

## State budget drip feeds public transport

Once again the Bracks Government has delivered a state budget full of road projects with only small concessions for public transport improvements. Delivered in May, the budget allocates twice as much money to new road projects than public transport, and lacks any indication of how the government’s 20-2020 target can be achieved (20% of motorised trips to be taken by public transport in 2020).

The budget contains very little that will actually improve services for public transport users in 2005-06. One aspect is some long overdue improvements to local bus services in some outer suburbs. The allocation of a mere \$5 million of funding for 2005-06 increases to \$10 million in 2006-07, but falls well short of the \$57 million that the Bus Association of Victoria says is needed to bring Melbourne up to the standards of other Australian cities. The rest of Melbourne will continue to suffer woeful bus services until the government gets serious about making public transport a competitive choice for those living beyond the tram and train network.

Other than an upgrade of North Melbourne station, the budget is full of more studies and little action. These include studying public transport options along the Dandenong line, some more planning work for the new bus contracts, and investigations into restoring passenger services to Mildura and Leongatha.

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## RIP “Think Tram”

On 23<sup>rd</sup> of May the PTUA together with the Collins St traders and other groups gathered for the funeral of Tram Stop 7, corner of Collins and Russell Streets in the city.



Behind the theatrics was a serious message: up to a third of tram stops across greater Melbourne may go, as Yarra Trams, the state government and local councils have failed to agree to implement any effective tram priority at intersections.

On Collins Street, Melbourne City Council road engineers effectively blocked any option but to delete three tram stops, even refusing to reduce traffic light cycle times to minimise tram waiting times.

Meanwhile a half-baked implementation of measures on Clarendon Street in South Melbourne has failed, with local traders and residents annoyed, for little gain for trams.

Melbourne’s trams must be sped up to remain competitive against car travel. The government’s “Think Tram” quite rightly proposes this be done by giving trams priority over cars, most of which carry a single person. But the reality is different: tram priority simply isn’t happening.

Tram stop 7 may be all but dead, and Think Tram appears to be set to follow it to the grave.

## Keeping in touch...

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Our web site is at [www.ptua.org.au](http://www.ptua.org.au)

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

Stay up to date with PTUA events, and view  
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News mailing list  
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## Committee

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All committee members can be emailed at the addresses given  
above, or by the format: *firstname.lastname@ptua.org.au*

### 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.

## The End of Suburbia

After a last-minute change to a larger room, our member  
screening of “The End of Suburbia” on 12 May was  
filled to capacity, with around sixty attendees.

The film examined the evidence pointing to an imminent  
peak in global oil production – the point at which the  
world will be pumping the highest volumes of oil it ever  
will produce, and production will then begin to taper off.

Given rapidly escalating oil consumption, particularly in  
China and India, “peak oil” points to continuing  
increases in petrol prices and physical shortages of  
petroleum.

Following the screening, PTUA policy director Vaughan  
Williams led a brief discussion about what peak oil  
means locally, and how public transport can mitigate the  
impacts. Many people showed interest in showing the  
film more widely, and further screenings are (if you'll

excuse the expression) in the pipeline. The PTUA could  
assist members organising screenings in their local area  
and copies of the DVD are available from Environment  
Victoria (ph. 03 9341 8100).

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## Office help needed

The PTUA has a need for more volunteers to staff our  
Ross House office. Duties would include attending to  
enquiries by phone and email. Ross House is  
conveniently located in Flinders Lane, and broadband  
internet is available for volunteers' use, which may be  
particularly useful for students.

Please contact the office at office@ptua.org.au or phone  
9650 7898 if you can help.

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## Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 30<sup>th</sup> July 2005

Newsletter contributors: Daniel Bowen, Matt Cook, Chris Loader, Alex Makin, Tony Morton, Cameron Tampion 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.

## State budget (cont'd from page 1)

Instead of rolling out a network of high-frequency full-time bus routes across Melbourne (as per the Melbourne Transport Plan), the government has only committed to one new SmartBus route – Ringwood to Frankston, and new services will not start until 2008.

The budget also revealed the Wellington Road SmartBus will not commence until 2007. The PTUA believes the time for pilot programs is well and truly over and it is time for the government to implement its principal public transport network at a much faster

rate than the present one-per-year average.

And despite overwhelming public support, rail and tram extensions to South Morang, Doncaster, and Knox have been left out. The Government has failed to deliver on its 1999 election promises.

The budget also shows an expected tram and train patronage increase of 4%. But there will be next to no extra services provided to provide additional capacity. It also expects a zero increase in bus patronage in the next year – which leaves the 20-2020 goal a distant dream.

Unwilling to reallocate transport funding from road projects onto public transport, the government has instead launched an inner city parking tax to fund public transport improvements. While a useful source of additional revenue, this must not replace existing funding sources for public transport. And there continues to be no evidence of transport funding decisions taking into account economic, environmental and social considerations.

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## Warrigal Road SmartBus finally arrives

Despite being promised for delivery back in October 2004, the launch of Warrigal Road Smartbus, connecting four rail lines and Chadstone Shopping Centre with a frequent bus service, is much welcomed news.

It is encouraging to see that service improvements were not endlessly delayed by the installation of electronic displays.

This demonstrates the sensible realisation that improved frequencies and extended operating hours are the key factors

towards increasing public transport patronage.

Likewise it was a pleasant surprise to see that concerns flagged by the PTUA back in February in regard to differing bus and train frequencies on weekends were mostly rectified through providing a 20 minute service at most times on Saturdays.

While the increased frequencies and operating hours are of course a step in the right direction the lack of timetable consistency and “clockface” timetables will create

confusion for passengers. Furthermore despite the hype of the service allowing for improved connections with rail services the opposite tends to be the case.

Ultimately however it is now time for the State Government to hasten the pace of the Smartbus roll-out. SmartBus truly has the potential to revolutionise bus travel in Melbourne so let's ensure that the rest of Melbourne can quickly see similar improvements.

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## Outer East Branch is one year old!

June marks the one year anniversary of the Outer East Branch and within this time we have seen a commitment made for the Ringwood to Frankston (Stud Road) SmartBus and approximately 20 minute Saturday service levels on the Warrigal Road SmartBus. Additionally Whitehorse Council has stated it will now fully reconsider the option of grade separating the rail line at Springvale Road, Nunawading

These achievements however are only just the beginning. The State Government and the Opposition both must realise the need for radical service improvements for the entire of Melbourne's bus network and a commitment for both the Knox Tram and Doncaster Road Tram extension are still required.

The Doncaster Road tram extension to Doncaster Shoppingtown will not

occur until a feasibility study is completed, and unfortunately the State Government is once again cowering away from leadership through Peter Batchelor's continued avoidance in meeting with both Boroondara and Manningham Councils.

With a State Election due in November 2006 now is the time to tell your political representatives that you expect better.

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

# Transport planning looks ahead, to 1969

Picture this: A high-level committee of business people, road lobbyists and public transport planners produce a report on Melbourne's future transport needs. It contains many fine words about the importance of public transport and the need to attract passengers back to trains, trams and buses. Yet at its core are plans for massive freeway expansion: of the money proposed to be spent, 90 per cent is to be spent on roads.

Are we talking about the report on Melbourne's transport recently released by the Committee for Melbourne? No: We're actually referring to the Melbourne Transportation Plan, produced back in 1969. The Committee for Melbourne report is just the latest warming-over of that plan for a fresh audience, but has been warmly received nonetheless by our roads-obsessed State Government.

The main ingredient of the 1969 plan was a Los Angeles-style grid of freeways criss-crossing Melbourne. Many of these freeways have since been built, and many others are being resurrected one by one by a powerful road lobby. The roads in the Committee for Melbourne's plan are just the latest to come out of the bottom drawer, and they can all be found on the 1969 freeway map. They include some (like the "missing link" from Ringwood to Greensborough) that the government, until now, has denied having any plans for.

Just one thing has changed since 1969. Back then, new freeways were justified with peak-hour commuters in mind; it was thought that by building enough roads, the city could finally come to terms with the car and banish traffic congestion for all time. According to this theory, by now we should all be driving into work at 8:50am, cruising happily at 100kph and

going from Dandenong to the City in a little over ten minutes.

What they had forgotten was the economists' law of supply and demand.

Indeed, all that has happened is that as more roads are built, people find more reasons to drive cars and fewer reasons to use public transport, walk, cycle or stay at home.

Every new freeway has, within five years, filled up with new traffic, and so have all the arterial roads that people used before the freeway was there. Thus, while Melbourne's population has grown by a third since 1981, the number of our car trips has doubled. The number of hours we spend in cars is higher than ever.

But isn't the government supposed to have a goal of raising public transport use to 20 per cent of all trips by 2020? Indeed it does; they re-announced it just two months ago. But the flip side is that car trips should reduce from 90 per cent of trips now to 80 per cent by 2020.

Do our transport planners seriously propose to reduce our dependence on cars by making it easier to drive, while doing comparatively little for public transport, cycling and walking? Grab a copy of the 2005 Budget papers and decide for yourself. Or try *The Da Vinci Code* instead: it's about as informative and a far better read.

Here's what has changed since 1969: the government still builds freeways, but tells us they're really for freight, not for cars.

Ordinary folk going from A to B are supposed to use public transport (despite the lousy service) and leave the roads clear for the trucks.

The punch line is that if we all actually did this, we wouldn't need

the freeways in the first place; freight would move just fine on all those uncongested arterial roads. The reason we even consider building more roads for freight is that all the roads are crammed full of cars, which outnumber trucks five to one. Building more roads just encourages still more cars to clog them up, reproducing the same old problems again and again.

Meanwhile, what is there for public transport? The private operator in charge of our train system tells us they can't improve their services any further without building new tracks. That's why they want a third track to Dandenong, despite many parts of our rail network lacking even two tracks, and despite long-overdue extensions to Rowville and Doncaster (also proposed in 1969 but, unlike the freeways, never built) being still just as far away as ever.

But are our train services really incapable of growing any further? Records show that in 1950, Melbourne's train system carried 204 million passengers. By comparison, Connex say they carried 135 million passengers in 2003-04. Now think of all the improvements that have been made since 1950: the underground loop, extra tracks, extra platforms at stations, several generations of new trains, and so on.

If the Connex managers can't find a way to carry at least 50 per cent more passengers with all that extra infrastructure, then maybe we need to hire some new managers, and save most of the huge cost of a third track to Dandenong.

All the fine words aside, we have come into the twenty-first century still running our transport system on a tired old freeway plan from the 1960s. It's time we moved on.

# Is a \$1b third track to Dandenong really needed?

The state budget included some \$25 million in spending in preparatory work for a third track from Caulfield to Dandenong. This is often cited by the government as the number one priority in rail infrastructure in Melbourne.

But the provision of the third track will come at an astronomical price, with some predictions putting it as high as a billion dollars. For that amount of money, rail extensions could be built to reach suburbs that currently have no rail service at all, such as South Morang, Doncaster and Rowville, and fixing lines that still have only *one* track.

While the PTUA agrees the Dandenong line is seeing daily overcrowding and action needs to be taken, we believe that lower-cost alternatives to the third track must be considered. Some solutions might include:

## Spreading the passenger load

Overcrowding occurs mostly during peak hour. One of the reasons for this is that commuters to the CBD from distant suburbs beyond Dandenong want to get home as quickly as possible by using peak express trains. But most expresses stop running at 6pm. By running expresses over longer hours, more 9-5 commuters would be encouraged to vary their hours.

Commuters in some areas are also limited by operating hours or poor frequencies of feeder buses. These should be enhanced to allow those using buses to reach the trains to travel over wider hours.

People are also encouraged to travel in peak hour because of the high frequencies. Enhancing evening frequencies, say running trains at least every 15 minutes until 9pm weeknights, would further spread the load.

A number of Frankston line passengers use Dandenong line

services to reach Caulfield, often overtaking their Mordialloc trains. Running more Frankston services may reduce this.

## Reducing dwell times

One of the causes of capacity limitations is the time spent waiting at stations, particularly in the city loop, which sees large numbers of both trains and passengers. Measures to reduce dwell times would help:

Providing platform staff at CBD and busy stations such as Caulfield during peak hour would help by speeding up wheelchair loading and unloading, and assisting drivers by signalling that they are clear to depart.

More or improved platform CCTV would also help drivers depart quickly.

Exit of crowds from platforms (thus moving clear of the train) could be aided by re-instating "Stand on left" signs on underground station escalators, and removing remaining (unused) barriers in suburban station doorways.

An education campaign encouraging people to walk behind the yellow line (particularly at stations like Parliament where large numbers of people leave via one of two end-of-platform exits) would also help speed departure.

Passenger bottlenecks such as the Richmond centre subway should be reviewed improvements made.

## Signalling and passing loops

Signalling between the city and Dandenong should be enhanced to allow for at least a train every two minutes.

Stopping patterns should be reviewed to ensure maximum train throughput.

It is not uncommon to see freight trains at peak hours. Priority must be given to passenger trains.

Locations where passing loops (preferably in both directions) can be provided at low cost should be identified.

## Providing alternatives

All V/Line trains should stop at Richmond to ensure those passengers to not unnecessarily use Dandenong metropolitan trains.

Operator on-time penalties on lines at capacity should be relaxed at peak times, to ensure all capacity is used. For instance if scheduled services are every 5 minutes or better, delivery of frequent services is more important than timekeeping, so late-running penalties could be reduced if they arrive within 15 minutes of their scheduled time.

The new Dandenong Road/Wellington Road SmartBus should have full traffic priority and peak frequencies better than every 10 minutes, to provide a viable alternative to some train passengers between Caulfield and Huntingdale.

Trams feeding from Dandenong line stations should have traffic priority, so St Kilda Road passengers have an alternative to travelling via the city.

## Conclusion

These measures (and we are sure there are others) would go a long way to fixing the present chronic overcrowding on the Dandenong line. Some of these also apply to other lines.

All such alternatives must be considered before we commit to spending hundreds of millions of dollars and unleashing untold disruption building a third track to Dandenong.

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## Re-privatisation not solving rail chaos

The government and private operator Connex are now admitting that the ongoing spate of train cancellations and delays is not all due to a driver shortage.

The PTUA pointed out in June last year that the driver shortage alone could not explain the abysmal performance of the train system. Even then, a report on the problems indicated that train failures, not driver shortages, were causing the largest number of cancellations.

Now that the shortage is essentially over but trains are still being cancelled left, right and centre, the operator and government now admit (as reported in the Age on 30 May) that "the shortage was masking other major problems".

Cancellations and late running are now at their worst levels in six years, and possibly the worst in our history. No noticeable improvement can be discerned since last June, when passengers were already being driven away from the rail system in significant numbers.

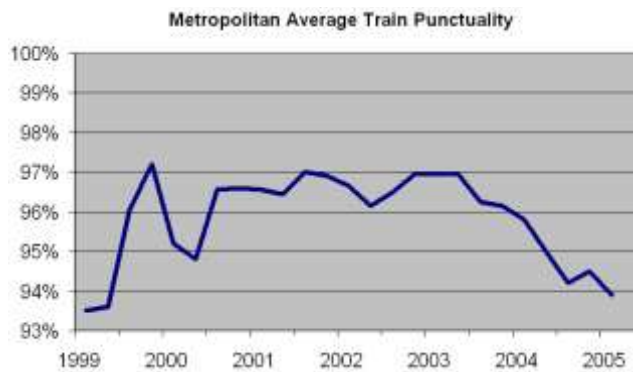
Rather, there has been an ongoing crisis since the government re-privatised the system in the first half of 2004, paying Connex three times as much money to run twice as many train services.

In retrospect it is likely that the biggest problems stem from asset-stripping by former operator National Express, at the height of which (in late 2002) Hitachi trains in good working order were being scrapped at the rate of one a week. Connex cannot be blamed for this

particular act of sabotage, but the State Government must bear some culpability both for allowing this to happen on its watch, and for renewing a form of privatisation which gives us separate operators, maintenance contractors and suppliers who can all point the finger at each other when problems arise.

Over nearly a century and a half of public ownership, when Melbourne's trains were manufactured and maintained in-house, it's hard to find a time when services were as chronically unreliable as they are today.

Transport Minister Peter Batchelor must see to it that the privatised system performs to the same standard as its predecessor, or else take it back into public ownership.



(Source: Track Record, Department of Infrastructure)

## Greater Dandenong bus continues

Greater Dandenong Council is once again to be congratulated for voting to continue the funding of two weekend bus services in the absence of State Government leadership. With approximately 1,500 passengers boarding these

services per month it demonstrates that there is clear demand for improved public transport in the outer east.

It is encouraging to see the Local Council of Greater Dandenong

providing leadership where the State Government and its Transport Minister, Peter Batchelor have clearly failed. It is time for the State Government to deliver bus improvements to the people of the outer suburbs.

## Public transport black spot of the month

On Sunday evenings, routes 112, 96 and 16 have been timetabled to depart St Kilda for the city all within 6 minutes of each other, leaving 24 minute gaps between

services. The fact that route 96 trams routinely sit at the Acland Street terminus for 27 minutes at a time suggests it would be easily fixed by running route 96 services

earlier. Not to mention the waste of a tram and driver doing nothing for nearly half an hour. Yarra Trams tell us they want to fix the timetables – watch this space.

## Common myths about public transport: Cars

### Myth: People who own cars won't use public transport

Fact: Most people will continue to own and use cars, just as they do in European cities. But people do not stubbornly refuse to use public transport when it provides a palatable alternative to car use, as it does in European cities.

It is often said that the car is here to stay, and that people will never give up their private vehicles. We agree.

The elimination of the car is both unlikely and unnecessary. The traffic problems in Melbourne, that the road lobby promises to solve by building more freeways, could all be relieved if we shift a small, but significant, minority of car trips – about one journey in five – from the car to walking, cycling or public transport. Lots of local travel, such as grocery shopping, would still be carried out largely by car; people would still take drives in the country; most people with difficult work locations or heavy equipment to carry would still drive to work.

The major cause of Melbourne's traffic problems is not local travel;

it is long car journeys focussed on the central city, precisely the kind of trip to which public transport is best suited. There are two reasons why more of these trips are made by car than would otherwise be the case. The first is that people in Melbourne often lack an effective choice between cars and other modes of transport. The second is that people often have "perverse incentives" to drive cars: the car is packaged into its owner's salary for a fraction of its true cost, and the owner pays none of the ongoing costs but instead is penalised if the car is not driven far enough or often enough. Both these reasons point to serious problems in public policy, but to acknowledge these problems is not to call for restrictions on car use.

An extreme version of the car-is-inevitable argument claims that once people own cars, they will use them for all their travel, regardless of the alternatives. This is an insulting attitude: it assumes most people are stupid. High car ownership does not necessarily mean high car use. Many overseas cities renowned for their successful public transport have higher car ownership rates than Melbourne:

City	Car ownership per 100 persons
Melbourne (census area)	48
Paris (Ville de Paris)	58
Frankfurt (region)	50
Toronto (census area)	50
Vancouver (census area)	54
San Francisco (Bay Area)	58

High car ownership does not mean that people will never use public transport or other alternatives. It simply means that they don't have to use public transport, and will not unless it provides an acceptable quality of service. At present in Melbourne, public transport service quality is poor so it attracts few customers; in cities where public transport is of high quality - fast, frequent, integrated, safe and cheap - it is used extensively (although people still use their cars too).

**More transport myths exposed**  
⇒ [www.ptua.org.au/myths](http://www.ptua.org.au/myths)

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## Spencer Street: the next phase

Caulfield loop trains resumed stopping at Spencer Street in late June, but now it's the turn of Burnley and Clifton Hill line

passengers to miss out, with their trains bypassing Spencer Street (and the entire loop after 8pm weekdays) until November.

We can't help but be reminded that we were assured when the project started that there would be no disruption to train services.

**GADZOOKS! MY TRAIN WON'T STOP AT SPENCER STREET FOR THE NEXT FIVE MONTHS!**



(With apologies to Metlink)

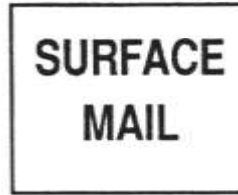
# PTUA News

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