

Ticketing fiasco rolls on

The PTUA is very concerned that the current ticketing problems may be perpetuated and even made worse if plans from the private operators and the Government come to fruition.

Transport Minister Peter Batchelor has established a ticketing taskforce in response to an audit of the Metcard system earlier this year. The audit found that up to half the automated ticket machines were out of order at any one time.

The PTUA has several problems with the Minister's taskforce proposal. These include a lack of consumer representation and the fact that it is comprised of the same private operators who want to fine everyone who has no ticket, even where the correct ticket has been unobtainable due to faulty machines. The Taskforce also includes the same bureaucrats who gave us the disastrous Metcard system and before that the Met Ticket debacle in the late 1980s. There is thus no guarantee that the taskforce will not repeat previous mistakes.

To prevent this, we consider that the taskforce should include consumer representation. Also it should not reinvent the wheel and repeat a previous study. Instead it should be charged with implementing the recommendations of the 1991 Met Ticketing Taskforce, which was a comprehensive investigation into the best ticketing system for Melbourne. The recommendations of 1991 were reached by consensus between the Department, the PTUA and an independent academic at the time. The main recommendations included:

- All stations staffed first to last train
- Return of tram conductors to all but the quietest routes and times
- Ticket machines used to assist staff by selling the more common tickets, not replace them
- Full range of tickets available at all stations and a wide range (including dailies) on all trams and buses

The PTUA considers that these recommendations would reduce revenue losses arising from faulty ticket machines. Fare evasion would also be reduced, and passenger perception of safety would be improved by providing a 'human presence' on board trains and trams and at stations.

PTUA AGM report

The PTUA held its annual general meeting on Thursday November 15 at the Duke of Kent Hotel.

An election was not required for the committee due to insufficient nominations. Office bearers and committee members are listed on page 2.

Our guest speaker was Frank Fisher from Monash University. Frank is Associate Professor and Director at the Graduate School of Environmental Science, based at the Monash Clayton campus. He spoke about the need to take a holistic view of the costs of car travel and the transport choices he had made. He certainly practices what he preaches, using bike and rail to commute from Clifton Hill to Clayton.

Secretary's AGM report ⇒ Page 2

Get involved!

The PTUA is keen for all members to get involved with the running of the organisation – helping with campaigns, as well as helping to guide policy.

For those with Internet access, we have set up an informal discussion group for PTUA members. Joining is done through the web page:

www.yahoogroups.com/group/ptua/

This group is an excellent way to stay up to date with issues concerning public transport, and current PTUA campaigns. **(Note opinions posted do not necessarily reflect PTUA policy).**

In the near future, we also plan to set up an announcements-only list for members to get occasional PTUA-related news.

And don't forget to browse through the PTUA web site for news, policies and other material:

www.ptua.org.au

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Keeping in touch...

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World Wide Web

Our home page is at www.ptua.org.au

The PTUA members' discussion list is at
www.yahogroups.com/group/ptua

Committee Members

Paul Mees – President
Anna Morton – Vice President
Vaughan Williams – Secretary
Les Chandra – Assistant Secretary
Daniel Borowski – Treasurer
Daniel Bowen – Newsletter editor
John Cox
Hayden Jones
Tim Mattingsbrooke
Anthony Morton
Tim Petersen – Convenor, Geelong branch
Miriam Powell
David Robertson

Committee Meetings

Third Tuesday of each month. Members are welcome to attend.
Please call the office for details

Secretary's AGM report

2001 was an exciting and hectic year for the PTUA.

Despite early hopes that the Bracks government would change public transport policy, it has largely carried forward the Kennett agenda as if there had been no change of government.

At last year's AGM we farewelled some long serving committee members and received an influx of new blood.

Highlights of the year were the two Public Transport First campaigns in the Aston by-election and last month's Federal Election. Other areas of activity included committee work (PTCCC, Greenhouse, Metro Strategy), tram campaigning and maintaining a high media profile for public transport.

It can be disheartening to lose on an issue, but this is the reality of being a social change movement and trying to turn policy around in the face of a powerful, entrenched bureaucracy and a well resourced opposing lobby.

Currently our membership is slowly increasing. We are working on greater use of technology, and our treasurer has implemented a cost reduction programme making more money available for campaigning.

To ensure an even stronger voice for public transport in 2002, we need your help. Each of us, whether a committee member or ordinary member, must become

advocates for better public transport. Please familiarise yourself with our policies. You will find details of these on our website at www.ptua.org.au. Lobby your local MPs and write letters to newspapers and magazines. Phone talk-back radio. Encourage your friends, neighbours, family and workmates to do likewise and join the PTUA. Get active. Attend committee meetings, volunteer for campaigns or to staff the office.

If you have offered to help, and we haven't followed up, please keep at us. It's not that we're not interested or have enough people, it's just because we're disorganised and don't have enough people.

Finally, my thanks to the following: Paul Mees, Daniel Borowski, retiring committee members Glen Boyce, Roberto D'Andrea, continuing and new committee members, and committee observers. I would like to give special mention to Hayden Jones for running the PT First campaign, auditor David Sauer, our office volunteers, our newsletter editors Daniel Bowen and Peter Parker, the newsletter mailout team, everyone who helped with our campaigns. I also wish to pay tribute to our partners in the PT First alliance, particularly the Knox Environment Society for their work in the Aston campaign. My last thanks are to our members for their support during the year, without which we could not have functioned.

Vaughan Williams
(This is an edited version of the secretary's oral report given at the AGM)

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 15th February

Newsletter production: Daniel Bowen and Peter Parker. Printed on recycled paper by Flash Print, Collingwood.
Our thanks to the dedicated mailout team.

Minister must save Sunday trains

The PTUA condemns plans by private operator M>Train to cut Sunday evening services on half of Melbourne's rail network.

M>Train plans include:

- Reduced service frequency (forty instead of thirty minutes)
- Ceasing services around 11pm instead of midnight
- Closing the city loop at 7pm

M>Train was planning for the reductions to come into effect next month, hot on the heels of the private rail companies threatening passengers without tickets \$100 fines, even where tickets could not be purchased due to faulty Metcard machines. It would seem that M>Train seems more determined than ever to chase their customers back into their cars.

The PTUA has called on Transport Minister Peter Batchelor to withhold approval for M>Train's service reductions. Intervention would honour a government guarantee under the Passengers' Charter. The Charter requires that timetable changes must be approved by the Director of Public Transport after consulting with an independent committee (PTCCC), which includes consumer representation.

Bourke Street

The campaign to retain trams in Bourke St Mall announced in the last newsletter was put on hold for the duration of the Federal Election to allow us to focus on the Public Transport First campaign.



M>Train must not be allowed to flout the PTCCC process and axe services just because it suits them. The private operators are being paid hundreds of millions of dollars to provide services. It is only fair that the public receives value for money from this expenditure.

The PTUA considers that the issue of service levels is too important to leave to the private operators or use to blame the previous Government.

We also encourage Minister Bachelor to honour his party's 1999 policy, which includes a requirement that 'Labor's stricter and higher standards are complied with in relation to service reliability, fare structures, health and safety, timetabling and service frequency'.

The policy also commits Labor to 'an active role in planning, monitoring and regulating all public transport services including timetabling and fares' and 'measures to ensure that the public transport system continues to operate as an integrated whole'.

The PTUA calls upon Mr Batchelor to act like a Minister and pull the private operators into line. The travelling public of Melbourne and Victoria deserve nothing less.

The PTUA has now been informed by the Minister's Office and the Director of Public Transport that the ridiculous proposal to remove trams from Bourke St Mall will not proceed.

Accordingly, this campaign will remain on hold and be reviewed at the PTUA Strategic Planning Weekend in January.

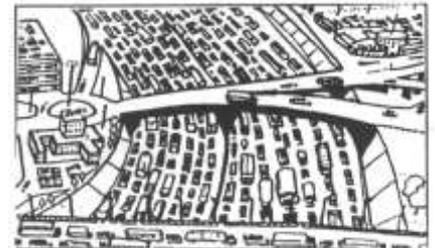
Eastern-Tullamarine Freeway link: On or off?

The Northern central City Corridor Study is proceeding, slowly but hopefully surely. PTUA President Paul Mees remains a member of the project's reference group -- as a nominee of the Royal Park protection Group.

Meanwhile, Transport Minister Batchelor's assurance that the Bracks government has no plans to link the Eastern and Tullamarine Freeway were thrown into doubt in October, when the Infrastructure Planning Council published a draft report.

The IPC, an advisory body established by Premier Bracks and headed by Mike Fitzpatrick, a financier specialising in private infrastructure projects (what ever happened to conflict of interest?), recommended that the two freeways be linked.

Scoresby freeway ⇨ Page 6



Members can be assured that the PTUA will never allow trams to be removed from the mall and will continue a watching brief in case anybody should attempt to resurrect the proposal.

Thanks to those members who helped and those who offered to help.

PT First and the Federal election

A large team of PTUA members worked with volunteers from allied organisations to run a Public Transport First campaign during the Federal election held on November 10th.

Although it was hard to make our voice heard in a campaign that focussed mainly on issues like asylum seekers, we were determined to keep the transport issue alive in preparation for a more serious campaign in the State election, expected in around 12 months.

We campaigned initially in half a dozen marginal electorates, and held two public meetings: one in Boronia (La Trobe and Aston electorates) and one in Blackburn (Deakin and Menzies). Our objective was to persuade one of the 'major' parties to agree to an independent enquiry into the Scoresby Freeway under Federal environment legislation. Unfortunately, neither party agreed to our request.

John Howard promised to fully fund the Scoresby Freeway and offered nothing for public transport. Labor issued an insulting policy in which they promised the Bracks government even more funding for the Scoresby Freeway than the Howard government, in supposed return for which Peter Batchelor announced a 'sweeping package of public transport measures.' Unfortunately, these measures were a combination of already-announced programs and betrayals of previous promises:

- smart bus (a Kennett government initiative of doubtful benefit, announced in 1999)
- a completely useless wide median strip for the Scoresby Freeway

- a tram extension from East Burwood to Vermont South (actually a broken promise, since at the 1999 election the Bracks government promised an extension all the way to Knox City); and

- a tram from Monash University to Huntingdale (another broken election promise: we were promised a train all the way to Rowville).

We were faced with a dilemma and decided to back (i.e. give preferences to) two candidates who had personally shown a much more pro-public transport stance than their parties: Kevin Andrews, Liberal MHR for Menzies and Phil Staindl, Labor candidate for La Trobe.

We also had to deal with a now-familiar dilemma about who to place first. In this case, the choice was between the Greens and Democrats. Since the Democrats had made public transport a major theme of their campaign, whereas the Greens, while supporting good policies had chosen to emphasise other issues (for example, in their preference negotiations with the ALP), we placed the Democrats first in the lower house in La Trobe and in the senate in both electorates. Because Greens candidate Barry Watson had given transport greater priority, we placed him first in Menzies.

We letterboxed and handed out how-to-vote cards on polling day in these two electorates. The overall effect of our campaign was difficult to assess because other factors were clearly uppermost in voters' minds.

As far as we can tell, we were able to swing around 1% of votes in the booths we staffed. Given the difficulties we faced, this was a tremendous achievement, and an excellent preparation for the coming State election.

Sincere thanks to all those who helped with the campaign, as well

as to Karl Charikar, our hard-working co-ordinator.

High Court finds for Transurban

As reported last issue, on 11 October the High Court handed down its decision dismissing Peter Allan's appeal against the tax breaks granted to City link early in 1996. After almost six years, the case is now over without the merits – i.e. the question of whether Transurban were entitled to the tax breaks at all – ever being considered.

For five years, the case had revolved around the legal technicality of 'standing', but the five judges who rejected Peter's application did so on a different ground, one that had not been raised since being rejected by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in 1996. The court determined that while a decision to refuse an application for tax breaks under the Development Allowance Authority Act could be appealed, a decision to grant an application could not. Therefore, the question of standing did not arise.

Justice Kirby dissented and said Peter's appeal should have been allowed. He said that the legislation was ambiguous, but that rather than focusing on "certain of the words and phrases", the court should look to the reasons behind the reform of administrative law. "In my opinion, it is undesirable that the class of persons who may enlist the remedial provisions of such legislation should be unnecessarily narrowed, particularly when the object of those persons is to uphold the compliance by the administrator with the laws as made by the parliament."

The judgment is available for viewing at www.highcourt.gov.au

Geelong news

Work continues on trying to keep up to date with developments and exert some influence over the Geelong line section of the Fast Rail Projects. The State Government's latest Request for Tender requires tenderers to submit bids for both an electric service to Geelong, as well as a diesel service which would use the same fast train sets as the other fast rail lines. (Thankfully, the government has dropped plans to run altered versions of the existing diesel locomotives, which would have meant slower stopping services.)

Despite that breakthrough, there is still a big challenge to make sure that stops at stations are not sacrificed to achieve the target trip time. The latest tender documents still assume only two stops for a 45-minute service: North Geelong and North Melbourne, and seem to focus on saving time only between Geelong Station and Werribee - a leg which they expect an express service to travel in only 16 minutes! We are continuing to campaign for improved service frequency, later trains, bus connections to stations and better fare structures. Making sure that conductors and even toilets are retained on trains are also high priorities.

The Geelong Branch is also pleased to announce that a forum on sustainable transport in Geelong, "Making Geelong More Liveable - Sustainable Transport Solutions" will be held on December 17, from 5:30-7:00 pm at the Geelong City Hall (entrance from Little Malop Street.) It is being organised in cooperation with local cycling advocates and the City of Greater Geelong, and will feature guest speakers, including green transport guru Rodney Tolley and our own Paul

Mees. The more people that come, the better!

Over summer, we also look forward to cranking up a Bellarine Peninsula campaign for more buses, and a review of the entire Geelong region's public transport.

Airport rail link in doubt

There is now serious doubt that the rail link to Tullamarine Airport promised by the Bracks government in its 1999 election manifesto will be built. The reasons being given in the media are the poor financial results from the Brisbane and Sydney links, but the real reason is that the airport link planning process has been bungled from Day One.

The PTUA strongly supports a rail link to Melbourne Airport. But we believe Melbourne should be copying successful cities, not those whose airport links have failed. The most successful cities are places like Zurich and Geneva, where around two-thirds of airport travellers and half of airport employees use public transport. Given that, in comparison with these places, Melbourne Airport sees many more domestic passengers, especially day-return business travellers without heavy luggage, a similar target should be our objective here.

Designing a rail link to achieve social and environmental benefits by carrying a large share of the airport travel market is a very different process from designing a link to be profitable as a free-standing private project. In particular, as the experience of Geneva and Zurich shows, a high 'mode share' requires an airport link that is seamlessly integrated with the rest of the rail, tram and bus network, and that offers frequent services at regular fares.

And, shockingly to Australian eyes, they are owned and operated by the government.

Unfortunately, the Melbourne proposal developed by Nauru House was for an antipodean version of the Heathrow Express, a fast, relatively infrequent and very expensive 'premium service' used by around 5 per cent of Heathrow passengers and virtually none of the staff. The service is profitable for its private operator, because Heathrow is a very busy airport and even 5% of the market is a lot of passengers. But it offers few social or environmental benefits.

The Melbourne proposal was for an unnecessarily capital-intensive project designed for 130 km/h operation -- but with the station placed in the airport car park, a good 100 metres from the terminal! The result was a proposal that aroused the hostility of local residents, and is unlikely to attract private backers. And even if it went ahead, the rail link is only expected to attract 10 to 20 per cent of airport travellers anyway.

The time has come to scrap the current failed planning process and start again. This time, we should start by defining our objectives properly -- i.e. an airport link that benefits the community. We should then examine 'international best practice' in achieving this objective. If we do so, we will need to abandon the 'private sector fairy godmother' fantasy. The Zurich and Geneva airport links are net money-earners, but this is because of the extra, mainly off-peak, patronage that they attract to the whole integrated regional public transport network. They would not have been viable as free-standing private projects. Neither, as it has turned out, were the Sydney or Brisbane projects, even though each of them has received substantial public subsidies.

New Trams and Superstops

PTUA members may have noticed the first of the sleek new low-floor Yarra Trams vehicles operating on Route 109 in Collins Street. The new Citadis trams are lower to the ground than current trams. This makes boarding and disembarking easier for everyone, including wheelchair users. Eight more of the new trams will begin operation on route 109 before the end of the year.

Yarra states that the new trams will have a capacity of 180 passengers. However this is based on most passengers standing as the new trams have only 42 seats – the same number as the much smaller A-class trams currently running on route 109.

Even the old W-class trams (many of which are rotting at Newport) had around 50 seats. It is hoped that Yarra will monitor passenger volumes and increase service frequency to avoid overcrowding.

Another Yarra Tram innovation is the provision of 'Superstops'. The main features of the Superstops are wider waiting areas, raised platforms, passenger shelters, a ticket machine, real-time information, a trip planner, audio announcements, and improved passenger information.

The first two Yarra Trams Superstops have been built on Collins Street at Swanston Street, with a third Superstop being constructed on Collins Street at Spring Street. The Superstops complement the low floor trams, providing easier accessibility to the tram, particularly for mobility impaired passengers. Fifteen Superstops will be built throughout Melbourne, with five already approved for route 109.

Meanwhile, the Herald-Sun has reported that Yarra Trams have asked the Melbourne City Council

to ban right-hand turns at the corner of Collins and Spring Streets to help make room for their proposed Superstop. The PTUA strongly supports Yarra Trams' proposal, which would ease the current ridiculous situation that allows a few hundred people in cars to delay 50,000 tram passengers every day.

We are disappointed that the Melbourne City Council has rejected the Yarra Trams request. This is despite the Council's stated aim of improving public transport in the city. The PTUA strongly urges the council to reconsider its decision.

Subject to the concerns over seating capacity, the PTUA welcomes Yarra's new trams and Superstops. We also consider that to derive maximum benefit from these hardware improvements, services need to be made more frequent, particularly on evenings and weekends. The PTUA would be pleased to work with train, tram and bus companies in this regard.

STOP PRESS: Reports that the Melbourne City Council has reversed their decision mentioned above. Congratulations!

Scoresby Freeway Challenge

PTUA President Paul Mees issued court proceedings in early November seeking an injunction preventing Vicroads and Transport Minister Peter Batchelor proceeding any further with the billion-dollar Scoresby Freeway. Paul, who is a barrister, is representing himself.

Paul says the freeway is illegal under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 because it has not been approved by the Federal Environment Minister.

The Federal legislation prohibits actions which affect endangered species, migratory birds, or wetlands of international importance registered under the 'Ramsar convention'. The proposed Eastern Ring Road (of which the Scoresby Freeway is the first stage) affects all three. The only exception to the prohibition is if the Federal Minister for the Environment conducts an assessment and approves the action.

Although the Scoresby Freeway has undergone environmental assessment under the Kennett government, this assessment was fatally flawed. The Kennett assessment did not consider the whole Eastern Ring Road – it left out the environmentally sensitive link through the Yarra Valley 'green wedge', keeping residents of Bulleen, Heidelberg, Eltham and Warrandyte in the dark.

Secondly, the process was dishonest because, once it became apparent that improving public transport would produce greater reductions in traffic congestion than building the Freeway, the public transport option was dropped from the study to prevent it winning. And finally, the Kennett government's own review panel recommended that the southernmost section of the Freeway not be built because of its effect on the Ramsar-listed Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands, but Vicroads have simply ignored this and propose to bulldoze ahead regardless.



Letter to the Editor

(Please note: letters may be edited for space reasons)

Bicycle lockers

Bicycle theft has been a serious problem on our rail system with tens of thousands of bicycles being stolen. In the last decade vandalism has been a growing problem that has resulted thousands of bicycles being damaged by vandals. Most cities have done little to combat these problems or respect the rights of cyclists to have secure bicycle parking.

Brisbane is the exception. Citytrain has successfully reduced bicycle theft and vandalism by installing bicycle lockers at railway stations. There are now 1700 cyclists using lockers with 1000 more wanting a space. Brisbane now has one free bicycle locker for every nine car parking spaces on the rail network. In comparison, Melbourne has only one bicycle locker per 46 parking spaces at stations.

Melbourne led Australia by installing 32 bicycle lockers at stations in 1979. However locker provision has grown by a meagre 30 lockers a year since then. Lack of secure storage for bicycles is one of the reasons why the latent demand for bike/rail commuting has never been realised in Melbourne.

Bicycle lockers should be marketed to two target groups:

(a) Cyclists living between 1 and 3 km from a station who currently do not use the rail system.

(b) Commuter cyclists who currently access a station by car to travel to work or for education

The provision of secure long-term bicycle parking should be integrated into the long term

station upgrading and vehicle parking program. Bicycle parking should be integrated into the development of all-mode interchanges. The Brisbane experience has shown that the 'devil is in the detail' so there should be an engineer within the transport bureaucracy with a specific responsibility for intermodal passenger infrastructure and operations who can hack the detail and get it right.

Cyclists should have the same rights as other road users. Ensuring that 'cycle and ride' is as convenient as 'park and ride' should be a priority to reduce car dependency and increase both cycling and public transport journeys.

Alan Parker

Disruption handled well

An accident on the Glen Waverley line on 15 November provided an opportunity to observe the quality of otherwise of Connex's contingency planning.

Some members may recall the shambles when trains on the Ringwood line were disrupted a couple of years ago and many other examples that disclose poor planning for service disruptions.

On this occasion, Connex appears to have handled the disruption very well.

Glen Waverley trains were diverted to Alamein and ran express. Buses then ferried passengers to East Malvern to join trains running on the outer half of the line.

Most well run public transport systems have detailed contingency plans for almost every conceivable disruption. It is to be hoped that Connex's handling of this disruption will reflect good planning in future.

Of course, if Melbourne had a good public transport system there would be a high quality bus network making it much easier for the system to deal with a disruption on any given line.

Thank you

Thanks to the following people who have supported the PTUA financially in the current appeal:

J & S Alexopoulos
JC Alford
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C Cartmel
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Lesley Vick
Harry Ward
Rod Watson
John Young
PE Young

We also received a number of anonymous donations - thanks to those people as well. If you have not donated, please do what you can to help us – see the insert with this newsletter. You may also wish to consider upgrading your membership to “Donor”.

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Responsibility for electoral comment in PTUA News is taken by Vaughan Williams, 247 Flinders Lane Melbourne.