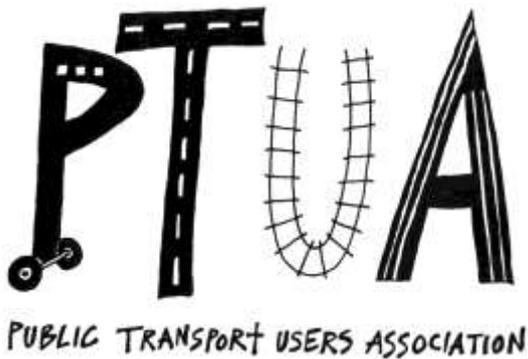


Submission to the Audit of Melbourne 2030

September 2007



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Introduction

The Public Transport Users Association (PTUA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the first five year audit of Melbourne 2030 (M2030). M2030 includes a number of laudable objectives, and the PTUA was excited by the potential for a more sustainable transport system that was apparent in the draft Implementation Plan for integrated transport.

Close to five years later, we are quite disappointed with progress towards the aims of the integrated transport plan. In terms of the priority needs for public transport users identified in Table 1 of the Implementation Plan, the government appears to be focussing more attention on "desirable" attributes such as ticketing than on "critical" attributes such as coverage and frequencies. We believe the government needs to refocus on the basics, such as:

- expanding coverage, especially of the rail network;
- boosting frequencies across the network, and outside peak times;
- ensuring services are available all day, every day;
- providing traffic light priority for road-based public transport to speed up services and make more effective use of tram and bus fleets;
- integrated, public management of public transport (even if not day-to-day operations) to more effectively and efficiently integrate and coordinate services; and
- staffing the system to provide security, customer information and assistance.

The following remarks are based around addressing progress and effectiveness of the M2030 integrated transport implementation plan, and suggestions on how to enhance progress towards achieving the strategic intent of M2030.

Although we have not made detailed comment on other implementation plans, we applaud the government for its strong protection of Melbourne's 'green wedges' under M2030. While there are some issues in the detail, the basic thrust of maintaining green wedges is vital for Melbourne's liveability, as Melbourne is almost unique in being an expansive metropolis lacking 'green belts' or other such large areas of undeveloped green space within the contiguous urban area. Equally important is M2030's focus on targeting urban growth within the established rail corridors, and maintaining Melbourne's pattern of contiguous urban development as distinct from American-style 'sprawl'.

Action 1

Upgrade and develop the Principal Public Transport Network and improve local public transport services

- **Develop a metropolitan bus plan**
- **Develop a metropolitan tram plan**
- **Develop a train plan**
- **Improve ticketing systems**

The PTUA has been very disappointed with progress on this action item. While Bus, Tram and Train plans have been developed, these have not been released to the public and an extremely low proportion of measures in these plans have been implemented or are undergoing implementation. The Department of Infrastructure apparently now views these as resource documents rather than plans, as can be seen by the fact that their content is not reflected in the current 20-year plan *Meeting Our Transport Challenges*.

We are also concerned that integration between public transport modes and coordination of services is not as effective as it could be. Lack of integration unfortunately stems to an extent from the wording of the Action which refers to the development of separate plans by mode and not a single integrated plan for public transport development. This has been borne out in the implementation, where despite ongoing promises there is little progress being made on such fundamental reforms as timetable coordination between suburban buses and trains, and numerous tram routes still terminate around 1 or 2 kilometres short of railway stations.

This reinforces our belief, expressed in our original submission on the integrated transport plan, that new governance arrangements should be adopted based upon the 'transport community' model prevalent in Europe.

The costly new ticketing system is also experiencing significant delays and we are concerned that greater focus is being placed on Smartcard commercialisation opportunities than on ensuring a cost-effective and user-friendly ticketing system. It is unfortunate that the opportunity was not taken to explore ticketing alternatives based on the existing Metcard hardware with a greater staff presence, which would likely have proved less costly to the system.

Action 2

Encourage sustainable travel

- **Develop a travel demand management action plan**
- **Develop a walking action plan**
- **Develop a cycling action plan**
- **Support policies for activity centres and Transit Cities**
- **Prepare guidelines to integrate transport infrastructure and development**

There appears to be very little progress on managing travel demand in Melbourne. Emphasis still appears to be on predicting and providing for private motor vehicle travel predicated on assumptions of limitless, clean transport fuel and an absence of induced traffic. Genuine TDM measures, such as ensuring the private costs of transport decisions more accurately reflect the full social cost of those decisions, are conspicuously absent. The resulting high level of private motor vehicle use creates an urban environment that deters walking and cycling and that consumes an inordinate amount of land for roads and parking. In this context it should be noted that the recent reversal in the decline in public transport mode share is related more to high petrol prices and CBD employment growth than policy action by government.

Lack of progress on expanding the availability of reliable, frequent and otherwise attractive public transport is hampering the development of identified Transit Cities and activity centres. The lack of deterrents to car use, combined with infrequent buses running on meandering routes, means that private motor vehicles generally remain the preferred means of accessing activity centres. As a result, activity centres can suffer from high traffic levels which detract from local amenity and deter walking and cycling. These factors would also be contributing to the continuing growth of business parks in 'transport poor' locations that more conspicuously and effectively cater for access by car but offer very poor access for public transport users and active transport.

The fare structure is also working against the success of some activity centres by making relatively short public transport trips, especially those across zone boundaries, uncompetitive with private car travel. We note, for example, that outward travel by public transport to the Major Activity Centres in Hampton and Sandringham is discouraged by the Zone 1 boundary at Brighton Beach. These disincentives could be addressed by expanding the overlap between zones to cover activity centres and reducing the fare increment for crossing a zone boundary. An increase in the number of zones from 2 to 4 could also be considered providing that fares for all-zone tickets are no higher than existing Zone 1+2 tickets, and the increment for each additional zone is moderate.

The definition of Activity Centres, however, is still of concern. The purpose of planning is to deliver outcomes that are both different and superior to those that would result from *laissez-faire* development. The objective of increasing public transport use is not served by designating existing car-based centres remote from public transport as Principal or Major Activity Centres whose further growth is to be encouraged. Doubtless this outcome would result in the absence of planning, in which case specific planning intervention for these centres is not necessary. Meanwhile there is evidence of

neglect, both in declaring Activity Centres in existing public transport nodes with concentrations of development, and in developing better public transport links to those nodes that are designated as Activity Centres.

Although draft *Public Transport Guidelines for Land Use Development* were released over a year ago, we are yet to see any sign of these guidelines being finalised or implemented. The lack of such guidelines at a time of rapid outer suburban growth is potentially undermining the effective provision of public transport across large parts of outer Melbourne.

Action 3

Provide for the transport needs of growth areas

- **Build sustainable transport options into the design of growth areas**
- **Coordinate staging sequences and transport services**

Although there has been long-overdue legislative change to ensure the powers of the Director of Public Transport mirror Vicroads' long-standing status as a referral authority for land use planning, there is no indication that these new powers are being used proactively in the interests of sustainable development and greater public transport use.

For example, the most urgent and inexpensive priority for integrating transport and land-use planning is to build new railway stations in growth areas that are currently bypassed by existing train lines (such as Roxburgh Park and Point Cook) and equip them with feeder bus services to penetrate the surrounding residential areas. At the time the M2030 strategy was developed the PTUA had identified eight locations where new stations are needed on existing lines; many of these had in fact been identified in 1991 or earlier. These were:

- Southland shopping centre;
- Hampton Park (now Lynbrook);
- Cave Hill (between Mooroolbark and Lilydale);
- Eltham North (Allendale Road);
- Coolaroo (Barry Road);
- Roxburgh Park (Somerton Road);
- Patullos (Patullos Road, Roxburgh Park); and
- Newport West (Maddox Road).

Urban growth subsequent to M2030 has exposed new inadequacies, particularly on the outer reaches of the Werribee, Pakenham and Cranbourne lines. Yet government plans propose to build just four new stations in the next 20 years (at Coolaroo, Point Cook, Lynbrook and Pakenham Lakes, the last three not until 2012). The station at Coolaroo, despite costing four times as much as the average new station in Perth, includes no new feeder bus services; only a costly 1200-space car park which will accommodate just 10% of the adult population in the station catchment before filling up. The decision to build this station appears to have been the outcome of lobbying by the local community and the PTUA leading to an election promise from the government, not any proactive planning under the M2030 strategy.

The other most important priority for transport and land-use integration is the extension of high-frequency bus services into new growth suburbs so that people have access to public transport from the time they move in, before regular car use becomes a habit. While some new bus services have been introduced in fringe suburbs, these run at the same hourly frequencies typical of traditional Melbourne suburban bus services and are clearly intended as 'charity' services for non-car-owners rather than as an environmentally friendly alternative for the general population.

In short, the Director's new status as a referral authority, while removing one of the many disparities between our public transport management organisation and our road management organisation, has not actually progressed the M2030 objective. It does however highlight the need for an independent planning authority to manage public transport and help drive land use planning decisions in the interests of sustainable urban development.

Action 4

Provide for freight and commercial transport

- **Develop a freight and logistics strategy**
- **Plan for and develop capacity for ports**
- **Increase the rail share of freight to ports**

On this action we repeat our concern, widely expressed when M2030 was developed, that the needs of freight and commercial travel are not served by ongoing expansion of road capacity. While expansion of roads provides relief in the short term, adjustment of travel patterns within just a few months causes freight movements to be further impeded by private passenger vehicle travel for non-commercial purposes. Expansion of road capacity also promotes inefficient utilisation of freight vehicles, and perverse incentives to shift freight from rail to road modes where it conflicts with passenger transport and residential land uses.

If there is a need to provide greater capacity for urban road freight, this could be achieved through road space reallocation and managing demand for general traffic road space. We do believe, however, that planning for road freight is based upon a flawed 'predict and provide' approach that does not stand up to scrutiny (see pages 15-20 of our submission to the East West Link Needs Assessment).

The provision for regional rail freight is an increasingly urgent issue: see comments under Action 5.

Action 5

Improve transport links to regional Victoria

- **Complete the fast rail projects**
- **Reopen country rail lines**
- **Complete high standard road links to provincial cities**

The PTUA welcomes the reintroduction of passenger rail services to provincial centres such as Ararat and Bairnsdale. We are however concerned that progress appears to have stalled on the reintroduction of passenger rail services to Mildura and Leongatha, and on the government's commitment to standardise the rail network.

The existence of two separate rail networks within the one State having incompatible rail gauges is unprecedented in Australia's history and cannot be sustained into the future. Since the introduction of M2030 there has been little progress on existing plans to complete the conversion of the Victorian rail network to standard gauge. Ultimately, gauge conversion will also have to take in the Melbourne metropolitan network, and forward planning for rolling stock and infrastructure must take this into account. The only workable alternative is to roll back gauge conversion and revert to broad gauge for the entire Victorian network, excepting only the interstate freight and passenger lines to Sydney and Adelaide.

The attempted designation of entire portions of the regional rail network as 'freight network' or 'passenger network' based on gauge is likewise unsustainable and has been a barrier both to regional rail freight development, and to the restoration of passenger services to the large regional communities that need them.

Given that the break-of-gauge problem was created as a result of a Commonwealth initiative to standardise freight lines in western Victoria, Commonwealth assistance should be sought to achieve full standardisation as part of the phased reconstruction of the increasingly derelict regional rail network. Gauge standardisation and rail reconditioning has greater economic implications for regional development than expansion of highway capacity and should take priority over the latter in requests for Auslink funding.

Action 6

Ensure integrated planning for metropolitan transport

- **Develop and implement a plan to increase public transport mode share to 20 per cent (20/2020)**
- **Develop a metropolitan road and traffic management strategy**
- **Develop subregional integrated transport strategies**
- **Complete the Local Government Transport and Mobility project**
- **Review metropolitan parking policies**

The government has not implemented a plan to increase public transport mode share to 20% by 2020, notwithstanding the release of *Meeting Our Transport Challenges* and other transport documents. As noted by the Implementation Plan, this task is closely related to tasks outlined under Action 1 which have not been made public. The PTUA calls upon the government to release modelling on the mode share impacts of transport projects and TDM measures that have been completed since 1999 or that are currently being implemented.

The PTUA has also been disappointed with subregional integrated transport strategies such as the North East Integrated Transport Study which to date has only been released in draft form. These strategies appear to fall well short of what is required to successfully achieve 20/2020, and the lack of commitment to expanding coverage of the rail network would be undermining investor certainty for developers contemplating developments that are consistent with the policy intent of M2030.

Similarly there appears to be little movement on reviewing parking policies, with the enforced provision of excessive car parking in new developments still commonplace in the planning provisions. On the other hand, careful attention needs to be paid to the needs of traders and local communities when considering on-street parking. The viability of strip shopping could be seriously undermined and local amenity and liveability ruined by the imposition of clearways that remove barriers currently shielding pedestrians, shops and homes from moving traffic. Instead of expanding the use of clearways which would inevitably induce additional traffic, focus should be placed on prioritisation of high occupancy public transport vehicles by means of dynamic signal priority to make more efficient use of existing capacity.