

Government plan fails 15 minute test

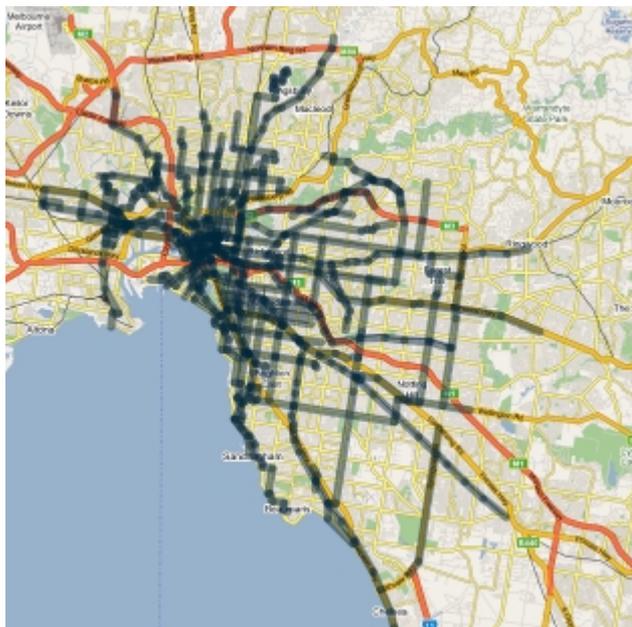
Why mode share is stagnant

There's nothing that discourages public transport usage more than the prospect of long waits for services. Anybody with a choice does simply not put up with waiting, nor do they want to check timetables to minimise that waiting. They drive instead.

Studies such as the government's unreleased Train Plan have shown repeatedly that until services run at 15 minute or better frequencies (for most trips), large numbers of choice passengers will remain in their cars.

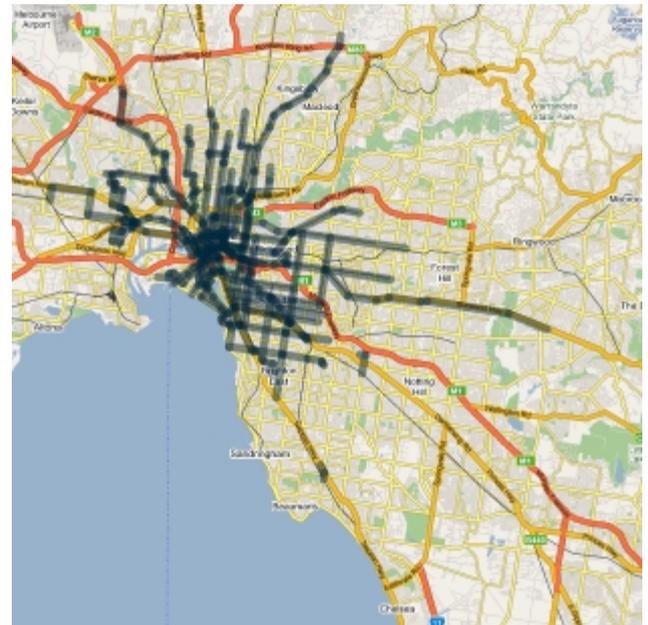
Yet as the maps on this page show, few public transport services in Melbourne run at or better than every 15 minutes. Even during peak hour, a number of railway stations, including locations as close to the CBD as Brunswick and Yarraville, have services worse than every 15 minutes, underscoring why parallel motorways are so congested.

During weekday off-peak hours, trams and some train lines offer frequencies high enough to travel without timetables, but vast swathes of Melbourne's suburbs have only infrequent services:



15 min or better services, weekday off-peak

The second map below shows weekend daytime services, and is even more stark – for the most part only those living in walking distance of tram lines have access to routes running every 15 minutes or better:



15 min or better services, Saturday daytime

During the evening the situation is even worse, and it becomes crystal clear why just 8% of trips are by public transport, and why roads are increasingly congested during most times of the day.

The state government's Meeting Our Transport Challenges plan, announced in May, does little to alleviate this – which is why the PTUA has branded it a failure. Despite including billions in spending, virtually the only upgrades to 15 minutes or better will be a small number of orbital Smartbus routes, many replacing existing routes which largely meet that standard already.

Until services right across Melbourne offer frequencies that minimise waiting time and don't require users to schedule their trips to match timetables, patronage growth and mode share are likely to remain stagnant.

These maps and more ⇨ www.ptua.org.au

Keeping in touch...

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Membership Enquiries

Call or e-mail the office (see above)

PTUA members can obtain cheap yearly Metcards – see

www.ptua.org.au/members/offers

Internet

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

The PTUA runs email lists for member discussions, and to stay up to date with PTUA events, and view archived newsletters online:

www.ptua.org.au/members/resources

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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.

“End of Suburbia” free screenings

The PTUA is hosting more screenings of the documentary ‘The End of Suburbia’ about the end of the age of cheap oil.

Tuesday September 5th, 6:45pm
Function rooms 3/4
Paddy O’Donoghue Centre
18-34 Buckley Street, Noble Park (Melway 89 E2)

The film screening will be followed by a discussion about how we can adapt our communities, transport choices and lifestyles to living with less and more expensive oil.

Another screening will take place in Doncaster in the near future. Keep an eye on our web site for details.

⇒ www.ptua.org.au

Annual General Meeting and 30th birthday celebration

The PTUA Annual General Meeting (as well as a celebration of our 30th birthday) will take place on Thursday 28th of September 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 22nd September.

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)

PTUA Geelong branch challenges MPs to go car-free

The Geelong Branch of the PTUA has challenged Geelong's State MPs to survive seven days without driving a car. The idea was that MPs should experience Geelong's poor public transport service levels first-hand

We wrote to the six MPs, outlining our rules for the challenge, and included log sheets for them to record their PT journeys, or why they couldn't use PT in particular instances. We also enclosed the relevant bus timetables, although we seriously considered not doing so, given that "normal" PT users have to furnish their own.

We gave the MPs two clear weeks to reply. Unfortunately we didn't twig that this period coincided with the school holidays and a number of MPs were away during that time.

A week after sending the letters we put out a media release announcing the challenge. This led to a story in the Geelong Advertiser, which quoted the reaction of two MPs ("ludicrous" - Michael Crutchfield). We also gained an interview on the local community radio station.

After the two week period we had heard nothing formally from any MP. Due to the lack of response, we decided to modify the Challenge and ask MPs to use PT only between their home and office. When we rang the MPs offices to let them know, it emerged that most MPs were on holidays and hadn't considered the original Challenge. But having already told the first couple of electoral assistants that we were revising the Challenge, there was no going back unfortunately. A letter was sent confirming the new Challenge.

We put out a media release announcing the revised Challenge,

noting the poor response so far, although we had to concede that some hadn't yet considered it.

We gave MPs a clear week to reply to the second letter, and all did so, except (surprise, surprise) for Mr Crutchfield. But we already knew his attitude!

Our media release announcing "acceptances" led to a further radio interview, and got good coverage in the Geelong Advertiser and Geelong News, and a par in the other local free weekly.

Obviously trying to use poor PT can be a big sacrifice. We didn't try to portray the Challenge as involving self-sacrificing TravelSmart-type martyrdom, because we didn't want MPs reacting self-righteously. So, for example, we didn't say that the seven days had to be consecutive.

Tactically, we were unfailingly polite in most of our documents, using the words "suggestion" and "invitation" etc. We only made public comment after giving MPs time to digest and respond to our Challenge.

We didn't get stuck into the MPs who we said "declined to participate". Their answers were often self-incriminating, and even the media themselves got stuck into them for us! The Geelong Advertiser journalist herself noted that none of the MPs had taken up the original full seven day Challenge.

The final responses from each of the MPs were as follows.

Participating MPs:

Ian Trezise (MLA for Geelong) – Will rely on public transport for five weekdays from the 31st July (closest to the original Challenge).

John Eren (MLC for Geelong Province) – Committed to using public transport between home and his office for 5 consecutive weekdays in early August.

Lisa Neville (MLA for Bellarine) – Will rely on public transport to travel between her home and her office for 6 non-consecutive days, and will try to finish the challenge by early-mid September.

Non-Participating MPs

Elaine Carbines (MLC for Geelong Province) – Says that she understands the problems with PT, particularly on the Bellarine Peninsula, but wouldn't be able to participate due to the extent of her varied commitments.

Peter Loney (MLA for Lara) – Rejected the challenge on the basis that it was not well based, as taking public transport between his home and office is "relatively straightforward". He also noted that his electorate has a large non-urban section, and also that it would be inappropriate to leave a car in the Corio Village Shopping Centre car park overnight. He acknowledges that "bus routes and timetables do not necessarily serve those who wish to travel within the electorate, and modal connections are difficult."

Michael Crutchfield (MLA for South Barwon) – No response received since he described the original Car-Free Challenge in the press as "absolutely ludicrous".

We look forward with interest to reading the reports of the participating MPs.

The PTUA will also consider running the Car-Free challenge for MPs in metropolitan Melbourne.

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 30th September 2006

Newsletter contributors: Daniel Bowen, Jeremy Lunn, Alex Makin, Tony Morton, Tim Petersen, Paul Westcott, Kerryn Wilmot. Printed on recycled paper by Flash Print, Collingwood. Our thanks to Max Nicholson and the rest of the dedicated mail out team.

New train timetables on the way

V/Line has announced new timetables for the Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Seymour and Gippsland lines, to take effect from September, to take advantage of the now largely-completed Regional Fast Rail changes.

PTUA members may recall that there had been some concern that after all the hundreds of millions of dollars spent, and years of disruption during construction works, not to mention the foolish single-tracking of the Bendigo line, that the new timetables would offer little for country travellers.

However V/Line and the government appear to have delivered new schedules that, while not perfect, do bring welcome extra services. Fortunately they have resisted running any more than token “flagship” services with the “super-express” stopping pattern (which are only of use to a minority of users), although some towns on the Gippsland line will suffer from

a significant gap in services during the PM peak.

The new schedules will provide services that are hourly (or close to it) on weekdays between Melbourne and Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Traralgon and Seymour. Weekends are still not all hourly, but some significant gaps have been plugged.

Services will also run later into the evening in both directions, allowing visitors to Melbourne to enjoy evenings in the city and avoid peak hour. Likewise, day-trippers into the country will be able to avoid having to rush back to Melbourne.

We would have liked to have seen more frequent off-peak services -- half-hourly to Geelong, for instance -- and peak hours remain a concern due to overcrowding. But the new V/Line timetables are a big step forward.

And in the suburbs...

New timetables are also expected on suburban lines shortly. Starting in September there will be a handful

of extra peak hour services on the Broadmeadows, Sydenham, and Werribee lines, and minor modifications to other services.

From October trains will run until 1am on most lines on Friday and Saturday nights, and extra peak-hour trains on the Dandenong line.

While any extra services are to be welcomed (particularly later-running), we believe the new suburban schedules don't go nearly far enough.

At the time of writing it appears there will be no extra off-peak trains, easily achievable without investment in signal upgrades or trains. Lines currently suffering regular peak hour overcrowding, such as Frankston, will get no extra trains. And after 7pm, passengers on most lines will continue to wait 30 minutes between trains (something which was proven solvable during the Commonwealth Games, when all lines ran every 20 minutes in the evenings).

Bourke Street trams get low priority

Once again, the engineers at VicRoads and Yarra Trams are planning to delete stops from the CBD and move others, this time on Bourke Street. Under the plans revealed in July, stops will be deleted from King and Exhibition Streets, while stops at William, Queen and Russell Streets will be moved away from intersections.

While the PTUA supports the introduction of platform stops, we are opposed to the relocating of stops away from streets intersections, and the wide spacing of stops in high demand areas such as the CBD.

One likely explanation for the moving of stops is that the engineers do not wish to disrupt the movement of cars at intersections, despite being a highly inefficient way to move people in the CBD.

Currently traffic signals at the William and King Street intersections routinely give more green time to cross traffic than Bourke Street. There do not appear to be any plans to change this bias against Bourke (and Collins) Street trams, despite it disproving the City of Melbourne's traffic engineers' claim that it is not possible to reduce 90 second cycle times because of pedestrian crossing times.

Given this is not the case it is clear that the engineers could either adjust green times dynamically to give trams priority, or reduce the cycle time to reduce delays to trams overall - if they wanted to.

With trams stopping at both red lights (with no priority mechanisms) and at tram stops, it is a recipe for slower tram services,



contrary to the goals of Think Tram. We already see trams stopped at red lights with doors closed on Collins Street and outside St Paul's Cathedral. Yarra Trams has yet to produce any evidence of improved travel times or reliability from previous changes.

Unfortunately, it appears that cars and other traffic will continue to get priority over trams under the proposals, which are fundamentally contrary to the City of Melbourne's new transport strategy.

It's time the Think Tram program got serious about tram priority instead of removing stops from street intersections where they belong.

Meeting the weekend transport challenge

Melbourne's public transport is failing to capitalise on changing travel patterns by clinging to antiquated weekend timetables.

New Vicroads data indicates that almost a quarter of Melbourne car trips are made on Saturdays and Sundays. Ted Vincent, Vicroads Traffic Manager for Melbourne, says that the phenomenon has arisen over the last four or five years. On some streets weekday peak hours have been replaced by high traffic volume throughout the day, seven days a week. Road congestion and competition for parking spots is increasing due to the lack of a practical alternative in many areas. This presents a golden opportunity for public transport to assist, but only if services are sufficient to attract choice passengers.

Despite population growth and greater weekend travel, Saturday train service levels on major lines remain pretty much as they were in the 1970s. The last network-wide weekend service upgrade took place in 1999, when Sunday train and tram services were boosted. Despite recent traffic growth, there have

only been small improvements to some bus routes and no increase to most train and tram frequencies since.

To meet modern travel needs, reduce congestion and make public transport a mode of choice on the weekends, the PTUA is calling for a fresh round weekend service increases across the network.

The main elements could be:

- A Perth-style 15-minute (or better) off-peak service frequency to apply across as much of the suburban rail, tram and bus network as possible seven days a week
- And end to mismatching Sunday evening train frequencies (currently mostly 30 minutes on half the network, 40 on the other).
- Re-organisation of main bus routes to follow direct, easy-to-understand routes
- Local buses to operate to simplified timetables seven days a week to connect with trains.

Increased weekend travel is part of long-term social shifts due to the rise of the dual income family, weekend shopping and the spread of casual working hours. None of these will go away in a hurry. Hence growing weekend travel presents one of the best opportunities for patronage growth there is.

Rising petrol prices, congestion and parking can only increase public transport's relative advantage. Financially, better weekend services make sense too; more so than peak services, weekend improvements are cheap. This is because they use existing assets more intensively for revenue service, with the additional costs confined largely to staff.

The market for weekend travel is now proven and the required changes need not be expensive. But will the government boost services network-wide for this fast-growing market? It will if it is genuine about increasing patronage and the Minister's recently re-affirmed 20% by 2020 'stretch target'.

Rowville residents demand Rowville rail

Residents in Rowville have for the past several years remained determined in calling for the Rowville rail line. The PTUA's End of Suburbia screening in Rowville in July backed-up this call with a number of resolutions calling for the immediate scoping of this project.

Recently the Victorian Liberals have stated their support for the line with a pledge to provide detailed scoping works for the project.

The Victorian Greens in their Transport Policy have also supported the Rowville rail which featured among a number of rail extensions. Additionally the Greens



called for an overhaul of bus services to ensure frequent, direct and readily available services.

The centrepiece of the Greens Policy however was the call for

much needed institutional reform that would finally see the fiefdom of VicRoads incorporated into a combined Transport and Planning Authority. The Draft report into Traffic Congestion prepared Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission has called for a similar restructuring as did Premier Bracks' own Infrastructure Planning Council in 2002.

With both the Liberals and Greens calling for the Rowville rail it is clear that the Bracks Government's mantra of 'let them ride buses' is not satisfactory to the people of Rowville.

East and southeast united in calls for better public transport

The PTUA Outer East Branch is holding regular forums showcasing the film *End of Suburbia* which outlines the reasons behind rising petrol prices and the implications this holds for suburban residents.

As recently explained in the Four Corners report "Peak Oil?" it is clear that the age of cheap and never-ending oil over.

End of Suburbia forums have been held in Rowville and Blackburn, both of which had packed audiences and made resolutions calling for urgent public transport improvements.

While the State Government did recently unveil its *Meeting Our*

Transport Challenges document, with its headline figure of \$10.5 billion of spending, throwing money at an issue does not solve it if that money is not well allocated.

Melbourne's bus network is largely dysfunctional and requires urgent reform. Simply spending money will not resolve this issue. The bus network must be re-designed from scratch to ensure that main roads are provided with a level of service comparable to the train and tram networks.

On first appearance this may seem to be a big ask, yet inner city areas enjoy a network of tram services that operate generally every 10-20 minutes through to midnight. Outer

suburban residents are expected to make do with bus services that in four years time may, if we are lucky, operate until 9pm and run every hour.

Families are doing it tough with rising petrol prices eating into budget. It is clear that an alternative to car dependence is required.

The outer suburbs have suffered first hand from the broken promises of the Bracks Government, and the PTUA is fighting to ensure this does not happen again.

**More *End Of Suburbia* screenings ⇨
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Middleborough Road mess

In what has been a complete failure on community consultation, local residents are up in arms over the grade separation of the Middleborough Road level crossing being carried out by VicRoads. Laburnum station will be rebuilt, but it will be moved away from Middleborough Road, jeopardising local bus connections.

While the distance is not great, pedestrian linkages to the station will be extremely poor. For example, to get from the western side of Middleborough Road (i.e. Box Hill High School) to a city-

bound train, one would have to go under the road, back up onto the bridge to cross the railway line then down onto an access path to the station. A circuitous route, to say the least.

Residents are also concerned that with the provision of space for an eventual third track there will be no space for a third platform.

During construction, commuters on the Belgrave/Lilydale line will face a six week closure. VicRoads admits that a total of 55 buses will be required in peak times, in order to transfer passengers from

Blackburn to a temporary station at Box Hill East. How well this will work is anyone's guess.

The flaws of this project are many, and stem from the government failing to take a high-level view of the area and the problems of level crossings in the area.

And while Middleborough Road will eventually get its grade separation, it should be noted that the local community has long expressed the view that the infamous Springvale Road (Nunawading) level crossing is the highest priority.

PT usage falls after Games

One of the hopes before the Commonwealth Games was that the emphasis on public transport would be reflected in increased usage afterwards. However this appears not to have happened, with about half of users surveyed indicating that their willingness to use it had not increased.

The temporary Games service increases, which saw 20 minute

trains all evening, and many buses running until after midnight, were welcomed by users. But it's hardly surprising that when the extra services disappeared, so did the extra patronage.

The lesson appears to be that if public transport services are as good or better than the other options they will be used. But if services are

inferior and other choices are available, they will not be used.

This reinforces the fact that transport patronage is grown by concentrating on fundamentals such as network coverage, operating span and frequency, service co-ordination, travel speed, ease of use and value for money.

PTUA gives evidence at Senate oil inquiry

Following a joint submission with Environment Victoria to the current Senate inquiry into future oil supplies, the PTUA was invited to give evidence to the Senate transport committee when it met in Melbourne in June.

The PTUA's contribution highlighted rising doubts over the ability of global oil supplies to meet growing demand, the inability of biofuels to fill the gap, and the potentially serious impacts on the environment and food security stemming from our current oil addiction.

The PTUA also highlighted deficiencies in the transport system that are leaving many families dependent upon their cars, with the result that household expenditure is being siphoned away from local goods and services in order to finance increasingly costly oil imports.

The message from our evidence and that of various other contributors is clear: all tiers of government must fundamentally reorient transport and land use policy away from car dependence and towards sustainable

modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.

We are hopeful that the inquiry's final report, due in October, will follow the *Sustainable Cities* report in calling for federal support for public transport in transport funding and tax policy. There will be few issues more central to the national interest than preparing Australia for the second half of the age of oil when supplies will be more difficult, more expensive, and more environmentally damaging to obtain.

United call for Federal PT funding

As rising oil prices bite into family finances and spreading congestion frays the nerves of road users, public transport advocacy groups around the country have called for the Federal government to take action and fund public transport upgrades.

The PTUA, along with Action for Public Transport (NSW), People for Public Transport (SA) and the Sustainable Transport Coalition (WA) made a united call for Federal investment into alternatives to car travel.

A growing body of political leaders is also recognising the need for transport alternatives.

Prominent federal Liberal MP Malcolm Turnbull has called for large investments in public transport by the Commonwealth Government in response to rising oil prices and traffic jams. In highlighting the need for government to reinvest in public transit, particularly rail, Mr Turnbull contrasted Australia with other developed nations where public transport did receive federal funding.

Mr Turnbull's comments were closely followed by similar calls

from the other side of the political fence when NSW Transport Minister, John Watkins, called on the federal government to help fund "clean, safe and attractive public transport". This evidence of support for federal funding of public transport across the political spectrum mirrors the recommendations of the bipartisan Sustainable Cities report tabled in federal parliament last year.



The response from federal transport minister, Warren Truss, was decidedly unenthusiastic, remarking that "the states have billions of dollars in GST revenue to put into public transport". However, Mr Truss failed to explain why, in light

of this revenue going to the states, the Commonwealth continues to direct billions of federal dollars to road projects each year to the exclusion of public transport.

With Prime Minister John Howard recently describing spiralling petrol prices as "the greatest worry of my political life", it's time for the federal government to become part of the solution by investing in public transport. In our submission to the current Senate inquiry into petrol prices, the PTUA has called upon all tiers of government to expand the coverage and quality of public transport as a matter of priority.

Unfortunately so far the Federal Government has concentrated on trying to make fuel more affordable, rather than looking at the root problem – how to move people and goods cheaply and efficiently.

Canberra needs to hear the message clearly. To convey your support for federal funding of public transport, you can find the details of your federal MP at:

⇒ www.aph.gov.au/whoswho/

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