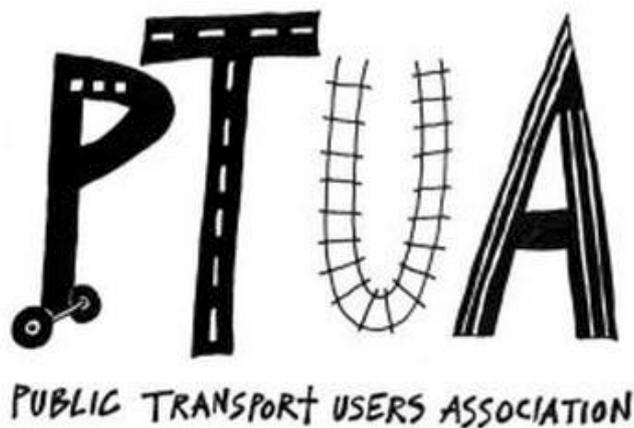


Melbourne Transport Strategy

Submission from the Public Transport Users Association Inc.

30 September 2005



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Melbourne Transport Strategy

Summary

- A large-scale mode shift toward public transport, walking and cycling is essential to Melbourne's future liveability.
- Melbourne City Council must advocate for greater focus on public transport in transport policy at all levels of government and right across metropolitan Melbourne.
- Public space should be made more accommodating of pedestrians and cyclists and relegate private motor vehicles to the bottom of the pecking order.
- Melbourne City Council must advocate for the removal of impediments to the shift of freight from road to rail.

Introduction

The Public Transport Users Association (PTUA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Melbourne Transport Strategy and congratulates the City of Melbourne on making the effort to produce a range of comprehensive Issues Papers in support of the development of the strategy.

The Issues Papers indicate that there is at least some recognition within council that a large-scale mode shift to public transport, cycling and walking is essential to maintaining Melbourne's liveability as population grows by a projected one million people. Furthermore, it is clear that liveability within the City of Melbourne is being harmed by inadequate public transport services across metropolitan Melbourne which force non-residents to use cars for journeys into and through the municipality. For Melbourne to achieve its vision of being a thriving and sustainable city, the Melbourne Transport Strategy must place people at the core of all transport decisions and make private motor vehicles subservient in all regards.

We also note that an East-West Integrated Transport Proposal is to be considered in the development of the Melbourne Transport Strategy. PTUA strongly opposes this proposal and we include our submission to the Planning & Environment Committee (Attachment A) as part of our submission to the Melbourne Transport Strategy.

Public Transport

PTUA welcomes the recognition in the Public Transport Issue Paper and other Issues Papers that a large scale switch to public transport is fundamental to Melbourne's liveability and that public transport services are currently of an inadequate standard to achieve this switch.

Given this recognition, any serious transport strategy must include measures to address these deficiencies through advocacy at the state and federal levels in favour of sustainable transport choices and a shift away from policy decisions that entrench car dependence such as major road projects and taxation incentives for car usage. PTUA does not see a major role for the City of Melbourne in public transport provision as the council does not cover the greater metropolitan region like the Brisbane City Council, and services should be centrally planned to ensure proper integration of services. PTUA does however encourage the City of Melbourne to commit human and financial resources to the promotion of sustainable transport policies and to lobby both state and

Commonwealth governments for improved public transport infrastructure and services across greater Melbourne.

Public transport access within the City of Melbourne

The Issue Paper's analysis of which suburbs have access to all three modes of public transport seems somewhat odd and arbitrary given most areas have access to at least two modes within the suburb's borders and frequently other services within neighbouring areas (e.g. proximity of tram 109 to Port Melbourne). Of far greater relevance is the service span and frequencies of services within easy walking distance (whether or not within the suburb or municipality and regardless of mode) and the quality of the connection with the broader public transport network.

PTUA welcomes council's recognition of its role in facilitating movement from public transport into the city urban form. In this light, we expect that there will be no repeats of the Melbourne Central debacle that forces train passengers to negotiate a maze of retail development between the station and trams along Swanston, Elizabeth and La Trobe Streets and other parts of the city. PTUA expects council to ensure that all public transport intersections and interchanges facilitate quick and easy movement between services and into public spaces.

PTUA also supports Yarra Trams in moving towards its goal of Access for All and in beginning to address the needs of improved accessibility throughout the entire Melbourne tram network for passengers with disabilities. In this regard we welcome the progressive installation of platform stops at existing tram stops. PTUA notes, however, that the introduction of platform stops making boarding possible for everyone, should not, in itself, involve any loss of the existing number of tram stop locations.

Public transport access outside the City of Melbourne

Only one third of Melburnians have easy access to train and tram services, and the two thirds of Melbourne that only have access to buses confront services that stop at around 7pm on weekdays and that do not run at all on the weekend in many cases. If the City of Melbourne is to properly address the road traffic streaming into and through the municipality from these outer suburbs, it must strenuously advocate at the state and federal levels for major public transport enhancements right across greater Melbourne to give middle and outer suburban residents an alternative to the motor car. The recommendations in Attachment A include a range of priority enhancements that council should be promoting.

Vehicle Priority

Whilst the City of Melbourne enjoys a relative abundance of public transport services compared to outer suburbs, the effectiveness and attractiveness of tram and bus services are severely curtailed by growing traffic congestion. This hindrance of public transport vehicles by private vehicles threatens to drive passengers away from public transport which would only serve to further increase congestion and pollution.

The only proven means of minimising congestion in the long term is to provide good public transport services and to ensure these services have priority over other road users. The City of Melbourne, in tandem with VicRoads, must ensure that both trams and buses have priority over private motorists at all traffic lights and that private vehicles are prevented from holding up public transport vehicles wherever possible.

Public transport capacity

Many public transport services are now becoming overcrowded as commuters attempt to escape escalating fuel prices. PTUA believes that some of the infrastructure-based approaches to addressing this overcrowding are overly expensive and unnecessary in light of lower cost alternatives including:

- ensuring full-length trains run instead of three carriage trains;
- providing more peak-shoulder services to spread the passenger load;
- ensuring longer service spans and higher frequencies of connecting bus services to allow more travel outside the peak;
- staffing stations to allow reduced dwell times at stations;
- upgrades to the signalling and control systems to enable increased frequencies;
- revisiting stopping patterns and loop directions;
- passing loops in selected locations; and
- upgrading alternative services including SmartBus routes and trams servicing St Kilda Rd from Dandenong line stations.

PTUA does recognise that capacity is an issue in certain locations, and council should advocate for the duplication of all sections of single track on the suburban network.

Planning

PTUA is concerned that there appears to be a disconnect between transport and urban planning policy. Minimum car parking requirements should be eliminated from the planning scheme and all new developments should be required to provide targets and strategies for boosting public transport, walking and cycling mode share. It may also be appropriate to require contributions to the provision of public transport infrastructure where this is currently inadequate.

Active Transport

Active transport, including walking and cycling, forms part of most journeys that incorporate a trip on public transport. Therefore the needs of cyclists and pedestrians must also be considered if a mode shift from cars to sustainable transport is to be achieved.

Safety

Both Issues Papers for walking and cycling recognise that pedestrians and cyclists suffer few serious injuries on smaller, quieter streets despite the presence of motor vehicles. Similarly, the papers recognise that allocation of 20 per cent of the CBD road space to pedestrians has failed to make walking easy and safe. It seems clear that traffic speed, rather than the presence of traffic *per se*, is the key risk factor in death and serious injuries suffered by pedestrians and cyclists.

PTUA welcomes initiatives to improve safety and amenity for cyclists and pedestrians such as the “Copenhagen” model. We note that other models such as the Dutch *Woonerf*, or living street, have also proven successful in improving safety and amenity without the need to dedicate road space to particular users. We encourage the City of Melbourne to investigate adoption of a similar approach to traffic management across the municipality.

Security

For cyclists to feel comfortable riding to and parking in the city, bicycle parking facilities must be secure in both reality and perception. We encourage council to engage with bicycle user groups to determine the best mix and placement of secure bicycle parking facilities.

Traffic lights

Traffic light cycles should accommodate the needs of pedestrians and enable priority for public transport vehicles (i.e. both buses and trams) over private motor vehicles. The intersection of Swanston and Bourke Streets could serve as a useful model: it has 60 second cycles and moves both trams and pedestrians quite efficiently. PTUA notes that relatively short cycles result in shorter waiting times for pedestrians which could be to the benefit of both sets of users.

The use of streets within the Hoddle Grid for through-traffic should be discouraged. For instance, cars on traffic sewers such as King Street should be encouraged to use city bypass routes such as Wurundjeri Way, via a combination of signage and changes to traffic signals to give cross-streets equal or more green signal time. This would aid tram operations and enhance pedestrian amenity with subsequent economic benefit to businesses on the street.

Parking

The first page of the Parking Issue Paper is quite promising, however the rest of the paper fails to capitalise on these early insights. PTUA notes that many successful congestion reduction strategies incorporate a reduction in parking spaces. Furthermore, the provision of parking has been associated with problems such as urban sprawl and excessive motor vehicle use as outlined in *The High Cost of Free Parking* by Donald Shoup¹.

The demand for parking spaces could be curbed by the provision of frequent, safe public transport services until late at night providing people travelling outside of peak hours with an alternative to the car.

Freight

PTUA supports a major shift in the freight task from road to rail. Such a shift would have major benefits in terms of road safety, road maintenance, energy efficiency, air and noise pollution and greenhouse emissions. Melbourne City Council should lobby for federal funding of any required rail infrastructure investment and advocate for the removal of all impediments to the use of rail for interstate and intrastate freight movements. Such impediments include the high level of externalities imposed upon society by road freight compared to rail freight, hence council should aim to ensure transport decisions reflect the full economic, social and environmental costs to society of modal choice.

PTUA notes that attempting to increase road capacity for freight movement inevitably results in induced private motor vehicle traffic which will impede road freight movements to the same extent as prior to roadway expansion. The efficiency of the transport sector would be better served by ensuring a high quality public transport alternative for passenger movements and a well-integrated rail network for freight movements.

¹Shoup, D., 2005, *High Cost of Free Parking*, APA Planners Press, Chicago

(Attachment A)



East-West Integrated Transport Proposal (EWITP)

Public Transport Users Association Inc.
Submission to the Planning & Environment Committee
Melbourne City Council

6 September 2005

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East-West Integrated Transport Proposal (EWITP)

Summary

- The proposed tunnel linking the Eastern Freeway with Deer Park is an expensive and inappropriate response in a time of concerns over oil supplies, increasing evidence of human-induced climate change and poor standards of public transport alternatives.
- Attempts to increase road capacity invariably result in “induced traffic” with no net benefit for existing road users.
- Public transport enhancements are sorely needed along the Doncaster corridor and other broadly East-West corridors including Knox, Rowville and Werribee.
- The proposal pays insufficient attention to removing impediments to increased mode share for rail freight.
- Melbourne City Council should proactively engage in advocating for improved public transport across Melbourne and dedicate financial and human resources to this activity.

Introduction

In 2005 the Melbourne City Council is rehashing a repeatedly discredited 1950’s freeway plan that could cost \$10 billion to implement, the key feature of which, to quote one of the report's own authors, we'd “be better off not building”. Also, contrary to the assumptions of many people who would support it in the general community, is not expected to reduce congestion.

Noteworthy observations in the report

Despite its obvious shortcomings, the EWITP actually contains a good deal of insightful observations about transport and this corridor in particular. For example:

- “Projects that attempt to relieve traffic congestion have always proved to be short-lived ... because the extra road space they create induces additional traffic² ... and simply creat[e] more and more congestion” (page 1 of EWITP – page 23 of Agenda Item 5.8)
- “the road tunnel proposal alone will not provide the wider benefits of the EWITP” (page 6 of EWITP – page 28 of Agenda Item 5.8)
- “The Doncaster corridor has long been considered public transport disadvantaged” (page 9 of EWITP – page 31 of Agenda Item 5.8)
- “the capacity limitation of a bus-based system is such that it could not achieve the share of

² Since the first high profile recognition of the “induced traffic” effect by the UK Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment in 1994, numerous studies have shown that increasing road capacity results in additional traffic as people switch from other modes (i.e. public transport) and/or make longer or more frequent car journeys. Increased road capacity could include additional road space or removal of constraints to traffic flow such as traffic lights. This “induced traffic” brings congestion levels back to where they were prior to the addition of extra road capacity with no net benefit for existing road users. Further information is available at <http://www.ptua.org.au/myths/congestion.shtml>

demand that is required for the corridor” (page 9 of EWITP – page 31 of Agenda Item 5.8)

- “a rail service ... in a dedicated reservation, well-served by integrated bus services, walking and cycling links ... is the only real way to provide a quantum shift in public transport mode share in the eastern corridor” (page 9 of EWITP – page 31 of Agenda Item 5.8).

Or to quote the report's author once again:

“... the real key to solving congestion is to shift people from car to public transport”
Transport consultant William McDougall – co-author of report, *The Age*, 1 September 2005

Similarly, the Agenda Paper produced by council staff makes some important observations that are unfortunately not adequately addressed in the proposal:

- “The lack of transport choices in middle and outer suburbs significantly adds to individual private transport costs, social dislocation and access to employment opportunities – particularly with rising fuel prices” (paragraph 24, page 5 of Agenda Item 5.8).
- “[T]wo thirds of metropolitan Melbourne’s residents only have access to bus services. These services are notoriously poor; average peak serviced are 40 minutes, the average finish time of buses is before 7pm and only 18 per cent of buses operate on Sundays. As long as 66 per cent of metropolitan Melbourne are without public transport services, only a third of the broader population have the choice of using public transport to access the City of Melbourne” (paragraph 26, page 5 of Agenda Item 5.8).

In other words, the construction of freeways does nothing to improve mobility for the one third of Melburnians who cannot drive, and around two thirds of Melburnians are forced to drive along corridors such as the Eastern Freeway because they are not provided with adequate public transport alternatives. In the absence of unlimited funds for capital works, spending should be prioritised for public transport measures that address mobility and equity issues for low income and non-driving individuals and households without inducing additional car journeys.

Shortcomings in the report

The Age reported on 1 September 2005 that the report's main flaw – the freeway tunnel - was “only advocated ... after a brief from a senior town hall officer called for it”. This pre-ordination of the report's contents perhaps explains various fundamental flaws and inconsistencies that show up in the report, including:

- Page 10 of the EWITP (page 31 of Agenda Item 5.8) claims that freight transport would save time and money with the tunnel, yet there would not necessarily be a reduction in peak hour travel times for private transport.
- Despite its recognition of the induced traffic effect and repeated claims that this proposal does not increase road space or capacity, it seems to grant motor vehicles a new unrestrained underground freeway of at least the current corridor's width, whilst allocating the existing surface roadspace to other existing users of the corridor (i.e. road based public transport, cyclists, etc). As obliquely conceded at paragraph 21 of Agenda Item 5.8, this effectively represents a doubling of roadspace and makes the old mistake of trying to treat congestion by making driving more attractive.

- Page 10's outline of the impact on freight transport completely ignores rail freight, despite this being, supposedly, one of the key elements of the proposal.
- The very concept of linking the Eastern Freeway to Deer Park flies in the face of council's recognition that most of the freeway's traffic is destined for nearby inner suburbs, the CBD and south of the CBD as outlined in council's paper for this agenda item (paragraph 15) and the Northern Central City Corridor Study (NCCCS).
- The EWITP and covering Agenda Paper make frequent references to the importance of public transport, yet the vast majority of the spending put forward in the proposal is aimed at private motor vehicle traffic.

The Agenda Paper also makes a significant omission at paragraph 12 when it fails to mention the possibility of reallocating existing transport funding from roads to public transport. If the government achieves its goal of 20 per cent of motorised journeys being undertaken by public transport by 2020 (ie a shift away from private car travel), it is likely that little, if any, additional road capacity will be required over the next 15 years. Conversely, a doubling of public transport patronage will require significant additional capacity and is unlikely to be achieved without a major rebalancing of transport funding. This glaring disparity in capacity necessitates a re-ordering of transport priorities away from urban road construction and towards public transport enhancements.

The investment required to implement the EWITP serving just one road corridor could deliver metro-wide public transport extensions and boost service frequencies, operating hours and reliability right across the city which would have the following benefits:

- improved access and mobility for non-drivers;
- less induced traffic;
- a safer transport system that is less prone to accidents;
- encouragement of more energy efficient transport choices requiring less oil; and
- reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollution.

Congestion through the inner north

PTUA makes the following observations about congestion through the inner north:

- The EWITP correctly identifies heavy rail to East Doncaster as a priority investment to improve mobility in the Eastern Freeway corridor.
- A rail line could provide much higher capacity along the corridor at much lower cost than a freeway.
- There is no immediate need for a Doncaster rail link to access the city through an expensive tunnel via North Melbourne. PTUA can only assume the report's suggestion of this route is intended to justify the inclusion of a tunnel in the EWITP, as the hospital and university precincts are already relatively well-served by trams. If anything, the focus should be on giving these trams genuine priority over motor vehicles to boost their effectiveness and attractiveness.
- The Doncaster rail link was proposed as part of the original plans for the Eastern Freeway, but subsequently shelved. This could happen again.

- Other public transport enhancement in the north and northeast would also improve mobility and reduce pressure on the corridor, for example:
 - South Morang train extension;
 - tram 48 extension to Doncaster Hill;
 - boosting frequencies on the Hurstbridge, Epping and Upfield lines; and
 - accelerated roll-out the Smartbus program.
- The EWITP fails to canvas these other enhancements to public transport in the northeast, and therefore can only ever offer partial and temporary relief to mobility problems in the corridor.

Pressure on the Westgate

The EWITP points to pressure on the existing East-West corridor crossing the Westgate Bridge. PTUA notes that a key factor in this pressure is the lack of adequate public transport west of the Maribyrnong River which forces people onto the Westgate Bridge. Pressure on this corridor originating from the western suburbs could be eased by measures including:

- boosting service frequencies on Williamstown, Werribee and Watergardens suburban train lines;
- boosting frequencies on Geelong and Melton V/Line services (and future electrification of the latter); and
- accelerated roll-out of the Smartbus program and other service improvements across the area.

Similarly, the pressure on the Monash freeway corridor leading to the Westgate is exacerbated by the lack of rail services to Rowville, Knox and beyond Frankston, as well as lack of adequate bus services enabling commuters to access the south-eastern rail lines.

The EWITP addresses none of the deficiencies, and council would be well served by advocating for their rectification at source rather than simply treating their symptoms.

Conclusion

- At a time when outer suburban councils right around Melbourne are calling for better public transport, we need to be improving the coverage and frequencies of rail and bus services in all corridors, not just the Doncaster corridor.
- At a time when oil prices are cutting into household budgets and consumer spending, we need to free Melburnians from car dependence.
- At a time when climate-related disasters are wreaking havoc in Africa, Asia, Europe and America, we need to prioritise less polluting modes of transport and land-use patterns.
- The proposed tunnel does none of these things, so council must immediately reject it and turn its attention to promoting improved public transport to the north and south as well as to the east and west of the city.

Recommendations

The City of Melbourne should engage with the State and Federal Governments and other stakeholders seeking enhancements to public transport across metropolitan Melbourne including (but not restricted to):

- Construction of a heavy rail line from Victoria Park to East Doncaster;
- Extension of the Epping line to South Morang;
- Construction of a heavy rail line to Rowville;
- Extension of the Frankston line to at least Baxter;
- Electrification of the Sydenham/Watergardens line to Sunbury;
- Extension of the no. 75 tram to Knox;
- Extension of the no. 48 tram to Doncaster Hill;
- Upgrades to frequencies and operating hours to trains, especially in the western and northern suburbs;
- Immediate rollout of the Smartbus program;
- Traffic light priority for trams and buses;
- Traffic calming measures through the inner north to improve liveability and further encourage mode shift to public transport, cycling and walking.

The City of Melbourne should dedicate financial and human resources towards the encouragement of a mode shift towards public transport across greater Melbourne, possibly utilising the proceeds of the City Parking Levy.