroo. During the day, express services would operate every 10-15 minutes, interspersed with local stopping services. Services would be through-routed to southern or eastern suburbs. Late evening and early morning services would be provided by extending stopping services through to the airport.

Level crossings would be abolished along the line, and additional stations constructed at Coolaroo and Attwood, with local bus services integrated to provide better transport for the whole community.

While we were not able to assuage all the concerns of the local residents, we all came away with a better understanding of our relative positions. In conclusion, we agreed that the current plans are ill-thought out and it is most important the proper consultation takes place to ensure that all the options are considered and the best possible outcomes occur, balancing the needs and desires of both local residents and airport travellers.

Who Tolloed the Toll?

John Mellor, a keen new road boosterist, reports in *The Australian* (6 May) that tolls to Transurban via Citylink's techno-E-tag system are so high by Australian standards that huge advertising is required to promote demand. A mammoth \$40 million is being spent, not the \$15million planned! *The Sunday Age* (9 May) reports that motorcycles will not be tolled on Citylink because the technology cannot detect them reliably. A special troubleshooting team has been rushed out from the French company operating the tolling system in an attempt to fix problems delaying the system opening. More problems have surfaced in the private-sector system set up to handle toll accounts, with customers being overcharged and having their details lost.

The CityLink delays and operating problems cannot help but remind us of a certain automatic ticketing system whose failures public transport users must wrestle with every day.

One Small Auto Ticket Stuff-Up

With the fare rises in January came alignment in the prices of Short Trip and Rail Plus Two tickets, which serve similar purposes—one on trams, the other on trains. Much to my surprise, then, I found my '10 x Short Trip' ticket did not work at station barriers. The hovering inspectors told me that Short Trip and Rail Plus Two tickets are not interchangeable, despite the prices now being identical! One wonders why anyone bothered bringing prices into line; this appears to be just another futile exercise by Metcard.

Rumour File

Taking trams down Swanston Street between 15 and 17 May, I noticed two of the tram stops between the city and Melbourne University had 'Tram Stop Not In Use' covering the tram stop signs. Naturally I was somewhat concerned; had Swanston Trams surreptitiously closed these two well-patronised stops without telling anyone?

Fortunately, these stops have since returned to normal. Nonetheless, we are still none the wiser as to these mysterious events over the weekend.

Tony Morton

A Larger Auto Ticketing Failure

Even though the government signed the final Onelink contract a couple of months ago, by taking over advertising from Onelink they have implicitly admitted the poor quality of advertising Onelink had done as part of the original deal.

It's a pity, then, that the latest advertising of auto ticketing and Metcard done for the government is just as bizarre.

Large well-placed colour advertisements in metropolitan and local papers show a tatty corner shop, a street newspaper vendor and a blurred photo of strap-hanging passengers on a crowded tram and then sell the message that your public transport trip is actually one stop longer and slower than you think because, first, you must plan to buy your ticket off the system. What a negative message to try to sell to smart users!

Herald-Sun Survey Shows Little Support for Auto Ticketing

The PTUA was vindicated by the recent customer survey in *The Herald Sun* on user attitudes to public transport, and to automatic ticketing in particular. 90 per cent of users who replied to the survey believed the automatic ticket machines had made public transport use less pleasant and more difficult.

It appears the PTUA criticisms of auto ticketing have been on the right track, in the eyes of those who have to use it.



Copy Deadline for the next PTUA News is 30 July

Newsletter Production Team:

Tony Morton, Tony Fuery, John McPherson and Vaughan Williams

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Our thanks to the dedicated mailout team

Useless Bus Service Slammed

PTUA Decries 'Tokenistic' Rowville Bus

The PTUA has slammed the 'Rowville Express' bus service from Rowville to Glen Waverley station, introduced on 3 May by Ventura Bus Lines.

Ventura is running four buses to Glen Waverley in the morning peak and three back to Rowville in the evening peak, all at half-hour intervals. There are no buses in the evening in case people work late or want to catch a movie, and no buses on weekends. The service is an insult to Rowville residents' intelligence.

According to the timetable, the last bus leaves Glen Waverley at 6:48pm, committing city workers to finish work by 5:30 at the latest. Any unexpected holdups will leave them stranded at Glen Waverley station. The PTUA fails to see how Ventura expects to attract anyone to such a tokenistic service.

There is a danger that the failure of this bus service could be used as an argument against extending the rail line. Melbourne's public transport bureaucrats have a culture of using their own failure as an excuse not to do better. If someone runs a pathetic bus service which no-one uses, this becomes an excuse for not providing the kind of service that people need. It's inviting people to say, 'We don't need a rail extension to Rowville, because we gave them a bus and nobody used it'.

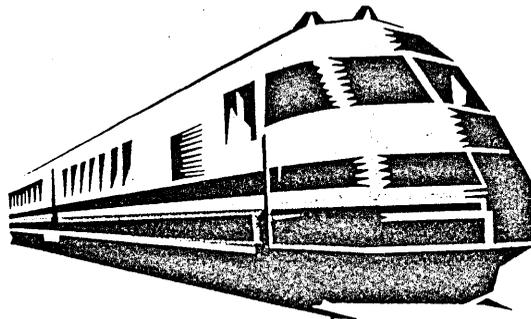
The message from the Rowville community is clear: people don't want a half-hourly bus in peak hour, they want a train that runs seven days a week, just like they have in Ringwood or Ferntree Gully. A rail line to Rowville from either Glen Waverley or Huntingdale could be had for a paltry \$100 million. This is not a huge sum when taken in the context of another \$300 million for the Eastern Freeway and the cool billion dollars proposed for the Scoresby Freeway.

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Members' Meeting

**What sort of country/interstate services
do we need?**

Trains every hour to everywhere?

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Statewide connecting coaches?

Tilt trains?

Wednesday 23 June, 6:30pm for 7:00pm, Ross House

(follow the signs from the front door)

Light refreshments will be served

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Make sure your PTUA News follows you when you move!
Cut out or photocopy this form, fill in and return to us at
PTUA, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000.

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