



State election looms: Parties challenged on transport

Going into the state election, the PTUA is challenging the major political parties to commit to funding real solutions to Melbourne and Victoria's transport problems.

With endemic traffic congestion and pollution, and (despite a brief respite recently) petrol prices set to continue to climb, it is time to offer more people a genuine alternative to driving.

Key commitments must include:

- Reform of the Planning and Transport Ministries to overhaul the management culture and ensure a holistic view of land-use planning and transport issues, to ensure the best “triple-bottom-line” (environmental, social, economic) outcomes
- Redesign of the bus system into a co-ordinated, direct, frequent, easy-to-understand network that genuinely complements the train and tram systems in providing all of Melbourne with transport choices
- Commitments to build rail extensions into suburban areas that desperately need them now: South Morang, Doncaster, Rowville, and electrification to Baxter, Sunbury and Cranbourne East
- Relatively cheap extensions to the tram network so that routes terminate in logical locations: Route 48 to Doncaster; Route 75 to Knox City; Route 57 to East Keilor; Routes 3, 5, 6 and 67 to their local railway stations
- New stations to better serve suburbs and traffic generators close to existing rail services: Southland, Lyndhurst, Coolaroo, Campbellfield and North Eltham
- Upgrades to service frequency to provide more of Melbourne with services at least every 15 minutes, 7 days a week, including evenings

(including duplication of single track and signalling upgrades where this is necessary)

- Upgrades to regional town bus services in line with those taking place in Melbourne: routes to operate 7 days a week into the evening
- Genuine priority for bus and tram services to ensure these vehicles are not delayed by heavy traffic
- Commence removal of level crossings, beginning with those worst affected by high train frequencies, tram/train crossings and buses held up in traffic

The PTUA was highly critical of the government's *Meeting Our Transport Challenges* document when it was released in May, because for all the money being spent, very little is going towards getting people out of their cars and onto public transport. With a few trivial exceptions, there is no commitment to any the urgent priorities listed above.

Now is the chance for the government, opposition and minor parties to commit to the types of upgrades that will cut car use, and give more Victorians real transport choices.

With this issue is a sticker you can display to show your support for better public transport. And see inside for more information on our campaigning leading up to the state election.

For more details of the PTUA's short-term transport priorities:

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/publications/fiveyearplan

**PTUA celebrates 30 years
– See pages 4-5**

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

Committee

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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.

Events

End of Suburbia in Manningham

The PTUA is hosting another screening of the documentary 'The End of Suburbia' about the end of the age of cheap oil.

Wednesday October 18th, 7pm
Manningham Conference Centre
699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster

Forum: Which political party is the most PT-friendly?

Monday October 23rd, 7:30 pm
Knox Civic Centre
511 Burwood Highway, Wantirna South

Peak Oil – Imposed by Nature, Frankston

This film sets out to explain the peak oil phenomenon, giving an approximate date for the Peak and it draws up lines of possible consequences for Mankind as well.

Presented by PTUA in association with Environment Victoria and Friends of Frankston

Thursday October 26th, 7:30pm
Samuel Sherlock Hall,
Quality Street, Frankston (Melway 100A E8)

More coming up

Keep an eye on our web site for details of more events.

⇒ www.ptua.org.au



Join thousands of other Australians in a peaceful walk urging action on climate change.

Motor vehicles are among the largest and fastest growing sources of greenhouse emissions. Demand better public transport from our governments.

Date: Saturday, 4th November 2006

Start: 1pm, Melbourne Town Hall

End: 3pm, Birrarung Marr

Bring: Family, friends, kids, bikes, placards and happy faces ready for a fun afternoon.

Info: www.walkagainstawarming.org

Making the links to joined-up government

Like Tony Blair in the UK before him, Steve Bracks came to power in 1999 and promised “joined-up government”. Consistency across all areas of public policy is clearly desirable. Vast sums of taxpayer funds can be wasted on government services if the objectives are undermined by other government programs.

Transport is one such area that is closely interdependent with other areas of policy such as health, the environment, economic performance and social equity (see PTUA News March 2006).

One of the most glaring deficiencies of the Bracks government is the failure to integrate transport and land use planning. For example, Chadstone shopping centre is notorious for traffic snarls and parking woes and is identified as a Principal Activity Centre under Melbourne 2030. Planning approval has been granted for a major expansion of Chadstone, however the government has failed to provide attractive, fast and frequent public transport services to the centre. If the government was serious about integrating the Melbourne 2030 activity centres into the public transport network, they would have started work on extending tram route 3 to East

Malvern railway station and on to Chadstone.

Another monument to the failure to integrate transport and land use planning lies almost due south of Chadstone. Like Chadstone, Southland shopping centre is also identified as a Principal Activity Centre under Melbourne 2030, however this complex abuts the Frankston railway line. Joined-up government suggests that a Principal Activity Centre next to a railway line would have a railway station, however many years after promising a feasibility study, the Bracks government appears no closer to providing one.

Numerous symptoms of institutional failure exist – trams that terminate a few hundred metres from the nearest railway station instead of meeting the train, buses that are scheduled to depart stations moments before a trainload of passengers arrive, lack of priority for public transport vehicles at traffic lights and the privileged access enjoyed by roads to sources of funding beyond the reach of public transport.

The draft report on congestion released by the Victorian Competition & Efficiency Commission (VCEC) in April flagged many possible options to

address these failings. The PTUA has called on the government to release the final report completed last month, however we believe a number of measures are already clearly warranted, including:

- Establishing a central agency to plan and manage Melbourne’s public transport system, similar to those operating in Zurich, Vancouver and Perth
- Properly integrating transport and land use planning to reduce the need to travel and increase the accessibility of trip generators by public transport.
- enshrine social and environmental sustainability principles into transport legislation that recognise the impact of induced traffic and the need to reduce motor vehicle travel, energy consumption, pollution and greenhouse emissions.

While the PTUA is clearly hoping for solid commitments to public transport infrastructure ahead of the state election, it is institutional reforms such as these that will drive the fundamental change needed in transport policy.

Geelong bus petition reaches 1000 signatures

More than a thousand Geelong residents and visitors have signed a petition demanding better public transport services in the Geelong region.

The petition calls for more frequent buses running later into the evening as the key to making public transport a viable transport choice for more people. It also calls for the return of bus stops to Geelong’s city

centre, better connections to trains and wheelchair access to platforms 2 and 3 at Geelong Station.

Whichever government is elected in November, the response clearly shows that voters will be expecting public transport of a much higher standard. High petrol prices will continue to hurt Geelong while there is a lack of useable public transport throughout the region.

The petition calls for suburban buses to run at least every 15 minutes during the day and early evening and at least every half-hour from late evening until midnight. It also calls for buses to the Bellarine Peninsula and Torquay to run up to every half-hour during peak times, and at least hourly during the rest of the day and evening.

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

Newsletter contributors: Daniel Bowen, Alex Makin, Tony Morton, Chris Trikilis, Paul Westcott.

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PTUA celebrates 30 years of standing up for passengers

The PTUA's 2006 Annual General Meeting took place on Thursday, 28th of September at Ross House.

Members heard how the organisation (then called the Train Traveller's Association) was founded (see below), and watched a video of highlights from the past few decades.

Founder Frank Casey's daughter Alison was present to cut the birthday cake, and remarked afterwards that her father "would be

so proud that the association is still in existence and continues to have a strong public profile."

Apart from anniversary celebrations, the normal business of the AGM was also held, with the committee for 2006-2007 being determined (see list on page 2). We would like to thank retiring committee members Beth Driscoll and Chris Loader for their contributions over the past few

years, and trust that they will continue to stay in touch.

The video of highlights can be viewed on our web site:

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/about



How it all began

It's the evening peak hour. A Lilydale train breaks down at Ringwood station. Hundreds of passengers trying to get home are told to find alternative transport. Some try and arrange lifts. Some decide to start walking, perhaps even hoping to hitch a lift. A lucky few manage to find taxis. Many more try desperately to cram into buses.

A man squeezes himself into a bus. It won't take him all the way home. From the bus he'll have to walk another mile. But he squeezes himself on. And just as the bus leaves, he hears from the station loudspeaker: "Lilydale train now leaving – stand clear" and he watches as his train – now empty – departs.

The man was Frank Casey, and the events of that night in February 1976 inspired him to write a letter to *The Herald*.

He had the foresight not to simply gripe about his experience, but to try to identify the causes, including issues that sound all too familiar today. For instance he wrote:

There is no doubt that we are suffering from a quarter of a century of neglect of rolling stock, stations and services – while money and attention has been concentrated on providing freeways and facilities for the car traveller...

And he called for other disgruntled commuters to form an organisation: the Train Travellers Association, which met for the first time a couple of months later.



In 1984 the Train Travellers Association widened to cover buses and trams, and changed its constitution and name to match: the Public Transport Users Association.

So while the organisation is thirty years old, the PTUA name is 22 years old – but that still makes it older than the names Metlink, Connex Melbourne, Yarra Trams, the Department of Infrastructure, and VicRoads. Only V/Line is older, by just a year.

Some things have changed over the years: in 1976 the TTA cautioned against the outright ban of smoking on public transport. And given regular strikes at the time, one of the key planks was refunds on periodical tickets when industrial action occurred.

Other issues remain constant: regular fare increases, many above the rate of inflation; a tax system and government priorities which favour car use over public transport.

There have been some significant wins: One early demand was multi-modal ticketing, which happened in 1983. A campaign during the nineties called "Seven day service for a seven day city" called for better Sunday services, which were delivered – at least on the trains and trams – in 1999.

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If it wasn't for PTUA, the government's Smartbus project would have been all flashy electronic signs (of doubtful reliability), but no extra buses. And it was video from the PTUA in 2003 which revealed the true

scale of the mess on New Year's Eve, which subsequently led to all night trains and trams.

It was the PTUA that kept pushing for the tram to Box Hill.

It was the PTUA that helped mobilise community groups across Victoria to fight the proposal in the early Kennett years to slash country rail services, close the Williamstown and Stony Point lines and run buses instead of trains after dark in Melbourne.

We were also

involved in early discussions that led to the Nightrider buses and Metlink's common branding.

These sorts of improvements only come through the hard work of PTUA volunteers, and something to bear in mind is that we are always looking for members to contribute more – so if you have some free time, please do get involved.

Frank Casey passed away in 1994, but his legacy – and that of his torturous trip home in February 1976 – lives on.

We are compiling some information on the PTUA's history for our web site.

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/about/history



Tunnel freeway threatens inner north again

Even before the ink was dry on Federal funding for the extension of the Eastern Freeway to Frankston (a.k.a. Eastlink), the road lobby had begun agitating for the revival of the westward extension through Fitzroy and Carlton, one of the inner-city freeways cancelled by Liberal premier Rupert Hamer in 1974.

Last year the road lobby forced the “east-west tunnel” into a strategic report for Melbourne City Council despite the report’s author, William McDougall, saying after the report’s release that Melbourne would be better off without it and that more priority had to be given to improving public transport (The Age, 1 Sep 2005).

The MCC report gave the road lobby the excuse they needed to include, in the State Government’s Meeting Our Transport Challenges

strategy, yet another study aimed at proving the need for an inner-north freeway.

There have already been a number of studies into the transport needs of the inner north, most recently the Northern Central City Corridor Study, released in draft form in 2004 but never finalised.

Without fail, the evidence has shown that there is no case for linking the Eastern and Tullamarine Freeways, since the vast majority of traffic exiting the Eastern Freeway is heading for the city. Meanwhile there is a perfectly good road - Citylink - providing a freight route between the Port of Melbourne, the city and the industrial and freight distribution centres in the eastern suburbs (very few of which are in Doncaster or Mitcham).

Nonetheless, the road lobby is now gearing up for a \$5,000,000 “East

West Link Needs Assessment” that gives them one more chance to search around for a pretext to build this road. Given the road lobby’s privileged position in transport planning in Victoria (almost unique among international cities), sustainable transport activists will need to be wary.

While the PTUA’s campaign in 2004 helped elect several freeway opponents to Yarra City Council, heading off the freeway threat will require action at state level. Neither major party so far has signalled a departure from its historical record of giving the road lobby whatever it wants while leaving public transport in the hands of incompetent managers. But with transport set to be a pivotal issue in the coming election, real change is at last possible.

Transport focus: Northern suburbs

The suburbs through which the Upfield line passes were identified as a public transport focussed corridor even by the freeway-mad Kennett Government in 1996. Ten years later, however, public transport in this corridor suffers from the double-whammy combination of poor service and overcrowding.

The Upfield line remains one of the worst-provisioned train services in Melbourne, running only every 20 minutes in peak hour and half-hourly after 7pm. At no time do trains run at the minimum 15 minute frequency required to attract travellers with a car alternative. As a result the service is attractive only to central-city commuters in peak hour, and runs as a charity service at all other times. This is a spectacular waste of resources when parallel north-south roads are congested all day long.

For decades, successive governments have used the existence of the Sydney Road tram as an excuse to neglect the Upfield line, even to threaten it with closure on numerous occasions from the 1890s through to the 1990s. But in reality, the train and the tram serve entirely different needs: the tram for short-distance travel on Sydney Road and Royal Parade, and the train for longer-distance travel between suburbs and to the city.

And of course the tram has difficulties of its own, suffering from delays due to traffic. While there have been some improvements made to tram priority, particularly with respect to separating trams and cars in Royal Parade, bolder measures are required along the entire length of the route.

The government’s omnibus Meeting Our Transport Challenges strategy promises little to rectify the

problems in this corridor. While we may in time see 15 minute frequencies on the Upfield line (but only in peak hour), our lazy bureaucracy is using the ubiquitous “capacity constraints” excuse to delay any improvements. Since we know this line had trains every 4 minutes in the 1920s, this just isn’t good enough.

Meanwhile planners seem more interested in counterproductive measures like widening Bell Street, which is sure only to give us a bigger road congestion and pollution problem in five years’ time.

The PTUA will be seeking commitments from election candidates in this region to improve peak and off-peak frequencies on the Upfield line, speed up trams though bold measures (such as reconfiguration of car lanes in Royal Parade), and oppose costly road expansion.

Transport focus: Melbourne's East

For seven years Eastern and South-eastern Melbourne have waited for a plan that, as promised back in 1999, would 'address the fixed infrastructure requirements for the region' (Page 11, Rebuilding a Transport Network, Labor's Plan, 1999). Unfortunately they are still waiting.

Previous commitments such as rail to Cranbourne East rail and Rowville, and off-peak express services have been abandoned completely, and the one commitment that was delivered, the Vermont South tram extension, was simply a watered-down version of the initial promise of a tram to Knox.

Bus improvements have also been minor, with the Government taking a decade to deliver frequent bus services across just four orbital bus routes in Melbourne, despite internal reports stating that the orbital routes could be operational within five years. Most other bus services still meander through suburbs, providing unneeded complexity and journey times uncompetitive with car travel. The much-hyped SmartBus service has also largely failed to deliver, with mandated frequency guidelines not being met along routes on Blackburn and Springvale Road.

After seven years, despite the endless rhetoric, Melbourne's outer east is still a public transport wasteland.

Rail extensions to match urban growth

In releasing Melbourne 2030, The State Government proposed an activity centre known as 'Casey Fields', in Cranbourne. This purposely built centre was to have as its centrepiece a rail line with a station at Cranbourne East. While the City of Casey dutifully followed the State Government direction, the government has simply turned its back on Melbourne's south east by failing to deliver the rail extension.

Meanwhile with continuing population growth, a new station in Lyndhurst is required now and not – as the government's plan stipulates – a possibility in 2012. If a new station can be built in Ballarat within two years, there is no reason why Lyndhurst residents must wait six years for their station.

The Pakenham and Cranbourne lines, despite the urban growth have some of the most infrequent train services anywhere in Melbourne. Passengers expected to wait up to an hour for a train, and the government currently shows no plans to rectify this situation.

Rowville line

The concept of a rail line to Monash University and Rowville was first proposed in the 1969 Transport Plan. With the economic strength and continued population growth of the region, the rail line is needed more than ever. The Wellington SmartBus is an inadequate measure in comparison.

Only a rail line can carry thousands of passengers per hour, which would have the potential to remove one lane of traffic from the Monash Freeway and provide competitive journey times to Monash and the CBD.

'Let them ride buses' – but be expected to wait

The government seems content to tell Melbourne to 'let them ride buses' and yet the minimum service standards are sorely inadequate. In Melbourne's east, due to a failure to provide much needed rail and tram infrastructure, residents are being told that in four years they may finally have better bus services.

Unfortunately the service improvements will do little to entice people onto public transport. Melbourne's meandering bus routes remaining coupled with up to an hour's wait provides a level of service vastly inferior to that enjoyed by the tram network.

Transport focus: Regional services

Town bus services

While some parts of Melbourne are at last receiving basic bus services on weekends and into the evenings, people in regional towns must be wondering why they are missing out.

While nobody would claim that hourly bus services will attract people out of their cars, the upgrades across Melbourne nevertheless do represent a step forward for those residents who

don't drive, and until now have been unable to reach many opportunities for education, recreation and employment.

The question then must be: why is *at least* this basic level of service not being provided on regional town bus services?

New V/Line timetables

The new timetables for V/Line train services have now been implemented across all lines, providing additional services,

particularly at off-peak, evening and weekend times.

But there is still anger from residents in a number of smaller towns in Gippsland, for whom the new timetables mean a longer wait for a train home. A number of services have been needless converted to expresses, bypassing smaller stations in order to save a few minutes. Commonsense should prevail, and these stops be added back, to ensure all residents can enjoy the new train services.

Transport focus: North eastern suburbs

Doncaster rail

Out of control petrol prices have shown we can no longer afford to leave two-thirds of Melbourne high and dry without transport alternatives. Now is the time to complete Melbourne's rail network allowing frequent trains on all lines serving most of the greater city area, and rolling out a proper network of feeder buses running longer hours between people's homes and train stations.

Rail along the Eastern Freeway through to Doncaster was promised when the freeway opened in the 1960s, and is the only way to stop traffic jams along inner city arterial roads and at the city end of the freeway in peak times. The municipality of Manningham is the only one within 15km of the CBD still without any form of rail infrastructure, and the reality is now that it must be built sooner rather than later to improve a minimal modal share.

The cost of building the train from Victoria Park as far as Doncaster Shoppingtown would cost less than

\$400m, and include tunnelling beyond Bulleen. Overcrowded buses which are currently held up in traffic in the city in peak times could be far better utilised providing frequent and reliable services to railway stations in Doncaster, West Doncaster and Bulleen by connecting with every train, seven days a week and extensively covering the region.

A train line along the middle of the Eastern Freeway is the only way to stop the choking of the inner city with cars, and finally provide the north-east with its promised rail connection and a viable transport alternative – albeit 40 years late.

Doncaster tram

Finishing a tram route in the middle of nowhere makes no sense. Now is the time to ask why tram route 48 from North Balwyn to the City shouldn't be continued to Doncaster, given the areas beyond its present terminus have been residential for nearly half a century.

Not only is Doncaster Hill is set to go through an enormous

redevelopment, but the main focus of the hill, Doncaster Shoppingtown is set to almost double in size. Yet no thought has been given for how to get people to the Hill, and with an enormous change of traffic patterns set to occur with the opening of EastLink, there is no better time to finally correct this gross oversight.

This simple, 4.5km extension would not be expensive, and would benefit much of Melbourne. It would also provide a unique opportunity for tram/bus interchange at the popular Doncaster Park+Ride as well as serving the communities of Doncaster, North Balwyn, Kew, Richmond and the city.

The removal of the wasteful bus route 207 (which follows the tram for over half its journey) could see the redistribution of resources allowing immediate relief to an overcrowded and unreliable bus network in the north-east. The tram to Doncaster is a simple, easy-fix project with numerous benefits for the whole region.

Transport focus: Western suburbs

Western suburbs residents have long felt they are the poor cousins of the east when it comes to services and facilities, and the area of public transport is no exception.

Poor, infrequent and unreliable services, overcrowding and traffic congestion all plague Melbourne's west, with recent government announcements indicating little if anything is to change.

Indeed, under the government's transport plan, millions of dollars is to be squandered on adjusting lanes on the Westgate Freeway, apparently because it hasn't

occurred to decision makers that the reason so many people are driving across the bridge is that virtually no station west of Footscray has a train more often than every 20 minutes – even in peak hour.

And out of peak hours, while most eastern suburbs lines run every 15 minutes, all western suburbs lines run less frequently.

Many bus routes need upgrading to tram-like frequencies, and tram 82 from Footscray to Moonee Ponds needs service upgrades to at least 15-minutes in daytime, 10-minute peaks and 20-minute evenings until

midnight to connect with trains and better serve major destinations such as Victoria University and shopping centres at Highpoint and Moonee Ponds.

With a growing population and worsening traffic, it's clear that improved public transport – more frequent trains, upgraded and direct bus routes, and even strategic tram extensions such as to East Keilor – must be provided to the western suburbs.