

Campaign news

Rally4PT

The Rally for PT on 28th June saw over 3000 people hit the streets of Melbourne calling for public transport to be prioritised before the East-West toll road. The rally was a brilliant demonstration of the community opposition to the East-West toll road.

The big turn out made this a historic event – the biggest rally for public transport in decades. It brought together many groups from across the state – even the sun came out! Addressing the crowd were Cr Sue Bolton (Moreland), Adam Bandt - Federal MP for Melbourne, Danae Bosler - Public Transport Not Traffic, Cr Stephen Jolly (Yarra) and others, including some residents of affected areas.

With the contracts for the East-West toll road far from signed the rally was one of many activities designed to make it clear that Victorians do not want this project. Community members are

taking steps to prevent contracts being signed before the election on 29th November. For more information about how you can get involved go to www.ptnt.org



PTUA's Open Letter to Premier Napthine

Over the last two months, members of the Public Transport users Association along with supporters of the Public Transport Not Traffic campaign raised a significant amount of money to fund the publication of an open letter to Premier Napthine. The open letter to the Premier reminded the Coalition of their promise to fix public transport - and not build the East-West toll road.

This was an impressive effort by PTUA members and it reminds us of what we can accomplish. Everyone should be very proud. The publication of this letter in News Limited media conveys an

important statement to an audience beyond our regular scope. Further, the letter, signed by more than 200 Victorians including the mayors of four local councils as well as respected academics, demonstrates that the community opposition to this road is not only sophisticated but well-resourced.

“The government needs to realise that the community are

ready to do whatever it takes to stop these contracts being signed,” warned PTUA President Tony Morton. “Raising the money to print this letter in the mainstream press is just the start. The Victorian community has the capacity to challenge this project on multiple fronts using all the legal options at its disposal.”

Keeping in touch...

PTUA office

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Membership Enquiries

Call or e-mail the office (see above)

PTUA members can obtain cheap yearly Myki passes – see www.ptua.org.au/members/offers

Internet

Our web site is at www.ptua.org.au

The PTUA runs email lists for member discussions, and to stay up to date with PTUA events. Members can also view archived newsletters online:

www.ptua.org.au/members/resources

Committee

- Anthony Morton – President
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Phil Bourke – Treasurer

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Matthew Ferrantino

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Yvonne Kirk

Jeremy Lunn

David Robertson

Nalla Sivarasa

Bruce Sutherland

Branch convenors:

Paul Westcott – Geelong

Terry Konstandelis – Eastern Suburbs

Member meetings

Melbourne:

See below for details of upcoming meetings

Eastern Suburbs:

Fourth Tuesday of every month, 7pm
“The Barn” (behind Box Hill Baptist Church)
3 Ellingworth Parade (off Station St)
Box Hill

Geelong:

First Saturday of every month (except Jan), 10:30am
Multimedia Room, Courthouse Youth Arts Centre
Corner Gheringhap and Little Malop Streets, Geelong

Public meeting

West Australian federal Labor MP and former WA transport minister Alannah MacTiernan will address a public meeting at the Fitzroy Town Hall at 6:30pm on Thursday 28th August, organised by the City of Yarra and the PTUA. For details see ptua.org.au/members/meetings

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Adopt-a-document

As part of bringing the PTUA into the 21st Century, we are seeking to digitise the extensive PTUA library. The library includes various local and international transport theory books and articles along with historical materials relating to public transport service

provision and public transport advocacy.

Given the large task of digitalising the library, we are calling for members to express interest in participating in the job.

The proposed Adopt-A-Document scheme, will see members collect a document or two to take home (and keep), as

long as they scan the documents and upload them onto an online library accessible to all members.

If those interested can please email Cait Jones
cait.jones@ptua.org.au

Cait will collect names over the course of the month and be in touch with the next steps.

Victorian Greens On Board With Tram Gap-Filling Programme

In an announcement on 15 July, the Victorian Greens have committed to a programme of works to fill the missing links in Melbourne's tram network.

For nearly three decades it has been PTUA policy to seek a range of relatively small 'tactical' tram extensions, to fill gaps in the network where routes stop short of a logical terminus such as a railway station. This is a relic of the days when tram and train operators competed for passengers (despite being public agencies). Today there's widespread agreement on the need for connected, multimodal networks if public transport is to be more attractive to people, and yet these gaps remain. We're therefore very pleased to see that the Greens' policy endorses all of the short tram extensions called for in our published policies and budget submissions. These include the completion of the route 75 tram extension to Knox City, extension of the West Maribyrnong tram route to East Keilor (connecting to the route 903 Smartbus), the route 48 extension to Doncaster Hill, and a tram service along the entire length of Burke Road, connecting with trains at Caulfield station and the 48 tram and route 200 bus in North Kew, with a possible further connection to Ivanhoe to remedy the dearth of public transport links across the Yarra.

Compared with motorways and rail tunnels, these are relatively low-cost projects that are well-justified by their very substantial network and 'connectivity' benefits.

There are also a handful of proposals in addition to those on the PTUA's own list:

- Extending route 86 from Bundoora RMIT to South Morang station. The recent train extension

from Epping makes this a sensible project, providing a high-standard public transport link between the Whittlesea growth corridor and key Bundoora destinations such as RMIT and LaTrobe University. It is a welcome addition to the list.

- A new east-west route between South Melbourne and South Yarra, made possible with 300 metres of new track in Park Street. This provides a useful cross-linkage between inner-urban activity centres south of the city at very low capital cost.

- An east-west route along Victoria Street from North Melbourne station to St Vincent's Plaza requiring about 1600 metres of new track. This likewise provides a useful connection between North and East Melbourne which is currently very awkward by public transport despite being a stone's throw from the CBD.

- An extension of route 82 from Footscray to Docklands along Footscray Road. While such a tram link has often been floated, we regard this as a lower priority: Footscray is already a logical terminus for route 82, and the Footscray Road route is already well-served by buses. There are few intermediate destinations on this route and this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

- An extension of route 19 to Fawkner via Gowrie station. Again, we refrain from endorsing this: while a short extension to the Merlynston shops makes logical sense, further northward extension parallel to the Upfield train line is probably unwarranted. A new station on the Upfield line at Camp Road (connecting to the 902 Smartbus) and an increase in train frequency would provide much

greater benefit to this community, and very probably at lower cost.

Some of the proposed extensions, such as the Park Street route and the extension of Glenferrie Road services to Kew Junction, require little new infrastructure. Most, however, will require laying new tracks. If done in a manner that reflects existing suburban tramways—but including the provision of level-access stops—we can rely on prior experience to do the work in a cost-effective manner.

Recent built experience with tram extensions includes route 75 to Vermont South at a capital cost of \$10 million per km (including minor work on the connecting 732 bus route), and route 86 along Docklands Drive at a cost of \$7.5 million per km. While both these extensions date from 2005, we believe the Greens' estimate of \$15 million per km averaged across all proposed projects (a 50–100% nominal markup on last decade's as-built costs) is a reasonable allowance for cost inflation. While it's a substantial discount on the very large capital costs of interstate light rail projects, it must be recognised that the latter include the costs of establishing light rail systems where they do not currently exist (or exist only to a small extent, as in Sydney).

Of course, given the many worthwhile avenues for public transport spending, it makes sense that these extensions be prioritised over time taking into account the outcomes of a cost-benefit analysis. However, with one or two exceptions we believe all these projects are likely to have benefits exceeding their costs and are well overdue.

PT network shakeup

A wide range of timetable changes took place on July 27th, particularly on buses (see p5), but also on trams and trains across the state.

Trams

The biggest change is that route 112 has now been split back to two routes: route 11 runs from West Preston via Collins Street to Docklands, and route 12 runs from St Kilda via Collins Street and Victoria Parade to Victoria Gardens.

This should allow larger trams to be concentrated on route 11 where they're most needed.

Part time routes 24, 31, 79 and 95 have been phased out, which should make the network simpler to understand.

However it's unclear how the existing fulltime routes will cope with demand at busy times, particularly once tram journeys within the CBD are made fare-free from January 2015. One can only hope that PTV and Yarra Trams are planning ahead to ensure services won't be swamped.

Metro trains

The Dandenong line has now gone to every 10 minutes on weekdays between the peaks, a very welcome move. Trains beyond Dandenong

to Pakenham and Cranbourne are every 20 minutes.

This means both the Dandenong and Frankston lines run at least every 10 minutes, 7 days-a-week for most of the day, meaning a true "turn-up-and-go" service on those lines.

Despite a lack of PTV promotion of this, passengers are benefiting greatly, particularly those connecting from other services, and 10 minute services should be rolled-out onto other lines as soon as possible.

There have also been minor changes on the Frankston line, including removal of the peak-shoulder timetables which have caused much confusion in the past. PTV and the government have claimed there are two extra morning services on the line, though it appears one of these is just after morning peak, and in the outbound direction. To claim these services provide capacity for 2000 passengers is stretching the truth somewhat.

It's also unclear why the government says the two claimed services provide "capacity for 2000 additional passengers" – logic would conclude that this can only be so if those trains are full

well beyond the 798 benchmark figure.

Regional services

On V/Line, the Ballarat and Bendigo lines have switched to using the new Regional Rail Link tracks, which have been completed between Sunshine and Southern Cross. While this should mean reduced delays, it also means no stopping for those trains at North Melbourne, so passengers have lost their interchange for northern suburbs lines and the frequent 401 shuttle bus to Parkville.

V/Line passengers heading to the City Loop can change at Southern Cross, but in the afternoon thanks to the Loop direction change, have to either catch a tram to Southern Cross, or use the Sunbury line back to Footscray to get back to the Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong lines.

It remains to be seen how well this will work – during peak hour, Sunbury trains are often very crowded, and outside peak hour, both Sunbury and V/Line trains are relatively infrequent, making connections difficult.

Other than this, most V/Line trains have had tweaks to their timetables, and coach services have been altered to maintain connections.

RRL closer to completion

On 15 July the Regional Rail Link (RRL) took a significant step towards completion when the new tracks were used for the first time by Ballarat and Bendigo trains.

A few days prior to this PTUA's Tony Morton, Daniel Bowen and

Paul Westcott were given an escorted tour of the whole project by RRL Authority CEO, Corey Hannett.

Despite remaining flaws, the huge scale of the undertaking was impressive, and now looks

to be completed a year ahead of schedule.

Please visit ptua.org.au/newsletters to read the full report.

Bus Ructions Muddy The Waters On Network Planning

The PTUA has always stood for public transport that can act as the ‘mode of choice’ for large suburban populations, but is also cost-effective to provide. Typically it involves provision of a rigorously coordinated multi-modal network, where rail provides high-capacity ‘backbone’ connections between city centres and suburban hubs, and buses or trams cater for local travel and feed the railway stations.

However as with any change—no matter how good or bad—community acceptance demands both adequate public engagement, and a convincing assurance that all sections of the travelling public share the ‘gain’ and—to the extent necessary—any ‘pain’.

Of all service changes this century, two stand out in the scale of negative reaction expressed directly to us at the PTUA: the demotion of the Altona train service, and this month’s changes to eastern suburbs buses.

Both reflect a new cost-cutting mentality that insists all improvements must be within the existing budget, as distinct from letting funds grow along with patronage.

The Altona changes in 2011 were a clear case of one community being robbed of service in order to expand provision in the transport-starved Werribee growth corridor at minimum cost. The latest bus changes, however, are more ambiguous because there are sensible improvements being made on most routes, and passengers who lose their current service often have access to an equally good or better service a short distance away.

‘Gold standard’ 10-minute off-peak frequencies now exist on a

much wider range of routes than before, on weekdays at least. This includes the City to North Kew route via Johnston St and Kew Junction, which has finally been restored to the level of service that existed under public ownership in the 1980s (albeit by combining two routes, the 200 and 207). Other routes have been changed to connect better with trains, providing faster journeys into the city and inner suburbs, and to provide full-time service rather than weekday- or peak-only routes. Of course, yawning gaps still exist. The most contentious changes are in the Blackburn North and Ringwood North area, where in the late 1990s the erstwhile National Bus Company realised it was more profitable for them to carry passengers on its own buses all the way into the city, than to convey them to a faster train service on the Ringwood line. As *PTUA News* reported way back in March 1997, even the then-new Eastern Freeway extension to Mitcham didn’t make the bus-only trip via the freeway time-competitive in peak hour with a multimodal bus-train journey via Nunawading. Yet by shepherding passengers into the former, NBC was able to recoup 100% of each fare using its own parallel ticketing system, rather than receive a fraction of the multimodal Met fare.

Both NBC and its operator-captive tickets have faded into history, but only now have some of its long-haul bus routes been replaced with rail feeder services, with mixed results for passengers. One such is route 303, a ‘commuter’ service that ran four buses from Ringwood North into the city in the morning, and four out again in the evening.

Passengers are now being directed to catch the nearby 271 service to Blackburn station, or route 270 to Box Hill or Mitcham. While this will usually result in a faster trip, available at any time of the day, passengers on the route have pointed out that this now exposes them to more systemic problems with Melbourne’s public transport:

- Ringwood line trains have a record of being far less reliable than the buses. Chronic under-investment in Melbourne’s train network has hit home in recent years with regular system failures. The time advantage of the faster rail journey quickly evaporates if a service is cancelled.

- Surveys consistently show one of the biggest factors in passenger comfort for longer journeys is the ability to get a seat. Many (but not all) of those on route 303 had a seat all the way to the city; by comparison, most city-bound peak trains are standing-room-only at Blackburn. Overcrowding on these services also remains an issue.

Compounding these problems are the ‘process’ issues surrounding the changes. Despite the government having deliberately created PTV as a central clearing-house for network planning and operation, the new Transdev contract inexplicably makes the private operator, not PTV, responsible for reorganising its routes to boost patronage. Perhaps because of this, there was no obligation to engage the public prior to declaring the new routes—in any case, Transdev is not the entity best placed to do so. (It is PTV’s role, for example, to act on the train-related concerns raised by passengers on the former route 303.)

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Geelong Branch Report

In the last few years there has been a push from centres down the Warrnambool rail line for increased services, particularly to and from Geelong. This has recently crystallised into a proposal from Warrnambool City Council for a 12-month trial of four train services a day from Warrnambool to Geelong, ultimately increasing to five.

The proposal was formulated after discussions with PTV and V/Line. The lack of any extra paths for Geelong-Melbourne trains, and a dearth of rolling stock, means that no more through Melbourne-Warrnambool services can be provided, so the proposal involves introducing Geelong-Warrnambool services only.

The proponents have decided that to get more rail services, on a virtually cost-neutral basis to appeal to the politicians, all through Melbourne-Warrnambool services will need to cease, so that two dedicated loco-hauled train sets can shuttle both ways four times a day between Geelong and Warrnambool, connecting with Geelong-Melbourne trains at Geelong station.

The big problem with that is, of course, that every through passenger on the Warrnambool line will have to change trains at Geelong.

The Branch discussed the proposal at its June meeting. We were pleased that the proponents want more frequent public transport in the Warrnambool -

Geelong corridor, and acknowledged the amount of work done to investigate the options, build a case for improvement, and advocate for that to the state government.

The Branch agreed that the proposal should be investigated thoroughly, but we feel that the obstacles involved will be hard to surmount, and could well engender considerable resistance.

In our comments to the proponents, we identified the following specific problems:



1. The need for through passengers to change trains.
2. The need to give though passengers a guaranteed seat on any connecting train, particularly in the “up” (to Melbourne) direction.
3. The lack of DDA compliance of the facilities at Geelong station which affect changes of train.*
4. The unreliability of timekeeping of both Melbourne - Geelong and Warrnambool - Geelong trains, meaning that any scheduled connections between trains will often be longer than intended, or not achieved at all.

5. The absence of first-class accommodation on virtually all Melbourne-Geelong trains will mean that Warrnambool line passengers will no longer have that option for the whole of their trip.

The Branch has told the advocates of the scheme that it must be subject to full and effective public consultation, and any trial should only proceed if the above problems had been fully overcome.

Attempting to introduce a cost-neutral scheme is commendable, but it must not be pursued at the expense of passenger convenience.

We know that the proponents are aware of most of the concerns and have already investigated ways they might be overcome.

The Branch also noted that the full opening of the Regional Rail Link in a year's time should significantly alter the model on which the scheme has been developed.

Fundamentally, we feel that money will have to be spent to allow a truly effective increase in rail services beyond Geelong. Track duplication of sections of the Geelong - Warrnambool line is vital, in particular as much as possible of the Geelong - Grovedale section (now a G21 Priority Project), and a new crossing loop in the Colac - Warrnambool section, for example a long-planned loop at Weerite.

* the start of work to make Geelong station DDA compliant was announced in mid June.

Gordon Price speaks to PTUA members

Gordon Price, the Director of the City Program at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, shared his thoughts on the development of public transport at the PTUA members meeting on 28 May. Gordon was a long-term councillor in Vancouver and was appointed to the first board of the Greater Vancouver Regional Transportation Authority. Vancouver has one of the best performing public transport systems in the world.

Gordon stressed that good transport is about land use and that the pre-WW2 development of Vancouver was centred on their street car (tram) network. However, since WW2 traffic engineers have, for the most part, dominated city growth. Vancouver was one of the few cities that did not lose its street car network as a consequence. Planning knowledge has declined in many cities with

the single minded focus on maintaining the mobility of ever larger numbers of motor vehicles on expanding street networks.

This phenomenon, which Gordon described as "Motordom," is maintained by significant industry and political support. Motordom demands to be fed, and its latest manifestation in Melbourne is the Napthine government's proposed east-west link.

Vancouver accepted that it could not sprawl because of physical constraints - including the Pacific Ocean, and surrounding mountains and wetlands. This contrasts with Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary, forever being moved by governments, to cater to roads-based suburban development.

A particularly beneficial influence in the development of transport in Vancouver included the continuity of government support at the provincial and local levels. A

single major event, Expo '86 in Vancouver, also triggered the city's first investment in rapid transit.

It was noted that this contrasts strongly with the situation in Melbourne where the major political players cannot even agree on a functioning strategy and spend much of their time scrapping over the details of individual public transport projects.

Gordon also highlighted what he sees as the deliberate denial of objective reality by officialdom in both British Columbia and Australia on the increasingly urgent issue of climate change. The perpetuation of "Motordom" is an important element in this with its gross overuse of resources and the growth of car based cities that are largely incapable of being effective places of commercial and social exchange.

Bus Ructions Muddy The Waters On Network Planning

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This situation may be contrasted with the simultaneous route changes in Brimbank, in the western suburbs. In Brimbank's case, the new routes were drafted many months ago and subjected to an extensive public consultation process, which led to some fine-tuning of the proposed routes. The result is certainly far from perfect—zero-sum budgeting applies here too—and many individual bus users are negatively affected by the changes. But at least in this case the negative outcomes could be

identified and reconciled over a longer period of time.

The stand-out examples of effective, accountable public engagement in transport planning are still the cities, like Vancouver or Perth, where a single public-spirited agency takes all responsibility. In these cities, route and timetable changes are canvassed well in advance; members of the public may make submissions and attend meetings of the agency; patronage and financial data are open to the public; and new network ideas are floated by individual planners in

online forums. Where planners must operate under severe budget constraints—as now in Vancouver—this is also communicated openly to the public, to whom even cost-cutting Treasurers are ultimately accountable.

All this goes to show that good network planning is only partly about designing networks with good technical attributes: the travelling public must also be involved in the process and their opinions must count, even where they sometimes run counter to optimal design.

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Responsibility for electoral comment in PTUA News is taken by Tony Morton, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.