



Transport the key to emissions reductions

While the Federal Government finally appears to be paying some attention to carbon emissions, planning to phase out incandescent lightbulbs in favour of Compact Fluorescent Lightbulbs (CFLs), there's no sign of directing funds towards urban public transport projects. This is despite household lighting representing a fraction of the emissions of transport – indeed, calculations we've done indicate that transferring just 20% of car trips to public transport services would save around four times the carbon emissions of switching all lights to CFLs.



The Howard government has historically taken a dim view of funding public transport, with Federal Roads Minister Jim Lloyd remarking to the Financial Review in April: "We're not prepared to get involved in public transport. If the states can't run the trains, don't swing it over to us."

Meanwhile the Federal Government continues to fund billions of dollars in road projects around Australia, including full or partial funding of multi-million dollar bypasses at Deer Park, Geelong and Pakenham.

While the ALP National Conference earlier this year showed support for federal funding of public transport, this is yet to materialise into any firm commitments.

With continuing pressure on petrol prices, and transport accounting for up to half of every Australian households' carbon emissions, it is clear that giving more people sustainable travel options should be a priority for governments at all levels.

Kosky's contracts countdown

By the time you read this, only about 120 days will remain until the government has to tell Connex and Yarra Trams whether their franchise contracts will be extended. If the government doesn't give formal notice of an extension by 30 November, our trains and trams will revert to public ownership a year later, on 30

November 2008.

According to the contracts themselves, only token compensation is payable to the private operators if they lapse.

November 2007						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Phases of the moon: 2 ☾ 10 ☽ 18 ☾ 25 ☽

On current indications and despite protestations that she has not made up her mind, Minister Lynne Kosky has no intention of taking responsibility for running public transport. The current plan appears to be to grant the operators a short extension of around 18 months (using disruption from the introduction of smartcards as a pretext), then re-tender the franchises to the same or new private operators.

The Minister hopes to avoid a public backlash over the contract extensions by lowering people's expectations. Expect a lot more stories in the media saying that taking back public control of the system won't make trains and trams any faster or more reliable, like the one in The Age on 1 July ("Public control? Not likely").

Continued ⇒ Page 2

East-west study / PTUA meets TTA	3
Weekend train crowding continues	4
But it's not just the trains that are crowded	4
Kerang tragedy / Bus lanes / Geelong branch.....	5
Outer East / South-East branch news/ Double Fault....	6
Letter to the editor / News in brief.....	7
ARA launches 'Railmates'	7

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

Branch meetings

Geelong:

First Saturday of every month (except Jan), 10:30am
Multimedia Room, Courthouse
Youth Arts Centre
Corner Gheringhap and Little Malop Streets, Geelong

Outer East:

First Thursday of every month, 7pm
in Box Hill. See page 6.

South-East:

First Tuesday of every month, 7pm
Greater Dandenong Council offices,
397-405 Springvale Road,
Springvale

Special South-East meeting to discuss transport issues in Casey:

See page 6

Kosky's contracts countdown (cont'd from page 1)

Anyone who has used good public transport (in a place other than Melbourne, naturally) will know better. We have so much more rail infrastructure and such a generous operating budget compared with similar cities that, if properly managed, we could have the best public transport in the world. The main obstacles are twofold: our persistence with a flawed British franchising model that dissipates planning responsibilities into the no-man's-land between government and private operators; and the failure to properly tackle the defeatist, self-serving corporate culture inherited from the old Public Transport Corporation.

What we call for is an approach to public transport that roughly matches that taken for roads: a statutory corporation with the power and independence of

Vicroads to take charge of planning; a mandate to deliver outcomes for the travelling public; a planning culture focussed on growth and innovation; and service delivery done either by public agencies or by private contractors under the direction of the planning authority.

This same approach is taken in most cities with successful public transport, like Vancouver, Toronto, Zurich, London, and even Perth (which is growing patronage and mode share at a rate that puts Melbourne to shame). Public transport in these cities is fast, frequent, clean, reliable, safe and cheap, and yet requires less subsidy per passenger than ours.

So the next time you hear defeatist statements from government figures or public commentators, don't remain silent: write to the paper that prints it, or ring up the radio programme that broadcasts it, and remind them that it's the government's refusal to sort out the managerial mess that's holding us back.

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 30th August 2007

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

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PTUA contributes to Eddington East-West travel study

In last year's transport statement, Meeting Our Transport Challenges, the State Government announced a study of east-west travel needs. That study is now underway and has received over 120 submissions from individuals, community groups, MPs and industry. Undeterred by the previous Northern Central City Corridor Study (NCCCS) which found a road tunnel was unjustified, the road construction and financing sector is once again pushing for a tunnel extending the Eastern Freeway westwards to CityLink and potentially beyond towards Deer Park.

Along with many other submissions, the PTUA's submission argues against such a costly and disruptive project based upon sustainability concerns and analysis of actual travel patterns in the study area. While the road lobby increasingly attempts to justify large road projects on account of freight rather than commuter traffic, the vast majority of vehicles on Melbourne roads are passenger cars, particularly at peak times. Far from serving primarily freight vehicles, building more and bigger roads is proven to encourage more car traffic and cause more congestion, pollution and greenhouse emissions. Furthermore, very little of this car traffic is travelling from one side of Melbourne to the other.

Several submissions have highlighted the existence of separate 'east', 'west', 'north' and 'south' travel needs rather than an 'east-west' need. The Doncaster corridor provides a prime example of actual travel needs. Most of the traffic entering the study area from the Eastern Freeway is cars, and most of this traffic is heading to the CBD and surrounds, not to the western or northern suburbs. A train line from Victoria Park to East Doncaster could absorb a large share of this traffic and integrate well with existing train lines, therefore offering connections to the rest of Melbourne, including (but not restricted to) the western suburbs. Similarly, improved train services in the western suburbs, including electrification to Melton and Sunbury and higher frequencies on existing lines, would reduce the high levels of car dependence in the area and absorb a sizeable share of the commuter traffic currently on roads such as the Western Ring Road and West Gate Freeway.

Most submissions arguing in favour of a road tunnel attempted to downplay the seriousness of road transport emissions and peak oil or ignored the issues altogether. What the facts show is that road transport emissions are currently growing so fast that Victoria will be unable to meet its overall greenhouse emissions reduction target, and that the fuel efficiency of the Victorian

car fleet (or 'parc' as it is known) is not showing any signs of improvement.

In a dramatic departure from previous 'she'll be right' statements from the International Energy Agency (IEA), the IEA's most recent Medium-Term Oil Market Report highlights a serious oil supply crunch around 2012 which is broadly consistent with peak oil experts such as Chris Skrebowski. Many analysts now believe that conventional crude oil production has peaked, and that increasingly difficult and expensive to extract non-conventional oil will follow in the not too distant future. In the context of rapidly growing demand in China and India, the potential implications for the price and availability of petrol are serious, and point to the need to fast-track the expansion of the electric rail network into areas such as Doncaster, Rowville and Melton.

The PTUA believes a strong case has been established for expansion of the rail network and improved integration and frequencies across the train, tram and bus networks as a whole. We hope the EWNA process is sufficiently robust to recognise this.

More information on the study, including submissions:

⇒ www.doi.vic.gov.au/eastwest

PTUA meets TTA

The PTUA recently met with the Transport Ticketing Authority to discuss the upcoming Myki Smartcard system. While the PTUA believes the huge \$494 million could have been better spent, we are continuing to offer our feedback to the TTA in an effort to try and ensure that passengers at least get a usable system for the money.

We remain concerned about scanning off, particularly during busy times on street vehicles (trams and buses). While the TTA aren't budging on this issue, they do appear to appreciate that they have a big job ahead to successfully implement the new tickets and machines.

Issues with disability access have also been identified. While

machines will meet DDA standards, some people with disabilities involving fine motor skill problems may find themselves unable to use validators, and it's not yet clear what the solution to this will be.

At this stage it is expected that trials of the system will begin in Geelong later in the year, with a later rollout to metropolitan Melbourne, and state-wide.

Weekend train crowding continues

These pictures were taken on a Belgrave train on a Sunday afternoon in June. The train was 3-carriages only, as there was no football in Melbourne that day. Similar scenes are now occurring on a number of lines in the evenings – with passengers left behind in some cases.

The PTUA believes it is inexcusable to have passengers standing on trains this crowded when carriages are available. You simply cannot try and convince people to use public transport, and then give them such poor service, when it is entirely avoidable by running more or longer trains.

We have no hope of sustained patronage growth if users at all

times of day and throughout the week are forced to put up with such conditions.



Connex has said they are reviewing the situation (after media attention on this issue last November), but 8 months later continues to choose the bottom line over passenger comfort.

While it may seem obvious that providing space for more

passengers will result in higher patronage (for very little cost), apparently the lure of 40% of the extra revenue (as is stipulated in the contracts) is not enough.

Meanwhile, staff within the Department of Infrastructure have said privately to the PTUA that such overcrowding should not be tolerated. But under the franchise system in place at the moment, they are powerless to act. This is why the PTUA is adamant that Connex's power to make these decisions should be taken from them, so the network can be run for the benefit of the travelling public, not Connex's shareholders.



But it's not just the trains that are crowded!

While it's the trains – and particularly during peak hour – that continue to get most of the attention with regard to overcrowding, tram users are also suffering. We're hearing stories of people left behind at peak hour tram stops on a number of routes, including 112 and 96.

Earlier this year, the PTUA highlighted Sunday morning overcrowding on route 16 to Yarra Trams management. To their credit, Yarra Trams reacted to this by increasing the frequency of services from half-hourly to every 15

minutes during this time of the morning.



But is the system coping at other times? In particular, are there plans to increase the fleet, or to

implement traffic priority to make better use of the current fleet, to accommodate growing demand for tram travel?

And are there plans to increase evening and weekend frequencies, which see trams as infrequently as half-hourly on Sunday nights?

As petrol prices continue to climb, demand for public transport services seems set to climb with it. The challenge for the government is to capture that demand – to provide the services that people want to use.

Kerang tragedy highlights level crossing safety

The accident at Kerang on 5th of June, with a V/Line diesel-hauled passenger train hit by a truck, should serve as a reminder that more needs to be done on level crossing safety.

The deaths of eleven passengers on the train was the highest such toll in nearly a century, though statistics show that passenger rail remains one of the safest ways of travelling. Such an unusual and tragic accident was the heavy focus of media attention – PTUA got calls from as far afield as the BBC.

The PTUA continues to campaign for the removal of crossings throughout the metropolitan area. At rural locations such as Kerang, it is important to upgrade crossings appropriate to the location, which might include precautions such as lower road speed limits, chicanes/curves, and rumble strips on the road, as well as better signage, lights, bells or booms where they are warranted. The recent announcement of upgrades at some locations is a good start, but there is much more to be done, including

making a start on removing crossings in metropolitan areas.

The aspect of vehicle driver behaviour is also significant, and should not be ignored. It is common to see level crossing rules flouted, with drivers often racing boom gates, queuing across tracks (as was the case in the Furlong Road, St Albans accident in 2004) and failing to check for trains when driving over unprotected crossings.

Our thoughts are with all of those affected by the accident.

Half-hearted lanes keep most buses slow

Years after many cities gave inner-city priority to buses, Melbourne finally has its own dedicated, clearly marked CBD bus lanes.

Well, almost. Lonsdale Street is probably Melbourne's busiest bus street, with many routes from the rail-deprived north-eastern suburbs converging there. In June a red-coloured bus lane was installed along the outbound side of the street, in an effort to move the buses through traffic more quickly.

But it is only a part-time bus lane, used in the afternoon peak only. At other times, parked cars fill the lane, and buses continue to have to drive around them, merging in and out of the next traffic lane.

Until the government bites the bullet and builds rail to Doncaster and other areas, there will continue to be large numbers of buses entering the CBD. And if that's the case, they might as well do so as efficiently as possible. So in the short to medium term, we support bus lanes on streets like Lonsdale Street. But they should be full time, and in both directions, with proper enforcement and accompanied by traffic light priority over cars.

Done properly, these measures would not only speed up bus journeys, but also make the most of our bus fleets and drivers.

Other locations that should see well-signed, fulltime, properly

policed bus priority include Victoria Parade, Hoddle Street, and other locations around Melbourne where large numbers of buses are held up by traffic.



Geelong branch news

The Geelong Branch has unfortunately needed to continue focussing on the non-appearance from the DOI, after 18 months, of the G21 Public Transport Strategy. In order to publicise the problem and flush out information, we have briefed journalists, local and state politicians, and bureaucrats. Contacting the DOI directly has been difficult and unproductive.

The G21 hierarchy finally bit the bullet and sent a letter to Jim Betts,

Director of Public Transport, asking that he receive a delegation to find out what is going on. Betts' reply complained that concern about the delay in formally releasing the Strategy was understandable, but that public comment about the problem had "not been helpful", in some unspecified way. The latest news is that an "overview" of the Strategy was to have been released on 17th of July.

Jim Betts' reply also revealed that the fundamental problem besetting Geelong's urban public transport since 2005, the supposedly temporary scattering of central Geelong bus stops at various disparate locations around the CBD, is not likely to be tackled in the "Overview". An addendum to his letter noted that a Geelong central area bus study has not even commenced yet!

Outer East branch news

From August the Outer East Branch will be meeting on the first Thursday of each month from 7pm at the Box Hill Community Arts Centre (470 Station Street, Box Hill) – see the map, right.

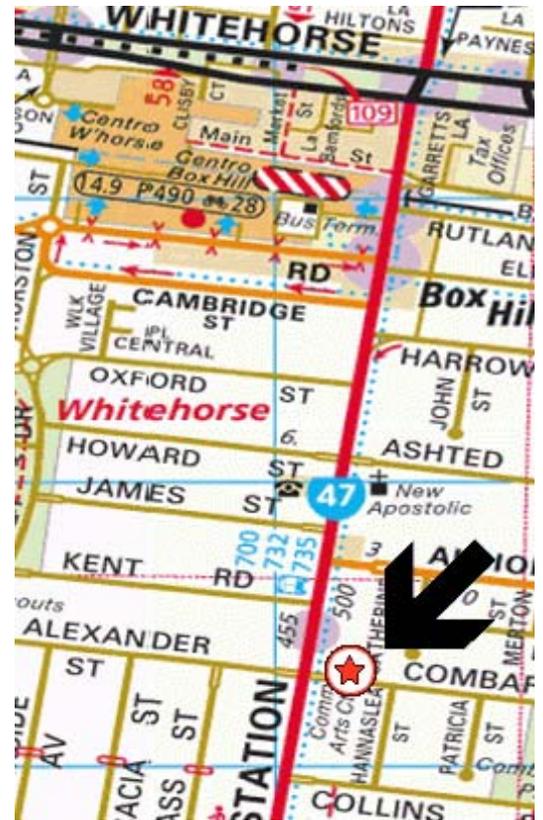
The previous months have marked a turning point in the campaign for better public transport with local councils adding to the pressure on the State Government.

The City of Manningham is to be congratulated for agreeing to fund a feasibility study into the extension of tram 48 from North Balwyn to Doncaster. This extension is critical for the growth of Doncaster Shoppingtown and while such studies should be the responsibility of the State Government it is encouraging to see local councils

step up when the Government is clearly failing.

The City of Maroondah has also appointed a full-time Transport and Sustainability Officer. This council employee will help ensure increased resource for public transport advocacy within Maroondah including the much needed duplications along the Belgrave and Lilydale lines.

The campaigns undertaken by the Outer East Branch are beginning to bear results. There has never been a better time to become active in the branch to further our campaign for sustainable transport in the outer east.



South-East branch news

Recent campaigning by the South-East Branch has helped improve conditions at Dandenong Station, with commitment to more regular cleaning of the station, and quicker action when the lifts break down.

We have also been keeping an eye on the upgrades at Noble Park, which is getting improved lighting

and security cameras, as well as a DDA-compliant underpass.

In coming months the branch will be campaigning on the Cranbourne East train extension - a broken promise from the 1999 election. With large numbers of residents from around Cranbourne working in Dandenong, the time has come to

extend the line, duplicate single track sections, and boost services.

We will be holding a special meeting to discuss transport issues in Casey:

Wednesday 5th August, 7pm
Old Shire Offices
Corner Sladen Street and South Gippsland Highway, Cranbourne

Operation Double Fault

“Operation Double Fault”, the proposal to sink rail lines underground to free-up land above for property development, appears to be gaining some momentum. Various proposals for inner-suburban sections of the Glen Waverley and Sandringham lines have been proposed, with the government and property developers taking an interest in the idea.

There are some advantages of such a proposal, which could include the removal of such troublesome level crossings as Glenferrie Road,

Kooyong (notorious for causing delays for both trams and trains).

But there is also potential for problems, with massive disruption expected during construction.

Conversion to underground operation for trains would mean a number of railway stations would have to be re-developed underground. Given that those likely to be affected are unstaffed most of the time, any changes would need to take into account security issues for waiting areas and platforms. Stations are intimidating

enough at quiet times; moving them underground, out of view of surrounding streets, would only make this worse.

“Double Fault” may have its benefits, but public transport users must not be short-changed for the benefit of property developers.

Indeed, given the huge amounts of money involved (estimates suggest the development rights would sell for billions), any revenue should go straight into extending the public transport network by building new lines.

Letter to the editor: Why not double-deck trains?

I wrote to the Minister proposing double-decker trains and was annoyed to receive in reply two weak objections: they would not fit under the bridges on most lines, and they would take longer to unload at stations and regain full speed.

I contend that they could carry about 30 per cent more passengers than single-deckers, but would not increase construction or running costs or travel times by a similar factor; so they would transport greater numbers more economically, especially on express services.

And we wouldn't use Sydney ones, we'd design our own for local conditions!

- Paul D Prentice

While it is undeniable that double-decker trains can carry more passengers than single-deck trains, we are inclined to agree with the Department of Infrastructure position that they are not at present a practical solution for Melbourne's needs.

While the City Loop was (sensibly) built for possible future double-deck operation, most of the rest of the system would need extensive

(and very expensive and disruptive) works to raise the height of hundreds of bridges and tunnels to cope, and the concerns over increased dwell times are valid, as they would negate much of the benefit.

We continue to be of the view that with upgraded signalling, removal of single track sections, more reliable operation, and improved frequencies (including peak, peak-shoulder and off-peak times) a great deal more capacity can be found in Melbourne's rail system with the current single deck fleet, at minimal cost.

News in brief

Tram accident

On Friday June 22nd, former PTUA Treasurer Daniel Borowski (who now works for BusVic) was hit by a tram while crossing Victoria Parade. At the time of writing, Daniel is still in hospital. The PTUA wish him a full and speedy recovery.

Compensation available

Continued poor performance on Connex and V/Line has meant compensation is available to holders of monthly and longer tickets who used any Connex service, and most V/Line services for the past few months.

While the compensation offered is merely a token, and many of those affected who use shorter tickets are not eligible, we do encourage people to claim where they are able to. It helps send the message that system reliability needs to improve.

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/2007/07/17/compo-may07

ARA launches 'Railmates'

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA), an organisation representing the interests and advocacy for the rail industry in Australia and New Zealand, have recently launched a new campaign entitled 'RailMates' to get better funding for rail development in Australia.

Given that rail affects everyone's life, either in the form of passenger services, or enormous impact that rail freight has in the community and in Australia's economy, the PTUA is pleased to see the industry is taking a stand to fight for a better share of funding for our rail network.



The PTUA has long called for greater funding allocation to go into rail investment for both commuter lines (such as to Doncaster, Mernda and Rowville) and for more rail-bound freight to correct the imbalance of road-funding as freeway and highway expansion. Pouring billions of dollars into road construction does little to ease the growing congestion or car reliance in Australian cities and costs the Australian economy billions of dollars each year.

It is not only funding which need to be changed, but also laws, tax concessions and planning processes which favour more car usage and dependency rather than ease problems faced not only in Melbourne and Victoria, but right around Australia.

'RailMates' aims to be a new voice that will be able to spearhead the lobbying efforts to Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, and we encourage PTUA members to visit the website. Also on the site, you can click on the 'have your say' section to send an electronic message to your Member of Parliament or Government.

⇒ www.railmates.com.au

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Inside:

- Kosky's contracts countdown
- Transport the key to emissions reductions
 - East-West study

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