

## It's time to move on ticketing

The PTUA has decided to reignite the Ticketing Campaign for the second half of 2002. As a state election draws near, the Government has begun to make some small improvements in the vexed area of ticketing and revenue enforcement.

The PTUA maintains that the automated Metcard system installed by the Kennett government is fundamentally flawed in a number of respects. The aim of this campaign will be first, to get some short-term measures implemented to mitigate some of the more annoying flaws of Metcard while working within the limits of the existing ticketing hardware. Secondly, we hope to ensure that any replacement system does not repeat the mistakes of Metcard.

Present trends are not encouraging. Transport Minister Peter Batchelor has established a Ticketing Taskforce to develop both short and long term solutions to the problems of Metcard. The Minister has refused to appoint consumer and public interest representatives to the Taskforce, which is made up entirely of DoI bureaucrats and representatives from the private operators.

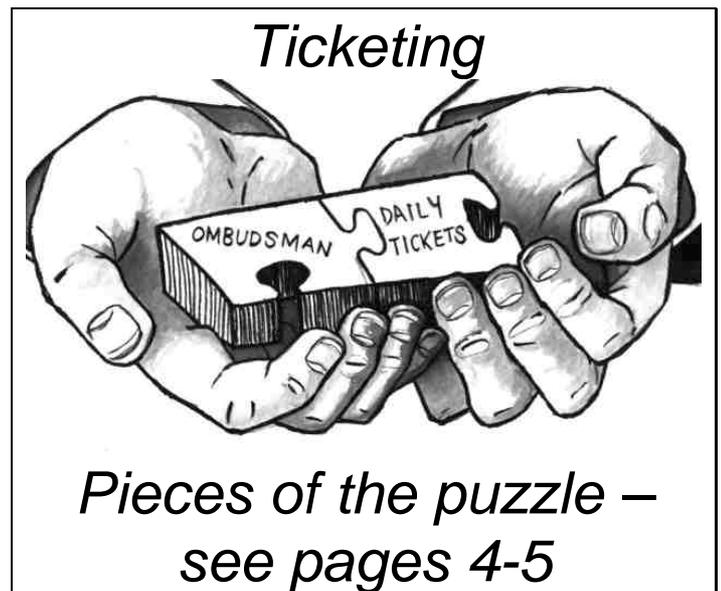
Both of these are manifestations of the old PTC bureaucracy - which we must not forget has form for introducing disastrously passenger-unfriendly ticketing systems.

The PTUA is concerned that the Taskforce is operating as a closed shop, and its members neither know nor care what passengers want. It also appears to be reinventing the wheel rather than implementing the recommendations of the 1991 Met Ticketing Taskforce which were the result of a transparent public process and are supported by the PTUA and, more importantly, by the travelling public.

Although the availability of daily tickets on trams and the establishment of a Public Transport Ombudsman are key pieces of this puzzle, much more fundamental change will be needed.

The PTUA intends to make vocal representations to the Government both directly and via the media on

these issues. Members interested in assisting with the campaign, or seeking more information, can contact the office on 9650 7898 or [office@ptua.org.au](mailto:office@ptua.org.au)



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*PTUA Annual General Meeting – October 2<sup>nd</sup> – see page 2*

## Keeping in touch...

### PTUA office

Second Floor, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne  
Telephone (03) 9650 7898  
e-mail: office@ptua.org.au

### Membership Enquiries

Graeme Gibson: (03) 9650 7898

### World Wide Web

Our home page is at [www.ptua.org.au](http://www.ptua.org.au)

The PTUA members' discussion list is at  
[www.yahogroups.com/group/ptua](http://www.yahogroups.com/group/ptua)

Stay up to date with PTUA news via the  
PTUA Announcements mailing list  
[www.yahogroups.com/group/ptua-news](http://www.yahogroups.com/group/ptua-news)

## Committee Members

Les Chandra – President  
Anna Morton – Vice President  
Vaughan Williams – Secretary  
Lucy Oates – Assistant Secretary  
Daniel Borowski – Treasurer  
Daniel Bowen – Newsletter editor  
John Cox  
Hayden Jones  
Martin Koval  
Bronwen Machin  
Tim Mattingsbrooke  
Anthony Morton  
Tim Petersen – Convenor, Geelong branch  
Miriam Powell  
David Robertson  
Luke Savage

## Committee Meetings

Third Thursday of each month (subject to change). Members are welcome to attend. Please call the office for details

## Annual General Meeting – October 2nd

The PTUA Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30pm at Ross House – 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

The election procedure allows for the AGM to elect a President, Secretary and Treasurer and up to nine Committee members. Nominations must be on the form attached and signed by the nominator and the candidate, both of whom must be current financial members of the PTUA.

Nominations must be received by the PTUA Secretary (2nd floor, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne) by hand or mail by 4:00pm Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2002. Nominations will not be called for at the AGM unless fewer than 12 nominations have been received by this closing date.

### PTUA Committee Nomination Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

nominate \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

for election to the position of: President Secretary Treasurer Committee member

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (nominator) \_\_\_\_\_ (candidate) \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (date)

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 1<sup>st</sup> November

Newsletter production: Daniel Bowen, Peter Parker and Vaughan Williams. Printed on recycled paper by Flash Print, Collingwood.  
Our thanks to Max Nicholson and the rest of the dedicated mail out team.

## Contracts up for grabs?

As we go to press, speculation is mounting that the government will scrap the existing tram and suburban train contracts, as well as V/Line.

While the PTUA believes that ultimately the system should be run by one, co-ordinated body, we hope that whatever happens, the priority will be in delivering better services for the travelling public, not delivering profits for multinational corporations.

### Watch for the latest news

⇒ [www.ptua.org.au](http://www.ptua.org.au)

⇒ PTUA Announcements e-mail list (see page 2)

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## How smart is SmartBus?

With great fanfare the government launched SmartBus at Blackburn Railway Station last month. SmartBus is a package of bus priority measures, real-time passenger information and service frequency improvements along Centre, Blackburn and Springvale Roads. Routes involved in the pilot project include the 703 along Blackburn Road and 888/9 along Springvale Road.

The DoI claims that SmartBus benefits include extended operating times, improved service frequencies, better connections with trains and trams, wheelchair accessible stops and buses and upgraded passenger information. If patronage increases by more than 30 percent, the Department may extend SmartBus services to other routes.

Passengers will most welcome the increased operating hours and improved service frequencies. This is especially so on the 888/9 route that was previously without evening and Sunday service. SmartBus services run every 15 minutes during weekday off-peak periods, 30 minutes during Saturdays, 40 or 45 minutes on Sundays and 30 to 70 minutes during evenings.

While we welcome these long-overdue improvements, we consider that the service frequencies should have matched the trains to ensure

reliable connections at all times, not just on weekdays.

The effect of this poor planning is most apparent on Saturdays where buses every 30 minutes try to connect with trains running every 20. Similarly Route 703, operating every 45 minutes on Sundays cannot effectively connect with trains every 20 minutes. The result is waits of up to 30 minutes; very poor for a service that claims to be “coordinated” and most unlikely to attract “discretionary” patrons.

As well as the poor choice of service frequency, scheduling could be improved, particularly on Route 703. Current timetables allow just one minute's wait for many weekday services arriving at Blackburn. This is too slim to provide reliable connections, and will result in passenger frustration as they see the train depart as their bus arrives. Connections in the opposite direction also seem excessive, with a 10-minute wait.

We consider that the Department's 30% patronage increase target is realistic, but only if services are frequent and properly coordinated. The current scheduling of SmartBus services leaves much to be desired. At the very least services should run as frequently as the trains to ensure reliable connections and predictable waiting times around the clock. Other routes should be similarly upgraded to provide fast and frequent local and cross-suburban transport in Melbourne suburbs.

### See also:

⇒ Feeder services – page 6

⇒ Sunday buses – page 7

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## Tram 109 Project

Work is continuing on the extension of route 109 to Box Hill, with a probable opening date being late this year or early next year. There has been some local opposition to the establishment of “easy access” tram stops along Whitehorse Road. These consist of a raised platform in the left hand lane of the road, which passengers use to get from the pavement to the tram, therefore making those stops wheelchair accessible. Cars have to move out of the tram lane at these points, and drive

over the platform (stopping to let passengers on and off, as at a “normal” tram stop).

Concerns have been raised that car drivers may be confused by the new stops, and that the loss of one lane at this point may lead to additional traffic congestion on Whitehorse Road.

The PTUA acknowledges there are legitimate concerns on both sides of this debate, and hopes that VicRoads and Yarra Trams will consult adequately with local residents. We hope any problems can be overcome, and that a better tram stop design can be implemented not only on this valuable extension, but also across Melbourne.

Meanwhile the DoI is also considering measures to speed up trams along Victoria Parade. This may include moving stops, modifications to traffic lights, and the possibility of bus lanes.

### More information:

⇒ [www.doi.vic.gov.au/tram109](http://www.doi.vic.gov.au/tram109)

⇒ [www.doi.vic.gov.au/victoriaparade](http://www.doi.vic.gov.au/victoriaparade)

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## Sunbury cuts

V/Line has cut peak services to Sunbury, by changing the 5:03pm train from Spencer Street to not stop there. They claim concern that some passengers are standing – in other words, the service was too popular, so instead of adding carriages, they have cut it!

The PTUA is particularly frustrated that this decision was eventually reviewed after the fact by the PTCCC, and approved – as the only opposition to the cut was from PTUA delegate Vaughan Williams. The result is effectively a 20% cut in peak service to Sunbury commuters.

We are most concerned that this sets a precedent that operators will simply cut popular services when they consider them inconvenient. And that the PTCCC will rubber stamp such changes, no matter how illogical they are.

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# First steps on ticketing welcomed -

## Rights blitz gains broad support

The Rights Blitz, a joint initiative of the PTUA and the Consumer Law Centre, was launched on July 24 under the clocks at Flinders Street Station by CLCV Director Chris Field and PTUA Secretary Vaughan Williams. Our brochure, "Your Public Transport Rights", was distributed to several thousand members of the travelling public on the day and over the following two weeks.

The Blitz attracted considerable media interest and was reported extensively in newspapers, radio and television. The PTUA is very pleased with the success of the Blitz, which we believe has served the dual purposes of informing the public of their rights when dealing with ticket inspectors and raising general community awareness of the problematic issues with ticketing and fare evasion.

In a reversal of previous sentiments, Transport Minister Peter Batchelor and all three operators publicly supported the initiative. We are pleased to see that the Minister and the operators appear to have changed their minds about the need to ensure that ticket inspectors remain within the law and that passengers are well informed about their rights.

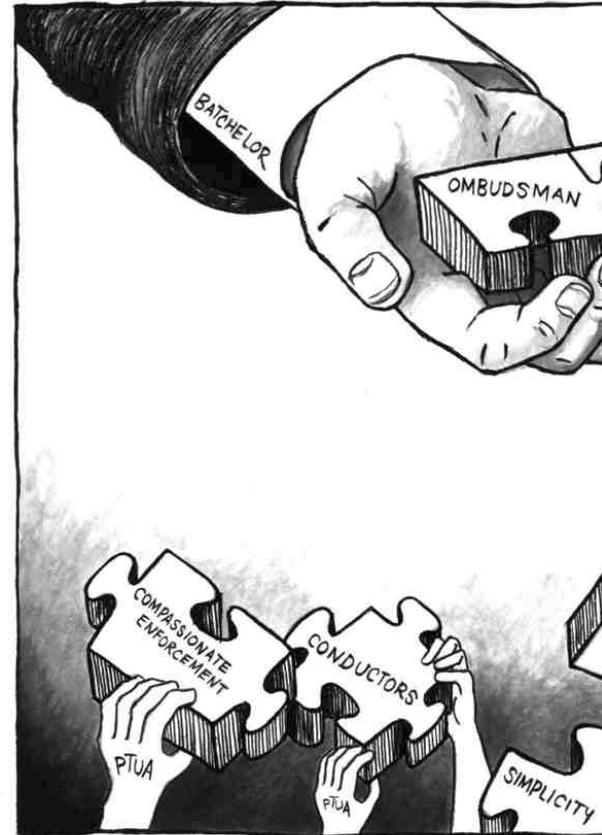
We have included a copy of the brochure with this newsletter, which may be of interest to members. If you would like more copies, please contact the office. The brochure is also on the PTUA website at [www.ptua.org.au](http://www.ptua.org.au). Members should note that the brochure, while not a substitute for legal advice, contains a relatively conservative view of the law on the matter and is not intended to be exhaustive. As members will be aware, the PTUA maintains a more robust policy view on the issues of ticketing and revenue enforcement than the legal opinion we are confident to state in the brochure. The PTUA will continue to argue for a more compassionate, passenger-friendly approach to revenue enforcement, based around a full time staff presence.

We would like to thank all those PTUA members who assisted with distributing the brochure, especially our campaign team leader Vaughan Williams and organisers Anna Morton and Tim Petersen, our partners at the Consumer Law Centre, and the I Prefer a Tram Conductor group who all made useful contributions to the project.

## Time to stamp out re-validation

The PTUA believes that another annoying and unnecessary feature of Metcard is the requirement to constantly re-validate an already valid ticket. This inconveniences passengers and erodes the convenience of purchasing a periodical ticket. A recent survey of PTUA members found that virtually all of them often do not re-validate an already valid ticket.

Another small but worthwhile improvement to the ticketing system would be to remove this requirement. As re-validation serves no useful purpose (it does not even provide useful or reliable data to the bean counters who run the system - which is why the operators still have to survey passengers to work out where people are going), this can and should be done immediately.



## Daily Tickets return to trams

In the days following the Rights Blitz, Transport Minister Peter Batchelor announced that ticket machines on trams would be modified to sell daily tickets. The cost was a very modest \$285,000. The PTUA welcomes this initiative, which rectifies one of the more annoying flaws of the Metcard system. However this is one small piece of a complex puzzle, which should have been implemented years ago.

The PTUA accepts that in the short term, the Government and operators must work within the limitations of the hardware installed by the previous administration (subject of course to any inexpensive modification like this that may prove feasible). The real challenge in the short term is to provide passengers with a functioning ticketing system by mitigating the well-known flaws of the Metcard equipment.

## The Public Transport Ombudsman - An Important Accountability Measure

Shortly after the launch of the Rights Blitz, Transport Minister Peter Batchelor announced that the government will establish a Public Transport Ombudsman.

The PTUA is very pleased with this announcement and supports the establishment of an Ombudsman, as we have campaigned with other consumer organisations for this initiative since the privatisation of public transport.

# but much more to be done



We believe that the Ombudsman will provide a better deal for passengers by providing a one-stop shop for complaints independent of the operators' discredited internal mechanisms. Currently, disaffected passengers make complaints to the operators, the Director of Public Transport, the Minister, local MPs, the media and the PTUA. We hope that the Ombudsman will prove a credible, fair umpire for the resolution of individual complaints.

We believe that it is important that the Ombudsman have sufficiently broad jurisdiction and reporting avenues to deal with systematic problems as well as individual complaints. Most passengers who complain want an assurance that the problem is known, and has been (or will be) fixed, and we hope the Ombudsman will have the necessary authority to give such an assurance.

The Minister has invited PTUA Secretary Vaughan Williams to join a working party chaired by the reputable Energy and Water Ombudsman, Fiona McLeod, which is to work through the structural issues and other details for the establishment of the Public Transport Ombudsman. We look forward to working with Ms McLeod, the private operators, and other consumer representatives, to ensure maximum effectiveness for the new Ombudsman.

## Review of Tram Attendants timely

The PTUA has welcomed the review of the 100 publicly funded tram attendants announced by the Minister as a logical follow-on from the availability of daily tickets on trams. Before the 1999 State election, the then opposition committed to return 100 conductors to the tram system. Unfortunately, although 100 staff were publicly funded, these staff are not genuine conductors. Rather, they are being used as taxpayer-funded ticket inspectors instead of for their intended purpose.

The PTUA would strongly oppose the removal of these staff from the system. Instead, they should be redeployed as genuine tram conductors. This means they would:

- Sell a wide selection of tickets at normal prices
- Accept both notes and coins
- Be deployed on a one-per-tram basis rather than roam in groups, to provide a full time presence
- Be placed on selected routes, and these routes publicised
- Have a clear responsibility to assist passengers and provide information as well as check and sell tickets
- Keep confrontation to a minimum by inviting passengers without a ticket to purchase one rather than seeking to impose fines.

At the same time, the PTUA has called for the 100 train staff that were promised at the last election to be redeployed as station attendants as originally promised. This would provide enough staff to cover another two dozen Premium Stations.

The PTUA believes that using these staff properly would be an interesting experiment and would be likely to provide hard evidence that a full-time staff presence is cost effective and is the only real solution to fare evasion.

## In the long run

Measures of the type we have described would help the travelling public live with the dysfunctional Metcard system until its contract expires in four years time. In the meantime, the Government must conduct a strategic, consultative review of the ticketing system to implement the recommendations of the 1991 Met Ticketing Taskforce (which were similar to current PTUA policy).

Instead, the Minister has established a ticketing taskforce, which is operating in secret to design a new system. The Taskforce has no consumer representation and is composed entirely of representatives from the operators and the DoI. They do not know (and in most cases do not care) what passengers want because they approach the issue from the viewpoint of the operator, not the passenger.

The information received by the PTUA to date is not encouraging. It appears that the taskforce is obsessed with buying the latest high-tech equipment while repeating the same fundamental flaws of Metcard, namely, an over-reliance on technology at the expense of a staff presence, over-emphasis on off-system purchase, and a reliance on hide-and-seek enforcement instead of systematic ticket checking by staff.

# Metro Strategy to promise "more of the same"

The State Government's long-term plan for metropolitan Melbourne will be released later this month. This document will be final, with further consultation being on the plan's implementation rather than its contents.

We understand that the Strategy will be long on platitudes supporting better public transport, but short on concrete proposals to bring this about. Furthermore, it is likely to re-commit to the freeways proposed under the Kennett Government.

The Metropolitan Strategy process involved two rounds of community forums to discuss the plan's priorities. These well-attended meetings were held throughout Victoria. During both rounds, public transport emerged as the public's single most important concern. In contrast, freeway construction attracted only minority support.

The PTUA is worried that despite the hype of "community consultation", the Metropolitan Strategy will turn out to be yet another "more of the same" bureaucratic document that eagerly commits to new freeways but makes no similar commitment to public transport.

The question that must now be asked is why the Strategy's priorities appear diametrically opposed to those expressed by the community at numerous forums. The Strategy's "more of the same" recipe will certainly not be good enough if the government is serious about achieving its target of 20 percent of all motorised trips by public transport.

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## Docklands transport plan

In late-July, the state government announced plans for public transport services in the fast-developing Docklands precinct. The announcement confirmed earlier plans that trams will travel in a loop along LaTrobe Street, Harbour Esplanade

and Flinders Streets, as well as a line along the Collins Street extension.

We welcome confirmation that these projects will go ahead. However, caution must be taken to ensure that the entire Docklands is easily accessible by public transport. The various Docklands precincts spread almost two kilometres from Spencer Street, and involve mostly high-density retail, residential and other developments. We believe that without the provision of high quality public transport throughout these areas, traffic congestion and pollution will very quickly become a problem. This would make the whole area difficult and undesirable to live in, work in, or visit, and would therefore risk the long-term viability of the Docklands.

We hope that appropriate tram extensions throughout the Docklands precincts are not just proposed, but built and running, as the various Docklands projects are developed. This will help ensure that the kind of economic prosperity that St Kilda Road enjoys, in part thanks to its high frequency tram services, can be repeated in the Docklands.

Furthermore, the principle of providing public transport into newly developing areas is one that should be applied in other areas around Melbourne.

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## Feeder services the key to increased rail use

Traffic problems near the Heatherdale railway station underlie the need for better suburban feeder buses. Local residents claim problems with excessive traffic and commuter parking. The problem is said to be particularly acute at Heatherdale because it is the most eastern station still in Fare Zone Two.

The usual response is to add more parking spaces near the station. This encouragement of Park and Ride only exacerbates parking traffic problems and saps patronage from feeder buses.

Some commuters are wary about using Park and Ride due to the perceived increased risk of their vehicle being stolen from railway station car parks compared to if the car was left at home. Also once the person is behind the wheel, there can be a tendency to complete the trip by car, thus bypassing public transport entirely. "Kiss and Ride", where the traveller is dropped off or collected from the station is even worse, as it generates extra trips that would not be necessary if feeder buses were better.

The main reason for the support of Park and Ride is the inadequacy of feeder buses in the area. Infrequent buses and their limited operating hours make Park and Ride the only practical choice for many commuters, particularly for the increasing number who work part-time or evenings and weekends.

As an example, the main route through Heatherdale Station, the 742, runs about every 30 minutes between approximately 6 am and 7:30pm on weekdays. The final bus leaves Heatherdale Station at 7:40pm, to take passengers from the train arriving at 7:32pm. The result is that people using the service would have to leave the city before 7pm to avoid missing the last bus. And with trains running every four minutes at peak times, most passengers would have a long wait for the half-hourly bus home.

Buses in suburbs such as Croydon are even less useful, with hourly service the norm, even on weekdays.

The upgrading of service in these areas would reduce parking problems, as people find buses a worthwhile alternative to Park and Ride. As well as serving the city commuter, more frequent service would satisfy local and cross-suburban travel needs that are currently unmet by public transport. Park and Ride facilities should still be provided (particularly at stations away from major suburban district centres), but should be seen as a minor access mode, as it is in many cities with frequent and well-patronised public transport services throughout the metropolitan area.

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# Complaints

Reports of heavy-handed ticket inspectors dominate the public transport complaints received by the PTUA in the past few months – in fact there have been more ticket inspector-related complaints than all the other complaints put together. Many describe situations where passengers attempted to buy tickets but were unable to, due to the shortcomings of the current system, and were subsequently fined.

Other complaints included:

- Lack/poor frequency of railway station feeder buses
- Infrequent and unreliable V/Line commuter services, which resulted in at least one passenger losing their job due to continued late arrivals

See also:

⇒ Ticketing, pages 4-5

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# Fares policy meeting

In July, the PTUA held a members' meeting to determine the organisation's fares policy.

The basic principles of this policy are that the fares structure for the Melbourne metropolitan public transport system should be:

- Simple for users and potential users to understand and use
- Inter-available for all modes of public transport
- Appropriately priced and encourages use of periodicals, off-peak and weekend travel, family and group travel

Any changes proposed to the current system would need to be broadly revenue neutral, and aid in meeting the goals above.

This policy does not cover the media, sale or checking of tickets - see pages 4-5 for more on this issue.

The specific policy adopted at the meeting proposes the following changes to the current fare system:

- Removal of the non-multi-modal, confusing Short Trip tickets, with reduction in the cost of zone 1 two hour tickets to compensate
- Removal of the single operator M>Train, Connex and National Bus tickets
- Addition of a small inner city zone
- Include Skybus and Nightrider buses in the ticketing system

More details will be found in the Fares policy paper, which will be made available shortly.

**More information on PTUA policies:**

⇒ [www.ptua.org.au](http://www.ptua.org.au)

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## In brief

### Yarra targets train passengers

While the transport companies may now claim to be trying to work together to increase public transport usage away from private cars, the reality is somewhat different. Yarra Trams still displays a "Park & Ride" banner outside their Melbourne Park P+R facility, facing the rail lines, ensuring the only potential customers to see it are those in passing trains.

### Late night campaign

The PTUA "late night services" campaign has commenced research into late night (after midnight) services in cities around the world. Preliminary research has shown that a wider than expected range of cities features after-midnight services, and that Melbourne's Night Rider service can no longer be seen as ground-breaking by world standards.

More in the next newsletter

### Outer east

At its July meeting, the PTUA committee determined to finally "draw a line" under our outer eastern campaign.

Those who have been around a while will remember that that PTUA decided to take action in the "public policy wilderness" that was the outer eastern suburbs in the early 90's. Our

hope was to make public transport one of the top priorities for the community. In one way, we proved too successful: by making transport in the outer east a big issue, we gave the road engineers fuel to pull their Scoresby Freeway plans out of the drawer and dust them off.

Unfortunately, politicians (both Labor and Liberal) fell over themselves in an effort to be the most pro-freeway.

There is now an active campaign at grass roots level running in the outer eastern suburbs, run by several local environment organisations, under the name Public Transport First.

Public Transport First plan to register as a political party later this year, and as such the PTUA cannot endorse them, but we have included contact information below for the benefit of members who may be interested in finding out more about them.

**More information:**

⇒ [www.ptfirst.org](http://www.ptfirst.org)

⇒ PO Box 1416, Carlton Vic 3053.

### More Sunday buses, but...

There have been small improvements to some bus routes in Melbourne's southeast, which introduce or extend Sunday services, including routes 631, 822, 831, 840, 841 and 888/9.

Other changes (apart from the SmartBus changes mentioned on page 3) have been made to route 600, which has now been fragmented into three separate routes (600, 922, 923). Unfortunately this has resulted in a more confusing route structure, the abandonment of clock-face timetables, and worse bus/train co-ordination at Sandringham.

Common sense says that bus routes should be simple to understand, direct and frequent at all times if they are to be attractive for passengers. The recent changes, by fragmenting one simple, comparatively frequent route into three infrequent and confusing routes, do precisely the reverse. This is no way to build route familiarity and increase patronage.

**See also:**

⇒ [SmartBus – page 3](#)

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*PTUA Annual General Meeting – Wed 2<sup>nd</sup> October – See page 2*

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