

It's time to get back on track

As this issue of PTUA News goes to print, the government is preparing its transport blueprint for the next decade: the Transport and Liveability Statement.

After years of pressure, the wishes of the people of Victoria have never been clearer, and they are perhaps best summed up by a press release entitled "Trams, trees and neighbourhoods: Melburnians set their priorities for the next 30 years", from 2002 from the ministers of Planning and Transport, reporting on the community forums held the previous year:

Among the issues raised was the need for ... Increased emphasis on public transport and cycling facilities, instead of roads.

The Minister for Transport, Peter Batchelor, said the strategy would include numerous short and long-term actions for improving public transport and reducing Victorian's reliance on cars.

"If we are serious about reducing car dependence, we need to make public transport an attractive and viable alternative for Melburnians," Mr Batchelor said.

Yet despite this recognition, the government has completely failed to heed the views of the community, and most of Melbourne remains car-dependent. Two-thirds of the population remain outside the reach of the tram and train networks, reliant on bus services which for the most part are notoriously infrequent, and even with spiralling petrol prices are no alternative to car travel.

After the disappointing Metropolitan Transport Plan in late 2004, the Transport and Liveability Statement is a chance for the government to show it's serious about public transport, that it's willing to genuinely make it a priority to bring usable, 7-day-a-week, frequent public transport into every suburb of Melbourne.

Alliance unites for better public transport

The Coalition for People's Transport, which includes the PTUA, Environment Victoria, Victorian Council of Social Service and Friends of the Earth, launched its Alternative Transport and Liveability Statement in February, calling for the state government to "get back on track".



The campaign highlights the calls for improved public transport coming from a range of community organisations, for environmental, liveability and social justice reasons.

The document, *Transport and Liveability: The Path to a Sustainable Victoria*, paints a stark picture of what Melbourne could become if the current road-building frenzy continues, and shows how improved public transport across the city can bring benefits to all facets of our liveability.

You can find out more about the campaign from the web site www.melbourneontrack.org.au or see the leaflet included with this newsletter.

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)

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.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

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

Planning weekend report

As is customary each year, the PTUA Committee spent the weekend of 4-5 February at Commonground near Seymour, mapping out the PTUA's strategic plan for 2006.

Since change in transport policy ultimately depends on having a Government that is committed to action on sustainable transport, the lead-up to the state election will be central to the PTUA's campaign activities this year. The Committee has formed several campaign teams to manage different aspects of the campaign, which aims to ensure that sustainable transport is a key election issue and obtain strong policy commitments from candidates right across the political landscape.

In addition to our major campaign we will continue to monitor and respond to the issues of the moment, such as the introduction of Smartcards and the difficulties this poses for public transport users.

Also discussed were the effective running of the PTUA office, our modestly healthy financial situation, and ways of further boosting our membership.

If you are interested in getting active and assisting with our election campaign, please contact Tony Morton: secretary@ptua.org.au.

Volunteers needed

As a voluntary community group with a small budget, we are always looking for new faces to provide volunteer help in the PTUA office and for campaign work. This is particularly important in the coming year as we hope to make the organisation function more effectively for our campaign work.

Duties of office volunteers include responding to phone and email enquiries, processing membership payments,

and assisting with campaign tasks. Informal training is provided so that volunteers are familiar with PTUA policies and office procedures. The office in Ross House is a quiet environment and internet access is provided.

If you can spare half a day a week or more to volunteer, please contact Tony Morton: secretary@ptua.org.au

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 15th April 2006

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The real “balance” between freeways and public transport

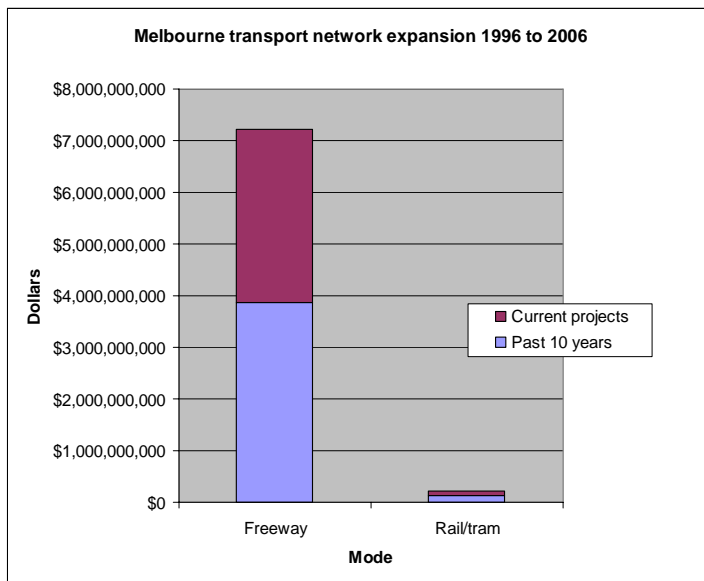
When faced with accusations that it is spending too much on roads and not enough on public transport, it is common for the government to play the “balance” card. They argue that we need both; that there has to be a balance of spending.

It’s only when you look closer at where the new money is going that the real picture becomes starkly apparent. We studied metropolitan Melbourne’s freeway expansion projects of the past ten years, against the tram and train expansion projects for the same period.

While some \$7 billion

has been, or is currently being spent on motorway expansion in metropolitan Melbourne, the total spent on rail and tram network expansion in that time is just \$225

million, around a thirtieth. Much of the road funding comes from the private sector, but it is the government that seeks and approves of the spending and construction.



The results speak volumes for the real priorities of successive state governments. They may make noises about wanting both road and public transport systems, but the reality is it is the freeway system which is continually funded and extended, not only starving public transport extensions of funding, but directly undermining it by making it easier for people to drive.

See the figures used:
[⇒www.ptua.org.au/newsletter/](http://www.ptua.org.au/newsletter/)

It’s time to integrate transport and planning

It is a major concern that the lack of progress towards the goal of increasing public transport patronage stems from the poor integration that exists between government departments, such as the Department of Infrastructure (DOI) and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

While the questionable goal of higher urban density as supported by the DSE is proceeding rapidly, the provision of better public transport under the jurisdiction of the DOI has been minimal. Furthermore the Department of Treasury and Finance has not signed off on the goal of increasing public transport modal share to 20% by 2020, meaning that the department which controls the final allocation of budgetary funding is failing to support key government targets.

Likewise excessive layers of bureaucracy act as a filter, meaning that the approval for the funding of projects needs to pass an

overbearing number of barriers through management ‘gatekeepers’.

In regard to transport expenditure the Public Transport Division within the DOI often competes directly with VicRoads for project funding. Unfortunately this is not a fair process, since the Public Transport Division does not have direct contact and hence direct influence on the Secretary of the DOI and likewise does not have direct contact or influence on the Transport Minister Peter Batchelor.

VicRoads meanwhile reports directly to the Transport Minister. This means that while the Public Transport Division is denied direct access to the key decision makers VicRoads is able to directly lobby these key decision makers resulting in increased likelihood of success.

Not only is there a lack of support for Melbourne 2030 across government departments but there is also a lack of intra-departmental support within the DOI. This is exemplified due to the excessive

number of ‘gatekeepers’ that the Public Transport Division needs to face, all of which filter information and serve as impediments to implementation.

After years of endless rhetoric it is time for the Bracks Government to act on delivering the much needed public transport improvements which are crucial to enabling the success of the languishing Melbourne 2030 Metropolitan Strategy. Time is of the essence given ever increasing petrol prices and the disastrous effects these increases have on household income and economic growth.

Victoria and Melbourne 2030 requires the abolition of VicRoads and the combining of Planning and Infrastructure (including Roads and Public Transport) into a combined government department, as has already been done in Western Australia, and which was recommended by Victoria’s Infrastructure Planning Council in 2002

It's time for bus reform

Melbourne's bus contracts expire in 2007 providing an opportunity to get the contracts right. It is clear that reform of the bus network will be crucial if the government has any chance of actually achieving increased public transport modal share.

The overhaul of Melbourne's bus network would allow routes to be designed to connect activity centres ensuring consistency with Melbourne 2030. Local bus routes would serve residential areas

removed from the main road network to ensure no one missed out. These local services would connect to the principal bus network increasing the coverage, frequency and span of Melbourne's public transport network.

The concept of zero-based planning – that is the complete redesign of the bus network – would ensure that Melbourne's bus network operates in a comparable fashion to the tram network - that is routes that are

direct, efficient, frequent and readily available.

Bus operators need to view bus routes as a holistic network and not as individual fiefdoms.

With the upcoming Transport and Liveability Statement and widespread acknowledgement that bus services must be improved, the government and the opposition must pledge to overhaul the bus network.

Commonwealth Games bus services provide a model

Throughout the Commonwealth Games in March, many parts of Melbourne will experience usable evening bus services for the first time. To provide spectators in most suburbs with car-free access to games venues, 50 suburban bus routes will operate until late at night on weekdays.

These services are significant for many reasons:

- They will be timetabled to actually connect with trains, up to the last service from the city, at many stations, to minimise waiting times.
- While not brilliant, they will run at reasonable frequencies such that timetables won't be essential.
- They will provide good coverage across the metropolitan area, with most

people being within 1km of a public transport service.

Such bus scheduling principles are commonplace in cities that have truly integrated public transport networks.

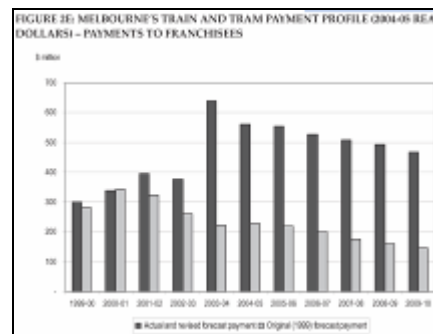
It's time for the government to bring Melbourne's bus network out of 1950s thinking and provide coordinated and frequent services to all suburbs all year round.

It's time for public control of public transport

Melburnians have had enough of the privatised mess that our public transport has become since 1999. Our shortage of trains and drivers is in large part due to asset-stripping by private operator National Express. Yarra Trams has proved to be more interested in removing tram stops than expanding its services. And much of the service planning that is needed falls into the gaps between an unaccountable transport bureaucracy and the minimal service obligations of operators.

But perhaps the most scandalous aspect of privatisation is that we are now paying twice as much to run public transport as we were under public operation in 1999, for a no more frequent but less reliable service. Perversely, this serves the

State Government's interests as it can point to the huge amount of money being spent as proof that it can't afford to boost services further. And it provides ammunition to the road lobby, who can denounce public transport as a waste of money.



(Source: Victorian Auditor-General)

Fixing this expensive mess means re-establishing public control over

public transport, as the government should have done when given the opportunity by National Express in 2002. To be effective, public transport should be planned and managed by a lean, accountable public agency modelled on those in overseas cities such as Zurich. Private operators should simply run the services.

With subsidies back under control, the extra funds available can be used on urgent public transport infrastructure projects, to fund radically expanded services ahead of the expected patronage increases, or returned to general revenue to fund schools and hospitals. And we would finally have the strong central service planning needed to run a first-rate multi-modal system.

It's time for more trains

Overcrowding is not just confined to peak periods these days, with weekend, evening and off-peak trains on some lines regularly being standing room only, and occasionally leaving people behind.

Paying passengers should not have to tolerate this level of crowding, which is commonly caused by Connex running three-car trains, even on busy lines. As a short-term

measure, the State Government should compel Connex to run six-car sets on busy lines to relieve overcrowding.

In the medium term, train services more frequent than the current 20, 30 or 40 minutes are required. After a recent service boost, all but a handful of Perth suburban stations



now receive service at least every 15 minutes seven days a week.

With overcrowding showing that demand exists, the time is ripe for Melbourne to stop making excuses and match Perth's train service levels.

It's time to fill our railway gaps

While Melbourne continues to grow and develop, Melbourne's train network is simply not keeping up. With just two electrification projects in 6 years in government (Sydenham and a scaled back Craigieburn extension), many parts of Melbourne are missing out.

The upcoming Transport and Liveability Statement is a last chance for the government to show it is serious about expanding the important role of Melbourne's rail network, providing high speed high capacity public transport links into Melbourne's growth corridors and to principal activity centres.

If the government is serious about providing more of Melbourne with useable public transport, the following suburban rail extensions must be included in the Transport and Liveability Statement:

- Expanding the Epping line to South Morang is the number one priority in the government's

own Whittlesea Strategic Transport Infrastructure Study of 2002.

- Doncaster Hill is a principal activity centre in the 2030 strategy, and needs a heavy rail line through to East Doncaster, as planned in 1969 and proven feasible in 1990.
- A rail line from Huntingdale to Rowville, passing Monash University and connecting the Stud Park major activity centre.
- Electrifying from Frankston to Baxter would provide high quality service to the area south of Frankston and connect the Monash campus at Leawarra.
- Electrification from Sydenham to Sunbury will better connect the two centres to the rest of the train network.

In addition, stations are required along some lines to provide access to existing rail services:

- A Southland station would serve one of Melbourne's largest and busiest shopping centres.
- On the Werribee line, a station at Newport West would service the Victoria University campus. Stations are also needed further west, at Derrimut and Forsyth Roads.
- Lyndhurst Park is a rapidly growing residential area adjacent to the Cranbourne line
- Coolaroo station is an omission on the Craigieburn line extension that must be filled.
- Campbellfield train station would serve the nearby shopping centre provide connections between the future Smartbus and the Upfield line.

It's time for more frequent country services

In the wake of the fast rail closures, country train travellers are still waiting for regular interval services throughout the day and evening on the newly laid tracks.

It's time for services that are truly competitive with driving, with half-hourly trains to Geelong, and hourly or better trains on the Bendigo, Ballarat and Latrobe Valley lines.

The country network beyond the fast rail lines is at a standstill: there are gaping holes in the network and a radical restructure is required. The densely populated parts of Victoria should be covered by a web of regular, interconnecting train and coach services based on the highly efficient Swiss model.

As in outer metropolitan Melbourne, bus services in regional centres need extensive upgrades rather than a few token additional services. With people struggling in the face of high petrol prices, now is the time to make regional public transport a genuine transport alternative rather than a service of last resort.

It's time for tram priority that works for passengers

Tram services need to work for passengers, not just the operator. PTUA, in its discussions with VicRoads about Think Tram, is insisting that tram stops be located at major intersections and passenger generators, and at all CBD intersections, not at arbitrary intervals.

Departure side stops are only acceptable where traffic light priority prevents trams having to stop twice. Tram stop design should be permeable to reduce pedestrian congestion and walking distances.

“Superstops” are over designed and consequently overly expensive and we recommend platform stops that can provide accessibility and amenity without such intrusion.

PTUA supports implementation of accessible stops across the network, but denounces using them as an excuse to remove other stops. Trams should be given priority at traffic lights to speed up the service and benefit passengers, unlike stop removal that only benefits cars.

Tram-only lanes should be enforced. Traffic planning should give priority to smooth running of

trams, carrying possibly hundreds of people, as a higher priority than motor vehicles that typically carry only 1 or 2.

The government needs to commit to extending the Think Tram programme across the city, but also needs to ensure that it is implemented in such a way that does not inconvenience tram passengers and antagonise local residents and businesses, as has been the case in the past.

RIP Tram stop 7, 1886-2006

Following its funeral last year, it is with deep regret that the PTUA relays news of the passing of tram stop 7 (Russell and Collins Sts), taken from us in early February.

Stop 7 and its neighbour at Exhibition Street, stop 8, have been replaced by a single Superstop midway between Exhibition and Russell Streets. Curiously the Superstop features “Stop 7” marking on its Next Tram screens, but “Stop 8” on the tram stop sign. Perhaps it should have been number Stop 7 ½.



In accordance with the wishes of the Melbourne City Council traffic engineers, no tram priority has been installed at the intersections,

therefore trams will continue to pause at the ex-stops in uncomfortable silence for up to 45 seconds as they wait for a green light (see picture).

But it's not all bad news. Since the funeral raised awareness of tram issues, the Melbourne City Council draft Transport Strategy has advocated tram priority, no more removal of tram stops, and that stops should remain at every major intersection. Should the draft be adopted, it will be something of a turnaround for the council, and a positive move for tram users.

It's time for tram extensions

Back in the days before people had cars, the tramways and railways competed for passengers, and built two disjointed systems. It's now 2006 and a population boom (and many subsequent new suburbs without proper public transport) and an integrated ticketing system in place means that many tram routes now terminate in illogical locations.

It's time that trams were extended from current locations to major generator points, whether these be shopping centres (48 to Doncaster, 3 to Chadstone, or 75 to Knox), or to their nearest station (6 to Ashburton, 72 to Caulfield, 5 to Darling and 67 to Carnegie).

There are many instances where the extension is only 1 kilometre or less but leaving the system in its current

disjointed form will continue to leave people without convenient interchange points.

The relatively small cost to extend these services to sensible locations would be money wisely invested and ensure the connectivity and usability of Melbourne's trams as well as boost patronage.

It's time to bring useable transport to all of Melbourne

Is it time cars featured health warnings like those on cigarette packets? Maybe trains should feature the Heart Foundation tick of approval? A recent study of NSW commuters found that the more people drive, the more likely they are to be obese.

Research has consistently shown that walking, cycling and public transport reduce the incidence of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis and depression. And these are just the indirect health effects.

Each year hundreds of people are killed on Victoria's roads and several thousand seriously injured.

For many of the survivors, the mental scars long outlast the physical injuries.

International experience shows that one of the most effective ways to save lives is to shift journeys from cars to public transport. Public transport is at least five times safer than car travel in Victoria, and provides mobility for people who are unfit to drive or lack confidence behind the wheel.

Public transport is often the only way to access employment, education and health care for the one third of Melburnians who cannot drive. Inadequate and poorly integrated public transport is

preventing many people from participating in the social and economic life of the state.

Rising fuel prices are also eating into household budgets and reducing consumption of goods and services with higher local employment content. Many of the 14,000 full-time job losses in Victoria over the last six months are the result of high fuel expenditure displacing other retail spending.

With oil prices likely to remain high or climb even further, the social and economic health of the state depends upon a renewed commitment to public transport.

It's time to start removing level crossings

A sustainable, integrated approach to transport planning obviously means attention must be given to road planning as well as public transport, walking and cycling. Road projects should be considered that improve the efficiency and amenity of the network without providing an incentive for increased use of cars and trucks. A good example of such a road project is the removal of level crossings.

Such projects would continue the programme that Vicroads' predecessor had in the 1960s, to progressively eliminate all level crossings.

While Sydney completed its own programme some twenty years ago (with one or two exceptions), Melbourne cancelled its programme after 1969 in order to save up money for freeways.

While the main beneficiaries of level crossing removal are motorists, there are also benefits to train travellers (who gain more reliable services, increased speed where crossing tram routes, and greater scope for higher service frequencies) as well as bus and tram users and pedestrians.

This year will also see increased activity on the Eastern Transport

Coalition's "Trackdown" campaign, which aims to remove four level crossings on the Ringwood line (including Middleborough and Springvale Roads) by lowering the rail line, similar to the successful Boronia project in 1997.

Lowering of tracks remains in our view the best way of eliminating level crossings as it avoids destroying the existing streetscape (contrary to what has happened at locations such as Huntingdale and Sunshine).

For more information on Trackdown, contact our Outer East branch: outereast@ptua.org.au

It's time for track duplication

Melbourne's train network is suffering greatly from unreliability due to many sections of track still not yet being duplicated. These single track 'pinch points' not only cause delays at the location of single track, but have a severe flow-on effect right across the line, and ultimately the entire train network.

The Hurstbridge line has many of these instances - duplicating Clifton Hill to Westgarth, Heidelberg to

Rosanna and Greensborough to Eltham would ensure a far higher reliability for the line. Similarly single track sections from Mooroolbark to Lilydale and Ferntree Gully to Belgrave would ensure that commuters would not have to wait up to 30 minutes between train services off-peak, and Keon Park to Epping would remove one excuse for not extending trains to South Morang.

And due to single track on the Altona loop, Werribee Line passengers even in peak hour are squeezed onto services running only every 20 minutes.

Duplicating these single sections of train line will bring great benefits for train frequencies and reliability right across the network.

20% by 2020 – How we're travelling

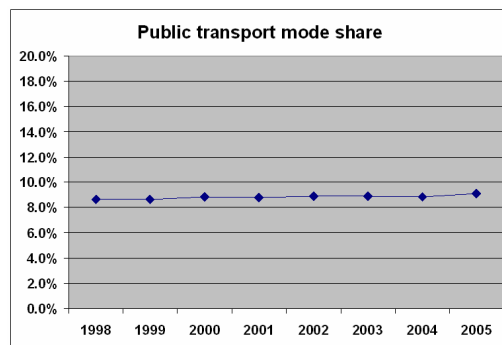
Strong public transport measures are needed in the upcoming Transport and Liveability Statement to ensure that the State Government achieves its goal of having 20 per cent of motorised journeys on public transport by 2020.

The government's record is best characterised as 'minding the shop', rather than the substantive improvements it promised at the 1999 election. It is true that there have been some tram extensions, improvements to outer suburban

bus services plus a couple of SmartBus and TrainLink routes.

However as detailed in this issue, more wide-ranging improvements are necessary to enhance system frequency, reliability, connectedness and capacity to make public transport sufficiently attractive to double its patronage as per the government's target.

The PTUA strongly supports the target. We consider that 20% by 2020 is eminently achievable, but



with just fourteen years until then and little to show for the strategy's first three, it should be taking steps now to realise its aim.

(Graph source: VATS, State budget papers, ABS population statistics, projections)

PTUA turns 30 this year

This year is the 30th anniversary of the PTUA, which originated as the Train Travellers Association in 1976. We're planning to mark the

anniversary in the newsletter and at a members' function later in the year. If you have any particular recollections of the past 30 years,

we'd appreciate hearing from you. Email memories@ptua.org.au or get in touch in writing or by phone via the Office (see details on page 2).

Commuter Club – discounted yearly Metcards

As a member service, PTUA is offering discounted yearly tickets through Metlink's Commuter Club. The offer is more than 9% discount on the retail price which means that 12 months travel cost less than 10 monthly tickets, so it's a great deal for regular travellers. The calendar year counts from first validation and tickets are refundable pro-rata from

Metlink under certain circumstances. Prices are:

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Zone1 \$960 | Zone2 \$645 | Zone3 \$645 |
| Z1+2 \$1480 | Z2+3 \$1300 | Z123 \$1810 |

We can package up the offer with a membership for any non-members who wish to participate and we can upgrade single memberships to family if you wish to include other members of your household.

To obtain your ticket 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. Orders are placed monthly. Email directly to tickets@ptua.org.au or contact us by mailing or phoning the office.

Car sharing – special offer for PTUA members

While we know that PTUA members are amongst Melbourne's most dedicated public transport users, we also know only too well that for some trips, PT just doesn't cut it.

Fortunately there is now an alternative to paying thousands of

dollars to buy and run a car for those trips. GoGet car sharing has reached Melbourne, and allows you to avoid those costs by having access to a car only when you need it, with a per-hour rate for use.

Bookings are made by phone or via the Web.

GoGet is offering PTUA members \$25 off the membership fee until June 2006. For details, contact GoGet via their web site at www.goget.com.au or phone 1300 769 389.

GADZOOKS! I'VE BEEN ROUND THE LOOP FIVE TIMES, BUT I STILL CAN'T FIND "SPENCER STREET"

