

Melbourne Central - Unlinking Melbourne's Transport

The Government has again failed to deliver on its promise to better integrate public transport modes.

Many of our readers will already be suffering the consequences of the closure of the Swanston Street entrance of Melbourne Central Station.

The direct and efficient link between the street and station has been replaced by a detour through the middle of the shopping centre.



The problems with the new arrangements are not just the extra travelling time for people using the station:

- The plans show a future bottleneck on the entrance closest to the street corner;
- The entrance closest to the street corner will be closed after 7.30pm, requiring people to detour further along Swanston Street to get to the station;
- The escalators to platforms 3 and 4 at the Swanston Street end are now poorly positioned with respect to the barrier gates, and there aren't enough of them, causing chaos in peak hour;
- The LaTrobe Street exit now requires navigating through a busy food hall;
- The next train monitors are difficult to read when entering from Swanston Street, and the Sandringham line monitor has vanished completely.

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Uni terminus design leap in wrong direction

Plans have now been released for M>Tram's proposed redesign of the Melbourne University tram terminus at the top of Swanston Street. From the perspective of a tram passenger, or most members of the University community in general, these plans take the existing bad situation and make it even worse.

After the present terminus and shunting area was installed some 8 years ago, an article in our August 1997 newsletter explained the flaws. The most glaring problem was that the main pedestrian flow from the university to Carlton via Masson Way and Faraday Street had been severed, so that people were now funnelled down a narrow footpath to an unresponsive set of traffic lights. The disparity between the sheer volume of pedestrians and the restrictiveness of the new 'traffic treatments' led to added inconvenience, sheer frustration, and at least one fatality.

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PTUA plans for 2004

The PTUA has formulated its campaign plans for 2004... and we need your help!

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*Seasons Greetings to
all our members!*

Keeping in touch...

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Committee Meetings

In 2004, meetings will be the fourth Thursday of each month. Members are welcome to attend. Please call or e-mail the office for details.

News in brief

Fares up, services cut

Fares increase by around 10% next year, just as services are cut for the first week of January. If the public transport operators want more business, they have a funny way of showing it.

Comeng can't handle the heat

M>Train has told the Sunday Herald Sun that their Comeng fleet cannot handle temperatures of more than 32.5 degrees. Yes, it seems that many of our air-conditioned trains cannot handle the heat! This results in cancellations on hot days – a ludicrous situation in a city that regularly has days with temperatures above 35 or even 40 degrees.

Northern Central City Corridor

The Eastern Coalition on Transport and the Environment has made a submission to the Northern Central City Corridor Study. The submission calls on the government to support the construction of heavy rail to Doncaster, as it is clear from previous studies that it would not cost significantly more than light rail for the anticipated passenger volumes.

Broadmeadows runaway report

The report into the Broadmeadows runaway train was published in early December. We are pleased to hear the government will be adopting all its recommendations, though the apparent delay in this report being published is of concern.

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 1st February 2004

Newsletter contributors: Daniel Bowen, Matt Cook, Peter Cook, Beth Driscoll, Chris Loader, Tony Morton, 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.

NYE – Fireworks... followed by sore feet?

Over 300,000 people attended the fireworks in the city to celebrate New Year's Eve last year. The festive mood, however, was dealt a blow by the vastly inadequate public transport options available on the night. People spent lengthy amounts of time in queues, only to be left behind by overcrowded trams. Others jostled for scarce taxis, while some ended up walking home – and if you're wearing party shoes, that leads to very sore feet!

This year, the government needs to put into place arrangements for extra tram and train services to ensure that people can enjoy the

festivities and travel home in a timely manner. As with big events at the MCG, there should be a number of trams and trains available at the initial surge period, then regular services to sweep up remaining revellers.

In addition, we believe that services to eastern lines should originate from or travel via Spencer Street to serve New Quay patrons, that all Spencer Street and Flinders Street Station entrances should be open, that larger capacity trams should be used wherever possible and that New Year's Day should run on a Saturday timetable (or at the very

least that services start at the normal weekday/Saturday time). These concerns have been raised with the Department of Infrastructure, but it looks like only a token level of extra service is to be provided, unlike other Australian cities which are providing comprehensive services throughout the night.

New Year's Eve is a major event in Melbourne. Public transport options should be designed to reflect this, accommodating the large, dispersed crowd and enhancing the safety and enjoyment of the night.

PTUA plans for 2004

2004 looks like being a big year for the PTUA, with many local councils up for re-election, a Federal election likely, and many new developments demanding a PTUA response (Metlink, Smartcards, Bus Plan, and so on). Campaigns around New Year's Eve and the University tram terminus will keep us occupied over summer.

For these reasons we decided to hold our annual strategic planning weekend late this year rather than at the start of next year. The weekend of 29-30 November saw the Committee head to Commonground near Seymour for two days of heavy strategising. The result is a plan that sets a clear strategic direction for the PTUA in 2004.

The next year will see the PTUA embark on a number of campaigns and projects. One campaign will centre on local government, as the most likely catalyst for policy change in the short term. We will build on the recent success in the City of Knox, and work to build local council support for the policies detailed in our publication *It's Time To Move*.

Of the specific projects and recommendations in *It's Time To Move*, the one with the most political impetus behind it at present is the Rowville train line. In the next year we will be working jointly with local groups and Knox Council to support their efforts in getting the train line on the agenda.

Other important projects for the year include:

- supporting the Metlink initiative, and campaigning for frequency and interchange improvements to give it teeth;
- demanding better New Year's Eve services;
- promoting convenient alternatives for the Melbourne University tram terminus, and campaigning against the inferior alternative being promoted by M>Tram;
- continuing our campaign for a user-friendly ticketing system supported by full staffing; and
- campaigning for Federal funding of public transport improvements.

While we regard all these issues as important, the Committee has limited energy to devote to them. We are always eager for our members to become active and support our campaign work, and we invite willing volunteers to call the office on 9650 7898, or e-mail office@ptua.org.au.

Organisationally, we will be working to ensure a fully-functioning office in 2004, and will continue to develop links and joint campaigns with allied organisations. Importantly, we will be seeking to build our membership and to seek greater participation by our members in PTUA activities. There will be opportunities through the year for members to provide feedback on our work and contribute ideas.

Again, we give thanks to the good people of the Commonground Co-Op for their hospitality and their warm, friendly facilities.

We look forward to an exciting year of transport campaigning ahead!

New Trainlink buses on the right track

Cranbourne and Epping area residents will benefit from an innovative feeder bus services introduced recently.

The new Cranbourne service, operating as Route 896, provides a welcome example of bus/train co-ordination in Melbourne's outer suburbs. Services are scheduled so that every train arrival is met by a waiting bus and every train departure is fed by an arriving bus at Cranbourne Station. Also, unlike most other bus routes in Melbourne, connecting services are provided on evenings and

Sundays – right up to the last train arrival at 1:07am every night.

The main shortcoming with the 896 is that the route is indirect, circular and runs in one direction only. This reduces its usefulness for some local trips and increases journey times.

Epping's route 571 has also received an upgrade, with buses as far as the Plenty Valley shops meeting almost every train.

These Trainlink upgrades break new ground for buses in Melbourne. Its seven day/seven night service is almost unheard of

for an outer suburban route. Also welcome is timetabling that offers genuine co-ordination with trains – something unseen since the demise of the 901 Black Rock to Sandringham bus some years ago.

The PTUA has always advocated this type of service co-ordination and is encouraged that attention was paid to this when designing this new service. We hope that these routes will be the first of many other "Trainlink" feeder services in Melbourne's outer suburbs.

Government stalling on BusPlan

Despite the positive steps forward with new Trainlink routes (see above), little progress appears to have been made on the Melbourne-wide implementation of BusPlan, despite it being key to the Government achieving its 20% public transport patronage target.

While the State Government has made piecemeal improvements in some suburbs, there is still not the recognition that a radical overhaul of bus services, such as recommended in BusPlan, is required to serve modern community needs.

BusPlan proposes to bring quality public transport to over two million Melburnians by providing seven day per week services, fifteen-minute service along major routes until midnight. These measures would strengthen public transport by making it practical for many local, cross-suburban and rail-feeder trips currently easiest by car.

The Bus Association of Victoria and the PTUA both support the basic concepts of BusPlan. We call on the government to support BusPlan and commit to completing

the implementation of Stage One over the next three years.

The Trainlink routes are more than welcome but every suburb needs bus services with similar operating hours, running at tram-like frequencies.



Chadstone on a typical weekend afternoon – the carparks are full...



...while the bus interchange is empty.

For more than two million Melburnians, buses are the only form of public transport available in their area. Yet bus services in Melbourne do not meet modern travel needs, as the following statistics show:

- Four out of five bus routes (including most serving major shopping centres) do not operate on Sundays
- The average bus route finishes at 6:53pm weekdays and 5:14pm Saturdays
- Four out of five bus routes provide no evening service at all
- The average interval between buses is 40 minutes during weekday peak periods and 50 minutes during the day

Note that Melbourne BusPlan proposes major routes running every 15 minutes or better until midnight, and local routes operating until 10pm most nights.

(source: BAV, PTUA)

Uni tram terminus (cont'd from page 1)

We argued then, and have maintained ever since, that the tram shunting area must be relocated from the middle of the University precinct to a location with less cross-traffic. The most suitable location is further north on Swanston Street, out of the way of 1/22 trams turning right into Elgin St.

The way would then be clear to install a superstop with one end at Masson Way and the other at Faraday Street, thus improving on the arrangement that had served the university for 80 years prior to 1997.

M>Tram instead proposes to expand the present shunting area to the south side of Faraday Street, and to build a superstop further south toward Grattan Street. This is being done in order to accommodate the new extra-long 5 section Combino trams (the need for which is unclear – patronage growth is better assured through more frequent services than through larger vehicles – in any case we understand these trams are likely to be moved to Southbank depot routes when Yarra Trams takes over M>Tram's routes). The plans were not discussed with the PTUA or with anyone in the 20,000-strong university

community, other than a few faceless administrators.

If this proposal goes ahead, anyone catching a tram on the Swanston Street side of the Uni will have to walk up to twice as far as they do now. While M>Tram insist that the Grattan Street stop is not an issue in this proposal, the proximity of the proposed superstop to Grattan Street strongly suggests that the removal of this stop will be next on the agenda.

The other losers, as before, will be the very large number of people who travel between the centre of the university campus and the Lygon Street shops, or to anywhere on the northern side of Faraday Street. Under this proposal Swanston Street is set to become a 200-metre impermeable barrier between the university and Carlton, from Elgin Street to a point south of Faraday Street. The existing crossing on the north side of Faraday Street will disappear, and people will have to make lengthy detours instead.

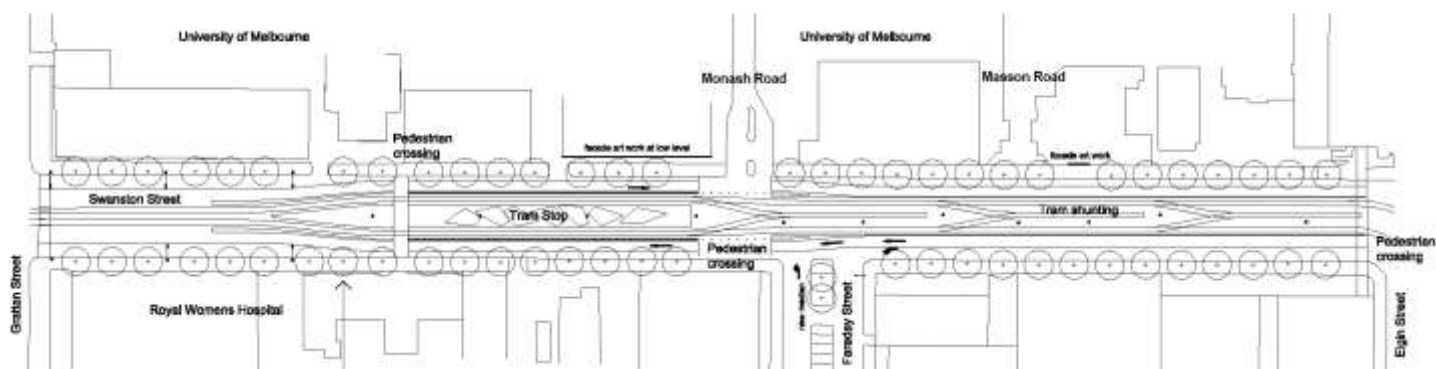
Since Jane Jacobs wrote *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in 1961, we have understood the deadening effect such barriers have on city life. The block between Elgin and Faraday Streets is half-

dead already thanks to the existing shunting area; the new proposal would hasten its demise.

M>Tram are instead trying to claim an improvement for urban amenity, largely on aesthetic grounds that, as Jane Jacobs also reminds us, cannot substitute for good walking design. While we agree that passengers benefit from superstops, the building of superstops in the wrong locations is still counterproductive.

Alternatives need to be considered that don't frustrate the urban dynamic of the area, and have minimal impact on residential amenity.

Melbourne University transport planning lecturer and former PTUA President Paul Mees was able to lodge a formal objection just in time for the plans to be voted on by Melbourne City Council. While the council has approved the plans, Paul has the opportunity to appeal to VCAT. If an appeal goes ahead, construction can't go ahead during the current university break, and there will be time for M>Tram to actually consult with the affected community, and independent planning experts.



M>Tram's plans for Melbourne Uni – the stop moves further south, and a whole block fenced off for shunting trams

Melbourne Central unlinked (cont'd from page 1)

Flawed justifications

The developers argue the new station has improved integration between the station and the shopping centre. They seem to fail to understand that most train passengers actually want to get to their tram, workplace, or university quickly, not spend money in the shopping centre every time they use the station. The thousands of people who connect to trams every day have been completely ignored.

Worse, M>Train negotiated a confidential payout from VicTrack for losing part of their station lease in the new arrangements. In other words, they profited by inconveniencing their own passengers. No wonder they are trying to sell it to commuters.

Government Asleep at the wheel

Planning minister Mary Delahunty approved the changes without considering station users. Worse still, the decision was based on wrong information that the

changes would add 30 seconds to the path to Swanston Street. The reality (backed by the final modelling) is that it takes at least a minute extra each way. That's over 8 hours a year of wasted time for anyone using the station 5 days a week.

The Government is spending \$7 million to shave off each minute on some regional fast rail lines. Why they have allowed developer greed to add a minute each way for people using the busiest exit of Melbourne's second busiest train station?

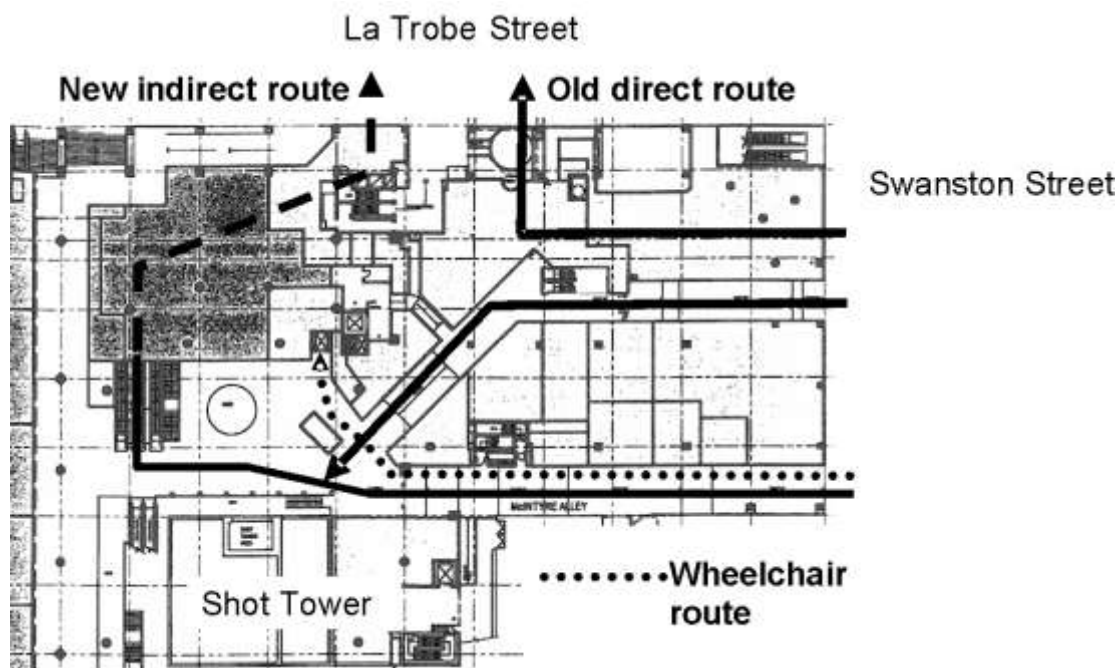
The new Metlink branding was based around improved integration between transport modes around Melbourne. The changes at Melbourne Central are best described as dis-integration.

We don't deny there are some improvements with the new arrangements. There will be a new lift at Elizabeth Street, and there is a new direct route to Lonsdale Street, but none of this justifies closing the main entrance at Swanston St.

What we did

After meeting with the operators, developers, and government, the PTUA launched a campaign to stop the closure. Thousands of leaflets were handed to people using the Swanston Street entrance with an excellent response including the recruitment of several new members. There was repeated coverage in print media and on radio, with many people expressing their outrage. 96% of respondents to our online survey said they were unhappy about the changes.

While we haven't been able to stop the closure, we hope the Government and operators will think to consult users next time there is a change to public transport infrastructure. Unfortunately they have failed again, this time with the Melbourne University Tram Terminus (see article page 1).



Inspectors code of conduct: More of the same

New legislation has been introduced into Parliament to intensify the confrontational hide-and-seek approach to fare evasion. The new Transport (Rights and Responsibilities) Act will provide for a range of measures almost entirely to the detriment of the passenger. Fines for first offences will increase to \$150, triple many comparable parking offences, and will increase further for subsequent offences.

This effectively raises the stakes and can only intensify the conflict between passengers and inspectors: the same fear and loathing that leads to many of the uglier incidents at present (including, at the most extreme, the serious injury of a 15-year-old passenger).

The new legislation will also reinstate the practice of ticket checking at tram stops. The PTUA

is opposed to this on fairness and convenience grounds: once a tram has moved off, a claim that a ticket machine or validator was non-functional cannot be verified. Also, a passenger may have separated from a group (particularly a tour group) and left their ticket behind thinking it would no longer be needed. Once a passenger leaves a tram, the journey is over and passengers should not be inconvenienced further by ticket checking.

On the positive side are a new code of conduct for inspectors (however, the code appears to be weak and it is not clear how it will be enforced) and the establishment, almost a year overdue, of the Public Transport Industry Ombudsman. The PTUA is reserving judgement on the effectiveness or otherwise of these measures until they are implemented.

Ultimately, the PTUA does not believe it is appropriate for largely untrained ticket inspectors holding police-like powers to roam the system like pirates harassing passengers, the great majority of whom make every attempt to pay their fares where the system allows.

We believe this package of measures is fatally flawed. It continues (indeed, redoubles) a reliance on random patrols that has never been successful in containing fare evasion coupled with a destaffed, unreliable system of automated ticketing. The only effective solution is to reintroduce a consistent presence of customer service staff on trams and at stations: staff trained to treat each passenger as a valued customer rather than a potential criminal.

Meanwhile, the fiasco of ticketing and revenue enforcement rolls on.

Regional rail

In mid-November, Transport Minister Peter Batchelor announced the planned Fast Rail Project configuration of the Bendigo Line.

The line will, as feared, be reduced to single track between Kyneton and Bendigo. However, the original plan for three crossing loops that are just long enough to fit a freight train has been modified following pressure from local organisations and the PTUA.

The crossing loops will be at Castlemaine (2.1km long), Ravenswood (9.5km), and Taradale (7.7km). The latter two loops are long enough for two trains to pass each other without stopping, provided they are running on or close to time. This will allow a theoretical 20 minute frequency on the single track section, but reliability can be expected to deteriorate.

There will be a 29 week line closure during construction, expected to occur around this time next year.

Proposed timetables

There has been some local debate on the matter of trains arriving in Bendigo before 9am. Like Ballarat, there has simply never been a service arriving before the start of business hours, to allow people from intermediate stops to commute to jobs in regional centres. The first morning train arrives in Bendigo at 10.34am, and Ballarat at 9.39am.

A service to Bendigo could be provided immediately by borrowing the Sprinters that spend the night there and form the 7.48am service to Melbourne. This train could leave Bendigo around 9pm, providing a service for day trippers that want to enjoy dinner in Bendigo before returning, arriving

in Melbourne around 11pm and returning the next morning to arrive Bendigo around 7.30am.

A later morning service to Bendigo would require an additional train, and this can be re-examined when the new trains arrive.

Ballarat also needs a morning service, which could be provided by the 9.10am train to Melbourne. This could depart Ballarat around 9pm, arrive in Melbourne around 10.30pm and return at 6.30am to arrive in Ballarat at 8am.

It is hardly surprising that nobody uses public transport to get to work in regional cities: there simply isn't any. Both these morning services are possible with existing trains, and have the bonus of providing an additional evening service to Melbourne from the two goldfields cities.

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