

New Years Eve debacle



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Also this issue: Fare increases, Summer timetables, Geelong line

Keeping in touch...

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The PTUA members' discussion list is at
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Anna Morton – Vice President
Anthony Morton – Secretary
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John Cox
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Jeremy Lunn
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Alex Makin
David Robertson
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Committee Meetings

Meetings are on the fourth Thursday of each month.
Members are welcome to attend. Please call or e-mail
the office for details.

News in brief

Partial win on CityLink tax breaks

The Tax Office and the Federal Court recently disallowed a small part of Transurban's CityLink tax breaks, in a moral victory for anti-freeway campaigners.

Transurban's appeal that their concession notes (essentially IOUs replacing a \$95.6 million annual fee to the State Government for the right to collect tolls) were tax deductible has been rejected by Justice Ron Merkel of the Federal Court.

"Tram Cams" to catch motorists

Motorists who fail to stop for trams are the target of cameras being installed on Melbourne's trams. The cameras will be like a speed camera – drivers will be booked and fined for delaying trams.

Talkback radio has revealed widespread motorist confusion on the topic. The problem is most likely exacerbated by newer trams not having a stop sign that flips out when the doors open for alighting and boarding passengers.

Addition to the family

We congratulate PTUA Secretary Tony Morton and Vice-President Anna Morton on the birth of their baby daughter, Emily.



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

Newsletter contributors: Daniel Bowen, Peter Cook, Chris Loader, Alex Makin, 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.

Fares up in ticketing overhaul

Public transport passengers faced average fare hikes of over nine percent in fare and ticketing reforms announced in December. The increase, which is more than three times the CPI inflation rate, came into effect on January 1. Passengers have become accustomed to fare increases in January, but this latest was the steepest for years.

Hardest hit are suburban users of the confusing Short Trip and Rail+2 tickets, which have been abolished. Suburban travellers will now be required to buy a more expensive Two Hour ticket, while city passengers can use a new City Saver ticket for CBD trips only. While we accept that the Short Trip tickets were confusing, it is obvious that many users have been unfairly disadvantaged by this change. We would like to see Zone 1 fares drop (to the level of Zone 2 or 3 tickets, which are around 25%

cheaper) to compensate those users.

Most full and concession tickets went up by close to 10%. While users of daily tickets can save by purchasing them in packs of five for a small discount, these are not available from machines or from stations, but must be bought online or from retailers, which are notorious for failing to stock many tickets.

A small step forward was the relaxed conditions on the little-known off-peak daily tickets available in Zones 2 and 3. The reforms mean that these tickets are now valid any time after 9am and permit free transfers across all modes in the zones covered. However until these tickets become available on buses as well as at railway stations, few passengers will benefit.

Other changes have simplified the fare system. For instance passengers may now carry pets, surfboards or bicycles without charge. There is now only one group travel ticket, pitched primarily at family groups. Ticket availability has been improved marginally with online ticket sales through the Metcard website.

In summary, the PTUA supports some of the changes which simplify the system, but sees no need for the huge fare hikes. Undoubtedly some people will be encouraged to risk not paying a fare – for others the increases will see them return to their cars. Public transport fares should be set at a level that makes it competitive with the marginal cost of private car travel, with any increases being limited to CPI.

Uni Tram Terminus plans stalled (for now)

Following on from the article in the December edition of PTUA News, Paul Mees (Melbourne University transport planning lecturer & former PTUA President) has successfully stalled M>Tram's plans to rebuild the Melbourne University Tram Terminus.

The plans, as shown in the previous newsletter, would have taken all that is wrong with the existing design, and made it worse. Had they gone ahead, work would have commenced on December 27 last year, to be completed during the Uni Holidays.

Having only had three days warning prior to Council signing off on the plans, Dr Mees pleaded with the Council to reconsider its

approval, and when they would not comply, lodged a last minute appeal with the Victorian Civil & Administrative Appeals Tribunal (VCAT). They are scheduled to hear his appeal on February 23.

The PTUA's two major issues with this design are that a high pedestrian activity area is no place for a fenced shunting yard, and that the main tram stop should be located as close as physically possible to the main pedestrian exit from the University at Masson Way.

Like the existing terminus, the planned design would actually encourage more people to jump the fence and cut through the shunting yard to quickly get from the Uni to Lygon Street, resulting in

casualties and delays to services. It would also have moved the southbound boarding point almost as far from the main exit as is possible.

The PTUA's proposal would involve moving the shunting yard north of Elgin Street, to an area of Swanston Street that has more than enough room for a shunting yard, and is remote from most pedestrian activity and residences.

As the next suitable construction window is not until December this year, it is hoped that M>Tram will take this respite to return to the drawing board, and design an interchange that will represent a net improvement to their customers.

New Years Eve debacle: How not to move 300,000 people

New Year's Eve was once again marred for many revellers thanks to totally inadequate public transport.

With great weather and widespread predictions of over 300,000 people attending the fireworks, the government in their wisdom decided trams and trains with a total capacity of around 60,000 people running until only 1.30am was pretty much all that was needed to get everyone home on New Year's Eve.

The PTUA tried to highlight the obvious shortage in capacity. We pointed out that Perth, Adelaide and Sydney were running trains all night (both into and out of the city) and dozens of bus routes to most parts of the city at least until 2am. We pointed out that Perth doesn't even have a large fireworks display to attract huge crowds in the city but still provided all night services. Despite all this the operators and government assured us the services would be adequate.

The reality saw thousands left stranded at Flinders Street Station and city tram stops as almost every tram and train service out of the city was loaded to crush capacity. Thanks to PTUA volunteer observers on the night and many respondents to a survey on our web site, we were able to paint a comprehensive picture of what actually happened, and gain widespread media coverage.

This shambles included:

- Platforms so overcrowded that police had to physically prevent people trying to enter platforms to catch the last train.

- Trains so overcrowded people forced doors closed to prevent the further crush while others attempted the dangerous practice of riding between carriages.



- Between trains, hundreds were left waiting on crowded platforms for 20-30 minutes at a time.
- M>Train used short 3-carriage trains on the two services to Upfield.
- Most tram routes ran only 4 services at 20 minute intervals, each at crush capacity at the first city stop. People unable to board these trams had to wait

20 minutes to attempt to board the next service, and many could not get on the last services.

- M>Tram used smaller Z class trams on several routes, while large B class trams sat idle in depots.
- Many people were frightened and some injured in the crush.
- People were dangerously crossing the tracks at Flinders Street Station due to overcrowding and closure by police of access routes.
- Long queues for scarce taxis after trains and trams

finished.

- Nightrider bus stops contained no timetable or route information, and cars were allowed to park along Collins Street, resulting in bus drivers being forced to double park.
- While Nightrider services ran all night, there were only 9 routes leaving the city, it was unclear which services extended to outer termini, and the concept of transferring from NightRider to taxi is totally unworkable on New Year's Eve.

All this occurred despite TV and newspaper coverage of our concerns of inadequate services prior to the event. Undoubtedly some people were put off going into the city by the bad publicity – had they not been warned, the situation could have been even worse. Indeed, we must be grateful

to the police and transport operators' staff, whose efforts ensured that despite huge crowds overcrowding services and stations, there were no casualties reported.

It seems the Government was only interested in running the bare minimum services possible to move people from the city centre immediately after the fireworks on New Year's Eve. Operator and government claims that services ran smoothly only reinforce perceptions that they are not interested in providing adequate services to get people home. This is at odds with anti-drink driving messages, and the government's decision to extend liquor licensing to 3am.

In a PTUA submission to the Department of Infrastructure's review of services, we have recommended:

- Trains and trams run at high frequencies immediately after the fireworks to clear the surge, just like they do after a game at the MCG.

- Trains, trams and arterial buses run all night, to spread the demand and cater for more than just those leaving the city immediately after the



fireworks.

- Information on additional services be widely publicised (including newspaper ads and information leaflets available prior to the night).
- High capacity trams be used wherever possible (or if smaller capacity trams must be used, they must run at higher frequencies)

- Trains and trams run both into and out of the city on published timetables so not only people leaving the city can use public transport.

- Trams operate on routes 69 and 79 serving St Kilda and other nightspots.
- Major suburban bus routes operate to provide services to the millions of Melburnians not living near train and tram lines or Nightrider routes.

Moving hundreds of thousands of people from the city is what Public Transport does so well in peak hour every

weekday of the year. The operators are businesses and will only provide additional services if the government provides appropriate funding. The government must take responsibility to provide adequate services on the biggest party night of the year in Melbourne. Let's hope common sense prevails for next year.

More pictures and notes from PTUA observers

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/news/nye2003/

Time to end summer timetable confusion

The PTUA has called for summer bus services to resume full operation at the same time as trains and trams.

Though trains and trams returned to normal timetables on January 9, some bus passengers waited until as late as January 23 to receive full timetabled services, with both peak and off-peak services cut. Prolonging the reduced summer timetable only confuses

passengers, results in missed connections and makes already infrequent services even less useable.

There is no justification for cutting services for such a long periods over summer. As was observed by overcrowding on trains and trams, most workers had returned to work by early January. Also students and others who are on holiday are likely to make more, and not less,

use of off-peak services during this time.

The PTUA considers that any service reductions be restricted to weekday peak periods between Christmas and the first week of January. Trains, trams and buses should be treated equally, with regular service on all modes resuming on the same day.

Geelong line closure

The Geelong line was closed for fast rail track replacement works between Corio and Werribee between early January and mid-February. Despite a few early hiccups and problems for people travelling between intermediate stations, V/Line seems to have run replacement buses for the majority of passengers reasonably well. Nevertheless, most travellers were relieved to get back on the train when the line reopened.

Along with the rest of the travelling public, we were particularly pleased that V/Line was able to secure partial fare integration during the works period, with Geelong (and Traralgon) tickets valid for travel in Melbourne's Zone 1. This came despite an earlier letter from the Transport Minister's adviser telling the PTUA that such a move would require the replacement of the entire ticketing system.

The Geelong branch has called for the arrangements to be continued indefinitely, and extended to include travel on Geelong's local buses as part of a wider policy to give people alternatives to driving to stations. Fare integration in the 1980s provided the biggest boost to patronage in Melbourne in decades – and would help provide similar benefits throughout Victoria if implemented with improvements to local bus systems.

Show us the plan!

As mentioned in our October and December newsletters, the state government is still stalling on Bus Plan, as well as, the Train and Tram Plans. Latest reports indicate that these three plans have been incorporated into a Metropolitan Travel Plan (MTP) to be released early this year. The MTP also incorporates regional specific plans such as the Outer East Public Transport Plan (OEPTP), which was also supposed to be released in 2003.

Those with a cynical eye might think that the eventual release of the MTP will reveal another roads-based plan dominated by VicRoads, while paying mere lip service to public transport.

What Melbourne deserves – and what Melburnians made clear in the 2030 forums that they want – is a plan that provides a way forward to real reforms in public transport, and that will ensure the aim of 20% public transport

patronage by 2020 is not merely a dream, but can become reality.

An integrated public transport plan incorporating Bus Plan would provide the greatest benefit to those living beyond the rail and tram network, specifically those residents in the outer suburbs.

To help with PTUA campaigning, contact the office, or e-mail alexander.makin@ptua.org.au

A fresh perspective on the speeding debate

The PTUA has watched with some interest the current debate over speed enforcement. At least one aspect of this is directly relevant to the public transport cause.

Some commentators in the media have pointed out that the German road toll is less than Australia's, once you correct for Germany's higher population. Germany is, of course, the land of the un-speed-restricted autobahn. This little fact has been used to bolster the road lobby's argument that spending lots of money to make roads "safe" is a more effective way of reducing the road toll than enforcing speed limits.

But the real reason for Germany's lower road toll is quite different,

though equally simple. Because of the superior quality of public transport in Germany, people there simply don't drive as much as we do – despite owning just as many cars. When one corrects for the lower number of vehicle kilometres driven by Germans compared with Australians, the fatality risk in Germany actually turns out to be higher, not lower. According to the OECD's International Road Traffic and Accident Database, Germany suffered 11.3 deaths per billion vehicle-km in 2001, compared with 9.1 in Australia. Suddenly those autobahns don't look quite so flash.

The only countries in the OECD with a lower fatality risk than us –

both per person and per vehicle-km – are the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Britain. Common features of these countries include road safety policies that focus on driver behaviour (including well-enforced speed limits) and high usage of the non-car modes: public transport, walking and cycling.

We invite the aforementioned commentators to make good their support for the European approach to road toll reduction, and lobby the State government to improve our public transport. The German example shows that high car ownership is no barrier to increased rates of public transport use, with fewer people killed and injured on the roads.

Opportunity Knox: The PTUA's short-term vision for Knox

Public transport in the outer east can be described using one word: abysmal. With bus services being the only public transport mode reaching most homes, many residents suffer from miserable service frequencies and a lack of evening services. Even Knox City Shopping Centre lacks evening public transport despite the popularity of its late-night O-Zone district. As a result over 50% of households in the outer east own two or more cars simply because public transport is not an effective or reliable method of transportation.

The PTUA wants to see a substantial improvement in the outer east between now and the next state election in 2006. We call on the State Government to heed the Knox community's demands for a train line to Rowville and the full tram extension to Knox City. We have

also released our proposal for the next State Budget, requiring the simultaneous implementation of the following within the next 12 months:

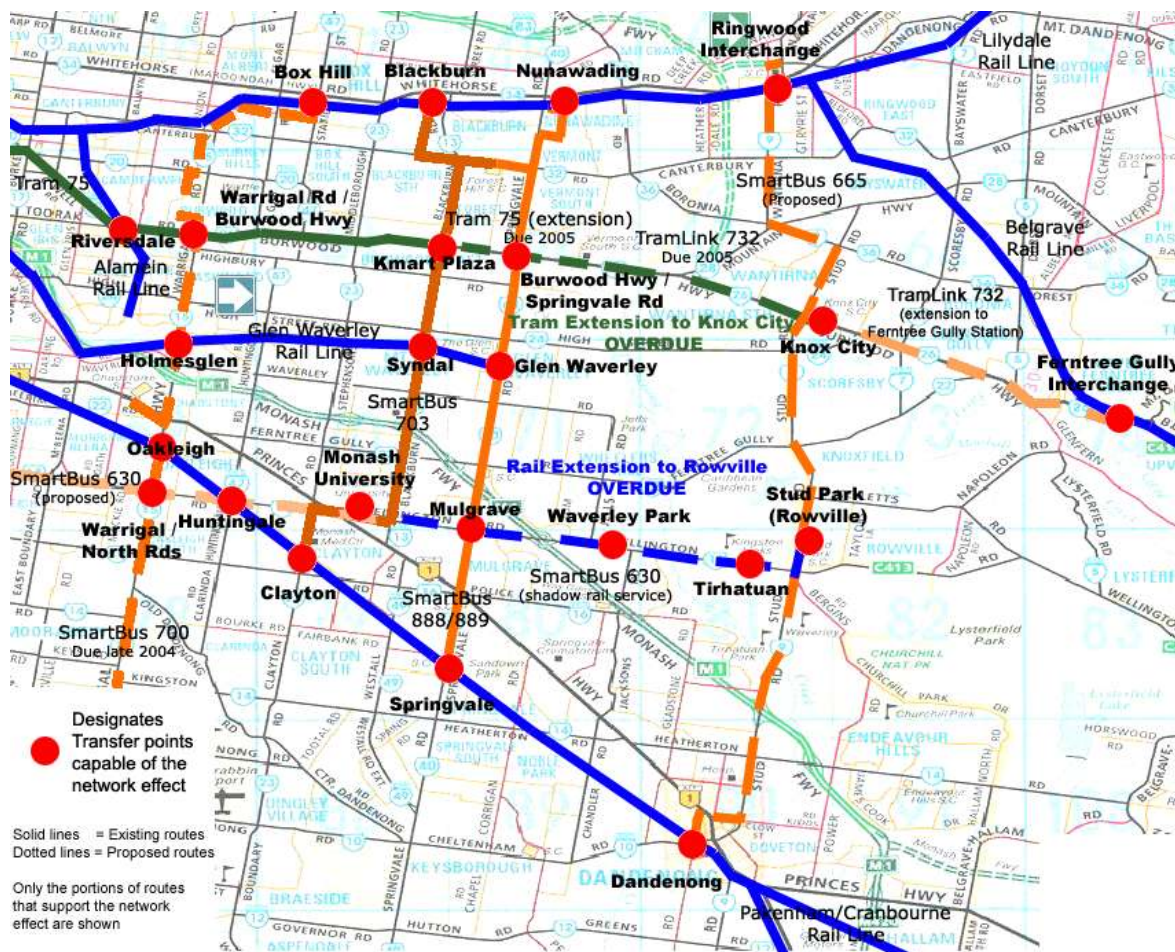
- Upgrading route 630 (Elwood to Monash University) to SmartBus standards (tram-like frequencies and full-time operation) with a western extension to Elsternwick and an eastern extension along Wellington Road to Stud Park (Rowville). This will finally provide Rowville residents with convenient access to Monash University and Huntingdale Station, as a precursor to an eventual Rowville rail line.
- Upgrading route 665 (Ringwood to Dandenong via Knox City) to SmartBus standards, providing a frequent and vital north-south link

along Stud Road for Scoresby and Rowville residents.

- Providing convenient public transport interchanges at key intersections and centres, allowing easy transfers between bus services and between bus and train services.
- Commitment to extend the shadow-bus service to Ferntree Gully Station when operational from 2005.

A snapshot of the PTUA recommendations, showing the proposed SmartBus routes as part of a wider public transport network in the eastern suburbs, appears below.

Map available in colour on our web site ⇒ www.ptua.org.au



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