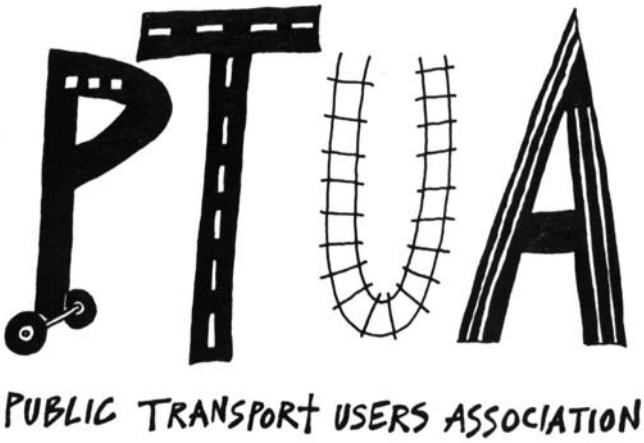

Submission in response to Rowville Rail Study: Stage One Feasibility Draft Report

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Introduction

The PTUA welcomes the study for the Rowville railway line as a necessary first step in building this long overdue transport link. The findings are overwhelmingly in favour of the project, although there are a number of issues that we believe have been overlooked, taken for granted or applied as unnecessary constraints. It is especially important to ensure that existing rail infrastructure can be used to its full capacity, so that the Rowville line can be built in a timely manner.

Benefits and Opportunities

The PTUA recognises the benefits as outlined in the draft report. The line promises to fill a major gap in Melbourne's rail network, giving Monash University and the Rowville corridor a fast, high-capacity public transport spine.

We are pleased the patronage forecasts, although conservative, confirm that use of the line would be in accordance with the expressed desires of the community over the last 15 years, corresponding to the second highest patronage on rail lines to the east of Melbourne. In addition the high level of counter peak patronage to and from Monash University would make efficient use of infrastructure and rolling stock.

Proposed Alignment

The proposed Wellington Road alignment, servicing Monash University and the Mulgrave growth corridor, has the long standing support of the PTUA as the most appropriate and most viable alignment to Rowville.

However, the PTUA is concerned that the ruling grade of two percent is an unnecessary constraint. This requires increased use of tunnelling, major earthworks and elevated sections which are likely to make the project more costly and have a greater visual impact on the urban environment. It is worth noting that the neighbouring Glen Waverley line makes extensive use of three percent grades. Three percent grades should not have an impact on travel speeds, effective running costs nor passenger comfort with higher powered modern electric trains.

Recent heavy rail systems overseas have been engineered with gradient standards of up to five percent, with six percent being a possible limit in extreme cases[1]. A further study should investigate a less ambitious ruling grade such as three to four percent, in line with other sections of the rail network in Melbourne.

The preferred terminus is the Stud Park Activity Centre, as explained in further detail below.

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[1] **Vukan R. Vuchic, *Urban Transit Systems and Technology*, Wiley, Hoboken [New Jersey] 2007, pp. 352353**

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Station Locations

The PTUA broadly endorses endorses the proposed stations outlined in the draft report. Primary criteria for station locations should include efficient access for feeder bus services, convenient walking access to major destinations, ability to serve wider walking/cycling catchments, and of course land availability. The broad station locations shown in Figure 15 of the draft report appear to meet these objectives reasonably well.

Station designs at major roads such as Mulgrave station at Springvale Road should seek to minimise walking distance between train and bus services and minimise any detour required for buses to deliver passengers to stations. A possible means of doing so would be to construct a station platform spanning (above or below) the Springvale Road intersection. This would also maximise walking catchments on both sides of Springvale Road.

The Monash University station should be at Wellington Road with convenient pedestrian access to the campus and adjoining bus routes.

Waverley Park should be located midway between Jells and Jacksons roads, to provide the most direct connections to frequent, cross-suburban bus services operating along both Jells and Jacksons roads. Direct buses along Jacksons Road would provide a useful connection to the Waverley Gardens Shopping Centre. Both Jells and Jacksons roads are noticeably absent from the Figure 13 map in the report, despite their high importance as feeder bus routes; this should be amended for the final report.

An additional station should be considered to the east of Eastlink for park and ride access, to avoid conflicts between commuter car parking and other, higher-value uses at the Stud Park Activity Centre.

At the Rowville end of the line, we favour the Stud Park Activity Centre as the rail terminus, as it is a major retail and development node that is already a focus for bus services.

The PTUA is concerned that the option for a rail terminus at the intersection of Wellington and Stud roads, a flood prone area, could have an implications on access to the railway line.

Rail Network Capacity

Trains between Rowville and the City should operate every 10 minutes throughout the day.

The draft study asserts that an upgrade of the Dandenong line, along with a Metro rail tunnnel, must be built before the Rowville line goes ahead. The PTUA urges the study team to review its assumptions on the potential capacity of existing infrastructure.

The railway line between Dandenong and Caulfield is presently timetabled for three minute headways. Therefore the main pinch point is between Huntingdale and Oakleigh. An upgrade to two-minute signalling (between at least Richmond and Huntingdale) would provide a theoretical

capacity of 30 trains per an hour or a practical scheduling capacity of 24 trains per an hour. This would not require any additional tracks between Dandenong and Caulfield.

An upgrade to two minute signalling would allow for:

- 16 trains to Pakenham/Cranbourne (13 currently; the 14th is a short run from Oakleigh);
- 2 V/Line trains from Gippsland, as now; and
- 6 trains from Rowville (one every 10 minutes)

While this would inevitably result in longer boom gate downtime at level crossings, a strategic approach to eliminate key level crossings such as Murrumbeena Road and Clayton Road would provide an overall capacity increase on the road network. If additional roads funding were available then it may be possible to eliminate further level crossings concurrently, however, a lack of such funding should not be seen as a barrier for completing the Rowville railway line.

Any additional tracks to Dandenong or the Metro rail tunnel would not alter any of the above. Furthermore the Metro rail tunnel would not provide any additional usable capacity into the CBD. With a signalling upgrade, the Huntingdale group would consist of two tracks to Caulfield, joined by two tracks from Frankston. These four tracks are joined by an additional two tracks at South Yarra from Sandringham. These six tracks are then maintained through Richmond and each track pair has its own path into the City.

- one via a dedicated Loop track (using platforms 6/7 at Flinders Street, platform 12 at Southern Cross and platform 2 at each Loop station);
- one via platforms 8/9/10 at Flinders Street and through to platform 14 at Southern Cross, thence to North Melbourne and the west; and
- one terminating at Flinders Street platform 12 or 13 and returning the way it came.

Therefore the Metro rail tunnel is not only unnecessary but it would not provide any additional capacity where it is needed. The current infrastructure is sufficient and can cater for six Rowville trains per an hour with only minor upgrades.

Connecting services

The Rowville railway line should be designed to cater for a vast majority of patronage originating from feeder bus services, similar to those provided in cities like Toronto.

All stations should be designed to maximise connectivity to buses by providing a fast and convenient connection between trains and buses. This includes minimising walking distances and, if possible, minimising any detour that buses should take to access the station. A good model would be Perth's Murdoch railway station on the Mandurah line, where escalators provide direct access from the station platforms to bus bays.

As an example, building Mulgrave station across Springvale Road would provide direct access to buses in both directions while allowing buses to continue efficiently on their north-south route (minimising inconvenience to non-transferring passengers). It should be noted, though, that a

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small detour with appropriate bus priority might be preferable to making passengers walk a considerable distance for transfers.

Frequent feeder bus services are required, with at least one bus service (from north and south) connecting with trains from Blackburn Road, Springvale Road, Jells and Jacksons roads and Stud Road. As well as connecting bus services from further east from Lysterfield and Rowville. In comparison to providing frequent feeder bus services, park and ride should be considered a lower overall priority.

Conclusion

It is imperative that this project goes ahead in a timely manner, given the potential benefits that the Rowville railway line brings to the region, in boosting economic activity, providing better access to employment and education and minimising road congestion in the region.

Signal upgrades and key grade separation projects on the Dandenong line could be completed concurrently as construction commences on the Rowville railway line.

A reservation should be set aside immediately along the Wellington Road route. Funding should be allocated so that construction can begin no later than when detailed engineering designs are completed.