



New train timetables and free rides to bring little relief

Additional train services announced in mid-September will bring only a little relief from overcrowding, and only on some lines. While there will be 39 extra services per weekday, only some of these are in peak hours, or during the shoulder-peak period.

The government has also announced a trial of free “Early Bird” travel on the Frankston and Sydenham lines before 7am, in an effort to encourage passengers to travel outside peak hours.

But off-peak services remain relatively infrequent and slow, with almost no express trains. So while some CBD workers are no doubt able to vary their working hours, the prospect of a long wait and a longer trip means most will continue to pack into crowded peak services.

Alterations that passengers should be aware of include platform changes at Flinders Street: this is primarily to give the Northern loop services two platforms during peak hours, which it’s hoped will improve on-time running and assist platform crowding. But it does mean that Caulfield trains will be split across platforms 6 to 9, and Sandringham passengers will have to put up with the subterranean environs of platforms 12 and 13 on weekdays. Hitachi trains rescued from a paddock in New South Wales will also be pressed into service.

While these changes are baby steps in the right direction, they are not the big changes needed to resolve the current chronic overcrowding.

A few extra services, some free rides and the ten new trains arriving in 2009 will barely keep up with continuing patronage growth, and the government appears to not yet have a comprehensive plan for the future of the suburban rail network.



Indeed, the fact that we now have a shortage of trains is a reminder that lack of planning – including allowing most of the Hitachi trains to be scrapped – is why we’ve got into this mess in the first place.

And meanwhile, Connex continues to force passengers into packed short trains in the evenings and on

many weekends, in a self-made capacity crisis which is further constraining patronage growth – with the Department of Infrastructure powerless to do anything under the current franchise contracts.

Now more than ever we need to see a comprehensive review of rail operations, to make sure that we are following world’s best practice, and more importantly, that we are making the best use of our (not insubstantial) rail infrastructure and fleet.

Contracts extended until 2009

As we had anticipated, Minister Lynne Kosky announced in August a one-year extension to the franchise contracts for Connex and Yarra Trams. These will now expire in November 2009, after which the government intends to ‘retender’. The pretext for the extension, as expected, is the period of ‘uncertainty’ expected to follow the introduction of the increasingly beleaguered Myki ticketing system.

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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

Daniel Bowen – President
Anthony Morton – Secretary
Kerryn Wilmot – Treasurer

Phil Bourke
Mark Johnson
Tim Long
Rob Meredith
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Tim Petersen
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Paul Westcott – Geelong
Jeremy Lunn – Outer East

Committee members can be
emailed using the format:
firstname.lastname@ptua.org.au

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.

Geelong 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

Annual General Meeting: Thursday October 25th

The PTUA Annual General Meeting will take place on
Thursday 25th of October 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 19th October.

Nominations will not be called for at the AGM unless
nominations received by this closing date are
insufficient to fill all positions.

Refreshments will be served after the meeting, and there
will be an opportunity to discuss transport issues, as well
as meet the committee and other members.

PTUA Committee Nomination Form

I, _____ of _____

nominate _____ of _____

for election to the position of: President Secretary Treasurer Committee member

Signed: _____ (nominator) _____ (candidate) ___/___/____ (date)

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

Newsletter contributors: Daniel Bowen, Tony Morton, Paul Westcott.

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V/Line overcrowding now rampant

Thanks to service improvements a year ago, coupled with substantial fare cuts in March this year, patronage on V/Line services has been booming. During the last financial year there was a 29% increase in passenger numbers on V/Line trains and buses, with a 50% increase in July 2007 compared with July 2006.

This vindicates what the PTUA has been saying for years – that service improvements will generate patronage increases. Unfortunately the passenger surge has led to overcrowding on a number of peak services, largely due to a lack of rolling stock. This is despite the fact that there are now twice as many V/Line trains running in peak hour as in 2005. It is a pity that the government hadn't sufficiently planned for the patronage growth we expected to follow significant service improvements.

The current congestion will regrettably continue for some time yet (unless passengers are put off in the meantime). Fourteen intermediate V/Locity carriages have been ordered, which will enable some of the current V/Locity fleet to run as three-carriage sets,



but these won't begin to be delivered until next year.

In the interim, V/Line are bringing back into service five carriages which were mothballed last year. The BS class carriages, originally built for use on the Spirit of Progress, are the last compartment-style carriages in V/Line's fleet. They were retired mainly because they had drop-chute toilets, which are no longer permitted. As part of their refurbishment, some of the carriages have been fitted with retention toilets. The five carriages

will be used to add capacity to Geelong line services.

New V/Line timetables will be introduced at the end of September with 48 extra services and a claimed increase of 13,000 seats across the network. However most of this increase will be in the off-peak because more carriages are available at that time.

Picture: Some Geelong line passengers choose to sit on the floor rather than stand. (Herald Sun, 16/8/2007)

Geelong branch: two years of "temporary" bus stops

It is now over two years since bus stops in central Geelong were scattered over half a dozen widely-separated sites due to road works. Those works finished almost a year ago, but the stops remain firmly in their "temporary" positions.

The Geelong Branch discovered recently that the Department of Infrastructure (DoI) have engaged consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB), at a cost of \$300,000, to compile a report on bus circulation in central Geelong.

PB told us that no public consultation was included in the process, but the Branch decided to make a submission to the DoI in any case. Tim Petersen developed a number of options. They all involve buses using a limited number of direct and predictable routes through the City, with stops on each block, and going on to the Geelong railway station. The document can be viewed at www.ptua.org.au/geelong/ under the heading "Submissions".

We sent copies of the submission to PB, the two Geelong bus operators and the Council. A few days later we were rung by one of the operators who was impressed enough by the ideas in the submission to ask the Branch to come up with suggested improvements to the extraordinarily tangled and impenetrable bus routes in south eastern Geelong! Tim Petersen obliged, with the proviso that any changes must be made according to agreed principles through a proper process of community consultation.

Federal election: Guide to policies

By the time you read this, it is quite possible that a federal election will have been called. At the time of writing however, we are still very much in a “phoney campaign” with little detail available about each party’s transport policy. A number of clues are available which provide some indication of what the parties will be offering public transport users.

ALP

Late last year Labor leader Kevin Rudd announced that an ALP government would launch a major cities program to fund urban infrastructure, especially road, rail and water. Little detail is available on this program, however Mr Rudd gave the example of motorway links as a key priority. The merits of such a program funding roads are dubious given the substantial sums of AusLink funding already provided to urban roads and the need to rebalance federal funding in favour of public transport. The inclusion of urban rail projects is however warmly welcomed.

In April of this year the ALP National Conference recognised a role for the federal government in delivering and funding urban public transport and better integrating it with land use planning and environmental objectives, as well as the need to reform Fringe Benefits Tax rules which currently discriminate against public transport users. At the time of writing however, this platform is yet to become tangible policy for the federal election.

Summary: some promising signs, but few concrete commitments for public transport thus far and continued preference for private cars seems likely.

Democrats

The Democrats’ action plan for land transport proposes substantial funding for integrated public transport and improvements to the frequency, amenity, safety, reliability and accessibility of public transport. The Democrats also propose the extension of rail services to residential developments on the city fringe and improved networks for walking and cycling. Reforms to FBT are also proposed along with reforms to urban planning requirements to encourage cycling and public transport.

While commitments in terms of public transport are laudable, the main blemishes on the Democrats’ policy are tax concessions and mandatory targets for biofuel blending. There are now major doubts about the social and environmental sustainability of substantial biofuel production, including concerns about negative impacts on biodiversity and global food security, as outlined in a new report from the OECD.

Summary: excellent on public transport, but led astray by false promise of biofuels.

Family First

No information was available at the time of writing.

Summary: public transport does not appear to be a priority.

Greens

The Greens have released a sustainable planning and transport policy which outlines principles, goals and measures aimed at encouraging more walking, cycling and public transport use and improved efficiency in the motor vehicle fleet. Bringing land use planning and transport together into

the one policy is an encouraging sign, as are proposals to take account of environmental and social goals in national transport planning.

While no specific projects are mentioned, the policy clearly sets the objective of attractive, competitive and accessible public transport and reduced reliance on fossil fuels.

Summary: an excellent integrated framework, but light on specifics at this stage.

Liberal/National

The Liberal/National coalition is yet to release any detailed election policies relating to transport, however current government policy provides a useful guide. The coalition is yet to commit to any form of support for urban public transport, although numerous national strategies recognise the benefits of greater use of public transport, including the National Road Safety Strategy and various environment-related strategies and objectives.

In term of actual funding however, the government gave strong signs early this year that it would spend \$19 billion on new road projects, focussing particularly on motorways in electorally important seats in south east Queensland.

Successive coalition transport ministers have recited pro-forma reasons for not funding urban public transport, however these excuses invariably lack foundation (see “Moving Australians Sustainably”, page 5). We hope to be pleasantly surprised when the coalition does release more details on its transport policy.

Summary: heads currently in the sand.

Moving Australians Sustainably

Public transport groups from around Australia recently joined with the PTUA to publish a report on the role of public transport in federal transport policy. The report - *Moving Australians Sustainably: Transport Policy in the National Interest* - looked at how public transport contributes to a range of federal policy objectives and responsibilities.

The report found that public transport makes a significant contribution to national economic performance by helping to manage traffic congestion, by reducing the need for costly oil imports and by contributing to improved participation and productivity in Australia's workforce. In light of this, governments that fail to support public transport could hardly be regarded as responsible economic managers.

The report also noted that greenhouse emissions from road transport are growing faster than emissions from most other sectors and that walking, cycling and public transport produce much less pollution than private motor cars. On top of major impacts on local communities around Australia, climate change also looks set to become a major threat to national security and regional stability. Climate-friendly transport like cycling and public transport is clearly in the national interest.

Major health impacts were also identified in the report. Physical inactivity - entrenched by car dependence - and excess weight were found to be major risk factors in almost all of the National Health Priority Areas that the federal government has identified as contributing significantly to the burden of illness and injury. Public transport can also reduce exposure

to the risk of road trauma and thereby make a positive contribution to the main priority area that is not influenced as significantly by physical activity - i.e. injuries. With national attention on the 'obesity epidemic', there is a clear need for the federal government to encourage less use of sedentary private transport.

Although the federal government has claimed in the past that public transport is the sole responsibility of state governments, this is out of step with practice in all other developed nations. The national governments of most Western countries make significant contributions to public transport services and/or infrastructure. Many of these countries, such as Canada and the USA, also have federal systems of government and several national governments were like Australia in not supporting public transport until quite recently.

Furthermore, the Constitution of Australia has a specific provision that allows the federal government to contribute to the development of state railway networks. It seems therefore that there is stronger constitutional backing for federal funding of public transport infrastructure than there is for many other recent federal incursions into state responsibilities, such as health, education and water management.

Many of the changes needed to enable federal funding of public transport are minor. The federal government's role in land transport infrastructure is largely restricted to funding through state and local



governments and does not require substantial project delivery capability within the Commonwealth Government itself. The main federal land transport funding program - AusLink - could be easily broadened to include public transport infrastructure and fund projects based upon merit rather than mode. In doing so, the federal government could also encourage greater accountability at the state level.

Some changes could even save the federal government over \$1 billion per annum. Elimination of the tax concession to company cars in the Fringe Benefits Tax legislation would free up substantial resources for other priorities such as public transport, renewable energy or other government services. This would also help to reduce congestion and energy use, thus further contributing to economic performance.

The chorus in support of such changes is growing - ranging from public transport user groups through to the recommendations of inquiries undertaken within federal parliament itself. It's now time for the parties to offer a real commitment to public transport ahead of the federal election.

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/federal

Fund the Gap - infrastructure in growth areas

The PTUA recently participated in the Inaugural National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) Summit in Melbourne. The NGAA is a collective of 30 councils from the outer suburbs of most Australian capital cities, including Casey, Cardinia, Wyndham, Melton, Hume and Whittlesea in Victoria.

The Summit heard the perspectives of both the federal government and opposition on the federal government's role in infrastructure delivery for local communities, as

well as perspectives from the welfare sector and the PTUA.

While the primary focus of the NGAA's current campaign - Fund the Gap - is around social infrastructure such as parks and libraries, the lack of viable transport alternatives was a constant theme running through research conducted for the NGAA and raised by delegates to the Summit. We were encouraged by delegates' recognition of the critical need for timely delivery of public transport

infrastructure in outer suburbs and improved integration with land use planning, as well as the importance of involvement by all tiers of government.

We encourage residents of these growth areas to congratulate their council and councillors for participating, and to urge the NGAA to push for federal funding of urgently needed public transport infrastructure in outer suburbs.

⇒ www.ngaa.org.au

Bus route reviews continue

The Department of Infrastructure bus reviews have progressed. The PTUA has seen draft proposals for changes to routes in Hobsons Bay/Maribyrnong/ Moonee Valley and Hume/ Moreland.

We were concerned that the first review in Hobson's Bay resulted in very few recommendations for alterations to the routes in the area. But the proposals coming out of the Hume/Moreland review reassured us – the changes were sweeping and

attempted to address many of the shortcomings and inconsistencies of Melbourne's bus routes.

While there have been instances where people have participated in the consultations solely to lobby for the removal for buses from their street, many some excellent suggestions have been made.

Submissions have now closed for the three remaining bus review areas of the year: the Whittlesea,

Banyule/Nillumbik and Frankston/Mornington Peninsula areas. The PTUA has made submissions and is expecting to see the proposals for changes soon.

As the process continues, we hope to see changes to services that better help Melbourne's buses properly complement tram and train services to provide a cohesive public transport network for the entire city.

Contracts extended until 2009 (cont'd from page 1)

This means there is a further 12 months in which to build political momentum for restoring public control to the system. Most importantly, the field of alternative outcomes in 2009 has been thrown wide open.

The best possible outcome for Victorians is that the system reverts to full public control, with a Zurich-style planning agency and reinvigorated Toronto-style public operating authorities. International experience reveals this combination as having by far the best track record for success, particularly in medium-density cities like Melbourne. The worst possible outcome is that the current contracts are put through the photocopier and handed to the lowest bidder among

the handful of commercial operators willing to put their hands up. Either outcome is foreseeable, as is an entire spectrum of outcomes in between.

What should be non-negotiable in any new management arrangements is the reassertion of public control over planning: this includes timetables and routes, as well as matters such as maintenance standards and the location of tram and bus stops. Public control, through an independent agency similar to Vicroads, is the only way to ensure the system functions as a coordinated network, and if staffed by the right people will ensure that public transport becomes what it should be: fast, frequent, clean, reliable, safe and cheap. These are

simple yet essential features, and all are lacking in the system as it is now. Next to them, talk of spontaneous planning 'innovations' by private operators is a red herring, as the past seven years have shown.

To keep the pressure on the government for change, continuous action will be needed. We encourage all those who care to write letters to the Age and the Herald Sun, ring talkback radio, and visit their local MPs. A wealth of source material and information to assist with this can be found on the PTUA website. Why not write a letter today?

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/help

PTUA lobbying behind the scenes

While many members know of the PTUA's activities via this newsletter and through media work, the committee continues to be in active contact behind the scenes with politicians, their advisers, operators and other interest groups around the state.

Following the trams/metro trains re-tendering announcement, PTUA representatives attended a Ministerial briefing called at short notice to provide background

information on the contract extension. We took the opportunity to request involvement in preparing the specifications for the new tenders and to encourage the Minister to consider alternative contract arrangements. We expect to make a submission early in the tender preparation process.

Recently PTUA met with the Minister's Chief of Staff and her political adviser where we discussed train and tram capacity

problems, Doncaster rail, lack of services to the western suburbs, the East West Needs Assessment, bus reviews, bus priority lanes, Nightrider buses, grade separation, and Federal funding.

We've also been in recent contact with Metlink, Connex and the Department of Infrastructure, and continue to work behind the scenes for improved public transport.

Coming events

Stringybark festival

The PTUA will have a stall at the Stringybark Festival on 20th and 21st of October. Stringybark is one of Victoria's longest running environmental festivals, showcasing products, concepts, conservation and environmental issues that help create a sustainable community.

Come along and say hello, and if you can help us staff the stall for an hour or two, please contact festivals@ptua.org.au

10am to 5pm
Weekend of 20-21 October 2007

Rowville Community Centre,
Fulham Road, Rowville

Melway 81 K1
Buses: 681, 682, 754 (not Sunday),
691, 900.

Caroline Springs public meeting

The Caroline Springs Residents Association are holding a transport forum in November to discuss proposals for a station at Caroline Springs (on the Melton line) and electrification and duplication of the line, to allow for increased growth in this rapidly growing residential area.

Many local residents bound for the city currently drive along the Western Highway to catch the Sydenham line, resulting in long commutes, full car parks and crowded trains on that line. A station nearby and more frequent services would provide an alternative.

7pm, Tuesday 13th of November
2007

The Club, 1312 Western Highway,
Caroline Springs

Melway 358 H4
Buses: 215, 456 (limited services;
check times of last bus)

Walk Against Warming

In order to best highlight that climate change is a big election issue, The Walk Against Warming will be held on the Sunday two weeks before the Federal Election, most probably in central Melbourne (as well as elsewhere around the country). Keep an eye on the PTUA web site for details, or watch:

⇒ www.walkagainstawarming.org

And if you are able to help on the day, please contact us by emailing festivals@ptua.org.au

PTUA Vice-President resigns

In late-August, PTUA vice president Alex Makin announced his resignation from the PTUA committee. Alex has been on the committee since 2003, and has been Vice President since 2006.

We understand that Alex wishes to focus more closely on outer-suburban transport issues – particularly those in the east and south-east of Melbourne – and to

give them more priority over other areas than a state-wide organisation like the PTUA is able to provide with its limited resources.

Following Alex's resignation, some members of the South East branch chose to also resign from their posts, and run the September 5th meeting in Cranbourne themselves, without the assistance of the PTUA. While we are disappointed at the

sudden change, it is pleasing to note that the meeting itself had a number of local residents attend to voice their concern at transport issues in the area.

The committee thanks Alex for his hard work with the organisation, and wishes him the best for the future.

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