

ISSN 0817 – 0347

Volume 29 No. 4

September 2005

## Bus reform urgent

With metropolitan bus contracts being renewed from 2007 the PTUA has seized the opportunity to lobby for a substantial and much needed improvement to Melbourne's bus services - thus aiming to ensure public transport equity for the two thirds of Melbourne that currently lacks useable public transport.

Improving Melbourne's bus network encompasses many aspects, such as service spans, frequencies, as well as accessibility improvements, better timetabling information and consistent branding.

Research from the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) has shown that better access to public transport would cut Melbourne households' transport costs by enough to enable them to pay off their housing mortgages up to eight years earlier. Excessive car dependence is clearly trapping residents into a greater level of financial instability.

Lower levels of disposable income are also detrimental to businesses, particularly smaller and localised businesses. It is a fact that as disposable income decreases there is less income available for people to spend on other goods or services. The effect of car/oil dependence is set to have major economic ramifications.

To ensure social inclusion and the future economic success of Melbourne, the neglect of Melbourne's bus network must be reversed. Less than half a dozen substantial bus upgrades over the past six years is simply not good enough. The renewal of Melbourne's bus contracts in 2007 provides the opportunity to address the gross transport inequity experienced within Melbourne's outer suburbs.

Given the State Election in November 2006, the two-thirds of Melbourne that live without an adequate public transport service will be watching.

Both parties must realise that a substantial commitment to Melbourne's bus network is critical to the continued viability and liveability of the middle and outer suburbs.

## Oil prices keep breaking records

Has the global oil market finally done what Peter Batchelor seems incapable of doing – making public transport more attractive than driving?

Metlink, which represents Melbourne's public transport operators, reports that the soaring price of petrol has helped lead to an 8.2 per cent increase in public transport journeys between the first quarter of 2004 and the second quarter of 2005.



April 2005



September 2005

If public transport is showing growth of around 8 per cent, PTUA looks forward to an immediate 8 per cent increase in public transport services to cater for this extra demand.

**Continued⇒ Page 6**

## PTUA AGM – Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>

This year's PTUA Annual General Meeting takes place on Thursday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Details⇒ Page 2**

Annual General Meeting.....	2
Tram priority / Tax reform .....	3
Outer East / Geelong / Dandenong extra trains .....	4
Melbourne 2030 / The Big Idea.....	5
Wyndham trams.....	6
Level crossing petition / Perth / Myths: alt fuels .....	7

## **Keeping in touch...**

### **PTUA office**

247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne  
 Telephone (03) 9650 7898  
 e-mail: office@ptua.org.au

### **Membership Enquiries**

Call or e-mail the office (see above)

### **Internet**

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

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

Stay up to date with PTUA events, and view archived newsletters online via the PTUA News mailing list  
[www.yahoogroups.com/group/ptua-news](http://www.yahoogroups.com/group/ptua-news)

### **Committee**

Daniel Bowen – President, Newsletter – [president@ptua.org.au](mailto:president@ptua.org.au)  
 Chris Loader – Vice President – [vicepresident@ptua.org.au](mailto:vicepresident@ptua.org.au)  
 Anthony Morton – Secretary (on leave)  
 Peter Cook – Treasurer – [treasurer@ptua.org.au](mailto:treasurer@ptua.org.au)  
 Alex Makin – Convenor, Outer East branch – [outereast@ptua.org.au](mailto:outereast@ptua.org.au)  
 Paul Westcott – Convenor, Geelong branch – [geelong@ptua.org.au](mailto:geelong@ptua.org.au)  
 Vaughan Williams – Policy Director  
 Beth Driscoll – Acting Secretary  
 Tim Hoffmann  
 Mark Johnson  
 Jeremy Lunn  
 Anna Morton  
 David Robertson  
 Cameron Tampion  
 Chris Trikilis  
 Kerryn Wilmot

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.

## **Annual General Meeting – 3<sup>rd</sup> of November**

The PTUA Annual General Meeting will take place on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> of November at 6:30pm at Ross House: 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

The election procedure allows for the AGM to elect a President, Secretary and Treasurer and up to nine ordinary Committee members.

Nominations must be on the form attached and signed by the nominator and the candidate, both of whom must be current financial members of the PTUA.

Nominations must be received by the PTUA Secretary (Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000) by hand or by mail by 4:00pm on Friday 21 October.

Nominations will not be called for at the AGM unless nominations received by this closing date are insufficient to fill all positions.

### **PTUA Committee Nomination Form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

nominate \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

for election to the position of:  President  Secretary  Treasurer  Committee member

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (nominator) \_\_\_\_\_ (candidate) \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ (date)

### **Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 31<sup>st</sup> October 2005**

Newsletter contributors: Daniel Bowen, Alex Makin, Tony Morton and Vaughan Williams. Cartoon by Matt Cook. Printed on recycled paper by Flash Print, Collingwood.

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

## Tram priority at last?

Finally we are seeing some sense in the Think Tram program. The bureaucracy has admitted the Clarendon Street project was a mess, and many of the failed aspects of the trial have now been reversed. Many of the problems stem from a lack of proper community consultation caused in part by an overly accelerated project timeline which in turn was driven by the transport minister Peter Batchelor.

Thanks to pressure from the PTUA, the Collins Street Precinct Association and others, we understand that the Collins Street tram stops slated for deletion have been given a stay of execution, while Elizabeth, Exhibition and William Streets will still get super stops. The Department of Infrastructure and City of Melbourne will now conduct a detailed traffic study of the CBD to fully understand the options for improving the passage of trams. We hope they realise that the best way to move more people more quickly through the CBD is to give trams actual priority over private vehicles, rather than deleting stops.

Some common sense can now be seen in Sydney Road. Traffic light sequences have been altered to clear right turning traffic in front of trams at all times of the day, and give trams an extra chance to get through traffic lights if they miss a green light phase. Early results suggest savings of around 4 minutes to tram journeys may be possible, with minimal impacts on other traffic.

We also welcome a more flexible timetable during high frequency times – so running time saved can be put into more services (not lost when trams have to wait at scheduled timing points). But it is vital Yarra Trams maintain the advertised service frequency, whatever the running time achieved.

It is welcome to see more focus on actual tram priority and less focus on deleting stops. As Yarra Trams point out in the recent advertising campaigns, trams can move a lot more people in a lot less space – and they deserve to get priority over



private vehicles on our roads. Slower trams encourage more people to drive which then slows trams and other drivers down.

However many in VicRoads and Yarra Trams remain adamant that 400-500m stops is the target in suburban areas (in some cases greatly increasing walking distances for people who use stops that would be deleted). We watch with great interest.

## Tax reform back on the agenda

Tax reform has hit the news again with the Federal Sustainable Cities report released on 12<sup>th</sup> September calling for an end to fringe benefit tax concessions for car use, and introducing a tariff on four-wheel drives.

In August, Liberal backbencher Malcolm Turnbull highlighted the loss of over \$1 billion in tax revenue each year due to FBT concessions to motorists. And earlier in the year, NSW Transport Minister John Watkins called on the federal government to ease the traffic congestion exacerbated by these concessions by offering similar benefits to public transport

users. Mr Watkins promised to raise the issue at the next meeting of Australian Transport Ministers in November.

The PTUA strongly supports the extension of tax incentives to public transport or the removal of concessions from motor vehicles to level the playing field between car and public transport use.

If you would like to see fairer treatment of public transport under the FBT rules, you could write to your local MP, the Federal Transport Minister Warren Truss and the Victorian Transport Minister Peter Batchelor urging them to adopt the transport-related

recommendations of the Sustainable Cities report.

**The Hon Warren Truss MP**  
Minister for Transport and Regional Services  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House Canberra ACT  
2600 W.Truss.MP@aph.gov.au

**The Hon. Peter Batchelor MP**  
Minister for Transport  
80 Collins St, Melbourne Vic 3000  
peter.batchelor@parliament.vic.gov.au

**More addresses to write to:**  
⇒ [www.ptua.org.au/help/](http://www.ptua.org.au/help/)

## Outer East branch – now meeting locally

The September Branch Meeting marked a special occasion for the PTUA Outer East Branch. It was decided that it is time to enhance the strong results delivered by the Branch by meeting locally in Box Hill. This will make it easier for local residents to get involved in a local branch that is representing their local transport concerns.

Meeting locally will ensure a stronger voice for the Outer East Branch in the lead up to the 2006 State Election. Governments of all levels and of all persuasions must realise that improved public transport is a necessity, the social

and economic wellbeing of the State of Victoria depends on it.



### Meeting details

The PTUA Outer East Branch meets on the first Tuesday of each month. The next meeting is Tuesday the 4th of October from 7:00 to 9:00 pm.

New Location: 2/17 Carrington Road, Box Hill

The PTUA Outer East Branch thanks Jeremy Lunn and David Sauer for their efforts in securing and providing a venue for our branch meeting.

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

## Geelong news

The Geelong Branch has been busy recently with a number of activities:

- Successfully lobbying V/Line into upgrading signage and passenger information along the Great Ocean Road
- Submission to DOI which is resulting in additional bus shelters along the route
- Achieved a new bus stop to serve three routes near the Barwon River in Geelong,

filling a kilometre gap between existing stops

- Involvement in the G21 organisation formed by the five councils in the Geelong region. We have attended a number of community forums related to G21's public transport plan.

### Marshall station

Though at the time of writing train services were expected to begin serving Marshall station in late-

September, V/Line advised this would only be four trains per day (two in the morning, two in the afternoon) in addition to existing Warrnambool services.

V/Line say that when the new "fast rail" timetable is introduced in the first half of next year, it will include a much-increased service to Marshall.

## Dandenong gets extra trains

After many claims that the Dandenong line was at peak capacity, space has been found for two extra peak-hour train services each weekday, running direct to/from Flinders Street. This shows that, despite protests to the contrary, it is possible to squeeze in some extra trains onto the line.

While in a perfect world, all trains on the line would run via the City Loop for consistency, if the compromise for extra trains is that they run direct, then long-suffering Dandenong line passengers can live with that, particularly as Flinders Street remains the busiest city station.

The DoI and Connex are to be commended for finding the extra paths, and we hope they are endeavouring to identify more that can be used to alleviate overcrowding on this and other lines.

**CRIKEY! I WANT TO GO SHOPPING ON A SUNDAY,  
BUT THERE'S NO BUSES UNTIL MONDAY MORNING!**

## Lack of integration hampering Melbourne 2030

Is the lack of integration between government departments, in particular the Department of Infrastructure (DOI), which funds public transport and infrastructure projects, and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) to blame for the lack of progress towards improving public transport modal share?

While Melbourne 2030 promised to integrate Transport and Planning, the gulf between the two departments appears to be widening. Both Melbourne 2030 and the Metropolitan Transport Plan failed to adequately address transport issues, and even the few

projects in the MTP have no timetable for implementation.

It is clear that very little thought is being given to improved frequencies and operating hours of public transport.

This is further exemplified through the fact that the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) has failed to support Melbourne 2030 and the goal of increasing public transport patronage. The DTF has such little regard for Melbourne 2030 that it has even failed to sign off as a department on the goal of achieving the 20% target.

Mary Delahunty was removed from the Planning Portfolio due to her failure to ‘sell the concept of Melbourne 2030’. Without substantial and necessary improvements in public transport it remains unclear how 2030 will work.

While the implementation of Melbourne 2030 is primarily divided between two separate Ministers and ultimately constrained by an uncooperative Treasury, making significant progress will remain an uphill battle.

## Road lobby dusts off its wish list

Again we hear the familiar rumblings about congestion on the West Gate Bridge and at the city end of the Eastern Freeway. It now seems clear that the ‘next’ freeways in the road lobby’s sights after Citylink and Scoresby are an Eastern-Tullamarine freeway link and a second West Gate Bridge – perhaps even rolled into a single road project.

The latest attempt to get these freeways on the agenda is the so-called ‘East West Integrated Transport Project’ floated by Melbourne City Council, estimated at a stupendous \$10 billion, including \$5 billion for a grandiose freeway tunnel from Hoddle Street all the way to Deer Park.

Its proponents, despite explaining that the freeway isn’t actually intended to reduce congestion, nonetheless talk as though it will take traffic out of the inner city, as though all the drivers queuing up in Lygon Street would really prefer to go to Deer Park. The real justification for the freeway, it is said, is that it will take traffic off local roads.

No local road has ever been ‘relieved’ of traffic congestion

(except sometimes temporarily) as the result of building a freeway. It is less than ten years since the opening of the Eastern Freeway extension that was supposed to take all the traffic off the parallel Doncaster Road. But Doncaster Road carries as much traffic as it did ten years ago.

The dubious merit of the MCC East-West plan is underscored by the fact that even the consultant who co-authored the report, William McDougall of Sinclair Knight Merz, appears to be distancing himself from it, claiming that the report “only advocated a tunnel after a brief from a senior town hall officer called for it” and “I think the real key to solving congestion is to shift people from car to public transport”.

And to be fair, the MCC proposal does include a train line to Doncaster, as championed by the PTUA and others for decades. But this is a proposal that has merit quite independently of any road project, and should not be bundled up with one as though it’s impossible to do any public transport improvements without building a road as well. (And we

know that bundled public transport projects can get unbundled just as easily, as the history of the Doncaster line itself shows.)

A useful package of public transport alternatives could also include raising train frequencies and improving feeder bus networks in the western suburbs, so people aren’t forced to drive into town over the West Gate Bridge in the first place.

It’s rather ironic that while the public-transport-rich City of Melbourne is making freeway plans, outer-suburban Wyndham is instead looking at building its own tram network to help solve its transport problems.

Sometimes it’s thought that if we had lots of freeways *and* lots of public transport everyone would be happy. But that’s not the way urban transport systems work. Every new freeway makes Melbourne a less liveable city, regardless of how much public transport gets bolted on to it. The estimated \$5 billion cost of this single road is enough to pay for every single project in the PTUA policy document *It’s Time To Move*, and leave plenty over for hospitals and schools.

## **Oil prices keep breaking records (cont'd from page 1)**

While there is some doubt over how Metlink arrived at this growth rate (in particular whether the figures were seasonally adjusted or not), some anecdotal evidence(1) points to a fall in both car journeys and traffic accidents which leaves open the possibility of a switch to public transport, a reduction in overall journeys, or a combination of the two.

At the same time retail sales are suffering as record petrol prices bite into household budgets and oil

imports continue to drag down our international trade performance.

A little over 12 months ago the RACV claimed that the price of oil had peaked at \$US44.50 per barrel and that petrol prices would not rise much above \$1.08 per litre. Now that oil is flirting with levels above \$US70 per barrel and petrol prices regularly nudge \$1.30 per litre, the conventional view that oil scarcity will not emerge for another 40 years is beginning to look unjustifiably optimistic.

Mainstream economists and finance professionals have dramatically lowered the odds on the \$US100 per barrel level being broken in the foreseeable future. And the US Department of Energy has commissioned a

report on the peaking of world oil production. Known widely as “the Hirsch Report”, this study paints a stark picture of dramatically higher oil prices, protracted economic hardship and “chaotic” social implications. Importantly, the report warns that shortages of liquid fuels could occur unless mitigating action is taken as much as *twenty years* in advance of “peak oil”.

With credible estimates of the oil peak now falling within the four year period covered by the government’s budget and forward estimates process (see Table 1), the time for complacency is over. Transport and urban planning needs to make an immediate shift towards active and public transport and away from the current freeway fetish. Anything less, and the current wringing of hands over petrol prices will pale in comparison when the inevitable peak is reached.

(1) Chandler, J., ‘Gas guzzling generation shifts down’, *The Age*, 3 September 2005

Table 1: Projections of when global oil production will peak

2006-07	Ali Samsam Bakhtiari	Iranian oil executive
2007-09	Matthew Simmons	US energy investment banker
Post-2007	Chris Skrebowski	Petroleum journal editor
Pre-2009	Kenneth Deffeyes	Oil geologist
Pre-2010	David Goodstein	Vice Provost, Caltech
Circa-2010	Colin Campbell	Oil geologist
Post-2010	World Energy Council	International energy organisation
2010-20	Jean Laherrere	Oil geologist
2015	Volvo	Automotive company

## **Another local council considers funding PT**

Wyndham City Council, (in Melbourne’s outer west) has formed an internal working group to *undertake a scoping study for the Wyndham City Council to construct, own and operate its own tramway system.*

Most notable is Wyndham Council’s strongly worded language used in their scoping study report:

*It is clear from the budget initiatives over the past several years that there is no intent within the State Government to provide any serious investment in public transport infrastructure within Melbourne and certainly very little within Wyndham.*

While strongly worded statements from Councillors or indeed any

politician is nothing new, it is new to find these statements within an official council-adopted report.

An ever increasing number of councils throughout Melbourne are becoming dissatisfied with the lack of action and continued excuses provided by the State Government.

Hume and Knox have conducted public transport feasibility studies. Greater Dandenong funds its own Metcard operated bus services and the Shire of Yarra Ranges recently conducted a public advocacy campaign for improved bus services. Now Wyndham is looking at funding its own tram network.

The response from the State Government made it clear that they have no action plan of their own:

*“We wouldn’t have a problem with that at all and the Government would want to work with the council to get the best possible outcome for the community,”* – Kate Leonard, spokesperson for Transport Minister Peter Batchelor

Instead we hear the same often repeated quote: *‘transport would improve as the Metropolitan Transport Plan, released late last year, meant a better bus system was on its way.’*

Empty promises about improving bus services are all well and good, but when will the State Government finally provide action to support its policy commitment of improving and increasing public transport usage?

## Petition for level crossing elimination

David Bramwells, father of Alana Nobbs, who died at the Bentleigh station level crossing last year, has started an online petition which will eventually be submitted to

parliament, calling for all level crossings to be grade separated.

The PTUA has long-supported the removal of level crossings, and we

encourage members to sign the petition, which is at:

⇒ [www.gopetition.com/online/7136.html](http://www.gopetition.com/online/7136.html)

## Perth extends trains, considers trams

A new railway to Thornlie, 17 km south-east of Perth, opened last month. The spur line, which branches off the main Armadale line, brings faster and more frequent transport to the area, which urbanised in the 1970s.

The next expansion of Perth's rail network will be the 70 kilometre-long Mandurah line, due for completion in 2007.

Perth is also considering reintroducing trams, which last ran

in 1958. A feasibility study is now underway. A preliminary study by the City of Subiaco found that a tram network could cover inner suburbs, hospitals and universities and cost between \$125 and \$420 million.

## Common myths about transport: Alternative fuels

### Myth: Alternative fuels will come to the rescue

Fact: Many alternative fuels do nothing to fix local air pollution, merely substituting one noxious chemical for another.

Others such as natural gas or ethanol are impossible to produce on the scale required. This leaves electricity and hydrogen, but as these are energy carriers rather than fuels they must themselves be produced using some other fuel, which just pushes the problem up one level.

The quixotic quest for the new miracle fuel that will surpass petrol, and be cheap and plentiful to boot, has been with us for at least half a century. In the 1950s, cars powered by personal nuclear reactors expected. In the 1970s, solar cars. And in the 1990s, cars running on used cooking oil. Still no challenger has risen with serious prospects of toppling the dominance of petrol and diesel.

On the margins, LPG conversions are becoming popular as a way to avoid high petrol prices, but the efficiency benefits should not be overstated: the average LPG-fuelled car has only about 3 per cent less CO2 emissions than the average

petrol-fuelled car, and is slightly less energy efficient.

The real difficulty with alternative fuels is, however, the same as with any attempt to treat the symptoms instead of the cause of a problem: the fundamental problem doesn't go away but instead lingers to cause more difficulties later on.

Any hydrocarbon fuel when burnt in air, whether it be petrol, diesel, LPG or ethanol, produces both carbon dioxide and noxious byproducts such as nitrogen oxides and ozone. Even the lowest-emission fuels, LPG and natural gas, can often produce as much or more carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides than petrol (and are also much more limited in supply). And just as with the claim that free-flowing traffic cuts pollution, any overall reduction in pollutants is soon cancelled out by the sheer growth in car and truck trips.

The only 'fuels' that do not produce local pollution are electricity and hydrogen. But must be generated from some other, naturally-occurring energy source. As a result, use of electric or hydrogen-powered cars will not reduce greenhouse emissions any time soon.

And even if pollution-free cars and trucks are developed, they would still crash just as often, take up just as much land for roads, and generate the same equity problems as they do today.

In its investigation of all the options, the British Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution concluded that: *there would not be any environmental advantage in widespread use of alternative fuels in the UK.*

There is certainly a limited role for some alternative fuels in particular contexts; use of compressed natural gas instead of diesel in vehicles that stop frequently in urban areas, such as buses and garbage trucks, would help put these essential services on a more sustainable footing.

In the final analysis, the use of alternative fuels will have at best a marginal benefit, and will have no benefit at all unless accompanied by a substantial switch from car trips to public transport, walking and cycling.

**See an extended version of this article, and more transport myths exposed**

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

# **PTUA News**

Newsletter of the Public Transport Users Association, Org. No. A-6256L

Print Post: Publication No. PP 331088/00009

If undeliverable, return to:

PTUA Office, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000

**SURFACE  
MAIL**

**POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTRALIA**

## **Inside:**

- Bus reform urgent
- Record oil prices
- Tram priority at last?
- PTUA AGM: November 3<sup>rd</sup>

### **Changed your address?**

Make sure your PTUA News follows you when you move!

Cut out or photocopy this form, fill in and return to us at:

PTUA, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000.

Or e-mail us at [office@ptua.org.au](mailto:office@ptua.org.au)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

New address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/Suburb \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (M) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### **PTUA office**

247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

Telephone (03) 9650 7898

e-mail: [office@ptua.org.au](mailto:office@ptua.org.au)

### **World Wide Web**

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

### **Join us**

If you are reading a friend's newsletter and would like to join, call the office, or see [www.ptua.org.au/join/](http://www.ptua.org.au/join/)

Responsibility for electoral comment in PTUA News is taken by Vaughan Williams, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.