



Unified branding returns

Melbourne's public transport system has a new name. The system will now be known as "Metlink", after being launched by Transport Minister Peter Batchelor last month. Train, tram and bus stop signs will gradually be replaced with the new livery, starting with suburbs along the Alamein railway line.



The return to unified branding is official acknowledgement that the break-up of the Met into various fiefdoms, each with its own branding, was a failure and confusing to passengers. For example, new passengers would not necessarily be aware that they could board M>Train services at Connex-run stations.

The PTUA welcomes the Metlink initiative. It sends a message that there is one public transport system in Melbourne, despite there being several modes and operators. If extended across Melbourne we think it will prove a small but worthwhile benefit to passengers.

We also consider that Metlink should go beyond signage and branding to promote genuine service integration. Most important are measures to improve connectivity between services, such as route and timetable co-ordination, longer bus operating hours and the extension of tram routes to railway stations.

Also desirable is unified marketing to replace current wasteful and ineffective company-specific campaigns and the discontinuation of single-operator tickets. All these would provide the reality of integrated services as well as the appearance of it. The Association would welcome working with the government on any of these measures.

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Tram Plan

Material leaked to the Herald Sun recently revealed some of the detail of "Tram Plan", the DoI's future vision for tram services in Melbourne.

While some of the details are still sketchy, we are pleased to see that tram priority has been highlighted as one of the major issues on the network today. Better priority will not only make services more attractive to users by making them faster, it will also mean a more frequent service can be provided with the same numbers of trams and staff.

The Herald Sun report also outlines increased frequencies. Given the current regular overcrowding on some routes in peak hour, this obviously needs to be looked at. We believe frequencies also need to be increased for off-peak, weekend and evening (including after midnight) services, to better suit Melbourne's wide-ranging social and leisure activities.

The report also suggests new lines through CBD streets such as Russell and Exhibition Streets to boost peak capacity. Apart from unused capacity available on William and Latrobe Streets, we also believe that these would unnecessarily complicate the (at present, easy to understand) CBD route structure, and be enormously expensive to build. With limited funds available, this money is better spent on suburban extensions – for example to locations where current tram routes finish short of railway stations such as in Carnegie and Gardiner, and extending routes to major traffic generators such as Chadstone.

Also mentioned is the possibility of a link to Doncaster, though for capacity reasons we firmly believe this should be built as a train line (see article on page 2).

From the limited information published by the Herald Sun, we think overall that Tram Plan is a positive step forward for public transport in Melbourne, and if the major points are implemented they could go a long way to helping to achieve the Government's 20% by 2020 target.

We look forward to full details of the plan being released in due course.

Keeping in touch...

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Committee Meetings

Generally the third Thursday of each month. Members are welcome to attend. Please call the office for details

Tram Jam Plan Slammed

Trains the only solution for Doncaster

A State Government proposal for a light rail line (read tram line) to Doncaster along the Eastern Freeway median is counterproductive, and would lead only to bumper-to-bumper trams unable to move along Bourke Street. The Doncaster route should be built instead as a heavy rail line, as has been planned since 1969 and advocated in our policy document *It's Time To Move*.

Currently there are some 14,000 residents of the City of Manningham who work in the inner city. A larger number work at other destinations in the proposed rail corridor. To carry a serious share of this workforce, plus some school and university students, on trams would require at least fifty trams

each peak hour. This is obviously unworkable.

To cater for expected passenger numbers a regular train, not light rail, is required. Even though this might initially be more expensive, the ongoing costs of operating the line to a sufficient capacity would be much lower. Only ten trains, rather than fifty or sixty trams, would be required for each peak.

A tram would only be adequate if the government is planning to carry school children, pensioners, a tiny minority of CBD commuters and nobody else. It would also take longer to get passengers to their destination, and require more vehicles and drivers to maintain off peak services. Trams are much slower than trains, and a new tram line would cause severe tram congestion in Bourke Street as it ran through the City, slowing down

other tram routes and causing chaos for passengers and tram operators alike.

The government's target of carrying 20% of all trips on public transport by 2020 means that public transport must carry passengers who have a car available and are not necessarily travelling to the CBD. A train line to East Doncaster, together with the extension of the North Balwyn tram to Shoppingtown, has the overwhelming support of residents in the Doncaster/Templestowe area, many of whom have written to the Manningham Leader to say so.

We call upon Minister Batchelor to show some forward planning and build heavy rail to East Doncaster. Light rail is counterproductive for this corridor, and the PTUA will actively campaign in favour of the heavy rail alternative.

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 1st September 2003

Newsletter contributors: Daniel Bowen, Vaughan Williams, Tony Morton, Matt Cook, Peter Parker, Les Chandra, and Peter Cook. Printed on recycled paper by Flash Print, Collingwood.

Our thanks to Max Nicholson and the rest of the dedicated mail out team.

Yarra Trams: Be nice to us or we will sue you

As most members will have read in the May issue of PTUA News and elsewhere, the PTUA has been campaigning against Yarra Trams removal of seats from the B-class tram fleet.

Earlier in the year Yarra removed 28 of the 74 seats from one tram as a trial. They now have government approval to do this in a further ten trams. Yarra is doing this in order to squeeze more people into existing services during peak hour, and has made a number of excuses for their refusal to run additional services.

While some changes to seat layout might make things easier for passengers with prams, Yarra are removing over a third of the seats from the affected trams. The PTUA believes that a reduction of this magnitude is over the top and comes at significant cost to passenger comfort. We have observed the offending tram in service at 10:30pm with more passengers than seats.

The PTUA has been distributing a brochure warning passengers of the proposal to remove more seats from more trams. Rather than discuss the



issue with us, Yarra Trams CEO Hubert Guyot responded with a quite extraordinary outburst.

Late on May 30, Mr. Guyot sent an aggressive letter to PTUA Secretary Vaughan Williams threatening the PTUA and Vaughan personally with legal action unless we immediately ceased distribution of the brochure.

Mr. Guyot claimed that our statement that Yarra Trams is primarily concerned with making money rather than providing high quality public transport, together with our “Yarra Sardines” parody of their logo, “exposes [his] company to ridicule and is defamatory”.

The PTUA has advice from Senior Counsel that the brochure is not actionable and we have continued to distribute it at tram stops and in other public areas. Yarra Trams is yet to withdraw their threat or issue any apology for their unprecedented attack on free speech. Yarra has also given no indication of whether or not they intend to proceed with the removal of seats from further trams.

Members can read the brochure and relevant correspondence on the PTUA website at www.ptua.org.au. If you would like to help distribute brochures, please contact us on 9650 7898 or office@ptua.org.au and we will organise to get some to you.

Even the smartest cards won't stop cheats

The state government thinks reducing fare evasion is a good reason to introduce smartcards. This means getting rid of the recently improved magnetic Metcard system, and replacing it with millions of dollars worth of new equipment.

But if staffing remains the same, the percentage of patrons paying will stay about the same too. The new machines will not have any new mechanisms to stop people without tickets boarding or disembarking services.

If the government wants to substantially reduce fare evasion, they'll need to be more transport staff making sure passengers pay. Short of widespread moral change in Melbourne, nothing else will do that.

While introduction of smartcards will provide some passenger convenience, such contactless validation allowing people to leave the card in their wallet as they validate, this is nothing that could not have been implemented with the current MetCard system.

But even this would be negated by the inconvenience of the proposed “tag on, tag off” double-validation required on each trip. This is something designed for the bean-counters, not for the convenience of the travelling public.

Smartcards will not stop people jumping barriers, or walking through open ones. Or buying concession tickets when they're not entitled to them. Or strolling into a tram and out again without a ticket.

They will also make it more difficult for inspectors to check tickets, with no means of visual inspection. Instead each ticket would have to be checked by means of a reader, meaning slower inspections and more expensive equipment.

In fact with the estimated cost of a new smartcard-based ticketing system being in the region of \$400 million, it would take years beyond the end of a new smartcard system's life before the revenue recovered could cover its installation cost.

Increasing the intelligence of cards will never give them the stern look or strong arm of a human. People are the best way to keep other people honest.

Court vindicates tram passenger

On 2 June the Supreme Court rejected a government appeal from a Magistrate's decision to dismiss charges against Michael Orłowski, a tram passenger.

Mr Orłowski had left a tram at Melbourne University and been confronted by ticket inspectors shortly afterwards. Although Mr Orłowski had a valid ticket, he refused to show it as he did not believe that ticket inspectors had any power to demand his ticket after he had left the tram. Mr Orłowski considered the practice of inspecting tickets after passengers leave a tram to be unfair, having on a previous occasion observed a tourist being questioned after leaving their ticket with their tourist guide on the tram. (There are other problems with inspecting tickets after passengers leave the tram - for example, a claim that the ticket machine was not working cannot be verified).

Mr Orłowski also refused to supply his name and address to the ticket inspectors, and was detained while

police were called. Mr Orłowski produced his ticket and gave his details to the police officers when they arrived and was subsequently charged with a number of offences under the Transport Act.

A Magistrate dismissed the charges, holding that inspectors have no power to inspect tickets after the completion of a journey.

Justice Nettle upheld the Magistrate's decision. In dismissing the government appeal, His Honour said: "...the power to require production of a ticket could not have been intended to extend until after the completion of the journey; for otherwise who would say for how long it went on?"

Transport Minister Peter Batchelor has foreshadowed a further appeal and possible changes to the Transport Act to again increase the powers of ticket inspectors. The PTUA believes that the Minister has wasted too much court time and taxpayers money on the issue already and should accept the umpire's verdict.

There are good reasons why inspectors should not be given additional powers. Apart from the practice being unfair as described above, it is not reasonable to further delay a passenger when they have left the tram and are proceeding on foot to their final destination. Tickets should be inspected on-vehicle, preferably at the beginning of the journey. Inspectors already have police-like powers without the appropriate training and accountability mechanisms to balance those powers.

The current law on this issue is clear and appropriate, and the court's ruling is another flaw in the present culture of hide-and-seek revenue enforcement. Meanwhile, progress is slow on the Public Transport Ombudsman and other reviews of inspectors' power.

Will this comedy of errors roll on and on, continuing to cost the system money, goodwill and patronage? Or will somebody take a breath and begin the task of making fare collection work for everybody?

More frequency quick smart!

Our take on the 700 Smartbus proposal

Greater service frequency and better service integration. These are the major recommendation in a PTUA position paper on the proposed Route 700 Smartbus.

During the last election campaign Labor promised that the route would become Melbourne's third SmartBus service. The proposal made sense as Route 700 is a key route in Melbourne's east, serving Box Hill, Chadstone, Oakleigh, Mentone and Mordialloc. The plan would add \$1 million per year to annual running costs and upgrade

services to run every ten to thirty minutes, depending on the time of day and day of week.

We consider that though these proposals are a good start, the thirty minute services proposed for Sundays and evenings will not be frequent enough to entice 'choice' users out of their cars and to provide fast and reliable connections with intersecting train, tram and bus services.

Our case is particularly strong for Sunday services, given that Sundays is one of the biggest trading days of the week at Chadstone Shopping Centre,

which is a major destination for Route 700 patrons. The centre is planning a 40 percent expansion without a commensurate increase in parking, meaning that public transport must perform a greater role if parking and traffic difficulties are to be contained. Thus we consider that providing fifteen-minute services to Chadstone seven days a week is justified. The table below compares the PTUA's proposed service frequencies with those proposed by the DOI and existing services.

Continued⇒ page 5

No to tram stop cull

In a classic episode of the “Yes Minister” TV series, a health bureaucrat praises the wonderful efficiency of a hospital that has no patients. Patients, he says, only interfere with the efficient running of a health care facility, and so this hospital wants nothing to do with them.

It often seems as though privatised transport operators have a similar attitude to their passengers. From an economically rational private operator's point of view, passengers are a hindrance to efficient operations, and are merely to be tolerated as a source of revenue. Passenger convenience is a luxury, to be sacrificed whenever this yields gains in profit or in artificial performance measures.

This mindset explains the proposals that regularly arise to remove tram stops, or to shift them from convenient locations to inconvenient ones.

Faced with road engineers who refuse to give trams real priority over other traffic, tram operators instead try to speed up tram journeys by cutting out stops. From their perspective, removing or shifting stops is a good thing because it allows them to run the

same level of service with fewer vehicles and drivers.

But the gain in travel time seen by the operator is not seen by the passenger, because the passenger, unlike the operator, has to walk to the tram stop. Removing or shifting a tram stop may speed up tram journeys by 30 seconds, but can add well over 30 seconds to a passenger's walking time. Thus to passengers, removing or shifting stops is a retrograde step that makes public transport less attractive than the alternatives.

The PTUA accordingly is opposed to the removal of tram stops, and to the shifting of tram stops away from intersections, where they afford convenient interchange and are better integrated with the street grid for access to destinations.

Unfortunately, the mindset we are up against is sometimes so bloody-minded that it sacrifices passenger convenience even when there is practically no benefit to the operator. The closure of the stop outside St. Paul's Cathedral is a case in point, making it more difficult for southbound passengers to access Flinders Street but without any trade-off in faster services. Trams must still wait for the unresponsive

traffic lights at Flinders Street, but passengers are no longer able to alight while the tram is stationary.

While the PTUA was unable to prevent the closure of the St. Paul's stop, we have so far managed to head off a Yarra Trams proposal floated in June, to remove the stops at the corner of Collins and King Streets in favour of a superstop near Spencer Street. This would severely annoy patrons of the Rialto and other office buildings located at this intersection, with no real benefit to tram operations. The traffic lights at the King Street intersection are even more heavily biased against trams than at Flinders Street. As at Flinders Street, there has been no proposal to introduce tram priority at this intersection as a condition of tram stop removal.

The PTUA will continue to campaign against this counterproductive tinkering with tram stops. The proper way to speed up tram journeys, to the benefit of operators and passengers alike, is to introduce real traffic signal priority and enforce the 'fairway' rules. The Government and operators should not be afraid to stand up to the road lobby on this issue.

More frequency quick smart! (cont'd from page 4)

The frequent service we recommend would allow a 'network effect' to operate at all times, not just weekdays. This would promote increased patronage on routes that intersect Route 700 and make the route a convenient link between railway lines, thus avoiding the need to travel into Richmond for many trips. As can be seen from the table, the marginal annual cost of doing so is modest, at about \$500,000.

In conclusion, the PTUA strongly supports the extension of the Smartbus program, with its renewed emphasis on service quality, to bus Route 700. We consider that this route is a key component of the transport network in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, and has huge patronage potential. To exploit this to the fullest, we support services more frequent than the DoI is proposing along with priority and route improvements. We contend that the marginal costs are small compared to the increased patronage on this and intersecting

routes that frequent services would generate.

| Route 700 | Current | Proposed DoI | Proposed PTUA |
|----------------------|---------|--------------|---------------|
| Weekday Peak | 10 – 20 | 10 – 15 | 10 |
| Weekday Daytime | 20 | 15 | 10 |
| Weekday Evening | 60 | 30 | 15 |
| Saturday | 20-60 | 15-30 | 15 |
| Sunday | 70 | 30 | 15 |
| Estimated Cost (p.a) | \$3 m | \$4 m | \$4.5 m |

Regional rail foresight strategy slammed

The Minister for Transport recently slammed a perfectly sensible suggestion to begin preparing the Victorian broad gauge rail network for eventual conversion to standard gauge.

Due to historical accident, most main lines in Victoria are broad gauge (1600mm), including all lines that presently carry V/Line passenger services, while most lines in Western Victoria – including the Melbourne to Adelaide line – are standard gauge (1435mm).

Western Victoria and the Port of Portland are in fact cut-off from the broad gauge network, including the Port of Geelong. It is also impossible for passenger trains to continue from Ballarat through to Horsham, Dimboola and Portland due to a break of gauge at Ararat.

Multiple rail gauges, leaving the rail network as two incompatible halves, are the Government's gift to road transport.

Maintaining them will continue to impede Victoria's ability to efficiently move freight and

passengers by rail. One day, the State of Victoria will need to decide on one rail gauge, be it broad or standard, and convert everything. While the benefits of a single state-wide gauge may not be significant enough to justify a massive one off expense, they are enough to justify a planned transition over several decades with intelligent use of convertible infrastructure.

If all new sleeper orders in Victoria were gauge convertible, and were laid properly, converting the rest of the state to a single gauge would cost very little in a few decades time when all sleepers are convertible.

Opposition transport spokesman Terry Mulder suggested that the Concrete Sleepers ordered for the Regional Fast Rail project be gauge convertible. It is a very minor alteration to the design, adding about one percent to their cost. Transport Minister Peter Batchelor issued a press release in response, entitled "Dumb and dumber: Mulder and Drum's bizarre plan for Bendigo commuters", which appeared to

lambast the opposition for daring to appreciate the concept of planning beyond Mr Batchelor's own tenure as Minister.

In the process of lambasting the opposition, it highlighted this Government's strange desire to maintain and entrench the two gauge mess that it inherited. The minister declared that because there are no freight trains from the Bendigo line that connect to the national network today, there never would be. He further went on to defend plans to literally set in concrete the Bendigo line's status as an isolated backwater.

One wonders whether foresight should be a requirement in the job description of a Minister for Transport. Unilaterally declaring that Bendigo, Castlemaine, Kyneton and Sunbury can never have access to the interstate rail freight network (let alone to the Port of Portland) is bad enough. Refusing to even leave the option open to future governments for a negligible price tag is incompetent at best.

Bendigo fast rail uncertainty continues

Double track should be retained

It is still unclear at this time whether the State Government intends to single track the northern third of the Bendigo line as part of the Fast Rail project.

In the last two years, the State Government has kept changing its mind over the subject, confusing locals and advocates alike. The initial plan was to single track the line, the Government then agreed that double track was smarter, but no private funding was forthcoming, the plan went back to single track, but as at May 15, the Government is once again

reviewing that decision.

The PTUA feels that the loss in flexibility that is offered by keeping the existing double track line, as well as the time lost when trains cross each other, are not offset by any cost saving that may arise in the future from only maintaining one track, minus the maintenance cost of the additional crossovers.

It's no good running one slightly faster non stop "fast train" a day when you slow down half of the remaining services in the other direction so they can pass it. It's also insane to spend money ripping up one of the tracks when that money should instead be spent on

re-signalling that track to allow bidirectional operation as proposed for the Traralgon line.

The issues of tunnel stability at the two tunnels near Bendigo that were originally used as an excuse in the proposal to rip up one track from Bendigo to Castlemaine can be dealt with retaining the current speed limits on trains at those two locations. Both are minor expenses when viewed in context of the size of the project, and the extra ongoing costs that would arise from the increase in travel times and crew wages, and overtime paid when trains run late and delay other trains on the network.

Grovedale station – where will it be?

Reports in a local newspaper suggest the Minister's office is now suggesting an alternative site for a Grovedale Station on Marshalltown Road at the neighbouring locality of Marshall, on the site of a former station.

Despite the clear public preference for a station closer to Grovedale on

the Surfcoast Highway, the Minister has rejected this as a more expensive option, and has threatened to withdraw funding all together if councils insist on that site.

The PTUA believes the Government needs to bite the bullet and build a proper station on the

Surfcoast Highway served by frequent train services, rather than wasting funding on an inadequate station in a bad location, served by only one in five trains to Geelong. The extra funding required would still be only a fraction of the \$190m it has pledged towards half a freeway around Geelong.

Geelong fare reform

The State Government recently rejected the Geelong Branch's proposal for fare reform, which would have seen Geelong bus travel and some metropolitan travel included in the price of a V/Line ticket. Tickets to Melbourne would also have been reduced to a flat rate from all stations between South Geelong and Lara, creating an

integrated Geelong fare zone and making fares more competitive with the costs of driving.

Despite saying the initiative was commendable, the Minister's office said it could "only be contemplated in the context of both replacing the current ticketing system and of the current budget position."

Given that the proposal required no hardware changes and only minor software changes to V/Line's existing ticketing system, it would seem that the real reason for the government's inaction is it's unwilling to spend the estimated \$1.5m a year needed to cut fares to a flat rate.

Letter to the editor

Letters may be e-mailed to newsletter@ptua.org.au – no attachments please – or sent to the office – see the address on page 2. Letters may be edited for space reasons.

New bus shelters no shelter

I have been protesting for nearly a year without success to our local council, Monash, since the process began of destroying perfectly good, attractive, fairly new comfortable

shelters to be replaced by glass wind-tunnels with horrible seating.

The shelter that was destroyed in Stephenson's Road opposite Hamilton Square in Mount Waverley sheltered travellers from the weather. The new J C Decaux "shelter" is oriented so the sun, rain and wind beat right in.

The (council) planning officer says that (the provider of the seats) J C Decaux refused modifications

suggested by the Council because their design comes from Paris and cannot be modified.

- Valerie Yule, Mount Waverley

We are concerned about this loss of amenity to passengers. Members are advised to write to their MP and local council to make their views known.

It's still Time To Move

The PTUA book "It's Time To Move" is still available. It is recommended reading for members, as it is the basis for many of the PTUA's policies.

The book explains how public transport in Melbourne (and throughout Victoria) can be

improved to attract people away from their cars, and how such proposals are not only cheaper than the equivalent road projects, but also achieve the "triple bottom line" benefits to Economy, Environment and Society.

"It's Time To Move" is available to members for \$10 (\$15 to non-members) by contacting the office – see page 2. More information about the book is on our web site – www.ptua.org.au

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**SURFACE
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Inside:

- Unified branding returns
- Court vindicates tram passenger
- Even the smartest cards won't stop cheats

Did you miss out?

A label printing error caused a few members to miss out on the last two issues of *PTUA News*. If you didn't receive your copies, please contact the Office so that we can send them out to you – or to find out how you can access *PTUA News* online.

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