

Threat to Collins Street tram stops

Three years after being told not to, Yarra Trams has announced plans to remove three of the nine tram stops in Collins Street, and relocate another away from its intersection. Stops at King St, Queen St and Russell St will disappear under this proposal, while the stop at Exhibition St will be shifted further west.

When a similar proposal in 2001 caused a public outcry, the Government stepped in and prevented wholesale tram stop closures going ahead. However, the current proposal appears to have received the tacit approval of Transport Minister Peter Batchelor, as Yarra Trams claims to have already had its plans approved by the State Government. The plans have also been warmly praised by Melbourne Lord Mayor John So, who seems genuinely to believe that having fewer places to catch a tram is beneficial to tram passengers.

Removing tram stops is just as bad an idea now as it was in 2001. Yarra Trams claims travel times will improve by three minutes, but even if this is true, the only passengers who would get the full benefit are the relatively small number who travel all the way from one end of Collins St to the other. Most will save only one minute at most, only to lose two minutes because of the extra walking time. In our view this is the best method yet devised to drive people away from the tram system. Just as with the design of the new Melbourne University terminus, these plans are clearly designed to secure maximum benefit for the operator at the expense of passengers.

This sabotage of Melbourne’s tram stops can be stopped with your help. Please take a few minutes to write to Peter Batchelor, John So, your local Member of Parliament, or media outlets such as the Herald-Sun, The Age, MX, The Melbourne Times or the Melbourne Leader.

The PTUA and other groups will be lobbying the Melbourne City Council. While the council doesn’t necessarily have the legal authority to prevent the plans going ahead, a vote against them in council will kill the idea politically, and help prevent other such schemes going ahead in the future.

Where to write ⇒ www.ptua.org.au/help/

Stud Road SmartBus – Labor’s last stand

The upcoming state budget will provide the ultimate test as to whether the Bracks Government is standing by its rhetoric of increasing public transport modal share and whether it is committed to improving public transport in our outer suburbs.

The Stud Road SmartBus (also known as the Yellow Orbital Route) was one of the few identifiable improvements listed in last year’s grossly inadequate Metropolitan Transport Plan where it was identified as ‘a priority’.

Additionally the Stud Road SmartBus will provide clarification as to Labor’s own commitment to the outer east. Since winning government in 1999 the ALP has continually reneged on its election promises to the outer east including the Knox tram extension, the provision of an integrated and frequent bus network, the Rowville rail line study and the third track to Ringwood.

Given the five year timeframe of the Metropolitan Transport Plan the Stud Road SmartBus must be funded in this year’s budget, otherwise even the unambitious goals of the Plan will remain unfulfilled.

The Stud Road SmartBus is Labor’s last stand. If it is excluded from the upcoming budget it will be clear that Labor has abandoned its public transport goals as well as their own outer eastern parliamentarians and ultimately the residents of the outer east.

Have your say: Ringwood public meeting

Ringwood is a ‘Transit City’ yet the Government and Council are doing nothing to improve public transport in Ringwood or the Outer East. Attend our public meeting: ‘Ringwood... Tell Us the Future’ and ensure that you are there to demand better public transport for not only Ringwood but also the outer east.

‘Ringwood... Tell Us the Future’ – Thursday 17th of March 7:30 pm – Ringwood Room, Ringwood Library.

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

Stay up to date with PTUA events via the
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Committee Meetings

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

Fast rail timetable draft

The draft weekday fast rail timetables were released just before Christmas following media pressure initiated by the PTUA Geelong branch and the Bendigo line's Better Rail Action Group. They are available for public comment through the V/Line website, though brochures are yet to appear at stations.

While some small changes are positive (such as the extension of almost all services to South Geelong), on most lines only a few extra services will be provided each day. There is some attempt at hourly 'clockface' departure times in the off-peak, but train arrival times are still highly variable.

Despite heavy promotion of "fast" rail, few planned services would actually achieve the advertised travel times. The two 45 minute express Geelong services omit an important stop at North Geelong. The quickest trips on other lines are at times that are impractical even for 9 to 5 commuters. Most services save only a few minutes travel time.

There is no indication yet if weekend timetables will be improved.

We are currently preparing a response to the draft timetables.

V/Line draft timetables ⇒ www.vline.com.au

Geelong report

January line closure

Geelong train travellers endured another two-week closure of their line for further fast rail signalling and track work during mid-late January. To V/Line's credit, replacement buses (at least between the main Geelong stations and Spencer Street) seemed to be fairly well organised. However there was no advance notice of the closure before the New Year, and travellers are still in the dark as to how many more closures might be expected.

Regional public transport Plan

The Public Transport Plan for the Geelong region, jointly funded by an alliance of local councils and the Department of Infrastructure, is still in its early stages. A consultant's brief is likely to go out to tender soon.

Geelong branch web site ⇒ www.ptua.org.au/geelong

Bendigo line closure

The Bendigo line has recently been closed to allow for the widely opposed "Fast Rail" downgrade to take place. The line will be closed for the rest of 2005. Ironically, the only trains running into Castlemaine for the rest of the year are those of the recently reopened tourist railway from Maldon.

Bendigo Better Rail Action Group ⇒
www.ptua.org.au/allies/brag

ALP councillor reneges on Yarra promise

Residents of the City of Yarra made their concerns about transport policy clear in the council elections late last year, with five out of the nine elected councillors scoring highly on the PTUA transport scorecard. As reported in the last PTUA news, our proposed motion to council on transport policy won the support of Councillors Kathleen Maltzahn, Gurm Sekhon and Jenny Farrar (all of the Greens), Councillor Steve Jolly (Socialist) and Councillor Annabel Barbara (ALP). All five agreed to vote for our motion, or a mildly amended version.

The motion on transport policy that came before the council meeting on 8 February, moved by Crs Maltzahn and Jolly, was considerably milder than the motion circulated during the election campaign. Campaigners from the PTUA and Campaign for a Better City (CBC) negotiated with councillors and toned down the motion chiefly at the request of Cr Barbara. At a council 'briefing' on 31 January, Cr Barbara reconfirmed that she would support the toned-down motion, and even agreed to second it.



W. Heath Robinson's idea for traffic calming – would this work in Melbourne's inner suburbs?

But on the night, Cr Barbara reneged on her promise. In addition, the Mayor, Cr Kay Meadows (ALP) refused to disqualify herself from voting, even though she works in the major projects unit of the Department of Infrastructure, with the job of 'selling' DoI policies and projects. As a result, a 'gutting' amendment was adopted by 5 votes to 4, which emptied the original motion of substantive content and set up a tokenistic 'transport advisory committee' to create the illusion of action.

There was a good turnout by PTUA and CBC supporters and other concerned members of the public. All those who spoke from the gallery supported the original motion, and councillors who spoke in its favour were applauded. The 'gang of five' looked uncomfortable throughout, especially Cr Barbara.

All four councillors who kept their word from the election and supported the original motion – Crs Farrar, Sekhon, Jolly and Maltzahn – gave strong speeches in its favour. The PTUA and CBC have thanked them all for their support.

While this is a setback for our Yarra campaign, all is not lost. CBC will be calling a meeting of its supporters shortly to discuss where to go from here. PTUA members interested in the campaign are welcome to attend. For details contact the PTUA office on 9650 7898 or office@ptua.org.au

Tram 48 to Doncaster – it's not too late

With the announcement of the construction of the Mitcham-Frankston tollway and the impact this will have on the city end of the Eastern Freeway, the PTUA is looking at ways to relieve the strain on this major arterial, with up to 30,000 vehicles each day expected to be added to the current traffic jam in peak hour.

Whilst heavy rail through to Doncaster or East Doncaster is the obvious solution (see *It's Time To Move*, page 24) to alleviate this problem and also solve the overcrowding on the pathetic bus services running from the Doncaster/Templestowe area into the city, this government looks like

spending very little on infrastructure and this project is unlikely in the short term.

However, there is a short-term possibility which would have huge benefits to all within the Manningham region – that of the extension of tram route 48 from North Balwyn through to Doncaster Shoppingtown. Encompassing the Greythorn shopping centre, the new Doncaster 'Park and Ride' facility and the Doncaster Hill precinct; a fast, frequent and permanent service would be provided to an area starved of any rail services whatsoever or decent service levels.

Included with the removal of the 5 wasted buses which follow the tram for a significant part of the journey on route 207 and incorporating these into other route restructuring around Manningham, this tram extension can provide far better public transport services than the pathetic excuse that many have to deal with in this area so close to the city.

The PTUA is looking to get strongly behind this project in 2005, and if you are interested in helping out this project or are a local resident interested in this, please contact Chris Trikilis at chris.trikilis@ptua.org.au for more information

Successful start to the New Year

The PTUA was pleased to see a big improvement to public transport services as we entered 2005. Following a strong campaign by the PTUA to highlight the inadequacy of services in previous years, this year Melbourne was served with free all night trains and trams, including high frequency services up until 2am. Melburnians voted with their feet, with trams and trains proving very popular throughout the night.

The major overcrowding problems of 2003/4 were clearly addressed, although there were issues with some trams before midnight, and the shuttle bus connecting with Flinders Street routes, and Nightrider buses having to double park in Collins Street.

Information was more readily available, with prominent advertisements in newspapers.

Unfortunately that information was frequently riddled with mistakes –

including the major advertisements on 31 December that stated trams would run only until 2am.

Even so there was clear demand for an all night service every New Year's Eve – and the transport minister Peter Batchelor must ensure all night services are repeated every year.

Misinformation rife on the tram network

Despite the Metlink's efforts to improve passenger information, the PTUA continues to see poor information published across the network, particularly for trams.

What follows are some of our 'favourites' from the last couple of months (some of these were corrected after we alerted Metlink and Yarra Trams).

In mid October 2004, Yarra Trams combined route 8 and 22, 16 and 69 and creating new routes and timetables. Unfortunately:

- At time of writing there were still some old timetables for route 1, 22, 8 and 16 along Swanston St and St Kilda Rd.
- It took almost three months to update timetable and route information at the Flinders Street superstop, and there are still out of date maps present.
- Three months after the change Yarra Trams' new Combino class trams are still unable to display the new destinations.
- At time of writing it appears every tram in Melbourne still has a route map showing routes 1 and the defunct 16 and 22 (but not route 8) running up Lygon Street.

- Almost four months after the change, the Metlink website shows an out of date route 1 timetable from October 2000.
- The new route 8 and 16 tram timetables show the city saver zone ending at La Trobe Street (should be the University).
- The route 8 timetable claimed trams can speed past 13 stops in 4 minutes between the Brunswick tram depot and Brunswick Road, but it then takes another 8 minutes to travel one stop further to Park Street.
- The new route 1 printed timetable eventually published in December omits every single departure time from the East Coburg terminus.

La Trobe Street tram stops were issued with new route 30 timetables showing last weekday services at around 5.45pm when they actually are scheduled to run until around 6.30pm.

In December advertisements said that on New Year's Eve "Routes 86, 96, 109 or 112 terminate at the corner of Bourke & Spencer Sts". Of course routes 109 and 112 never run to Bourke Street. And it

turned out none of those services terminated at Spencer Street at all.

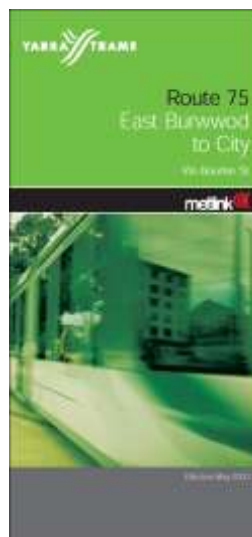
When a new route 78/79 timetable came out on 9 January, the printed booklet said it ran via LaTrobe Street. It took over 10 days to get the new timetable information on the Yarra Trams website, and it's still not available on the Metlink website.

Some copies of the route 75 timetable cover were misprinted, saying it runs to "East Burwwod", via Bourke Street.

Years after the extension of tram 109 to Box Hill, signage at two of the Collins Street superstops proclaims it to be the 109 to Mont Albert.

For new and occasional users, access to correct information is critical.

Yarra Trams tell the PTUA they will review why these errors were missed. They also assure us that a better quality control process is something they "can and will improve". If you notice further misinformation please email to chris.loader@ptua.org.au



PTUA survey results: Frequency is the key

The committee wishes to thank all those who took part in the 2004 PTUA member survey. We had 195 responses in total which has provided much valuable food for thought for the committee.

Unsurprisingly, members have clearly told us that improving the frequency of services would have the biggest impact of their use of public transport. 78% of members cited improved service frequencies in their top 5 improvements, followed by better timetable coordination between services (56%), better cross-town public transport (52%), increased service

operating hours (48%) and extensions to the network (44%). Ranked lowest out of 11 improvement options was 'Newer or more comfortable vehicles' (10%).

The survey showed our members are interested in a broad range of issues, the top issues being 'stopping new freeways' (55%), 'fares and ticketing' (42%) and 'improvements/extensions to the train network' (41%).

Members have told us that would like help in writing to politicians, more opportunities for members to meet and more information about

campaigns and events by email. A number of members have expressed interest in getting involved in our campaigns and there have been many generous offers of skills and expertise to the organisation.

The committee hope to launch some initiatives to address these concerns over the coming year.

Congratulations to the three survey respondents drawn who will be sent guest memberships to pass onto friends – Lesley Frances Williams of Brunswick West, Karl Tracksdorf of Mitcham, and Janet Hase of Hawthorn.

Are we too harsh on the government?

Feedback from our Member Survey has stated that some of our members believe that the PTUA provides overly negative media comment. In providing media responses the PTUA needs to compare what is actually delivered by the government and what was actually promised.

As the following tables represent, the state government has failed to honour a number of its commitments.

The ALP State Government can at best be described as a 'wolf in sheep clothing' in regard to public transport. While it is true that the State Government makes a number of public transport friendly press

announcements it almost always fails to follow through with substantial action.

The lack of progress towards upgrading bus services and the continual problems plaguing the train and tram network demonstrate that this government has provided little for public transport. The Metropolitan Transport Plan with its lack of identifiable action is further testament to a government that has failed to substantially honour its commitment to improving public transport.

As evidenced by the figures below public transport patronage has not risen above 9% of motorised trips

despite the government's continued rhetoric of increasing public transport usage to **20%** by 2020. The government has failed to shift people from their cars and onto public transport. In fact under the final years of the Kennett government public transport patronage increased by a greater amount than under the Bracks Government!

The evidence is clear the government will fail to increase the modal share of public transport as long as it fails to honour its commitments towards public transport projects.

See also ⇒ Bracks government election promises, p6-7

Year (ending June)	Train patronage		Tram patronage		Bus patronage		Total		Modal share
	mill.	increase	mill.	increase	mill.	Increase	mill.	increase	
1999	118	n/a	120.3	n/a	91.5	n/a	329.8	n/a	n/a
2000	124.2	4.99%	128.2	6.16%	91.6	0.11%	344	4.13%	8%
2001	127.9	2.89%	129.4	0.93%	92.0	0.43%	349.3	1.52%	8%
2002	131.8	2.96%	134.7	3.93%	92.2	0.22%	358.7	2.62%	9%
2003	133.8	1.49%	134.7	0.00%	93.9	1.81%	362.4	1.02%	9%
2004 (est)	133.4	-0.30%	135.7	0.74%	94	0.11%	363.1	0.19%	9%

Projected increase 00-04(Bracks Government) **6.9%**

Actual increase 1994-1997 (Kennett Government) **11.4%**

Source: Budget Paper 3; Auditor-General Report 57.

The Bracks government's election promises

Promises 1999	Status	Comments
Improve rolling stock and signalling	Broken promise	Rolling stock upgrades were part of privatisation agreements. Signalling remains unchanged.
Build a transit link to Melbourne's Airport	Watered down	No rail link; upgraded Skybus instead.
Fast rail links to regional centres	Delayed	Continually delayed and ill managed. Initial travel time promises are unfulfilled.
Providing an integrated public transport network	Broken promise	Service coordination and integration has not substantially improved.
Resourcing public transport		
Restore customer confidence in public transport.	Broken promise	Train cancellations have increased substantially thus eroding confidence.
Increase the number of people using public transport.	Broken promise	Despite much rhetoric public transport patronage has remained constant
Improve the reliability and flexibility of the service.	Broken promise	Service reliability has not improved. Bus services still face poor operating hours.
Extend services to growth areas.	Largely unfulfilled	Many growth areas remain without usable public transport.
Flyer trains - Ringwood/Belgrave/Lilydale		
Third rail track to Ringwood	Broken promise	Excluded from Metro Transport Plan
Faster travel times	Broken promise	Travel times have not improved
Flyer trains - Pakenham/Cranbourne/Dandenong		
Faster travel times	Broken promise	Travel times have not improved
Introduction of more express services.	Broken promise	No extra services
Flyer trains - Frankston		
Faster travel times	Partially delivered	Small speed increases achieved
Introduction of more express trains	Broken promise	No extra services
Metropolitan rail and tram extensions		
Broadmeadows to Craigieburn	Work underway	Project delayed. Stations at Coolaroo and Patullos will not be built.
Cranbourne to East Cranbourne	Watered down	Introduced TrainLink bus instead
Epping to South Morang	Watered down	Introduced TrainLink bus instead, against express wishes of residents, who wanted a rail extension.
Tram East Burwood to Knox	Watered down	Tram services will only be extended to Vermont South.
Extend and upgrade key tram routes.	Largely unfulfilled	Extensions limited to Docklands. No further extensions identified in Metropolitan Transport Plan.
A comprehensive, integrated bus network		
Increased frequency and spread of services	Broken promise	Bus service levels have not substantially improved, save for a small number of Trainlink and Smartbus routes.
Better coordination and integration	Largely unfulfilled	Apart from two Trainlink routes, bus coordination has not improved. Holiday timetables are still disjointed.
Ensuring new housing estates have roads planned that are bus-friendly.	Largely unfulfilled	New housing estates are often located in cul de sacs away from bus services.
Improved feeder services to other modes of transport	Largely unfulfilled	Apart from two Trainlink routes, feeder buses have not been improved, coordination is still lacking.
Regional transport plans		
Outer East Public Transport Plan	Delayed (until late 2003)	Transport plans were released but no substantial action was provided.
Train route to Rowville	Broken promise	Excluded from the Metropolitan Transport Plan
Train route to Rowville	Watered down	SmartBus service was announced (service will not begin until late 2006).
Revisiting country rail closures		
	Partially delivered	Ararat and Bairnsdale reopened. Mildura and Leongatha Delayed.

Promises 2002	Status	Comments
Transport and urban development		
Implement Melbourne 2030 to stop urban sprawl and encourage much more efficient urban design	Poorly implemented	Public transport plans for activity centres are largely inadequate. Other centres such as Chadstone are not located within the current Principal Public Transport Network.
Implement major improvements to public transport to achieve 20% of vehicle trips being by public transport by 2020.	No progress	Bus, tram and train plans were watered down and no specific actions to achieve the goal have been announced.
Revitalising Melbourne's Suburbs, Develop thirteen new Transit Cities.	Poorly implemented	Most Transit Cities have ignored the need for improved public transport.
Linking Victoria: Labor's plan for safe, efficient and reliable transport		
Develop a new smart card ticketing system	Poorly implemented	Token consultation with stakeholders.
Introduce new Smartbus services on Warrigal Road	Work underway	Continually delayed, not expected until mid 2005. Weekend frequencies still poor.
Undertake a \$9 million program to solve public transport "red spots" on priority tram and bus routes where there are avoidable delays.	Partially being delivered	Tram priority was announced and a limited program is being undertaken, but involves retrograde steps like removal of tram stops. Bus priority has been watered down.
Extend metropolitan rail and light rail services to growth suburbs including Craigieburn and Vermont South.	Partially being delivered	Craigieburn extension to be completed in 2005, but no Coolaroo station. Vermont tram extension will be complete in 2005, but no extension to Knox. Rail extensions to South Morang, Doncaster, Rowville, Cranbourne East still yet to be delivered.
Continue planning and development work for the Tram 109 project.	Delayed	Work is continuing, although improved travel times have not been met.
Introduce new bus services to outer suburban areas.	Watered down	New bus services have been introduced in some areas, but apart from the two Trainlink services, frequency and operating hours are poor.
Improve safety by fitting all suburban trains with closed circuit TV and duress alarms	Partially delivered	Comeng upgrades complete. Hitachi trains not upgraded. Staff presence is still rare.
Upgrade railway stations and transport interchanges at Essendon, Glenroy, Belgrave and Mitcham.	Watered down	Upgrades limited to new bus shelters.
Investigate increasing capacity on the Dandenong, Ringwood, Hurstbridge lines.	Delayed	Some planning, but no budget money allocated to address and resolve these bottlenecks.
Upgrade regional transport services		
Introduce new and upgraded bus services in regional Victoria, including Phillip Island, Bellarine Peninsula, Bacchus Marsh, Heyfield-Traralgon and Geelong.	Broken promise	Bus services in regional areas are still sorely inadequate.
Upgrade railway stations and bus interchanges to provide easier, safer and more convenient travel including facilities at Ballarat, Bendigo, Swan Hill, Warrnambool, Lang Lang, Ararat and the Anderson bus interchange.	Work almost complete	Upgrades limited to new bus shelters.
Restore regional rail services and introduce fast rail services to cut travel times to major regional centres.	Partly delivered	Train service reopened to Ararat and Bairnsdale. Fast Rail is continually delayed, and will single-track Bendigo line.
Review public transport in the fast regional rail corridors aiming for better coordination of rail and bus services.	Delayed	Still to be delivered.
Other		
Require government departments to have an increased focus on the Triple Bottom Line objectives of social, environmental and economic outcomes.	Broken promise	Government blindly following poor advice from departments. Triple bottom line assessments are not being adhered to.

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Inside:

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- The Bracks government's promises

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 15th April 2005

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