

Government forced into action

In early November, *The Age* newspaper launched a campaign highlighting the ‘failure of public transport’. Transport issues featured on the front page of *The Age* for four consecutive days with considerable coverage.

This coincided with a number of policy document releases:

The MTF report

On Saturday November 6th, the paper featured the *Most liveable and best connected?* study which was commissioned by the Metropolitan Transport Forum (MTF, a collection of most inner Melbourne local councils). The study highlighted how Melbourne’s liveability was slipping due to poor public transport provision. It highlighted that Melbourne has the cheapest cost of car travel of a selection of the world’s most liveable cities, and the highest level of road length provision per person. It confirms Melbourne is one of the world’s most drivable cities.

The report also highlighted that Melbourne presently has 90km of major road projects completed, under construction or committed in 2005, compared to just 12km of train and tram extensions. In Perth the situation is starkly the opposite with 77km of rail projects and 24km of major road projects. It is no wonder that Professor Bill Russell describes the Bracks government as the most “freeway-friendly” government in Victoria’s history.

This is no better illustrated in that despite having four major metropolitan freeway projects underway, the RACV has recently dusted off calls for a Healesville Freeway to be built! We ask: Just how many freeways does the RACV think we need?



When will it all end and how will it provide a sustainable fix to congestion?

The MTF report received extensive television and radio coverage, with transport minister Peter Batchelor reduced to personal attacks on one of Australia’s most respected transport academics – someone the NSW government recently called in to try to fix their transport problems. He also claimed that Melbourne has an excellent public transport system. A vox pop respondent on Channel 7 wondered whether the minister ever used the system.

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Keeping in touch...

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Call or e-mail the office (see above)

PTUA members can obtain cheap yearly Metcards – see page 5

Internet

Our web site is at www.ptua.org.au

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

Stay up to date with PTUA events, and view archived newsletters online via the PTUA News mailing list

www.yahogroups.com/group/ptua-news

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Committee Meetings

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

Annual General Meeting report

The PTUA's Annual General Meeting for 2005 was held on Thursday 3 November.

This was an opportunity for members to hear from one of the political parties contending for next year's state election: the Victorian Greens. Guest speakers Alison Clarke and Fraser Brindley explained the political context and new upper house arrangements from a Greens perspective. While no ironclad assurances were forthcoming, there is hope that transport may become the make-or-break issue deciding the balance of power after the election.

The AGM also elected the committee for 2005-06 (detailed above).

Acting Geelong Branch convenor Paul Westcott will also be part of the new committee while Tim Petersen is on leave.

The committee would like to thank outgoing committee members Vaughan Williams, Peter Cook, Tim Hoffmann and Tim Mattingsbrooke for their contributions to the PTUA over the years, and we hope they stay in touch and involved in the public transport advocacy movement.

Time was taken to answer members' questions, and we thank those who attended.

We wish all members a safe and happy holiday season.

– Tony Morton, Secretary

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 31st January 2006

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PTUA launches Five Year Plan

To coincide with *The Age's* coverage of public transport, the PTUA launched its Five Year Plan in November.

The plan identifies key projects that must be started now, in order to drive public transport patronage up towards the government's stated target of 20% of trips by 2020.

The government's reaction to the plan has been only to say that all ideas are being considered. But it is notable that when one part of the plan – for more frequent off-peak, weekend and evening frequent trains, which could be largely achieved now with no infrastructure or train fleet investment – was floated, Minister Batchelor dismissed it out of hand.

Here is a summary of the plan. The full version is on our web site.

Train

- Extensions from Epping to South Morang; to East Doncaster; Huntingdale to Rowville
- Electrification to Baxter and Sunbury
- Duplication of single track sections on the Epping and Hurstbridge lines
- Passing loops and signalling upgrades on the Dandenong line, subject to infrastructure and operations review
- New stations at Southland, Newport West, Lyndhurst Park, Coolaroo, Campbellfield



- Reconfigure Alamein line stations to allow interchange at Toorak Road
- Trains at least every 10 minutes on all lines during peak hours, and every 15 minutes, 7 days a week until at least 9pm
- More secure bicycle parking at stations
- Train system control upgrade
- Begin phased removal of level crossings

Tram

- Extensions to East Malvern station and Chadstone (route 3); Doncaster Hill (48); Hartwell (8); East Keilor (57); Knox City (75); Ashburton (6); Doncaster Road (72); Carnegie station (67)
- New route from Gardiner to Caulfield via Burke Road
- New route connecting South Melbourne to St Kilda Road
- More tram priority

Bus

- More bus services (particularly Sundays and evenings to 10pm) on all routes, thus at last giving all suburbs usable public transport
- Rollout of SmartBus services on 24 routes across Melbourne, plus two Orbital routes
- More bus priority

Running the system

- Central planning and timetable co-ordination
- Integration of transport and planning ministries, and the abolition of VicRoads as an independent body
- Rail infrastructure and operations review to ensure we get the most from our infrastructure

While there are a number of small infrastructure projects, and a couple of big ones, the Five Year Plan is not radical, nor is it expensive for a city the size of Melbourne.

Rather, it represents the kind of investment that the public transport system needs to seriously begin growing patronage throughout the city – not just in the one-third of suburbs that currently have usable services – to help curb car use, reduce our dependency on expensive, scarce and polluting fossil fuels, and provide a more liveable city.

The full plan can be read on our website, at www.ptua.org.au/media/2005/november07.shtml

Govt forced into action (cont'd from page 1)

Committee for Melbourne plan

On the Sunday, the Committee for Melbourne launched a package of five year public transport priorities. The package was put together by the public transport operators (principally the Bus Association Victoria).

This plan called for \$2 billion of investment in infrastructure, and boosts to service levels, including consistent 15 minute frequencies on the rail network, improved tram priority, minimum service levels for buses with 7 day and evening services, and an accelerated rollout of the SmartBus network.

The Committee for Melbourne package claims it could increase public transport mode share from the current stagnant 9% to 12% by 2011. Notably the plan did not call for any train or tram extensions in the next five years, citing capacity constraints on the current system.

The government responds

On the Monday, Peter Batchelor was forced to respond, promising a "Transport and Liveability" statement to be released after the Commonwealth Games next year. Unlike the government's last effort – the Metropolitan Transport Plan – this statement will supposedly contain a 5 year commitment to public transport projects that will address problems in Melbourne.

Oddly, the Transport and Liveability statement seems to have appeared from nowhere. Until this embarrassing media coverage occurred, the Metropolitan Transport Plan had been the be-all and end-all of government thinking on transport, with no hint of another plan waiting in the wings.

Unfortunately we understand that the plan is being jointly put together by VicRoads and the Department of Infrastructure (DOI) - suggesting the statement may just contain a selection of VicRoads' road wish list and DOI's public transport wish list. We firmly believe Melbourne has more than enough major roads, and only getting serious about shifting trips onto public transport can provide any sustainable easing of transport congestion and air pollution.

The PTUA's plan

Also on the Monday, the PTUA released its Five Year Plan for public transport – featuring a number of tram and train network extensions, more frequent services and longer running hours. For more details see story on page 3.

The road lobby strikes back

On the Tuesday, the Victorian Employer's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) released an infrastructure statement, calling for a massive freeway tunnel proposal joining the Eastern Freeway to Deer Park. Not surprising considering the author of the infrastructure statement is executive director of Australia's largest toll road investor, and the event was sponsored by VicRoads.

The VECCI paper included concessions for public transport, but claimed balance was required in transport funding. Unfortunately this fabled notion of balance involves continued massive bias towards road spending ahead of public transport spending. We think significant effort is needed to redress a massive imbalance in transport spending biased to providing more and more road space to be filled by more and more cars.

Government acts on crisis in transport

● Boost for loop trains and routes to suburbs

EXCLUSIVE
Too slow, too infrequent... and grinding to a halt

INSIDE
Labor plan to build 100km of new rail

PROUD NEWS
12 million

Last chance pre-election

The media attention on public transport has simply highlighted what we've known for a long time - transport problems in Melbourne are only going to get worse if the government continues to splash around money for road projects and drip feed public transport improvements. The "Transport and Liveability" statement is the last chance for the Bracks Government to get serious about public transport before the state election. It's an indictment they have failed to do so for the last 6 years.

The PTUA is an associate member of the Melbourne Transport Forum.

Removing tram stops *slows down* trams!

According to recent research for the VicRoads *Road Based Public Transport Advisory Council*, removing tram stops can actually make trams go slower, and cars go faster.

The scenario studied was a typical four lane road (two each way) with trams sharing the road with traffic. While initially removing tram stops made the trams go faster, it also made the road more attractive for car drivers, leading to an increase in car traffic and congestion. This in turn slowed trams down in the study, particularly at intersections,

with a net result that trams ended up 2% slower than before, while car traffic was up to 4% faster, and more cars were carried by the road. The end result was slower trams, fewer stops and more car traffic which is hardly a good way to increase public transport patronage!

Despite this, Yarra Trams and VicRoads want to increase the stop spacing along route 109 in Boroondara to around 400m in residential areas, which without other measures is bad news for trams and good news for cars.

They also said stops should not be removed in major shopping areas. But this doesn't seem to apply on Collins Street in the CBD. The Russell and Exhibition Street stops will be deleted in January and replaced by a mid-block stop, resulting in around 350m stop spacing. It would appear they believe the CBD warrants similar stop spacings to residential areas.

Similarly, in Bourke Street VicRoads want to install superstops near (but not *at*) Spring and Spencer Streets, making for longer walks to/from the trains.

Discounted yearly tickets

Through MetLink's Commuter Club PTUA can offer its members discounted yearly tickets. All zone combinations are available at more than 9% discount off the retail price. This offer is cheaper than 10

monthlies, so it's a great deal for all you regular travellers.

To obtain your tickets provide your name, full home (street) address, a contact phone number or email

address and which zone you require to PTUA, pay in full, and we will organise the purchase. You can contact us by mailing or phoning the office, or email directly to tickets@ptua.org.au

Geelong branch

The Geelong branch has welcomed the government's announcement of upgrades to local bus services, in particular more frequent buses in the outlying areas of Torquay, Grovedale and Lara.

And there is hope that the improved Sunday services in the Grovedale, Highton and Belmont areas will mean the end of the 'magical

mystery tour' involved in the meandering combined route that operates in those areas on Sundays.

As positive as these improvements are, they must be followed by further measures to enhance the viability of the public transport system. To be a real alternative to cars, the basic frequency of bus services within Geelong needs to be

increased from the present 30 to 35 minutes to 20 minutes or less.

As well, up to date and high quality customer information needs to be more readily available on and off buses.

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/geelong/

New Year's Eve

After a more successful New Year's Eve public transport outcome last year, we wait with anticipation the plans for this year.

Members will remember NYE 2003, when services were packed to capacity, and tens of thousands of people left behind when last trams and trains left the city around 1:30am.

Last year, forced into action by the PTUA-generated media coverage,

the government organised both trams and trains to run all night – attracting strong patronage throughout the night.

This year, we understand that as last year, all night trains and trams will run with NightRider buses.

Unfortunately, unlike most cities in Australia, the two-thirds of Melbourne living beyond the rail networks who form the public transport 'have-nots' will have a

measly 9 bus routes out of the city - many of which align to the rail network.

While all night trams and trains are a great start, the government must stop neglecting those parts of Melbourne reliant on bus services and provide a basic level of service to all suburbs on New Year's Eve.

Relive the shambles of NYE 2003
⇒ www.ptua.org.au/news/2003/nye

Doncaster to (finally) get on track?

After much pressure from the PTUA, Manningham Council and other community groups, Transport Minister Peter Batchelor has been forced to commit to a feasibility study into DART, or the Doncaster Area Rapid Transit.

While this system will look at the feasibility of installing heavy rail, light rail or a guided bus system similar to Adelaide's O-bahn, the PTUA and the general community are all in agreement that heavy rail is the only sensible option for the area. More than two-thirds of metropolitan Melbourne is located away from rail services, and a project like the Doncaster rail line would go a long way to solving this.

A railway along the middle of the Eastern Freeway isn't a new or revolutionary idea – it was floated back in the 1969 Transportation Plan alongside the building of the freeway, and while the railway has

never materialised the wide reservation in the middle is still suitable for rail. And Perth has proven that it could be built successfully, with rail lines running in the middle of freeways.

Traffic will only get worse with the opening of EastLink in 2008 with estimates of 31,000 cars expected to pour onto the congested road daily.

Light rail would struggle to cope having to integrate to the current tram network closer to the city, and the sheer number of vehicles required (close to 50 in peak hour) won't give much of a faster trip than the current car congestion on the freeway. Yet the train would provide an incredibly fast journey into the CBD.

The City of Manningham incorporates Bulleen, Doncaster, Templestowe and Warrandyte, and is the only municipality within 15km of the CBD without any form

of rail. The current bus network (like most of Melbourne's) operates to timetables better suited to the 1960s, when the area was still predominantly apple orchards, and does not reflect current lifestyles. Bus services are almost non-existent at nights or on weekends.

Light rail would result in a backlog of trams nose-to-tail from State Parliament through to Collingwood, which would not be what anyone could call a successful solution. And buses would be far more effective if operating as feeder services meeting every train, as has proven so successful elsewhere.

The Transport Minister has the opportunity to make the right announcement in his Transport and Liveability statement next year, and the future of Melbourne as a liveable city depends on it.

Tram vs Train to Doncaster	Tram (light rail)	Train (heavy rail)
Indicative Capital Costs	\$250-300 million	\$400 million
Operating Costs	\$7m/yr	\$4m/yr
Fare Evasion	High	Low
Travel Time (Doncaster Hill to City)	Around 40 mins	20-25 mins
Vehicles required in peak hour	Approx. 50	7
Scope for additional services	Low	High
Passenger conditions for travel	Majority standing	Mostly seated



Outer East report

The Outer East Branch has continued towards achieving its goals of ensuring a readily available public transport network throughout Melbourne's east.

Since the official founding of the outer east branch in May 2004 the branch has achieved government commitment for:

- Stud Road (Ringwood to Frankston) SmartBus
- Upgraded bus services in Maroondah, Manningham, Yarra Ranges, Knox, Whitehorse
- Red Orbital connecting Mordialloc, Box Hill, Heidelberg and Northland
- Eastern Freeway rail line feasibility study
- Wellington Road SmartBus
- Submission into removal of Melbourne's worst level crossing, at Springvale Road, Nunawading

The Outer East Branch has achieved these successes and more due to the dedicated work of its members. This list however is just the beginning, much more needs to be done and the State Election in 2006 will provide the opportunity to make public transport a priority issue.

You can help by attending our branch meetings in Suite 2, 17 Carrington Road Box Hill. Beginning in February we will meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 7pm.

Suburbs rally to PT in council elections

Prominent supporters of sustainable transport in the Outer East have been re-elected to Knox Council, despite the best efforts of political opponents. Councillors Mick Van de Vreede and Adam Gill survived a challenge from the Liberal and Labor Parties to retain their positions on Council.

Unfortunately, fellow Councillor Ben Smith was defeated due to aggressive preference-swapping by opponents, despite coming first on primary votes.

Mick and Adam's re-election, which many did not expect, demonstrates the support that exists in the outer suburbs for community-minded councillors who are prepared to take on the State Government over its poor record on transport policy.

And congratulations to Cr Makin

Another result from November's local council ballot is the election to Maroondah Council of PTUA Outer

East Branch convenor Alex Makin, who took the campaign for better suburban public transport services to the polls. We wish Alex all the best as a local councillor and look forward to exciting things happening in Maroondah.

With the election of many new councillors this November, we will be watching developments at the local level with interest.

Calling all RACV members

The RACV is fond of calling for more road expansion, which as we know encourages more traffic and undermines public transport patronage and patronage, as well as diverting much needed funds. (See also Congestion, on page 8.)

Calls for freeways and more lanes on existing roads are often under the guise of safer driving. Yet the main factor in the amount of road trauma is the amount of traffic on our roads. Expanding our road

system, far from reducing accidents, induces more car use which in turn leads to more accidents.

We know that some PTUA members drive – since much of Melbourne has no usable public transport, it is a necessity for many people – and we ask those who are RACV members but disagree with the RACV's stance to make your voice heard. Make sure they know that not all RACV members want continuous building of new

freeways, and a Los Angeles-like city choked with cars.

Letters to the RACV's *Royal Auto* magazine can be sent to:

Royal Auto
550 Princes Highway
Noble Park, 3174

Fax 03 9790 2628

Email:
Jeremy_Bourke@racv.com.au

Letter to the editor

Double-decker trains

I refer to the double-decker suburban train which ran from about 1992 to about 1998. Such a train would be capable of carrying about twice as many passengers as a more conventional train, hence it would help eliminate dangerous peak hour overcrowding and could double carrying capacity especially where Minister Batchelor tells us there is no capacity to operate extra trains. It would also help overcome the driver shortage problem.

– Peter Behan, Pascoe Vale

Double-decker trains actually only increase capacity by about 50% over single-deck trains, because some space is taken by steps and the

single-deck doorway areas, to allow for loading and wheelchair access.

Thus the 4-car test train had a maximum capacity of about 990 (compared with about 650 for a 3-car Comeng train).

While it would seem logical to use trains with a greater capacity, the double-decker has caused problems in the past. Firstly, a lot of expensive engineering work would be needed to allow double-deck trains to pass under bridges. This was done on the Ringwood and Dandenong lines, but none of the others.

Another issue is the much greater loading and unloading time required, not just because there are more passengers, but because of the

narrow stairways to each deck. Thus these types of trains run best where they are used for long journeys with few stops (such as the long-distance Sydney lines) or on systems that have all double-deck trains (again, Sydney being a prime example).

The other problem is that introducing another type of train complicates operations and maintenance, impacting system reliability. We already have five incompatible types: X'Trapolis, Siemens, Hitachi and two variants of Comeng. So while the train fleet should be expanded to provide more services, the PTUA believes it is preferable that this is done through the purchase of more of the same types of trains already in operation.

Transport myths: that freeways relieve congestion

Myth: Freeways relieve traffic congestion

Fact: They may provide some short-term relief, but within a short time the extra road capacity generates more traffic than there was before.

It was hailed as a solution to some of Melbourne's worst traffic problems. Now, four years after it opened, the CityLink tollway is the focus of a new traffic nightmare - worsening peak-hour congestion on the roads that feed into it.

– The Age, 11 November 2004

Road planners often promise that freeway building will relieve traffic congestion, especially on the arterial roads that freeways bypass. But the promised relief, if it arrives at all, is usually only temporary.

Official acknowledgement that freeways do not relieve traffic congestion is found in numerous places. In June 2005 a planning panel investigating new road construction in central Geelong found that the billion-dollar Geelong bypass will not, as popularly supposed, relieve traffic congestion on major roads like Latrobe Terrace. Defending the demolition of houses to build a new slip lane, the panel found that while “there is likely to be a reduction of up to 17% in traffic volumes in Latrobe Tce immediately on the completion of the Bypass”, the traffic will return to former levels “in a relatively short space of time”.

The best known official debunking of this myth is the report of Britain’s Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA) in 1994:

Increases in traffic on improved roads are, in general, not offset by equivalent reductions in traffic on unimproved alternative routes.

The first reason freeways fail to relieve congestion is that freeway

traffic still has to go somewhere before and after it uses the freeway.

The second reason is that new roads create new traffic. VicRoads has consistently underestimated the traffic consequences of new roads in its traffic studies, such as for the South Eastern Freeway link in the 1980s and the Eastern Freeway extension in the 1990s. But this is because its computer models assume that improved roads don’t generate any additional traffic. The evidence shows otherwise: though new roads do temporarily reduce traffic flows on parallel routes, this relief is almost completely wiped out after a few years.

A decade after the opening of CityLink, the parallel King Street route through the CBD is still classified as a major freight route by the road engineers at Melbourne City Council, and this is given as a reason why more priority can’t be given to trams on the cross streets.

In the 1950s, American transport planners claimed that roads respond to traffic, but don’t cause it. This is nonsense, of course. Road engineers used to be the only business people who thought that if they improved their produce, they wouldn’t get more customers! VicRoads planners are still stuck in the 1950s, denying that road building will produce additional traffic.

The Australian Institution of Engineers, the professional body representing road builders, concedes this on paper at least:

New urban roads always attract traffic....the two main sources are induced traffic (trips that would not otherwise have been made had the road not been built) and diverted traffic (trips that would otherwise have followed some alternative route).

Proponents of the westward extension of the Eastern Freeway try to have their cake and eat it too:

Reduced road congestion at the city-end of the Eastern Freeway and the inner north generally, which will be exacerbated in 2008 on completion of the East-link project. The [east-west freeway] would enable easier movement by local traffic, tram, bike and foot and improved amenity between the CBD and the inner northern suburbs – VECCI Infrastructure Task Force, November 2005

In other words: yes, building Eastlink will increase congestion, but don’t worry, this new freeway will reduce it again!

The final verdict – that freeways in the long term increase traffic congestion – came in 1994 with the release of the SACTRA report mentioned above. The British Department of Transport’s own expert team concluded that new roads can and do generate traffic.

Travellers must, as a matter of logic, be assumed to respond to reductions in travel time brought about by road improvements by travelling more or further.

– Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment, UK, 1994

In the heyday of freeway building in the 1950s, the well-known architect and visionary Lewis Mumford warned that trying to cure traffic congestion with more road capacity was like trying to cure obesity by loosening your belt.

The result of too much belt-loosening can be seen throughout the USA, where ‘suburban gridlock’ is endemic. We are not yet at such an advanced stage of urban decay; we can avoid it entirely if we want to.

⇒ For an extended version of this article, see www.ptua.org.au/myths/congestion.shtml

⇒ The State Government is conducting a congestion inquiry. Find out more, and read the PTUA submission at www.vcec.vic.gov.au