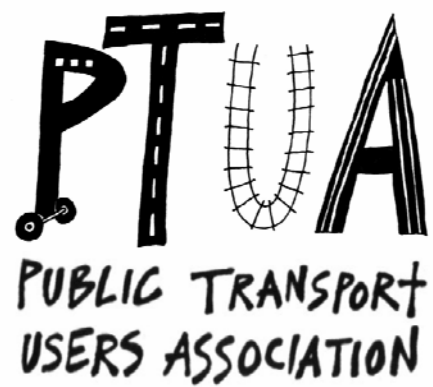


# Response to *Unlocking Victorian Tourism*

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# 1 Introduction

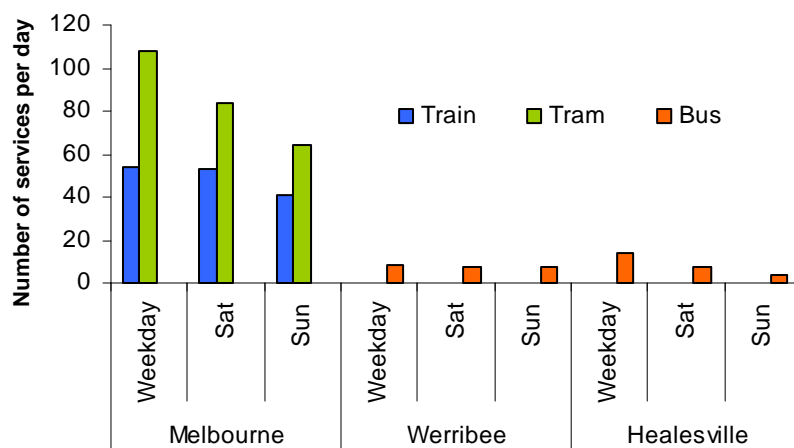
As noted in the Commission’s draft report (VCEC 2011a, p.1), the competitiveness of Victoria’s tourism industry is influenced by issues such as the availability and cost of transport.

In its draft report, the Commission appears to have categorised improvements to public transport as “State Government involvement in infrastructure investment” (VCEC 2011, p.172). Local and international evidence demonstrates that the quality of public transport depends as much on its management as on investment in infrastructure (PTUA 2009a, pp.30-31; PTUA 2009b). In other words, the management of *existing* state public transport assets will have a major impact on the availability and cost of transport in Victoria for both tourists and tourism industry employees. As such, we consider improvements to public transport services - such as those outlined in our previous submission (PTUA 2011a, pp.4-6) - as within the scope of the inquiry. We also recommend that international best practice be adopted in the design of the new public transport authority (PTA) which the government has announced will take responsibility for managing public transport in Victoria (PTUA 2011b).

We also consider that the cooperation of the PTA will be crucial in meeting the transport needs of many tourists. For example, according to operator estimates, at least 50% of passengers on regular public transport services in some parts of rural Switzerland are tourists (Petersen forthcoming). These services are tightly integrated, resulting in minimal waiting times between connecting services despite relatively low frequencies. Passenger information also ensures ease of access to local attractions for tourists using public transport services. These service features are made possible by a clear network plan developed by a competent, multi-modal public transport planning agency. We therefore recommend that Victoria’s forthcoming PTA be acknowledged as a key stakeholder for the tourism sector (VCEC 2011a, section 7.4).

Provision for tourist transport along the lines of this Swiss example is also relevant to Victoria. Cities with effective public transport systems are able to maximise the value of tourism assets on their urban fringe. Whilst Melbourne has significant tourism assets on its periphery, such as the Mornington Peninsula and the Yarra and Macedon ranges, these are relatively inaccessible by public transport.

**Figure 1.1: Public transport service levels to Melbourne Zoos**



Good public transport would not only be advantageous for day trippers to these areas, it is also a plus for those that may intend to spend several nights at a particular location. It enhances the travelling experience for many tourists that are now typically required to drive in what is often an unfamiliar environment. Because public transport is more economical for users than most other forms of transport, it also frees up discretionary expenditure at travel destinations.

### **1.1 The Mornington Peninsula as a case study**

There is a significant transport requirement in key parts of the Mornington Peninsula for short-term visitors, generally associated with tourist and holiday activity. It constitutes a significant proportion of the passenger transport task on the Peninsula but has not been addressed in any recent official assessment of public transport needs in the area. There has been some official recognition of the requirement of holiday makers with the operation of a summer bus service on the Great Ocean Road in and around Lorne and surrounding holiday destinations. The requirement is significantly greater on the Mornington Peninsula, but remains unmet.

Because public transport on the Peninsula is so poor the corporate organisers of a large summer polo event at the Nepean National Park have had to organise their own scheduled bus service from Rosebud to ferry patrons to the park because the regular service was not up to the task (Regular bus services between Frankston and Portsea/Point Nepean run only every 45 minutes, even in peak hour). Ironically, the same transport company that is contracted to provide regular route bus services on the Peninsula for the Victorian government also provides this ad hoc service.

These short-term travel requirements are not reflected in the Victorian government's provision of public transport on the Peninsula. The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council (2007) has estimated that the Peninsula attracts four to five million tourists annually and that tourism generates four million day trips each year.

Tourism is the largest single industry and a large employer on the Peninsula. To put the significance of this travel requirement into perspective, four million day trips per annum is equivalent to about 88 days of the 45,000 daily work related trips that Peninsula residents take each year.

It is evident that much of this short-term travel also occurs on weekends, when bus services on the Peninsula are either infrequent or non-existent on many routes. The VISTA 07 survey by the Department of Transport showed that 70.5% of weekday travel to or within the Peninsula was undertaken by Peninsula residents compared with 59.7% of weekend trips. This travel pattern is different from the inner suburbs where typically a similar proportion of travel is taken by local and non-local residents in the relevant municipality both on weekdays and on weekends.

The other important issue for this inquiry to take into account is that the shortage of public transport on the Peninsula and elsewhere contributes significantly to traffic congestion in these areas, which also reduces the appeal of the area concerned for tourists, and hampers access for potential employees of tourism operators (see Section 3 below).

## **2 Future challenges (inc. section 2.3.1 of draft report)**

It would be a major error of omission to exclude peak oil from the range of key challenges facing the tourism industry (PTUA 2011a, pp.1-2; VTIC 2008; Nygren *et al* 2009; Industry Taskforce on Peak Oil & Energy Security 2010). Energy supply insecurities and rising prices resulting from peak oil will necessarily impact tourism, and the viability of the Victorian tourism sector will depend upon the availability of less oil-dependent transport options.

We therefore recommend that the Commission's final report recognises the importance of peak oil to tourism policy, and highlights a strong role for local public transport, regional and interstate rail services (including high speed rail) and active transport (e.g. cycle touring).

We also recommend that the government undertake a comprehensive oil vulnerability assessment and include the tourism sector in the analysis.

### 3 Land use

Tourism attractions and precincts are often important employment centres for lower income workers. To the extent possible, these locations should be easily accessible by regular public transport services to ensure that such employees can afford the travel entailed in working there and that tourism operators are able to attract and retain staff (VCOSS 2010). This has implications both for the management of state public transport assets as well as land use policy. For example, planning schemes and regulations should not encourage development in locations that are not well-served by public transport across a wide span of operation. In smaller regional centres, convenient access by active transport may be a more suitable criteria.

“Many available job opportunities are in hospitality shift work, so they can’t take those which require working in the evenings or early mornings because they can’t get home or to work on time.”

*Cath Smith, Chief Executive, VCOSS<sup>1</sup>*

**Table 3.1: Public transport operating spans to Melbourne Zoos**

	<i>Melbourne</i>		<i>Werribee</i>	<i>Healesville</i>
	<i>Train</i>	<i>Tram</i>	<i>Bus</i>	<i>Bus</i>
First arrival - Weekday	5:36	6:43	9:30 <sup>a</sup>	6:28
First arrival - Saturday	5:50	6:42	9:30 <sup>a</sup>	9:05 <sup>b</sup>
First arrival - Sunday	8:15	8:04	9:30 <sup>a</sup>	9:22 <sup>b</sup>
Last departure - Weekday	23:45	23:27	16:50 <sup>a</sup>	18:50
Last departure - Saturday	23:45	0:25	16:50 <sup>a</sup>	17:05 <sup>b</sup>
Last departure - Sunday	23:45	23:37	16:50 <sup>a</sup>	17:15 <sup>b</sup>

*Notes:*

*a) Public transport is not available for staff starting at or before opening time, or finishing at or after closing time.*

*b) On weekends public transport is not available for staff starting at or before opening time, or finishing after closing time.*

Consistent with the Commission’s report on managing transport congestion (VCEC 2006, p.413), we are also concerned about the lack of progress on removing minimum parking requirements from the Victorian Planning Provisions.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Young commuters left stranded’, *Wyndham Weekly*, 2 February 2011, <http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/young-commuters-left-stranded/2064554.aspx>

## 4 Aviation policy

“There is no buffer against shocks...

“This is an industry that is not sustainable in the long term.”

*Giovanni Bisignani, Director General, International Air Transport Association*<sup>2</sup>

“Qantas has stepped up its efforts to combat high jet fuel prices by announcing cuts to management jobs, retirement of older aircraft and a reduction of domestic and international flights.”<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned above and in previous submissions, peak oil will have a major impact on the aviation industry (Kuhlman 2007; Gazzard 2008; Nygren *et al* 2009; PTUA 2011a, p.7). We therefore recommend that the Commission’s final report acknowledge the new government’s commitment to fast rail (PTUA 2011a, p.8) and place at least as much emphasis on eliminating impediments to the development of fast rail services as it does on air services.

In the meantime, we reiterate our view that improvements to public transport are not always contingent upon investment in new state assets. For example, despite Melbourne Airport’s status as one of the largest trip generators in that part of Melbourne, the 901 yellow orbital Smartbus is the only (relatively) frequent service to the airport that does not require payment of a premium fare as Skybus does. However this service has only one stop at the airport, in the open air and hundreds of metres removed from the major passenger terminals. It may not be stretching the point to say that this is the result of deliberate actions on the part of the airport itself and incumbent road passenger transport operators at the airport. The Commission’s final report should condemn the current restrictive practices and strongly recommend making the airport fully accessible to public transport services.

Public transport access to Melbourne Airport for both travellers and workers could be improved by effective bus network planning and reform to make best use of given resources (consistent with the skills and mandate of a best-practice Public Transport Authority (PTUA 2011b)), ensuring convenient placement of bus stops at the airport and full integration of Skybus with the metropolitan fare system.

Improved public transport would also place greater competitive pressure on airport parking fees far more directly, quickly and at much lower cost than measures such as developing Avalon airport to serve a larger share of air travel.

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<sup>2</sup> High oil prices to 'hit airline profits', *The Age*, 3 March 2011, <http://www.theage.com.au/business/world-business/high-oil-prices-to-hit-airline-profits-20110303-1bf7p.html>

<sup>3</sup> ‘Qantas cuts jobs and flights as fuel costs bite’, *The Age*, 30 March 2011, <http://www.theage.com.au/business/qantas-cuts-jobs-and-flights-as-fuel-costs-bite-20110330-1cfa7.html>

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