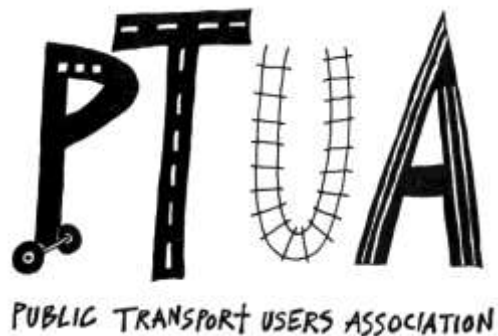


# Parliament of Victoria: Legislative Council

## Select Committee on Train Services



Submission by the Public Transport Users Association

1 June 2009

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# Executive Summary

*The Public Transport Users Association (PTUA), founded in 1976 as the Train Travellers Association, is the recognised consumer organisation representing passengers of all forms of public transport. It is a non-profit, voluntary organisation, with no political affiliations.*

The present inquiry has been prompted by an ongoing and widespread pattern of failure in Victoria's train services, culminating in the near-total shutdown of the metropolitan system in extreme heat conditions in late January 2009. In keeping with the terms of reference, this submission does not aim to catalogue the failures that have occurred in Victorian train services in recent years, but to analyse the underlying factors.

It has frequently been observed that Melbourne scores near the bottom of the world's large urban rail systems in its fitness for the purpose of transporting people. Yet at the same time, Melbourne is in no way short of rail infrastructure relative to other cities with higher rates of train travel. The conclusion to be drawn is that there are few *technical* justifications for the poor record of train operations in Victoria, and that the true factors underlying the state of our public transport system must be sought elsewhere.

In 2005, a team of experts from the University of Toronto reviewed the factors that contribute to 'best practice' in urban transport and concluded that the most critical requirement is effective governance—more important even than finance, infrastructure and urban land-use planning. When one investigates the management arrangements for public transport in all the cities that have been most successful in growing patronage and mode share in the past two decades, one finds in all cases that there is *one* body that bears ultimate responsibility for all aspects of the system: from the state of the infrastructure to the frequency and reliability of service, the cleanliness of vehicles and the level of crowding.

In Victoria, a passenger who is dissatisfied with their public transport service must take their complaint to a private operator. They quickly learn that under our franchising system, governments and franchisees are free to avoid any difficult issue by passing the buck, and only when an issue lasts long enough to cause real political damage, as with the train failures in January 2009, is a Minister forced to declare that "the buck stops here". For the rest of the time, we have a system where passengers complain to the private operators and the operators dismiss the complaints. The litany of train system failures—whether acute as in January 2009, or chronic as in the overcrowding seen every day—is the natural consequence of this hands-off approach.

If we are to have a public transport system that is not set up to fail, there is a need to reform the management arrangements that perpetuate failure. Despite all the promise of 'innovation' that accompanied privatisation in 1999 (and re-privatisation in 2004), the only evident result was to perpetuate and entrench the old management practices under private owners. Now that the Minister has admitted that franchising is no cheaper for the taxpayer than simple retention of train and tram services in public ownership, there are no good reasons left for continuing the franchising experiment, and many good reasons to pursue an alternative model.

The timing of this inquiry is fortunate, in that not only is there is an opportunity this year for the government to pursue new management arrangements at minimal cost, but there is also a ready-made candidate in the Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, better known as TransPerth. In relative terms, Perth has in recent years been more successful in growing public transport patronage than any other capital city in Australia, Melbourne included. One of the key lessons from Perth is the need to recruit expertise from successful jurisdictions, including overseas. Given the similarities in legislative framework with WA, a similar Public Transport Authority may readily be established in Victoria. Its first task would be to make a decision on the re-tendering of contracts for Melbourne's train and tram operations: this may be to re-tender to new private operators (under redrawn contracts) or to return to public ownership.

The specific problems that led to the catastrophic failure of the train system in Summer 2008-09 have a number of immediate causes, leaving aside the general neglect and planning failures for which we have proposed a competent Public Transport Authority as a remedy. These immediate causes relate primarily to track buckling, the fitout of the Comeng train fleet and other maintenance issues. In relation to these immediate issues we have made a number of recommendations, in particular the accelerated rollout of concrete sleepers and an upgrade to the Comeng air-conditioning units.

There are also numerous longer-term issues that affect the train system, in particular overcrowding, inadequate train services both within and outside peak hours, operating practices that waste rail capacity, and the lack of a proper multimodal network. Many of these issues would be tasks for a new Public Transport Authority to address in its initial years of operation. Our recommendations on these issues are intended as guidance, to highlight the actions that will help convert Victoria's rail systems from failures to world-leading successes.

**Please note:** V/Line and other regional issues will be covered in a separate submission from the Geelong branch of the Public Transport Users Association.

# Introduction

On 11 March 2009, the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Victoria established a 7 Member select committee on train services and agreed to the following terms of reference:

*To inquire into the factors leading to and causes of failures in the provision of metropolitan and V/Line train services.*

The inquiry has been prompted by an ongoing and widespread pattern of failure in Victoria's train services, culminating in the near-total shutdown of the metropolitan system in extreme heat conditions in late January 2009.

In keeping with the terms of reference, this submission does not aim to catalogue the failures that have occurred in Victorian train services in recent years, but to analyse the underlying factors. We do however stress that these failures are in no way limited to the events of January 2009, but have been a serious recurring problem for metropolitan trains in particular for at least five years. Even if previous failures were less widespread or shorter in duration than the more recent events, they have had serious consequences for the management of Victoria's transport task.

We cite just one example: on 28 August 2006, delays in work for the EastLink tollway forced the closure of the Ringwood train line for an entire weekday morning. In terms of the number of people affected (conservatively estimated at 50,000), this was an incident similar in severity to a total closure of the West Gate Bridge for an entire morning peak period. Nonetheless, despite this incident being quite clearly beyond the control of the train operator, the State Government maintained at the time that delays to train passengers were a matter between them and the train operator, and not the government's concern. As news reports at the time make clear, while the government was obliged to financially compensate train operator Connex for the incident, Connex had no similar obligation to compensate passengers, and stated it would not do so<sup>1</sup>.

This single incident, among others which will be known to the Committee, helps establish the context for the present inquiry. It is instructive to compare the government's planning for and response to this incident (or lack thereof) with what might have been expected from an equivalent closure of the West Gate Bridge: in particular one might question the lack of adequate contingency planning, the contractual arrangements that directed compensation to parties other than the aggrieved travellers, and the attempt to channel grievances to an operator who bore no responsibility for the incident. In light of subsequent debates about the need for an "alternative to the West Gate Bridge", it is often overlooked that in our public transport system we have the equivalent of some half dozen West Gate Bridges in Melbourne alone, and each of these fails on a regular basis.

Similar questions arise in regard to every other incident of train system failures: from the 'driver shortages' of 2004, to the Siemens train brake failures of 2006, to the rolling stock shortages of 2007 onward, to the heat-related failures of 2009. Unlike the example above, each one of these failures relates to areas which are the direct responsibility of train system planning and management. So while the 2006 incident might (albeit dubiously) be explained away as resulting from factors beyond the government's control, these other failures raise fundamental questions whether our public transport system is in fact being managed competently or effectively in Victoria. It is to these questions primarily that we urge the Committee to direct its attention.

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<sup>1</sup> "Compo for Connex, not commuters". Herald Sun, 29 August 2006.

# The root cause: failure to plan and manage

It has frequently been observed that Melbourne scores near the bottom of the world's large urban rail systems in its fitness for the purpose of transporting people. As World Bank-recognised transport expert Peter Newman reported in a comparison of Melbourne with 13 of the world's other most 'liveable' cities:

*Melbourne's public transport network as a whole struggles to offer a time-competitive alternative to car travel on almost any trip. Each public transport mode in Melbourne - trains, trams and buses - requires far-reaching innovations, in terms of operation and infrastructure, to offer premium standards of service such as those that help other cities perform better.<sup>2</sup>*

The poor performance of Melbourne's trains relative to those in other cities extends to the reliability of the system. Rail systems in the cities studied by Newman do not suffer chronic system failures at anywhere near the rate experienced in Melbourne. In Zurich, trains are scheduled to the nearest 30 seconds, cancellations are virtually unheard of, and passengers whose trains are delayed are provided with compensation and explanatory letters to employers.

Yet at the same time, Melbourne is in no way short of rail infrastructure relative to other cities with higher rates of train travel. Very few cities in the world claim a figure for kilometres of track per capita equal to or greater than Melbourne's. Toronto and Vancouver, two cities of similar size to Melbourne and higher mode shares for public transport, have fewer train lines between them than Melbourne. And these cities do not share Melbourne's intractable problems with train overcrowding: quite the opposite. As revealed by Statistics Canada's Census data, Vancouver has actually succeeded not only in increasing public transport mode share, but also in *reducing* the average time people spend travelling to work between 1992 and 2005, despite experiencing population growth rivalling that in Melbourne.

The conclusion to be drawn is that there are few *technical* justifications for the poor record of train operations in Victoria. Our rail infrastructure is without doubt in poorer condition than in other comparable cities, as outlined further below, but there is no good reason why this *should* be the case other than sheer neglect—and that leaves open the question of why our system should be so neglected in the first place. The true factors underlying the state of our public transport system must be sought elsewhere.

## The importance of good governance

In 2005, a team of experts from the University of Toronto reviewed the factors that contribute to 'best practice' in urban transport<sup>3</sup> and concluded that the most critical requirement is effective governance—more important even than finance, infrastructure and urban land-use planning. And not coincidentally, this is borne out when one investigates the management arrangements for public transport in all the cities that have been most successful in growing patronage and mode share in the past two decades—for example Vancouver, Copenhagen, Madrid, and even Perth in Australia.

Common to all these cities is a set of management arrangements for public transport that may be called the Transport Community model, the characteristics of which are:

- a strong, independent public planning authority, with a mandate to deliver service for the benefit

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<sup>2</sup> "Most Liveable and Best Connected?". Report to Metropolitan Transport Forum, November 2005. <http://www.ei.com.au/mtf/>

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy, C., Miller, E., Shalaby, A., McLean, H. and Coleman, J. "The Four Pillars of Sustainable Urban Transportation" in *Transport Reviews*, vol.25, pp. 393–414, 2005.

- of passengers;
- central coordination of routes, timetables and infrastructure planning;
- tight integration of separate transport modes into a single network; and
- procurement of services from public and private operators through 'gross cost' (fee for service) contracts.

The essential feature of such an arrangement is that there is *one* body that bears ultimate responsibility for all aspects of the system: from the state of the infrastructure to the frequency and reliability of service, the cleanliness of vehicles and the level of crowding. While other entities operate the actual services, these entities are contractors, and not franchisees. This is most evident in that when a passenger is dissatisfied with any aspect of the system, it is taken up with the authority, not with the operator.

The crucial importance of this 'one-stop-shop' approach is not self-evident. Often, it only becomes evident by contrasting it with the handful of systems, such as Victoria's, that experimented with an alternative 'franchising' approach in the 1990s.

In Victoria, a passenger who is dissatisfied with their public transport service must take their complaint to a private operator—a situation quite different to that in most other cities. Although Minister for Public Transport Lynne Kosky has retracted her famous remark, "Do I want to run a train system? I don't think so", her comments accurately reflect the logic of our franchised system, in which it is the franchisee, not a government authority, who is accountable for the standard of service. And while the dissatisfied passenger does have recourse to the Public Transport Ombudsman, it is not the Ombudsman's job to set or review standards. There is virtually no redress for the passenger who feels that train carriages are too dirty or that trains get cancelled too often: as long as the operator is ticking all the contractual boxes with the government there are no grounds for corrective action.

Particularly relevant to the deliberations of this Committee is the fact that under franchising, governments and franchisees are free to avoid any difficult issue by passing the buck. Suppose for example that a lot of trains are being cancelled due to air-conditioning failures. The government argues that the issue is due to inadequate maintenance of air-conditioners and is therefore the operator's responsibility. The operator argues that the air-conditioners were poorly specified when the rolling stock was procured by the government, and so the problem is the government's to fix. One or other party may then observe that as the franchise contracts are silent on the matter of air-conditioners, there may be no need for anyone to act at all. Armed with all the legal arguments, the issue can be drawn out until the onset of cooler weather, and then safely buried to both parties' mutual satisfaction. The only loser from this cosy state of affairs is the passenger, who conveniently lacks any power of intervention.

Only when an issue lasts long enough to cause real political damage, as with the train failures in January 2009, is a Minister forced to declare (as Ms Kosky eventually did) that "the buck stops here". For the rest of the time, the system is one where passengers complain to the private operators and the operators dismiss the complaints, while the government stands aloof from the conflict and issues self-congratulatory press releases aimed at ensuring no issue escalates to the point where it causes political damage.

The litany of train system failures—whether acute as in January 2009, or chronic as in the overcrowding seen every day—is the natural consequence of this hands-off approach. But the approach succeeds, because in the absence of a public authority with the obligation to take responsibility for everything, the opportunity always exists to hand a problem off to a private operator and dissipate public anger in public confusion.

Accordingly, while the Committee may see fit to make recommendations in regard to the specific train system failures we have already seen (several of which we put forward below), their implementation will not suffice by themselves to avert future system failures of one sort or another, perhaps even more severe than those we have seen. If we are to have a public transport system that is not set up to fail, there is a need to reform the management arrangements that perpetuate failure.

## Achieving good governance in Victoria

In the past half century Victoria has adopted from successful jurisdictions just one element of the Transport Community model of governance: multimodal ticketing. In all other respects we have lagged behind the rest of the world in reforming our management of public transport. Despite all the promise of 'innovation' that accompanied privatisation in 1999 (and re-privatisation in 2004), the only evident result was to perpetuate and entrench the old management practices under private owners, whose commercial interests have precluded serious engagement with governance issues.

As a result, trains, trams and buses are still operated as separate fiefdoms as they were 100 years ago, with franchising having further entrenched this pattern (undermining even the very small steps taken toward modal integration in the 1980s). And despite a decade of promises, little progress has been made on something as simple as timetable coordination of buses and trains: a crucial requirement in a city where 90% of people live beyond walking distance of a railway station, and one that is taken for granted elsewhere.

Indeed, virtually all the 'innovation' that has taken place in the last decade and been of real benefit to passengers (such as improved Sunday timetables, six-car running and additional night and New Year's Eve services) has been at the initiative of the government, following those few instances where it saw the potential for political damage. Conversely, most of the genuine operator 'innovations' have been questionable, poorly motivated and short-lived, such as one-off 'shopper express' trains, single-operator tickets, or proposals for trams to have half as many seats and stop in half as many places.

The Minister herself has now admitted that franchising is no cheaper for the taxpayer than simple retention of train and tram services in public ownership<sup>4</sup>, and that the so-far-nonexistent private-sector 'innovation' is the only reason for continuing with a more costly franchised model. Given this, we would suggest that after 10 years there are now no good reasons left for continuing the franchising experiment, and many good reasons to pursue an alternative model. This conclusion is supported by a recent OECD report that established Melbourne as an international benchmark for how *not* to write and manage contracts for public transport services:

*The list of key actions that franchisors should not do when adopting franchising is short, but crucial; the list is derived from the British and Australian experiences... Avoid giving franchises too much leeway in influencing network interactions as this undermines network integrity... Avoid 'cosy' relationships with the franchisee—this is regulatory capture in another guise... If authorities wish to ensure that the benefits of competitive tendering are realised then this list is 'non-negotiable'.<sup>5</sup>*

The timing of this inquiry is fortunate, in that not only is there is an opportunity this year for the government to pursue new management arrangements at minimal cost, but there is also at least one other Australian state offering a ready-made candidate. This candidate is the Public Transport Authority established, with bipartisan support, by the Government of Western Australia in 2003 and operating under the trading names TransPerth and TransWA.

The example of Perth is instructive, and not only because it has already planned ahead and overhauled its rail network to be more resilient to extreme heat (as explained in later sections). Since 1991 Perth has displayed the highest growth in public transport use for journeys to work of any Australian capital city, and is the *only* Australian capital to achieve growth in the proportion of work trips taken by public transport. The important thing about Perth's growth is that it has been sustained over a long period:

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<sup>4</sup> "Kosky stands by privatised trains", The Age, 24 January 2009  
<http://www.theage.com.au/national/20090123-7ors.html?page=-1>

<sup>5</sup> Peter Kain, Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, Australia. "The Pitfalls in Competitive Tendering: Addressing the Risks Revealed by Experience in Australia and Britain". In *Competitive Tendering of Rail Services* (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, European Conference of Ministers of Transport, 2007), pp. 106-107. Emphasis in original.



Melbourne's patronage has grown strongly since 2005, but this came after a long period of stagnation.

#### TRAVEL TO WORK BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT, AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL CITIES

##### Travellers

	1991	1996	2001	2006 change	
Sydney	341,460	305,363	343,692	341,076	-0.11%
Melbourne	179,090	143,223	168,905	196,721	9.84%
Brisbane	68,630	68,720	78,721	99,444	44.90%
Adelaide	41,244	32,359	34,500	42,238	2.41%
Perth	37,274	40,734	45,791	60,884	63.34%
Hobart	4,928	4,563	3,947	4,723	-4.16%
Canberra	11,362	10,366	9,101	11,690	2.89%

##### Mode share

	1991	1996	2001	2006 change	
Sydney	24.8%	21.6%	22.4%	21.2%	-14.5%
Melbourne	15.8%	12.2%	13.1%	13.9%	-12.0%
Brisbane	14.3%	12.5%	12.8%	13.8%	-3.5%
Adelaide	11.4%	8.9%	8.9%	9.9%	-13.2%
Perth	9.6%	9.0%	9.2%	10.4%	8.3%
Hobart	8.3%	7.1%	6.1%	6.4%	-22.9%
Canberra	9.9%	8.3%	6.7%	7.9%	-20.2%

(Source: ABS Census)

One of the key lessons from Perth is the need to recruit expertise from successful jurisdictions, including overseas, to avoid perpetuating old, unhelpful habits of thought and action. Accordingly, while it is to be anticipated that any new Public Transport Authority in Victoria would draw its personnel largely from the current Public Transport Division in the Department of Transport, the more senior levels of management at least should be drawn from an international recruiting effort, to ensure the effort of rebuilding the train system is led by the best minds available. (And initially at least, many of the current staff will still be occupied in their current work of administering the current franchise contracts.)

The first task of a new Public Transport Authority will be to make a decision on the re-tendering of contracts for Melbourne's train and tram operations, currently under way. It would be for the new authority, with its international experts, to determine whether the bids currently submitted to the government actually represent value for money or good outcomes for passengers. Should this not be the case, the authority should be empowered simply to allow the current contracts to lapse in November 2009 and assume the operation of the system itself—either permanently or until a suitable contractor can be identified. Under the terms of the existing contracts, the government incurs no significant financial penalty under this option.

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on the government to:*

- *Immediately place on hold (at minimal financial penalty) the re-tendering process for metropolitan train and tram franchises.*
- *Establish a Public Transport Authority within the Department of Transport, using as a template the statutory framework established by the Government of Western Australia.*
- *Commence an international recruiting process to appoint senior officers to the Public Transport Authority, with the selection criteria to specify experience in the successful planning and management of a multimodal public transport system with a record of significant patronage growth and evident passenger focus.*
- *Transfer to the Public Transport Authority the power to re-tender the train and tram contracts, and by extension, the responsibility for operation of trains and trams beyond November 2009.*

# Events of summer 2008-2009

Hot conditions in summer 2008-2009 resulted in chaotic conditions on the rail system, with hundreds of cancelled services, peaking in late January. In the last weekdays of January, 1447 out of 5966 scheduled train services were cancelled - about 24% of all services for those days.<sup>6</sup>

With many peak hour trains carrying a thousand or more people under normal conditions, the impact on passengers was severe, with delays up to several hours for some trips<sup>7</sup>, and overcrowding on remaining train services, as well as overflow onto bus and tram services.

## Track buckling

Track buckling across the rail network caused trains to be delayed due to speed restrictions, and in certain cases, caused the suspension of services on sections of some lines.

Buckling can be largely resolved by the use of concrete sleepers, which hold the tracks in place more firmly than timber sleepers. Interstate railway systems are accelerating their conversion programmes, with Perth having already upgraded all but one train line to concrete sleepers<sup>8</sup>. In comparison, Melbourne's network is not expected to be completely converted until 2024<sup>9</sup>, raising the prospect of tracks buckling each summer for decades to come.

It is notable that the current sleeper replacement programme is using broad-gauge-only sleepers, despite only a marginal cost for gauge-convertible sleepers. This effectively rules out gauge standardisation for the life of the sleepers - some 60-70 years.

While there are not currently strong arguments for gauge conversion of the suburban rail network, given the future potential for moving freight onto rail (including interstate movements, where track is largely standard gauge), as well as the possibility of future high-speed interstate passenger rail which may partially use existing suburban tracks, the PTUA's view is that upgrades to concrete sleepers should not "build out" potential for future standardisation.

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on the government to:*

- *accelerate the sleeper replacement programme, prioritising locations which are known to be prone to severe track buckling; and*
- *ensure that all orders for concrete sleepers specify gauge convertible sleepers.*

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<sup>6</sup> The Age: "Inquiry into train chaos" February 5, 2009  
<http://www.theage.com.au/national/20090205-7ycw.html>

<sup>7</sup> The Age: "Melbourne train commuters warned of more delays", January 14, 2009  
<http://www.theage.com.au/national/20090114-7qlf.html?page=-1>

<sup>8</sup> "Armadale, Thornlie lines to close", WA Today, January 12, 2009  
<http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/20090109-7djh.html>

<sup>9</sup> "What meltdown? Adelaide's rail network handles heat", The Age February 6, 2009  
<http://www.theage.com.au/national/20090205-7yzt.html?page=-1>

## Comeng fleet breakdowns

The Comeng fleet, originally dating from the 1980s, underwent refurbishment in the early 2000s<sup>10</sup>, with upgrades to seating, passenger intercom and public address systems, and visual displays. However, known design flaws in the air-conditioning systems, which cause failures in heat above 33 degrees, were not resolved.

The Comeng trains constitute just over half of the metropolitan train fleet. Given the reliance of the rail service on the Comeng trains, the reluctance of the government to upgrade these trains' air-conditioning systems seems extraordinarily short-sighted.

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on the government to:*

- *investigate upgrades to the Comeng train fleet air-conditioning to ensure it is more resilient on days of extreme heat.*

## Maintenance

Since timetable changes in November 2008, 90% of the train fleet is in use to run a full timetable<sup>11</sup>. This has obviously put more pressure on maintenance operations, though not beyond a level we would consider appropriate to a well-run train system, such as that in Zurich or Toronto. Heat issues caused a large number of failures, particularly to Comeng air-conditioning, and it appears there were limited additional maintenance resources that could be called upon to improve turnaround times and get trains back into service.

The increased commitment of resources to train maintenance, currently envisaged by the government for the next franchise period<sup>12</sup>, will doubtless assist in addressing this issue. However, it must also be ensured that there is flexibility to vary the resourcing as appropriate to evolving maintenance practices overseas. A Public Transport Authority with appropriate expertise, as recommended by us above, is in a position to review and encourage innovations in practice through the use of appropriate contracts, as occurs now in Zurich and other European cities.

## Union and procedural issues

Earlier this year it became apparent that there have been tensions between Connex and the RTBU, with Connex claiming up to 80% of cancellations are caused by spurious reporting of minor defects<sup>13</sup>. This culminated in a dispute that closed the Sandringham line for many hours when a train was parked on running lines at Richmond station, unable to be moved.

It appears this dispute has come about as a result of reforms to fault-reporting and repair procedures within Connex. Performance figures for April, after Connex and the union had reached agreement, showed a big drop in cancellations, so it appears the new arrangements may have been productive.

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<sup>10</sup> VicSig: Comeng trains <http://www.vicsig.net/index.php?page=suburban&traintype=Comeng>

<sup>11</sup> "Connex may be short of trains as school returns", The Age February 2 2009  
<http://www.theage.com.au/national/20090201-7usv.html>

<sup>12</sup> "Victorian government to spend millions on train maintenance", Herald Sun May 28 2009  
<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,25548462-661,00.html>

<sup>13</sup> "Connex blames 'fault-finding' drivers for meltdown", ABC Online January 29 2009  
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/29/2477359.htm>

However it is critical that the government and whichever operator runs the system after November 2009 work productively with the unions to ensure that industrial action does not disrupt rail services again in this way.

## **Information to customers**

Passengers waiting for delayed or cancelled trains complained of a lack of information. While Connex's SMS services did warn of line suspensions and cancellations, the Connex web site suffered under extreme stress, and the Metlink web site did not offer detailed information about service problems.

Passengers commented that frontline (station) staff seemed to have a lack of information, particularly in relation to latest developments and possible alternative routes.

*The PTUA recommends that the government / Public Transport Authority directs any future train operator to:*

- *review how realtime information is provided to frontline staff;*
- *ensure frontline staff have access to information concerning alternative tram and bus routes; and*
- *ensure that any customer-facing web site has upgraded capacity relative to that in early 2009, or that capacity can be boosted to ensure information is available during adverse events.*

## **Lack of alternative routes**

Melbourne's public transport network is characterised as being reasonably well-developed within the confines of the tram network, or equivalently Zone 1 - but severely lacking beyond it.

Trams provide reasonably frequent, medium-capacity services which can serve as feeders into the rail network, and—crucially in situations of disruption—act as an alternative to rail services. In a number of inner-suburban areas, trams link across rail lines as well as into the CBD, so for instance when the Sandringham line was suspended between Flinders Street and Elsternwick on the afternoon of 13 January, passengers were able to use trams to access areas with no train service, or to connect with trains operating between Elsternwick and Sandringham.

However, due to the relative carrying capacity of trams and trains, and their everyday passenger loads, it is obvious that trams will become overcrowded under such circumstances. Travel times are also much longer than for trains, due to a lack of traffic light priority, even along busy routes such as St Kilda Road.

Beyond the tram network, there are a number of cross-suburban bus routes which can also act as alternative routes for passengers. However, apart from a handful of relatively frequent routes (including, on weekdays, Smartbus services), most bus routes are only half-hourly or worse, resulting in long waiting times and limited capacity. The confusing route structure of many routes also results in a general lack of knowledge amongst passengers and public transport staff.

*In order to fully take advantage of alternative modes of transport in the event of future train disruptions, the PTUA recommends that the Committee call on the government / Public Transport Authority to:*

- *improve tram priority to speed up tram trips (and thus provide higher frequency services using the available fleet), particularly along high frequency routes such as St Kilda Road, but also others where trams suffer delays;*
- *reform and upgrade the bus network, providing "tram-like" routes primarily along arterial roads, running at high frequencies (every 10 minutes or better), particularly during peak hours;*

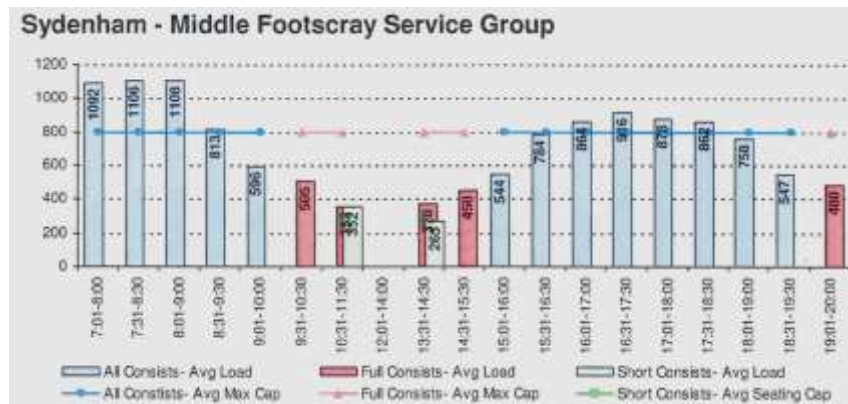
- *direct the tram operator and Vicroads to more closely co-operate during major train disruptions to ensure trams operate more smoothly through traffic, over-riding traffic light sequences if necessary to move as many displaced train passengers as quickly as possible;*
- *direct the train operator to ensure that frontline staff are aware of alternative routes that may be available, including train and cross-suburban tram/bus routes, particularly those with high-frequency bus routes; and*
- *ensure that there is a centralised, well-co-ordinated response to major incidents, and work with train, tram and bus operators to develop contingency plans to be put into operation in the event of train line suspensions, which could include increased frequencies on alternative routes, and standby trams/buses and drivers on high-risk days that can be deployed quickly.*

# Longer-term issues

## Crowding - suburban

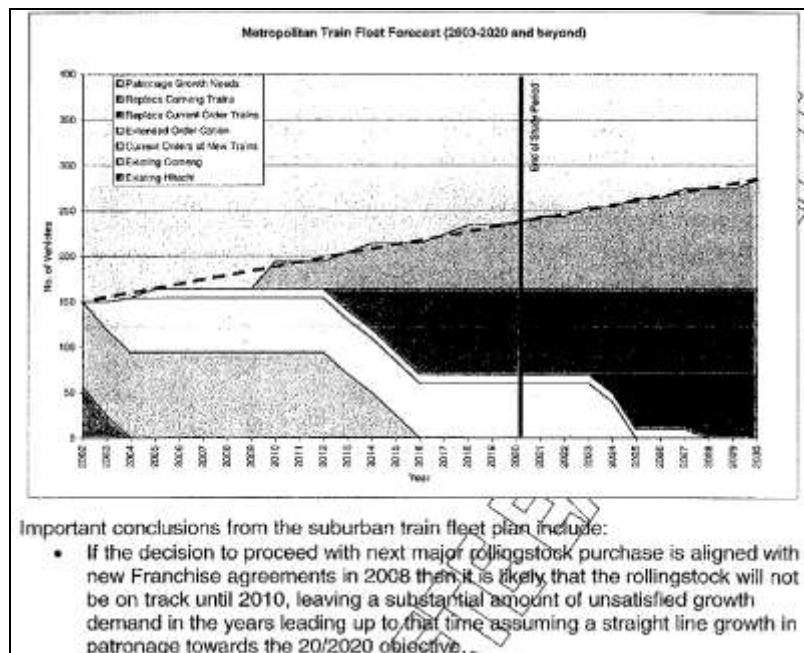
It is self-evident to any observer that the metropolitan and regional rail networks are now suffering from severe overcrowding, not just in peak times, but also in peak-shoulder, off-peak and evening periods, including weekends. Sustained patronage growth in recent years has resulted in packed platforms and carriages being a regular sight on the train network, with inner-suburban stations regularly seeing passengers left standing on platforms, unable to board crowded trains.

On the most crowded lines, such as Sydenham, load counts show average loads consistently breaching the "desirable" figure of 798 people per train in both morning and evening peak hours.



Connex Load Standards Survey, Department of Infrastructure, May 2007

Contrary to claims by government, the patronage growth currently being experienced was not unexpected. The scrapped 2003 document "Train Plan" forecast strong growth, and noted that the train fleet would need to be bolstered quickly, and that if trains were not in service before 2010, there would be "a substantial amount of unsatisfied growth demand".



Forecast of metropolitan train fleet required to meet patronage demand, from the unreleased Train Plan document, Department of Infrastructure, 2003.

As it is, the predictions of Train Plan are destined to come true. While the government now has 38 extra suburban trains on order, only a single train is expected to be delivered in 2009, with others following in 2010.

The over-crowding problems are undoubtedly worse because the vast majority of Hitachi trains, most of which were in perfectly serviceable condition, were actively taken out of service and scrapped in the early part of this decade. Of the 59 six-carriage Hitachi trains once in service, only 7 remain. Had they not been scrapped (and been refurbished to bring the interior to a standard approaching that of Comeng trains), we would now have a substantially bigger train fleet.

In the face of 2003 predictions of high patronage growth, this act amounts to a planning disaster. It is to avoid a repeat of such egregious planning failures that we recommend the establishment of a competent Public Transport Authority to replace the franchising arrangements that have led to such decisions.

As detailed under 'Operating patterns' below, there is ample scope to relieve overcrowding in peak hour by improving the current operating practices to make more efficient use of the CBD network. Documents from the 1970s show that the original planners of the City Loop envisaged up to twice as many trains using the system in peak hour as do today. Even a more modest increase would suffice to reduce average train loads to a more comfortable level and provide for some additional patronage growth (noting that mode shift to public transport for CBD travel is already nearly complete).

### **Inadequate frequencies in peak**

Despite the increase in train services on some lines in recent years as an attempt to deal with overcrowding, many lines still suffer from long waiting times in peak hours. At stations as close as a few kilometres from the Hoddle Grid, waiting times of 20 minutes are typical, and combined with crowded conditions, make the train service unattractive, even compared to driving in inner-city traffic.

Station	Distance from Hoddle Grid (by road)	AM peak (7am-9am) typical train interval
South Kensington	4.6 km	20 minutes
Seddon / Spotswood	5.4 km / 6.2 km	20 minutes
Macaulay / Royal Park / Jewell	2.5 km / 3.7 km / 5.2 km	20 minutes
Nth Williamstown / Williamstown Bch / Williamstown	11.7 km / 12.5 km / 13.5 km	20 minutes
Seaholme / Altona / Westona	15.3 km / 15.8 km / 17.0 km	20 minutes
Glenhuntly / Ormond / McKinnon	12.7 km / 13.3 km / 13.9 km	15 minutes
Ashburton / Alamein	12.8 km / 13.2 km	20 minutes

The poor quality train services from some inner-city railway stations and relatively high quality roads along parallel routes ensure that many commuters will continue to drive, adding to inner-city traffic.

Outer-suburban stations also suffer from poor frequencies in peak hour, particularly on the sections of single-line track.

Low frequencies mean there is a much bigger impact from cancellations, as each cancellation doubles the waiting time. In the case of stations with a 20 minute service, this results in a 40 minute waiting time, and if passengers then can't fit on board the following service, they face another 20 minute wait, making up to an hour's wait for a train they can board.

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *undertake a re-write of the train timetable from scratch, aiming to commence running towards the end of 2010 when the bulk of the additional 38 trains will have arrived;*
- *adopt a target for waiting time at all stations (except outer-suburban branches and single-line sections) of no more than 10 minutes in peak hours, to be achieved within two years; and*
- *undertake a programme of duplicating all single-line sections of track within the Urban Growth Boundary to allow a boost in services to those stations.*

## **Poor services outside peak hours**

Almost without exception, Melbourne's off-peak, evening and weekend train frequencies are poor, with waits of 30 to 40 minutes or even longer common after 7pm and not unknown during the day.

By 7pm, most lines run only half-hourly, ensuring that most commuters will avoid travelling at these times, instead adding to crowding on evening peak services to avoid long waits.

Weekend services are almost uniformly infrequent, at every 20 minutes to most stations. Traffic on many inner-suburban roads on weekends now rivals the snarls seen on weekdays. The traffic jams and difficulties in parking at suburban shopping centres such as Southland and Chadstone are a testament to the overall poor quality of weekend public transport.

Outside peak hours, there are few express services, making long trips by train less competitive when parallel motorways are often at their least congested.

Due to inconsistencies between former operator M>Train and Connex, Sunday night trains are less frequent (at every 40 minutes) and finish earlier on the Burnley and Clifton Hill groups of lines, while other lines run until midnight at least every 30 minutes. In some cases the early shutdown directly threatens the viability of public transport for big events. (See Special Events, below)

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to boost off-peak, evening and weekend services so that:*

- *as an immediate priority, all lines run until at least every 30 minutes until midnight on Sundays;*
- *all stations on the metropolitan network, aside from outer-suburban branches and single-track sections, receive service at least every 10 minutes until at least midnight, 7-days-a-week; and*
- *outer-suburban branches and single-track sections (until duplicated) receive service approximately every 20 minutes or better until at least midnight, 7-days-a-week.*

## **Operating patterns**

The current mix of operating patterns is confusing to passengers, and wastes track capacity, as express trains quickly catch up to stopping trains. It also leads to unreliability, with small delays tending to snowball. For instance:

- Between Richmond and Ringwood, there are 13 separate stopping patterns in the outbound direction only<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> "Getting Melbourne's Rail System on Track", PTUA 2005, citing Connex timetables.  
<http://www.ptua.org.au/publications/melb-rail-on-track/>



- On the Frankston line, there are 8 different stopping patterns in the inbound direction only<sup>15</sup>.

The most reliable, frequent train operations elsewhere in the world use simple timetables, with few variations in operating pattern, maximising reliability and the use of track capacity.

While Flinders Street Station has 13 platforms<sup>16</sup>, Melbourne's City Loop has only four single track tunnels. Because most trains are squeezed into the Loop, this places an artificial limit on CBD track capacity. This also results in delays, as for instance a late AM-peak train from Dandenong going into the loop may delay a following train from Frankston, and so on.

The City Loop also suffers from the peculiar practice (unique in the world) of reversing direction on weekdays. While this does not markedly affect peak-hour capacity, it adds significantly to occasional and new user confusion and leads to long gaps between trains at around 1pm when the direction reverses.

Provided high frequency, reliable services and good interchange facilities are provided, passengers are willing to transfer to reach their destinations. Running more trains direct into Flinders Street - where possible through-routing from the eastern suburbs to Southern Cross Station and the west - would allow more trains to run on the system overall, more reliably.

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *as part of a complete re-write of timetables, simplify the number of stopping patterns to a maximum of 2-3 per line;*
- *revise CBD area operations to run more trains direct to Flinders Street, preferably through-routing from east to west and vice-versa; and*
- *review the reversal of the City Loop on weekdays.*

## Special events

While Melbourne's planning and handling of special events is envied by other Australian cities<sup>17</sup>, in part due to the location of major sporting and concert venues close to rail services, there remain problems.

With event organisers regularly encouraging patrons to use public transport, and in cases limited or comprehensive free travel included in the cost of tickets (for example, Formula 1 Grand Prix, Commonwealth Games), the scheduling of additional services does not always cope with crowds. The PTUA regularly hears of sporting events and concerts where, particularly at the conclusion of the event, long waiting times and overcrowding (particularly on trains) occurs.

Additionally, because the overall public transport network is under-developed (especially in areas not served by trams and trains), this reduces the effectiveness of public transport provision to large events. In the case of the Grand Prix, comprehensive, frequent services are provided between the venue and the CBD, but few additional services are provided otherwise. So while patrons using public transport from the venue can clear Albert Park relatively quickly, they still face up to a 30 minute wait for trains from the CBD to get them home, and if reliant on buses, few if any services at all.

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<sup>15</sup> Connex timetable, effective November 2008

<sup>16</sup> Flinders Street Station has platforms numbered from 1 to 14, but platform 11 is presently decommissioned.

<sup>17</sup> "Senate Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services", transcript from Melbourne hearing 30/3/2009, page 24. [http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/rrat\\_ctte/public\\_transport/hearings/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/rrat_ctte/public_transport/hearings/index.htm)

Other events receive no extra services at all. In 2006, Melbourne's traditional Christmas Eve Carols by Candlelight was held on a Sunday night, and with big crowds expected, use of public transport was encouraged to get people to the event. But concert was scheduled to finish at 11:30pm, while the last trains on the Burnley and Clifton Hill groups were scheduled to leave Flinders Street between 11:20 and 11:45pm. Some audience members either had to leave the event before its conclusion, or risk missing the last train home.

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *revise planning procedures for large-scale events such that frequent, high capacity services are provided for patrons, minimising delays*
- *upgrade "normal" services so that all stations on the metropolitan network, aside from outer-suburban branches and single-track sections, receive service at least every 10 minutes until at least midnight, 7-days-a-week, to better absorb the additional traffic from special events*

## **Connecting and feeder services**

Many suburban railway stations, particularly beyond the reach of the tram network, have poor quality connecting bus services. It is common for these to run only every 30 to 40 minutes, even in peak hour, severely limiting their effectiveness. In the inner-city, a number of tram services run frequently, but fall short of connecting to their local railway stations.

The impact of this severe stress on a large number of station carparks right across Melbourne, with many filling during the morning peak, and some passengers parking illegally in order to be able to catch trains<sup>18</sup>.

Pressure on carparks acts as an artificial constraint on the growth of off-peak patronage, when there is generally capacity on train services for extra passengers, since prospective customers beyond the walking distance of rail services have no practical way to access stations.

The lack of parking and poor connecting bus services, particularly in the evenings when any bus services running at all are likely to be only hourly, also discourages commuters from travelling outside peak-hour, effectively forcing them to use trains in the morning peak, or not at all, thus adding to peak-hour crowding.

Poor connecting services detract from the effectiveness of the public transport network as a whole. They discourage counter-peak, off-peak usage of the rail network to destinations that are beyond walking distance of railway stations, and fail to provide a robust network that offers alternative routes in case of disruption.

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *institute a programme of extending tram routes to local stations (for instance route 3 to East Malvern, route 5 to Darling, route 6 to Glen Iris);*
- *upgrade local arterial road bus services to every 10 minutes, and running frequently until the time of the last connecting train, 7-days-a-week;*
- *provide better multi-modal information at interchanges so passengers can make best use of the entire public transport network; and*
- *limit railway station car park expansion to suburban fringe locations where land is outside suburban activity centres, is cheaply available, and frequent feeder bus services are impractical*

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<sup>18</sup> "Latest problem on train network: car parks", The Age, May 27 2008  
<http://www.theage.com.au/national/20080526-2ich.html>

## Fleet design

Melbourne has a mix of train designs, with four major types, the Hitachi, Comeng, X'Trapolis and Siemens trains. The Comeng fleet is further divided into the "north" (refurbished by Connex) and "south" (refurbished by former operator M>Train) variants.

Overall the fleet suffers from an inappropriate design for crowded conditions. Siemens trains have only two sets of doors per carriage side, and an internal layout which encourages passengers to congregate around doorways, which increases delays at platforms ("dwell time"). The southern Comeng carriages have similar problems, and it is common on both these train types to see passengers boarding and alighting in single file, despite the width of the doorways.

All Comeng and X'Trapolis trains have internal layouts with narrow gangways, further discouraging passengers from moving away from the doorways. Siemens trains and others have a lack of handholds along the carriage, which means those passengers who do move all the way in risk falling if they are unable to find somewhere to hold onto.

These problems contribute to excessive overcrowding around doorways, passengers left behind on platforms when there may be space inside the train for them, and long delays at stations, which limits rail line throughput and thus prevents more frequent trains from being run.

A separate issue, Siemens trains have ongoing issues with their brakes. While it has not been established that this is a critical safety issue, in the six years since problems were first identified in early-2003<sup>19</sup>, measures to prevent overruns have resulted in mass cancellations (January 2007<sup>20</sup>) and delays due to level crossing precautions (March 2009<sup>21</sup>). This issue needs to be completely rectified once and for all.

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *with passenger consultation, review internal train layouts and passenger movements and refurbish to improve dwell times, comfort and capacity, while not unduly impacting the number of seats provided;*
- *with passenger consultation, consider guidelines for the purchase of future trains, to minimise dwell times and maximise capacity, while ensuring that most passengers travelling outside peak hours can continue to get seats; and*
- *move to finalise a solution to the ongoing Siemens brakes issues.*

## Level crossings

Metropolitan Melbourne has almost 200 level crossings<sup>22</sup>.

Apart from adding to delays to motor vehicles, road-based public transport, cyclists and pedestrians,

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<sup>19</sup> "Millions to fix M>Trains", The Age, May 14 2003  
<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/05/13/1052591795355.html>

<sup>20</sup> "Further brake failures sideline a third of new trains", The Age, January 16 2007  
<http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/further-brake-failures-sideline-trains/2007/01/15/1168709680269.html>

<sup>21</sup> "Train brake failures lead to 30 km/h speed limit", The Age, March 7 2009  
<http://www.theage.com.au/national/20090307-8rln.html>

<sup>22</sup> The Age "On the wrong track", September 23 2005  
<http://www.theage.com.au/news/general/on-the-wrong-track/2005/09/22/1126982181700.html>

level crossings impact train service reliability, with regular accidents causing authorities to suspend rail services for extended periods of time while injuries and fatalities are thoroughly investigated.

Crossings also limit the provision of more frequent train services, with resistance from local communities to the impact of crossing gates being closed for longer periods of time.

In the case of the four train/tram crossings (at Riversdale, Kooyong, Gardiner and Glenhuntly), speed restrictions slow trains to 15-20kmh, impacting travel times and reducing track capacity, as well as causing delays to high-frequency tram services.

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *commence the staged removal of level crossings in the Melbourne metropolitan area, prioritising crossings with the highest accident rates, those with trams, and those with other frequent public transport services;*
- *upgrade level crossings across the state with safety measures to further reduce accidents, including lights and booms, rumble strips, lower speed limits and better signage;*
- *review emergency service procedures to see what measures can be undertaken to reduce delays to suspended rail lines, while still ensuring that authorities are able to appropriately investigate and clear accident scenes; and*
- *improve motorist education to ensure all drivers are aware of relevant laws and responsibilities around level crossings.*

## **Operational**

There are a number of operational issues that combine to degrade the efficiency of the rail network. In many cases they relate to a general lack of staff at critical points on the network, or operational practices which are long-established, but inappropriate given the growth in patronage and the need to improve efficiency.

Passengers in wheelchairs require assistance boarding and alighting from trains. This is done by the train driver, using a portable ramp contained in the train. The impact of this is most significant at busy CBD stations, particularly in the City Loop, where the time taken for the driver to assist the passenger can add to dwell time, causing delays to following trains.

Ill passengers are also generally dealt with by drivers, who will call for paramedic assistance and then wait (on the train) with the passenger. This is in part because most stations have no staff. In many cases if able to be accompanied by staff, passengers may be well enough to (voluntarily) move from the train onto the station, reducing delays.

At a number of stations, drivers cannot clearly see whether alighting and boarding passengers are clear of the doors, particularly at stations with narrow platforms (including Parliament), a problem exacerbated by the removal of guards from trains during the 1990s.

Flinders Street is considered to be a terminus station. Layovers at Flinders Street also result in delays, particularly if there is a driver changeover. Many rail systems around the world avoid crew changeovers at central city stations for this reason, preferring to have crews stationed at suburban termini.

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *introduce platform staff at the busiest stations, such as the City Loop, who have the necessary training and equipment to assist wheelchair passengers when boarding and alighting, particularly in peak hours, and also to assist in indicating to drivers that they can depart;*
- *re-introduce staff on all stations from first to last train, with peak hours being a priority, to allow them to assist sick passengers and, where appropriate, aid them in alighting from the*

- train to wait for paramedics inside the station; and
- upgrade or install platform CCTV at stations where driver visibility is poor due to narrow platform width or crowding, including Parliament and Flagstaff.
- move to upgrade train driver facilities at all outer-suburban termini, to allow driver changeovers to occur there rather than at Flinders Street, particularly during peak hours.

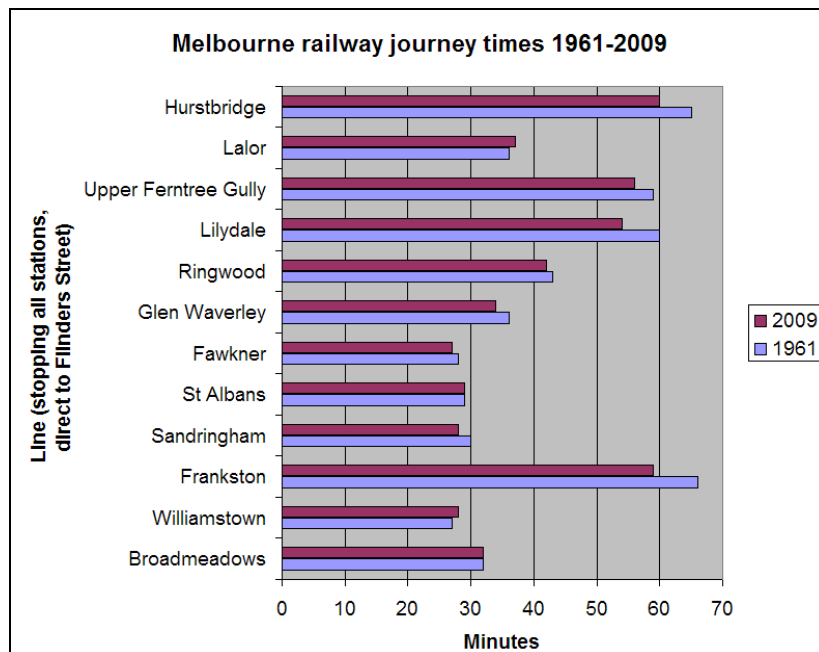
## Infrastructure

While Melbourne has significant rail infrastructure for a city of its size, it does have a number of shortcomings which impact rail operations.

Single-track sections cause delays to individual services to cascade through services right across the network. They also limit the frequency of services. There are a number of such sections on some of the busiest lines on the system.

- Altona loop (Werribee line)
- Upfield line
- Epping line (to be duplicated as part of the extension to South Morang)
- Hurstbridge line
- Lilydale line
- Belgrave line
- Cranbourne line

On many train lines, despite trains having improved acceleration and higher speeds, the journey time has not changed substantially for decades.



Source: Victorian Railways and Connex timetables, 1961 and 2009.

Track conditions and aging signalling and control systems may be contributing to this, and are susceptible to breakdown, and as well as incapable of handling higher-frequency rail services.

However, while there is a need for upgrades, recent cost-blowouts in rail infrastructure projects may be slowing down or preventing infrastructure to improve efficiency or extend the network.

The recent announcement of the South Morang rail extension (consisting of 5 kilometres of track

duplication, and 3.5 kilometres of new dual track, and one new station) at \$562 million<sup>23</sup> was greeted with disbelief by observers. While Perth's Mandurah Line, opened in 2007, cost \$12.5 million per kilometre, including a central city rail tunnel and numerous stations, a similar cost to Melbourne's Craigieburn rail extension, also opened in 2007, the South Morang extension comes out at some \$66 million per kilometre.

Costings such as this appear to be over-inflated and cast doubt on the financial viability of other rail projects needed in Melbourne to improve reliability and frequency, and to extend the reach of train services to help relieve congested traffic and reduce petrol consumption, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *ensure signalling and control systems are upgraded to meet the challenges of high frequency, reliable railway operation; and*
- *investigate costings on rail projects, with a view to ensuring Department of Transport project staff have appropriate skills and training to cost-effectively manage future rail projects.*

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<sup>23</sup> "State Budget to commit \$562.3 million for South Morang rail extension", State government press release, May 1 2009.

[http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/premier/state-budget-to-commit-\\$562.3-million-for-south-morang-rail-extension.html](http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/premier/state-budget-to-commit-$562.3-million-for-south-morang-rail-extension.html)

# List of Recommendations

## **Recommendation 1**

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on the government to:*

- *Immediately place on hold (at minimal financial penalty) the re-tendering process for metropolitan train and tram franchises.*
- *Establish a Public Transport Authority within the Department of Transport, using as a template the statutory framework established by the Government of Western Australia.*
- *Commence an international recruiting process to appoint senior officers to the Public Transport Authority, with the selection criteria to specify experience in the successful planning and management of a multimodal public transport system with a record of significant patronage growth and evident passenger focus.*
- *Transfer to the Public Transport Authority the power to re-tender the train and tram contracts, and by extension, the responsibility for operation of trains and trams beyond November 2009.*

## **Recommendation 2**

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on the government to:*

- *accelerate the sleeper replacement programme, prioritising locations which are known to be prone to severe track buckling; and*
- *ensure that all orders for concrete sleepers specify gauge convertible sleepers.*

## **Recommendation 3**

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on the government to:*

- *investigate upgrades to the Comeng train fleet air-conditioning to ensure it is more resilient on days of extreme heat.*

## **Recommendation 4**

*The PTUA recommends that the government / Public Transport Authority directs any future train operator to:*

- *review how realtime information is provided to frontline staff;*
- *ensure frontline staff have access to information concerning alternative tram and bus routes; and*
- *ensure that any customer-facing web site has upgraded capacity relative to that in early 2009, or that capacity can be boosted to ensure information is available during adverse events.*

## **Recommendation 5**

*In order to fully take advantage of alternative modes of transport in the event of future train disruptions, the PTUA recommends that the Committee call on the government / Public Transport Authority to:*

- *improve tram priority to speed up tram trips (and thus provide higher frequency services using the available fleet), particularly along high frequency routes such as St Kilda Road, but also others where trams suffer delays;*
- *reform and upgrade the bus network, providing "tram-like" routes primarily along arterial roads, running at high frequencies (every 10 minutes or better), particularly during peak hours;*
- *direct the tram operator and Vicroads to more closely co-operate during major train disruptions to ensure trams operate more smoothly through traffic, over-riding traffic light sequences if necessary to move as many displaced train passengers as quickly as possible;*
- *direct the train operator to ensure that frontline staff are aware of alternative routes that may be available, including train and cross-suburban tram/bus routes, particularly those with high-frequency bus routes; and*
- *ensure that there is a centralised, well-co-ordinated response to major incidents, and work with train, tram and bus operators to develop contingency plans to be put into operation in the event of train line suspensions, which could include increased frequencies on alternative routes, and standby trams/buses and drivers on high-risk days that can be deployed quickly.*

## **Recommendation 6**

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *undertake a re-write of the train timetable from scratch, aiming to commence running towards the end of 2010 when the bulk of the additional 38 trains will have arrived;*
- *adopt a target for waiting time at all stations (except outer-suburban branches and single-line sections) of no more than 10 minutes in peak hours, to be achieved within two years; and*
- *undertake a programme of duplicating all single-line sections of track within the Urban Growth Boundary to allow a boost in services to those stations.*

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- *as an immediate priority, all lines run until at least every 30 minutes until midnight on Sundays;*
- *all stations on the metropolitan network, aside from outer-suburban branches and single-track sections, receive service at least every 10 minutes until at least midnight, 7-days-a-week; and*
- *outer-suburban branches and single-track sections (until duplicated) receive service approximately every 20 minutes or better until at least midnight, 7-days-a-week.*

## **Recommendation 8**

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *as part of a complete re-write of timetables, simplify the number of stopping patterns to a*



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- *revise CBD area operations to run more trains direct to Flinders Street, preferably through-routing from east to west and vice-versa; and*
- *review the reversal of the City Loop on weekdays.*

### **Recommendation 9**

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *revise planning procedures for large-scale events such that frequent, high capacity services are provided for patrons, minimising delays*
- *upgrade "normal" services so that all stations on the metropolitan network, aside from outer-suburban branches and single-track sections, receive service at least every 10 minutes until at least midnight, 7-days-a-week, to better absorb the additional traffic from special events*

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### **Recommendation 12**

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *commence the staged removal of level crossings in the Melbourne metropolitan area, prioritising crossings with the highest accident rates, those with trams, and those with other frequent public transport services;*
- *upgrade level crossings across the state with safety measures to further reduce accidents, including lights and booms, rumble strips, lower speed limits and better signage;*
- *review emergency service procedures to see what measures can be undertaken to reduce*

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- *introduce platform staff at the busiest stations, such as the City Loop, who have the necessary training and equipment to assist wheelchair passengers when boarding and alighting, particularly in peak hours, and also to assist in indicating to drivers that they can depart;*
- *re-introduce staff on all stations from first to last train, with peak hours being a priority, to allow them to assist sick passengers and, where appropriate, aid them in alighting from the train to wait for paramedics inside the station; and*
- *upgrade or install platform CCTV at stations where driver visibility is poor due to narrow platform width or crowding, including Parliament and Flagstaff.*
- *move to upgrade train driver facilities at all outer-suburban termini, to allow driver changeovers to occur there rather than at Flinders Street, particularly during peak hours.*

### **Recommendation 14**

*The PTUA recommends that the Committee call on a future Public Transport Authority to:*

- *ensure signalling and control systems are upgraded to meet the challenges of high frequency, reliable railway operation; and*
- *investigate costings on rail projects, with a view to ensuring Department of Transport project staff have appropriate skills and training to cost-effectively manage future rail projects.*

# Further reading

Getting Melbourne's Rail System on Track, 2007

<http://www.ptua.org.au/publications/melb-rail-on-track/>

Every 10 Minutes to Everywhere: High quality public transport right across Melbourne

<http://www.ptua.org.au/campaigns/every10minutes/>

Transport governance: Public transport management that works for passengers

<http://www.ptua.org.au/campaigns/govern/>

Connecting to the Future

<http://www.ptua.org.au/publications/connecting/>