

News

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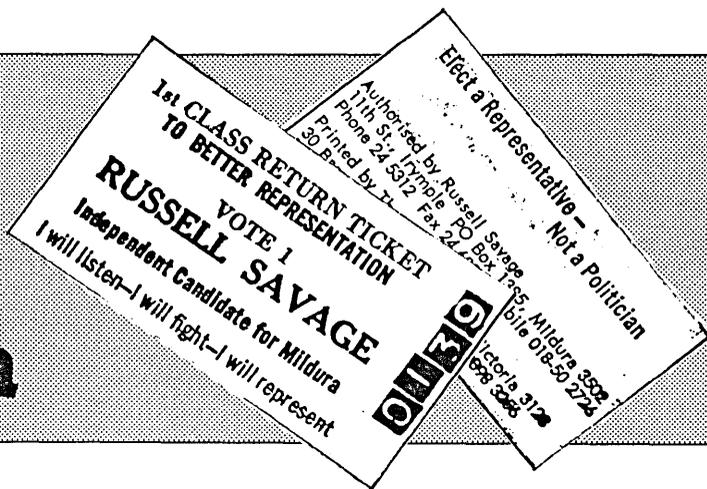
Newsletter of the
Public Transport Users Association

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Liberals derailed in Mildura



“Have your say about the lack of a passenger rail service” invited the notice of a Train Action Group pre-election public meeting in Mildura, and on Election Day, voters spoke loud and clear. Russell Savage, Independent Candidate for Mildura electorate defeated the sitting Liberal member in a swing of more than 20%. So intrinsic to Mr Savage’s campaign was the train issue that his How To Vote Card was printed like a train ticket.

The impact of the Train issue showed up in other electorates as well. Overall there was a swing against the National Party and the party’s president, Mr Brian O’Sullivan, conceded that country Victoria had punished the party for the closure of railway lines and country hospitals. In Bairnsdale all candidates for the State seat of Gippsland East pledged their support for

the return of a Bairnsdale to Melbourne rail passenger service, and with an 8.7% swing against the sitting Member, David Treasure, the Bairnsdale *Save Our Train Group* is optimistic that they may see the service restored. However, the group, which has increased its membership in the two and a half years of its existence to 750 paid-up members, sounds a note of caution in its newsletter, *On the Rails* “...The return of Country Trains is now recognised as an important issue and the Save Our Train Group intends to make sure that when a train is returned to Bairnsdale it will be at a time and of a standard that meets the demands of the residents of East Gippsland. It would be a hollow victory indeed if we got back a train which was not patronised because the needs of travellers were ignored.”

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Keeping in touch

PTUA office, Ground Floor,
247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.
Telephone: (03) 9650 7898

Committee meetings

The Committee meets monthly at 6.15 pm. at 247 Flinders Lane.
For details please call the office.

Membership

Graeme Gibson: (03) 9650 7898

PTUA on the 'NET'

The PTUA home page is on Vicnet at <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ptua/firstpt.htm>.

Tea, Coffee, Wine and Talk.

An informal meeting of members will be held on

Wednesday, 29 May,

4th Floor of Ross House, at 7.00pm.

We hope as many members as possible will come along to talk about the latest in transport issues including City Link.

Our member, Phil Morey, will fill us in about his case against Transurban which has received much media coverage.

We also plan to show a video for interest and entertainment.

A special invitation is extended to our large number of new members to come and learn more about your Association.

The Coalition Returned – Policies? Promises?

With the coalition government returned to office, it seems opportune to discuss what the likely situation for public transport is to be under the continued ministry of Alan Brown.

The policies that the coalition have adopted are one step removed from the “slash and burn” approach first adopted. It seems a long time ago now, but in 1993 (only 3 years ago) government policy was to close 2 metropolitan and 9 country rail lines, 2 metropolitan tram lines and extensive “bustitution” of evening tram and train services.

The PTUA rapidly mobilised and with huge community support managed to mitigate significantly the severity of the policies, though the environment still remained one of cutbacks and service reductions. The one positive move was the introduction of (limited) all-night bus services.

Three years later and much has changed. The fo-

cus has shifted and now the coalition is promising:

- Abolition of reduced summer timetables
- Sunday timetables to be abolished on Met train and tram (and the Saturday timetable to apply on both days)
- Cranbourne line to operate 7 nights a week
- Upfield line to be upgraded to full 7 day service
- City Loop to be open on Sundays.

All of these are actions the PTUA has consistently championed. In many cases, the PTUA is the only organisation pressing these issues.

We will be meeting with the minister’s office shortly and pressing for rapid action on these issues. We will also be pressing for action on the two issues they have so far evaded - country rail services and metropolitan bus services.

For the first time in many years the future for public transport looks reasonably bright. It is up to the PTUA to ensure that progress continues to be made.

The Grand Prix Transport historical myth-making?

The PTC has been fulsome in its self-congratulations on the super efficiency with which they conveyed people to and from the Formula One Grand Prix at Albert Park Race Track in March.

One of our correspondents has supported them in their evaluation, but another is not so sure.

Their different experiences are recorded here –

Correspondent A:

There is an amount of valuable data to be assimilated from the Public Transport Corporation’s speedy and efficient movement of large numbers of people to and from the Grand Prix. The following points should be carefully noted:

- 1 The operation was extremely well planned
- 2 No expense was spared in ensuring that every detail was attended to
- 3 The whole system was fully staffed at every level. Credit is due to staff for their courtesy and willingness to assist.
- 4 There was thorough supervision from the top.

Chief Executive Ian Dobbs personally attended to this.

- 5 Extensive advertising attracted thousands to use public transport.

A letter to “The Age” (12/3/96) from correspondent Colin Smith drew this conclusion - “...Instead of gridlock around Albert Park...the roads were less congested than ever. This suggests that general encouragement of tram, train and bus use at the expense of car use could achieve the purported aims of City Link”.

Correspondent B:

Returning from the anti-Grand Prix rally, he took advantage of the “express shuttle” operated on the St Kilda light rail route.

- 1) He had to queue for a quarter of an hour to actually board a vehicle at the former Albert Park station.
- 2) The crowded tram took off and travelled fairly slowly until it reached the Spencer Street bridge, where it sat quite still for ten minutes.

Continued next page

City Link legal actions.

From the *Herald Sun* 15-3-96

Court bid thwarts City Link

By **CLAIRE HEANEY**

TRADING in City Link shares was postponed yesterday in a dramatic 11th-hour court battle.

A Public Transport Users' Association member opposed to the project sought an injunction at 11am yesterday to stop the shares making their debut.

In a surprise tactic, Philip Morey made the application to the Federal Court, claiming the prospectus was misleading and deceptive.

The share release was delayed until 10.30am today.

Justice Richard Cooper ordered Transurban to lodge a notice with the Australian Stock Exchange warning prospective share buyers that legal action was pending.

Mr Morey claimed the prospectus was misleading because it allegedly used out-of-date and inaccurate figures to calculate expected returns for investors in the link.

Justice Cooper refused to issue an interlocutory injunction but said there were serious questions to be answered.

In the interim, the stock exchange notice advising of the proceedings would protect people, he said.



Philip Morey

Justice Cooper said an appropriately worded message would prevent irreparable damage.

He said the notice would allow people to make commercial decisions on whether to trade in City Link shares.

Counsel for Mr Morey, Ms Jocelyne Scutt, told the court the prospectus had also falsely dismissed the chances of a successful legal challenge to tax concessions for the project.

"To allow the shares to go into the marketplace would be misleading in the light of the challenge," she said.

But John Middleton, QC, for Transurban, said if the prospectus was put on hold it could risk the value of the shares and securities, threatening

the project's viability. "The allegations are simply wrong. The prospectus is completely accurate," he said.

Outside court, Mr Morey's lawyer, Mr John Cain Jr, said he was not disappointed with the outcome because the court had found there was a serious issue to be tried.

"The allegations relate to the information contained in the prospectus as far as its projections, its profit earnings, the studies used, the traffic information (are concerned)," the son of former premier John Cain said.

"What we say is there is some doubt as to the appropriateness and the frankness of that information."

"Therefore, we say there is a risk that people will be misled or deceived by the prospectus."

Transurban spokesman Rudi Michelson said last night the action was a costly legal stunt which had failed to reveal any new information.

He said the delay had inconvenienced investors.

The matter is due to return to the court on Monday.

**SHARES' late debut,
Page 63**

PTUA member Phil Morey's Federal Court action against the promoters of the City Link project has created dramatic headlines and helped draw attention to the dubious nature of the whole scheme [see press clippings]. The case was heard before Mr. Justice Northrop in April, and a decision was still awaited at the time of going to press. In a possibly related move, the Macquarie Bank, principal promoters of the whole Transurban investment scheme, have sold all their shares in the project.

Meanwhile, a second possible legal challenge is being canvassed by inner suburban residents and councils. This involves an appeal to the Administrative Appeals tribunal against the tax breaks given to the project by the Development Allowance Authority. The appeal is based on a section of the DAA's Act stating that a project is ineligible for tax breaks if there is a law in force prohibiting or restricting the operation of facilities that compete with the project.

STOP PRESS: The PTUA has decided to support this action. (see enclosed Appeal flyer).

Continued from page 3

3) When the complaints from passengers became too much to bear, the driver opened the doors and our correspondent joined thousands of patrons walking past a line of stationary trams stretching from Bourke Street down into South Melbourne (apparently one tram had broken down).

A press release from the transport ministry on 11 March suggested that 62,000 people had travelled to the Grand Prix by tram. This is less than half the total crowd of some 150,000, and many of these had driven to the point where they caught the tram, so perhaps a

third of patrons took public transport for the whole trip. In Europe and Canada, transport planners would be aiming for a public transport share of at least 75%.

One thing that Correspondent B couldn't help thinking was how much easier the whole operation would have been if the St Kilda rail line, with its ability to carry 40,000 passengers per hour into the heart of Flinders Street station, was still in operation. The short sightedness of transport minister Tom Roper's expensive light rail project of the mid-1980s was again demonstrated.

Dramatic halt to Transurban ASX listing

THE \$510 million Transurban City Link Ltd float – developer of the \$1.77 billion City Link tollways project – was prevented from listing on the Australian Stock Exchange yesterday by dramatic, last-gasp proceedings in the Federal Court.

An application for an interim injunction stopping the listing was lodged in the court shortly before Transurban was due to list at 11.30 am, with investors queuing to bid about \$600 for parcels of its stapled securities which were issued at \$500 each.

Justice Richard Cooper later refused the request for an injunction, but ruled that proceedings dealing with the Transurban prospectus would continue next week. Transurban securities are now set to list this morning.

Lawyers for Mr Philip Morey, a member of Melbourne's Public Transport Users Association, had applied under section 52 of the Trade Practices Act for the injunction.

Counsel for Mr Morey, Dr Jocelyne Scutt, told the court it

By MARK SKULLEY

would be "scandalous" for Transurban to be listed because the company's prospectus was "misleading and deceptive in certain particulars" and that potential investors were not fully and fairly informed.

Dr Scutt said the prospectus overstated the forecast return to investors because it gave an over-optimistic projection of City Link's future traffic volumes. The prospectus had used 1990 forecasts of Melbourne's CBD employment, but more recent data gave lower figures.

The forecast return to investors of 17 per cent from City Link's third year should be 7 per cent and, applying a margin for error, could mean "no return".

The prospectus was also defective because it said Transurban had legal advice that any appeal against tax breaks granted by the Development Allowance Authority would not have standing and would be unsuccessful, when the appeals would in fact have "considerable force".

Counsel for Transurban, Mr John Middleton QC, said the prospectus had used 1995 figures in the CBD employment forecasts and could immediately call an expert witness to prove it.

The company had obtained legal advice from Freehill Hollingdale and Page that the tax breaks granted by the DAA would stand despite any appeals, although this was separate from the legal advice referred to in the prospectus.

"The allegations are simply wrong," Mr Middleton said. "The prospectus is completely accurate."

He said the litigation could potentially "affect the viability of the project". If the market expected the company to list on March 14 and it "does not occur, then the perception is very damaging".

Justice Cooper said he was prepared to assume there was a serious question to be tried, but that Transurban securities could be listed provided an appropriate notice outlining the legal proceedings was made to the ASX.

He said people had subscribed for shares in the expectation they would be listed, and he did not know what damage they would suffer if the shares did not trade.

However, the resumed court hearing ended about 3 pm. The ASX and Transurban decided this was too brief a period before the

close of on-market trading at 4 pm for the stock to list yesterday. Outside the court, Mr Morey's solicitor, Mr John Cain, of Morris Blackburn & Co, said he believed his client was acting on his own behalf as a "concerned citizen" and not on behalf of any particular group.

A Transurban spokesman, Mr Rudi Michelson, said the company viewed the day's events as a "costly stunt" which had revealed no new information about City Link, but had sought to disadvantage thousands of direct Australian investors and hundreds of thousands of others who were indirectly involved through super-annuation funds.

Nothing to worry about?

The Autumn 1996 edition of *Motoring Directions*, published by the Australian Automobile Association, contains an article titled *Greenhouse: an ill-conceived alarm..*

According to the article, the whole greenhouse problem is a plot by "bureaucratic opportunists" and "environmental opportunists" to support "extravagant demands". Measures aimed at moderating the growth in greenhouse gases may be "unnecessary, unachievable and un-

desirable", not to mention "a self-delusion, an anodyne, a drug...".

The UK sees it differently

Transport 2000, of which PTUA is an affiliate, reports in their 1995 Annual Review that their Director was named Campaigner of the Year by *Country Life* and received the *Schumacher Society Award* for his "outstanding contribution to the environmental cause in the UK". The Review states that "1995 saw the collapse of the government's road building programme, borne

down by spending cuts and public protest" Unfortunately, however, the Department of Transport has not suffered a change of heart and Government proposals for privately funded roads caused concern. Transport 2000 research "showed that these 'shadow toll roads' will cost the taxpayer more than publicly funded schemes and will provide an incentive for creating more traffic." We agree.



HALS

Minimum Service Standards for Melbourne

The PTC claims 'world's best practice' as their standard. The PTUA considers the starting point to be:

Minimum service standards are basic service levels set by government, as the co-ordinating body for public transport, which must be provided by all operators. Operators are free to provide better services, but may not provide worse services.

Minimum service standards have been adopted (or are being developed) in many cities, including Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane and Adelaide.

Minimum services standards are issued as a public document so that customers of public transport are aware of the services to which they are entitled.

What should be covered?

Minimum service standards should be set to cover:

- Hours of operation
- Frequency of operation
- Fare levels
- Co-ordination between services
- Accessibility of services (including density of network)

They may also cover issues such as:

- Quality /Age of vehicle
- Accessibility of vehicles (disabled access etc.)
- Provision of information (timetables etc.)

How would it work in Melbourne?

The Department of Transport would set minimum service standards for all providers of public transport (whether PTC or private operators). Within these standards, operators would be free to make variations to suit local conditions. Compliance with these standards would be a condition of issuing of service contracts to the service providers (This is allowed under proposed new legislation - see 27. (4) (d) of proposed Public Transport Competition Bill)

The key standards would be:

- Public transport to be provided to *within 400m walk* of all residential areas.
- All areas to be provided with bus service to *nearest convenient railway station* or trunk haul bus service (or to CBD direct)
- All bus routes to operate *at least at same frequency as connecting rail services*.
- *No more than 5min wait between connecting services* (including bus/rail connections)
- *Full range* of "Met" fares to be accepted and sold.

Implementation

Minimum service standards should be developed over the next few months and introduced as contracts with service providers are renewed over the next 12 months.

*Public Transport Users Association
April 1996*

TOETAG Update

TOETAG (The Outer Eastern Transport Action Group) was active in the outer eastern area during the state election.

Stalls were held at Boronia and Belgrave and hundreds of leaflets distributed to interested local residents. The various candidates were also present at the shopping centres and have, we hoped, seen that TOETAG means business!

All the candidates in the area were polled on a number of public transport issues, relating to service, safety and fares. The conclusion was that neither Liberal nor Labor could be endorsed, but an independent candidate for Monbulk rated very positively and was endorsed by the group.

TOETAG president, Anthony FitzGerald has also spoken on local radio and to the local press. Issues such as lack of any proper service to the heavily populated and popular tourist areas of the Dandenong Ranges, under-utilisation of the rail line with very few express trains and a terrible Saturday service (worse than Sunday!).

TOETAG has already been approached by one local member of parliament wanting to meet with the group, and it hopes shortly to meet with all the local members.

Any reader interested in joining in the activities of the group is invited to do so. Contact Anthony FitzGerald on 9754 3488 (AH).

Letters

from Kieran O'Loughlin

I am writing to you to express my disappointment in the PTUA's recent decision to support the PTC's termination of loop services on the Sandringham line. As a member of the PTUA and a daily user of this line I feel that my interests were not adequately represented in this process. Indeed, it appears that the views of your grassroots members have not been sufficiently consulted and causes me to wonder whether this is normally the case in the PTUA.

I find it rather surprising that the PTUA should be seduced into lending its endorsement to the cancellation of direct loop services with the promise of more frequent and reliable services during peak hours. None of the regular users I have spoken to on this line feel there needs to be more trains but, without a single exception, they strongly believed that the direct loop connection should be maintained. This was particularly true for women and elderly people who expressed fears for their safety when having to change platforms and wait at Richmond station after dark (notwithstanding the PTC's assurances that Richmond would soon become a "premier station"). My letters to the minister and the PTC have brought the same completely unsatisfactory pro-forma reply, claiming that "over 50% of Sandringham line customers will be better off with all services running direct to or from Flinders St" (a bogus figure I would suggest, considering the way the "market research" was apparently carried out) and underlining the fact (much to my frustration) that both the Public Transport Forum and the PTUA supported the changes.

Why were other options not explored more seriously? Why, for instance, would it not have been possible to share a reduction in direct loop services across all lines if congestion on the loop is a problem? Yet again it appears that the PTC has made another precipitous decision which appears to be serving the interests of those people who run the train system at the expense of those who use it. I might also add that it is probably no accident that, Along with the

Williamstown and Alamein lines which are also denied access to the loop, the Sandringham line has been under threat for some time. Could this be the first stage in abolishing the line despite the promise of more trains in the short term?

Along with the overwhelming majority of my fellow commuters on the Sandringham line I would argue strongly that more "system oriented" considerations such as increased frequency and reliability can never replace more "user oriented" considerations such as convenience and safety.

What value does the PTUA place on the latter notions? And, more generally, how does the PTUA consult its members and other interested parties when deciding whether to endorse changes in the public transport system. It appears that the PTUA exercises some influence over these decisions. My final question, however, is whether it always does so responsibly.

from Philip Morey

To loop or not to loop? This is the question currently on the minds of Sandringham line users, of which I am one. Going direct to and from Flinders St. has cut 9 minutes off my journey. This saving makes my journey much less tedious. In addition Flinders St. is more or less set at street level - it takes about one minute to exit the station. Exiting the underground stations requires two or three sets of escalators to negotiate and maybe some additional steps up to street level. This can add up to 3 or 4 minutes before you get to the footpath.

Flinders St. station is close to all trams networks, Southgate, Bourke St. mall. Black Rock and Beaumaris residents are also rejoicing that the off-peak bus service between 9.30am and 4pm has improved from every 30 minutes to every fifteen minutes - every bus connects with every train. The service is almost a pleasure to use! Congratulations to MetBus.

from Tim Hoffmann

I would like to comment on the government's recent changes to the Sandringham train service.

As a user of the Sandringham service ideally I would like to have the same access to the city via the Loop as other train travellers. However what I'm really interested in is using a public service that is fast, frequent and efficient. Reluctantly I accept the Public Transport Corporation's argument that the Loop does not have the capacity to provide the extra services for the Dandenong, Frankston and Sandringham lines during the peak period.

However I can only hope that the government continues to provide more frequent services (as promised in its election manifesto) which would include easy interchange both for travellers changing from train to train and within modes and between modes of public transport.

from Norm Melford

During a recent trip down the Hume High/Freeway, (still no Motor-Rail) in one hour from 6am to 7am, I counted 103 trucks (mainly big semi's) heading in the opposite direction.

Some rough arithmetic suggests about \$50,000,000 worth of trucks, over 3000 tyres, 103 drivers, countless litres of fuel, etc.

Big money! Big trucks! Big Companies! Big Business! And this was just one hour on one highway.

If someone got serious about overstaffing in the PRIVATE sector, and suggested that one train, with a crew of two, should replace all those trucks, the sky would surely fall in.

In this context, the reported (Melbourne Age, 21/12/95,p.3) Government assurance that CityLink wouldn't be threatened by a Melbourne Airport rail link because the railway would only carry passengers - not freight - takes on a new meaning.

We could be excused for thinking that the major users of our highways, and the major beneficiaries of their upgrading, are now the truckies. Private motorists might be useful to swell the vehicle counts and potential toll revenues for "economic justification" studies for new freeways, but the real winners seem to be the truckies.

One specific implication for us in
continued next page

PTUA News

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Stop Press: Historic Turnaround.

Liberal State Government announces \$25 million upfield line upgrade over 2 years

Letters (Cont'd)

PTUA, of course, is that the absence of rail goods traffic lessens the chance of retaining country rail lines in any operational condition, and hence of retaining or upgrading what country passenger services survive, let alone restoring those that have been axed.

More solid research than my one-hour count is obviously needed. Maybe we (PTUA) could inspire some "investigative journalism" by some major media – as a welcome change from MET-bashing. Meanwhile, we pay the environmental and economic costs of the gross inefficiency of the thousands of trucks represented by my sample of 103.

from George Yule

I think it would be wise for the PTUA to have a list of priorities in two different categories:

- 1) Those requiring a large capital expenditure –
 - a. An extension of the rail system to Tullamarine Airport that would also bring public transport to the neglected area of North Western Melbourne
 - b. A line to Doncaster on the median strip of the North Eastern Freeway (like the very successful new line built in North Perth recently)
 - c. The extension of the Epping line

along the old route to Whittlesea.

d. A line along the median strip of Wellington Road from Huntingdale to Monash, VFL Park and Rowville - or a light rail that could also branch north along Springvale Road.

2) Not requiring new track - extend electrification to Melton, Sunbury, Craigieburn, Coolaroo.

3) Improve services by having express trains on the outer suburban lines – Berwick, Cranbourne, St Albans, Werribee and Epping – and from South Geelong to Grovedale.