



Safety means staff

Recent media coverage has confirmed what the PTUA has been saying for some time: that our public transport system is widely perceived as being unsafe. The Age has published many opinions, including those of the Transport Minister, transport operators, police and transport unions, and the general public.

The government’s announcement that stations are to be equipped with “Crimestoppers” noticeboards is of little comfort. With the majority of stations remaining unstaffed, a noticeboard is likely to achieve nothing other than being a new surface to attract graffiti.

Many of the current safety problems can be solved only by re-introducing staff, in particular on the train system. Staff on every station, and on all but the quietest (and safest) tram routes is the only effective deterrent to crime, and the only way to improve the public’s perception of safety, as well as solving many problems related to fare-evasion.

See also:

⇒ Safety – a look at the issues ⇒ page 4

NX gone: what next?

With the departure of National Express, and the probable takeover of M>Tram by Yarra, and M>Train by Connex, the government and operators need to take a fresh look at how to make the public transport franchises more viable.

Part of NX’s failure was due to the envisaged patronage increases never appearing. And while incremental service frequency improvements were made, all of the major operators are hamstrung by the lack of a fully integrated public transport network that can take people where they want to go, when they want to go.

The potential for growth in patronage on the train network in particular is limited unless better feeder services are introduced.

While strategies like Melbourne 2030 make encouraging points supportive of better public transport in general, their emphasis on the “Principal Public Transport Network” (eg primarily the current tram and train network) and the idea of separate plans for the development of tram, train and bus services, indicates that proper integration of the system into a cohesive network is still not on the radar.

Particular attention needs to be paid to those areas away from the “PPTN” – to areas currently covered only by bus services. These need a complete revamp: to tram style routes forming a grid along main roads and tram style service frequencies and operating hours. In other words, to a level of service that is actually usable and that people will therefore want to use.

Until these gaps in the network are filled, the tram and train franchisees, and the public transport system in general, will continue to fail to see the patronage boost it so desperately needs.

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The PTUA members' discussion list is at
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Committee Meetings

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

Geelong Branch

The Geelong branch has been busy meeting with the newly elected Labor politicians in the region. It is keen to see the proposed Grovedale Station built on the more prominent Surfcoast Highway (Torquay Road) site, rather than the isolated Reserve Road site. It is working hard to see a full-time train service provided to the station.

At this stage, only 58 trains a week are proposed to be provided to the station, which is about one fifth of the over 300 services a week that currently run to Geelong Station. Furthermore, future service upgrades are likely to be restricted by the failure to build a loop of track to allow locomotives to turn around. The Branch is lobbying for quick implementation of a 'stage two' of the station, including a full-time train service, extra track and a staffed ticket office.

Now that V/Line is back in public hands until at least 2006, the branch is also pushing for train fares between Geelong and Melbourne to include travel on

Geelong buses and Melbourne's public transport. In conjunction with better local bus connections to trains, fare integration would encourage transfers and allow more cost-competitive public transport trips to Melbourne.

Swanston Street... walk?



This picture was taken in Swanston Street just before Christmas. With this many cars, you wouldn't know it was supposedly a pedestrian mall.

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 1st May 2003

Newsletter contributors: Daniel Bowen, Tony Morton, Matt Cook, Peter Parker, Les Chandra, Tim Petersen and Peter Cook. Printed on recycled paper by Flash Print, Collingwood.

Our thanks to Max Nicholson and the rest of the dedicated mail out team.

PTUA calls for better Chadstone transport

Public transport to Chadstone shopping centre should be improved before expansion plans currently before the City of Stonnington are approved. That's the main message contained in a submission to council the PTUA lodged last month. Without better public transport, an expanded Chadstone would increase congestion for local residents and raise car usage across Melbourne.

In the submission we pointed out that though Chadstone has been designated as a regional centre, public transport access to it is much poorer than other retail centres in Stonnington.

Despite Sundays being one of the busiest trading days at Chadstone, public transport to the centre is almost non-existent. The two bus routes that do serve the centre each run only every seventy or eighty minutes, making them unattractive for most.

Car dependence can only be reduced by ensuring that public transport becomes a practical choice for many people.

With the aim of the Metropolitan Strategy to increase public transport's modal share to 20 percent of motorised trips, and Chadstone being such a large traffic generator, it follows that the Strategy's target can only be achieved if public transport access to Chadstone is dramatically improved. This requires frequent buses to railway stations and surrounding suburbs. To ensure service co-ordination and easy transfers, we advocated a service frequency at least that of trains throughout the day and night.

In urging the Council to consider the transport implications of an

expanded Chadstone, our submission pointed out that councils were required to consider these when approving new developments. We hope that Stonnington will do just this, and we will keep you informed of developments.

Smart Card exhibit ends

The DOI has closed its Smart Card exhibit at Flinders Street Station.

The exhibit was designed to tell passengers how smart card ticketing would work and its planned introduction to Melbourne.

The PTUA considers that expenditure on Smart Cards could be better spent on making the existing ticketing system more reliable, re-staffing stations and making services more frequent.



We were unable to see substantial benefits for passengers in Smart Cards and consider that it may be "a solution looking for a problem".

However if a Smart Card system is introduced, the most important consideration is that it only supports the integrated fare system and does not herald a retreat to the pre-1983 era of disintegrated fares – something which we understand has been considered as an option.

⇒ www.doi.vic.gov.au/ticketing

Runaway train

On the evening of 3 February 2003, a 3 car suburban train rolled downhill from Broadmeadows to Spencer Street Station powered entirely by gravity.

It is believed that there was a brake or brake control fault with the train in question, which may or may not have been to blame. We are also aware that it had been logged for repairs within a set timeframe, timeframes that are questionable but probably not unreasonable.

Train Controllers and other staff are believed to have made every effort to avert the disaster that a high speed runaway could have become, especially had it ended up on the Flinders Street viaduct.

We must also express our thanks to the driver of the Bacchus Marsh train, who reportedly ran alongside his train warning the passengers on board to brace for impact.

The commitment to safety from public transport employees is encouraging, and we can hope that the Government and the Operators can be brought to show similar responsibility for the system – an attitude welcome from the perspective of Public Transport users.

While the end result was a collision with a train that was about to depart, there were no deaths, and only 11 minor injuries. Our suburban network therefore stands at well over two decades of service without a passenger fatality.

It is clear that our system is run down and that there are some problems with its failsafe systems. It is our belief that these systems could be improved without excessive expenditure, and we eagerly await the official reports on this incident.

In depth: Safety

A look at the issues surrounding safety on public transport

By Matt Cook

There are few that would risk their life for public transport. It's easy to argue that efficient, clean, and egalitarian transport is a good thing; but if you ask people to risk personal injury just to get around, they'll probably want to injure you.

Yet this is something that our state government expects from people trying to use PT in Melbourne. For a more safe system, we need only look beyond the suburbs to country Victoria.

Here most PT is delivered by bus. Bus drivers will almost always intervene when their passengers misbehave, so most of the time they refrain from doing so. Most bus stops are integrated into their neighbourhoods, and aren't targets for criminals.

Almost all the rest is delivered by train. The rural train stations still open are almost all staffed from first to last train. Most of them also include some sort of shop that's open to anyone who wanders by. The trains themselves always have staff on board who are trained in managing unruly people. They make their presence known.

In short, the country PT system is safe because it's staffed.

Things are different in Melbourne.

They didn't used to be. Until the mid nineties, most train stations were staffed most of the time. If something went wrong, there was usually someone there to do something about it. Unless you're using one of the few Premium stations, now there isn't.

In 1996-7, when large numbers of staff were removed from stations and trams, 2 per cent of all Melbourne's crime occurred on PT facilities. In 2001-02, this figure was 2.9 per cent. PT's share of crime had increased by nearly 50 per cent.

According to the Victoria Police, between 1999 and 2001 the numbers of people committing robbery and carrying weapons on PT and at stations nearly doubled. During this time, the number of PT assaults increased by nearly 50 per cent.

"Given that the stations are people's primary point of contact with the system, you can hardly expect them to respect the system when the stations are just crap" – Bob Annells, director of Connex Melbourne, quoted in the Herald Sun 4/2/2003

Also during this period, the number of people who rated railway stations unsafe doubled to 30 per cent. According to the state government's *Local Safety Survey*, stations were seen as more dangerous than parks and streets.

So there are plenty of statistics to show that Melbourne's PT system isn't nearly as safe as it used to be, and that people realise this.

The recent media interest in the issue has brought to light stories of individual tragedy, giving a scared human face to the cold statistics. The tale of a violent assault that almost became rape was particularly provoking. But many stories remained frozen in the minds of those trying to forget.

The issue's newly found prominence has brought renewed calls for change from various groups.

The Police Association is one. Secretary Paul Mullett recently said latest crime figures showed insufficient police patrolling in and around trains. The current government promised an additional 600 police before the last election, and they are urgently needed.

"There's direct and anecdotal evidence to suggest that there's a fair case for a substantial number of that 600 to be deployed into the transit safety area," Mr Mullett said.

[The PTUA believe more emphasis is needed on every day customer service staff, on every station and most trams, with police used as a rapid-response backup in emergencies. – Ed]

The Victorian Council of Social Service is another concerned group.

Many female workers have told them of their preference to drive rather than risk the dangers of unsafe stations.

The state secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, Trevor Dobbin, says there are patrols "but it's not enough to cover the system".

He said that only 18% of Sydney stations are unstaffed, plus it has 850 guards patrolling its trains.

"It's quite a stark relief to the situation we've got here," Mr Dobbyn said. "We're calling for... a repopulation of the system with properly trained rail employees..."

The Victorian Liberals recently voiced their disgust of the present security system on trains. "It completely defeats the purpose and gives people a totally false sense of security," said transport spokesman Terry Mulder.

It's clear to many that the current system is inadequate in many

places. The security cameras and emergency intercoms on our stations and PT vehicles aren't designed to secure on their own. They are only there to help passengers contact security personnel located somewhere else.

There are many occasions when the damage has been done before they can be used to call for help. Sometimes victims and bystanders are too afraid to use them. None of these problems apply to a nearby member of staff.

Often, the sheer presence of someone in a uniform deters criminals. There are many crimes that a glare and stern words will stop in progress. Should a criminal act continue, an authority figure can lead the stronger passengers to assist them, and the police are only a short call away.

Every station could have staff doing nothing but watching and serving passengers, and the consequential drop in fare evasion would pay for it. See Project 6 from the PTUA's book *It's Time to Move* for details.

Another option is to open up more stations for retail development. Private enterprise could employ the people watching out for passengers. This wouldn't cut fare evasion, but would require nothing from the government.

Some have suggested satellite police stations be built on train station sites. There are suburbs that don't have police stations and others that need new ones. In many cases, the train station would be the perfect site to serve the whole area from.

No matter what the colour of the uniform is, it's clear that stations, trains and many trams need staff.

The Age has recently been focusing on this issue, and the other media have also taken an interest. It is presently in the minds

of many. But there is yet to be any resulting action. The staff are still not here. Things are as unsafe as ever.

Now is the time to contact your local newspaper, talkback radio, your local MP, your friends and neighbours and tell them all what needs to be done. Before more criminals realise where the best place to attack people is, and things get yet worse.

For information on the PTUA's policies on safety and other issues, go to www.ptua.org.au then click on Policies; Safety on public transport – or contact the office.

City Circle extended

The City Circle tram route, while aimed primarily at tourists, also provides links around the perimeter of the CBD that are not easily reached by other public transport.

In January the route was extended into Docklands. Although there is not much completed at Docklands yet, provision of public transport there will become important in the coming months, and even a token limited-hours service such as the City Circle should prove useful.

However, we are concerned that the City Circle has been subsequently modified to have a tram scheduled only every 12 minutes instead of the previous 10.

Given the regular overcrowding on the trams, this can only make things worse. It could be argued that the trams should instead be sped up beyond their current slow speed, maintaining the 10 minute frequency and also avoiding the delays currently caused to regular service trams along LaTrobe and Flinders Streets.

The current slow speed and overcrowding are off-putting enough to tourists. But other users (many of whom may be potential regular public transport users) are unlikely to be impressed at this most visible representative of the tram system.

In Brief...

Tram 109

The opening of the tram 109 extension to Box Hill is expected in the coming months.

Part of the delay has been the revision of the design of accessible tram stops along Whitehorse Road.

While the delay is regrettable, the modified design has several safety benefits from passengers' point of view, including physically preventing car drivers from overtaking stopped trams, particularly important in light of the recent tragic death of a school boy alighting from a tram in Burke Road, Camberwell.

We await completion of the project with interest, and if the design proves successful, hope that it will be implemented elsewhere across Melbourne.

⇒ www.doi.vic.gov.au/tram109

Views sought on outer east

The DOI is seeking community input on the future of public transport in Outer Eastern Melbourne.

Community meetings have already been held, but written submissions may be made until the end of March.

⇒ www.doi.vic.gov.au/outereast

Drive-in public transport?

The Misplaced Enthusiasm Over Park-And-Ride

Public transport planning in Melbourne is hostage to a defeatist mindset that sees it as catering only to those people who have no choice. This mindset is hostile to the idea that one could ever 'grow the market' by offering improved services.

Yet the State Government has repeatedly announced that it wants to see public transport mode-share more than double to 20 per cent of all trips by 2020. This poses a dilemma to officials trapped in the captive-market mindset. How are they to get more people to use public transport, without actually improving service quality? There is no answer to this question. But superficially, it appears that "park and ride" might offer a solution.

According to park-and-ride advocates, the reason more people don't use public transport is that they can't drive to it. Providing more car parking at key public transport nodes will allow more people beyond the reach of the system to access it by car, or so it's said.

Traditionally, park-and-ride schemes have been focussed on railway stations. But recently it's been thought that people will happily drive some distance and then switch to a bus or tram, if we just provide enough parking en route. Thus in January, Transport Minister Peter Batchelor presided over the opening of a big car park next to a bus stop in Doncaster. Not long after, some local MPs in Maribyrnong were reported to get excited about the idea of building another big car park at the terminus of the No.57 tram.

But looked at more closely, park-and-ride has some fundamental flaws.

- It's a second-rate option for passengers. In peak hours, people driving to the park-and-ride facility must contend with the traffic congestion caused by all the others doing the same thing, and must then leave their car all day in a public car park where it is vulnerable to theft. Outside peak times, public transport that requires a car to access offers no benefit over driving all the way to one's destination. And all the people without cars (including children and the elderly) are deprived of independent mobility.
- It works against good land-use planning. Public transport nodes are natural focal points for communities, and cities work best when commercial activities are clustered near good public transport. Park-and-ride schemes alienate just the valuable real estate near public transport that would be better used for activity centres.
- It's expensive. For example, on 24 February M>Train announced a \$350,000 upgrade to the Upfield station carpark, to increase the capacity from 35 to 103 car spaces. With each Upfield train having a capacity of 300 seated passengers and another 300 standing passengers, this new carpark will service only a tiny proportion of potential passengers - yet these lucky few will have had over \$5000 per car space spent on them.
- And lastly, it's impractical. As the Upfield example shows, and the PTUA policy document *It's Time To Move* explains further, to achieve adequate patronage on a public

transport route while expecting most people to drive to it would require an enormous investment in car parking - much more than can be justified financially. To provide a thousand car spaces is already a huge undertaking, yet a Melbourne train line can easily carry 200,000 passengers a day, and a tram route 20,000 a day, in each direction!

The alternative to building big car parks everywhere in the name of better public transport is to improve feeder bus services, and extend services to areas that lack them.

No-one has proposed any costing for the Maribyrnong park-and-ride, but a car park of any substance will cost many millions of dollars. A small fraction of this money would provide a bus service every six minutes along Milleara and Military Roads, from dawn to midnight. The bus would be available to everyone, not just commuters in the morning peak.

In the longer term, a tram extension to East Keilor, costing around \$30 million (about as much as a modest arterial road - or about 700 metres of freeway), would provide the capacity to serve an even greater number of passengers.

Park-and-ride is the answer to the wrong question. If we are serious about getting large numbers of people to use public transport, and not only peak-hour commuters to the city centre, improving feeder services is the only option.

PTUA in 2003

In mid-January the PTUA committee met to plan the year ahead. Our key projects this year will be:

Ticketing

The PTUA will continue to push for the recommendations of the Met Ticketing Taskforce to be adopted, even after all these years, while opposing political grand plans for buying even more ticketing gadgets. It is our belief that Smartcards, apart from undermining integrated fares, still wouldn't fix the underlying problems of the ticketing system, which can only be fixed with full staffing. We will continue to point out that the cities with a successful Smartcard system still have full staffing.

Late night and after midnight services

This campaign is carried over from last year. The PTUA will push for a 24 hour network in our 24 hour city. The first step of this would be an expansion of Nightrider buses to run more nights of the week, operate at least half hourly, and be supported by a limited tram network connecting the night life hot spots running at least quarter hourly, with a view towards pushing for a more comprehensive late night network as acceptance of Public Transport at night increases.

Chadstone Project

In response to Gandel's redevelopment project, push for greater Public Transport access to Chadstone, from the rail network (Route 700 improvements) as well as surrounding suburbs (other bus services, possible extension of Tram 3).

It's Time to Move

Our Marketing efforts for our latest publication have barely

started. The PTUA plans to push its message through *Time To Move* and develop it as a reference book of worthwhile Public Transport projects, with a view towards them being accepted as alternatives to expensive road projects.

Networking

Continue to develop our alliances with other groups whose aims are similar to ours, with a view towards putting out a stronger, united message.

And elsewhere...

We will continue our important work on issues such as rural services (including Geelong), passenger safety and service quality.

to buy remote control traffic light switches for tram drivers. This is a sure method of making trams go faster, but if we don't do anything, Vic Roads will only slow them down further.

- Peter Behan

Memberships

Our sincere thanks to the following Gold and Silver renewing members:

Gold

Mollie E. MacGregor
Tim Mattingsbrooke
Graham R. Anderson

Silver

Dave Dominko
Terry Johnson
James Minific
Mark Learmonth
Peter Parker
Miriam Powell
Rodney Snibson

Help us increase our membership – sign up a friend.

As you know, we are a volunteer organisation with limited resources, and we rely on membership fees to run our campaigns and keep the organisation going.

As part of a campaign to increase our membership, we are asking all our members to sign up a friend as a member of the PTUA, and have enclosed a membership brochure.

Everyone who signs up a friend will receive a year's FREE membership of the PTUA, so make sure your friend puts your name on the form when they send it in.

Letter to the editor

Letters may be e-mailed to newsletter@ptua.org.au – no attachments please – or sent to the office – see address on page 2.

It is incredible that the speed of trams is much the same as it was 50 years ago, indeed on some routes they may be even slower.

This situation has been brought about by the huge build up of car traffic and Vic Roads efforts to speed up car traffic by adjusting traffic lights biased against trams. One of the most glaring examples of this practice is on Route 59 at the entrance to City Link Mount Alexander Road Flemington just north of Flemington Bridge where trams are heavily retarded in favour of cars entering City Link.

What we must do now is seek the support of the pro public transport councils such as Moreland and Yarra so that we can put maximum pressure on the Transport Minister

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