



More than freebies needed to spread the peak

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the government’s Earlybird trial on the Frankston and Sydenham lines has been a moderate success, with the last services to reach the city before 7am now getting reasonably crowded with passengers making use of the free tickets.

The scheme was announced in September, coming into effect in late-October. The PTUA was somewhat sceptical of the idea, and while obviously some are benefitting from it, so far it’s unclear how many of the passengers on those early trains have actually moved their travel out of peak hour to take advantage of it, as against those who would have been travelling at that time anyway.

Part of the problem is that outside peak hours, passengers on most lines know they will face a longer wait between trains, and a longer trip, with little express running in off-peak and peak-shoulder times.

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Govt amends order: now 18 trains on the way

Following on from the 10 extra trains announced in the May budget, the government has announced another 8 will join the fleet as part of the order to arrive from 2009. This follows concerns from the PTUA that the original 10 trains would barely keep

up with the current patronage growth (see *PTUA News*, May 2007).

The government and Connex are also reforming train maintenance procedures to provide additional extra train sets in peak hours. The PTUA noted in the 2002 book *It’s Time To Move* (page 17) that up to 15% of trains were not in use during peak times, and these changes should reduce that by about a third, bringing Melbourne closer to world’s best practice.



Combined, the new trains and extra trains freed up should start to make an impact on the current levels of overcrowding, which has seen passengers regularly left behind at stations on some of the busier lines.

Finally, hopefully, the government has recognised that expanding public transport capacity is worthwhile – not only because increased passenger loads demand it, but also because it is a cleaner, more effective way of moving large numbers of people around our city.

But to really solve overcrowding, we will need to be ordering more trains every year, and finding ways of using our train fleet and infrastructure more effectively, including more off-peak and peak-shoulder services.

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Keeping in touch...

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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 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

Responsibility for electoral comment in PTUA News is taken by Vaughan Williams, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

PTUA joins Walk Against Warming

Up to 50,000 people joined the Melbourne Walk Against Warming on November 11th, with the PTUA present with a prominent banner.

The Walk went from the State Library down Swanston Street to the Alexandra Gardens, with speeches and music at each end.

We had a number of walkers approach us to express support for better public transport, and it was pleasing to see such a huge crowd joining together to call for more action on climate change.

Beat the price rise

It's now been confirmed that fares will rise on January 1st. You can beat the price rise by pre-purchasing tickets during December.

We have contacted those who bought Commuter Club tickets last December to ensure they had the opportunity to buy new yearly tickets before the Commuter Club



deadline. Unfortunately this deadline set by Metlink has now passed. However you can still buy yearly tickets and get big discounts compared with buying 12 monthlies:

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/members/offers

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 15th January 2008

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

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More cities follow the path to public control of transport

A key campaign for the PTUA this year has been working for the restoration of strong public control of public transport in Melbourne and Victoria. Our favoured model for public control is the 'Transport Community' model used in cities like Zurich, Vancouver, London, Madrid and Perth, where a central public authority with a strong passenger-focussed culture takes responsibility for strategic and tactical planning of public transport.

Now Brisbane seems set to follow the example of Perth in embracing this model of public transport 'governance'. One of the first actions of new Queensland Premier Anna Bligh has been to announce a single public transport authority for greater Brisbane.

Ms Bligh has called the new authority "a one stop shop for scheduling, customer needs and complaints", and said "At the moment there is a lot of confusion from the customer's point of view over who is responsible for public transport... We are going to create one authority to coordinate the myriad of 17 different bus, ferry and public transport service providers that currently service the region."



It is intended that the new authority will be in place by July 2008: about the time the Victorian Government will have to make its decision on the future governance arrangements for Melbourne's public transport.

Brisbane's existing operators will be made contractors to the new authority, which is likely to be based on the Transport for London model and involve local government and operators in its governance structure. Importantly, the government explicitly intends that the new authority will have responsibility for tactical planning, with powers to match. Ms Bligh said "a transit authority will have greater freedom to redeploy resources, like buses, to different areas in South East Queensland as needed."

Meanwhile in London, the city currently viewed most favourably as a model by Brisbane, Mayor Ken Livingstone has just unveiled a plan

by which Transport for London (TfL) would take control of fares, timetables and quality standards for all rail services within London and the Home Counties. One of the biggest existing rail franchises, Southern, would be taken over by TfL under the plan.

Other services would continue in private operation under 'fee for service' contracts, and all would operate under a common 'London Overground' brand, already in use on the three London suburban lines now operated by TfL. The Times on 20 November 2007 reported that while "the Government is committed publicly to maintaining the current franchising system... ministers believe privately that Mr Livingstone's model may deliver a better long-term structure for the rail industry."

But it could never happen here, could it?

Geelong branch report

The G21 Public Transport Strategy (with the title now spun as the G21 Public Transport "Action Plan") has finally been released by the Department of Infrastructure, after two years' largely secret gestation. However it still remains a draft until it is officially launched by the Public Transport Minister at some time in the future.

Although dubbed an Action Plan, it is basically a series of undertakings to "review" various possible actions. The actual public transport

improvements mentioned in the document were in fact almost all promised as part of the State government's "Moving Forward in Provincial Victoria" initiatives, which were announced back in November 2005, and were introduced a year ago. The only really new project is to increase Colac's town bus service from the present two trips a day!

The other problem which has occupied the Geelong Branch recently has been the persistent

practice of municipal authorities to move or eliminate bus stops, often at the behest of councillors, traders or residents wanting to "free up" car parking spaces. The bus companies may be asked for their views, but public transport users are never consulted or even notified. Our aim is to get the City of Greater Geelong to adopt a code of practice to use in making decisions about where stops should be sited.

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/geelong

Annual General Meeting: Stack repelled

The 31st Annual General Meeting of the PTUA took place on Thursday night, 25 October, at Ross House. The meeting was well attended, with 65 members present. Members present were keen to acknowledge the ongoing work of the PTUA, and the ordinary business of the organisation proceeded without dissent.

There were many nominations for Committee positions this year, including a number from active members of the major political parties – some of whom had only joined the organisation mere weeks before nominating. The nature of these nominations led to some concern that a party-political ‘stack’ was being attempted that might threaten the independence of the PTUA. Although the committee has, and has had, members of both major and minor political parties among its numbers, this is the first time a large organised ‘bloc’ had nominated with the apparent

intention of gaining a majority on the committee.

The Sunday Age “Heckler” column (21/10/2007) took some interest in the development, pondering:

What happens if Team Brumby takes over the PTUA? First press release might read something like "why Melbourne has the best public transport system in the world", followed by "Overcrowding, what overcrowding?"

Ultimately however, many of those with party-political connections subsequently saw fit to withdraw their nominations.

The membership passed two resolutions at the meeting, the full wording of which can be found on page 5. While these resolutions are non-binding, they establish guidelines for what is considered acceptable conduct by committee members with political affiliations. The membership also called on the incoming committee to consider

more binding changes to the PTUA’s constitution and by-laws to avert future ‘stacking’ attempts.

After the withdrawal of some nominations for positions, the 2008 committee was declared elected – a full list can be seen on page 2.

Under the terms of our Constitution, the incoming committee may consider co-option of additional members, including from among those who withdrew their nominations.

We thank our retiring committee member Chris Trikalis who it is hoped will maintain a strong relationship with the Association alongside his other pressing commitments.

Following the meeting there was an opportunity for members to discuss PTUA business over food and drinks. Many thanks are offered to our volunteers whose work has helped make the PTUA a strong advocate for public transport.

More than freebies needed... (cont'd from page 1)

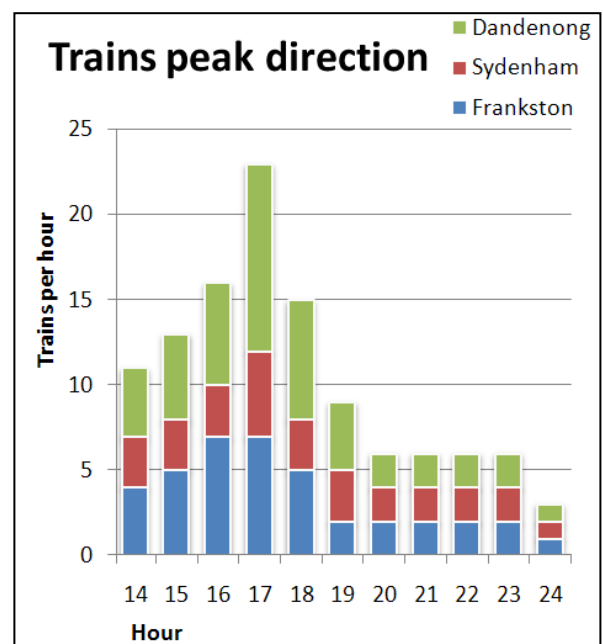
As can be seen from this graph, the frequency of trains, even on the busiest of lines, drops away markedly outside peak hour.

After about 6:30pm in the evening peak, for instance, most expresses stop running, and times between trains increase to 20-30 minutes on most lines, despite hundreds of carriages sitting unused. This ensures that passengers wishing to avoid a long wait will attempt to squeeze on in peak hour.

As detailed in our recent paper “Getting Our Rail System On Track”, more frequent services, including expresses, are the key to

encouraging more passengers to travel outside peak hours. And these are achievable now, using existing track capacity and trains.

Moving to services running at least every 15 minutes, 6am to midnight every day of the week, and providing feeder bus and tram services to match, will more effectively spread peak loads than any number of free rides.



AGM resolutions in full

Resolution No. 1

The following resolution was proposed to the membership by member Vaughan Williams, seconded by David Robertson. There being no dissent, it was put to the vote and carried unanimously.

“The Association:

- 1) Notes that the PTUA Constitution provides that the Association “shall not have any affiliation with, nor financially support, any party political organisation”;
- 2) Regards the political independence of the PTUA as vital to an informed public debate, and to fair and measured criticism of the government of the day (whether Labor or Coalition), and of the policies of all parties,
- 3) Acknowledges that many people involved in public interest advocacy also choose to join political parties, and,
- 4) Values the contributions of numerous PTUA members, past and present, who are or have been members of various political parties.

In the interests of the (perceived and actual) independence of the PTUA, the Association adopts the following guidelines:

- 1) It will generally be inappropriate for any person who is:
 - a) An elected official (such as a Member of State or Federal Parliament, or a municipal councillor), or
 - b) An employee of an elected official (such as an electorate officer or ministerial advisor), or

c) An announced candidate for public office, who is a member of a political party, to be elected to or to hold a position on the PTUA Committee.

2) The guideline in (1) above may be applied more flexibly to independent candidates and to members of small political parties (such as the now defunct Public Transport First party), particularly where the member concerned is not an office bearer or media spokesperson. At all times the interests and independence of the PTUA will guide decisions.

3) If a PTUA Executive member or media spokesperson wishes to stand for election to public office, they will normally be expected to stand down from their position for the duration of the campaign. This guideline may also apply to a committee member, depending on the circumstances.

4) The Association expects that the principal motivation of committee members will be the advancement of the PTUA’s Statement of Purposes.

5) The Association expects that committee members will at all times act in the best interests of the PTUA, and will not allow any conflict between their other interests and those of the PTUA. Committee members must be mindful of the reputational risk to the PTUA at all times.

6) The Association supports the right of members to hold and advocate their own views. However, it expects that committee members will observe PTUA policy when undertaking PTUA business, and when making public comment

in any other capacity, will endeavour to avoid publication of any comments likely to result in their private views being conflated with those of the PTUA.

7) These principles are guidelines only, and are not intended to bar any particular member from election to the PTUA Committee. The Association expects the Committee to manage these matters on a case-by-case basis, with all members participating in such discussions in good faith.”

Resolution No. 2

The following resolution was proposed to the membership by member Suelette Dreyfus and seconded by Mark Johnson. There being no dissent, it was put to the vote and carried unanimously.

“The Association:

- 1) Notes with concern the recent reported attempts to ‘stack’ the PTUA for party-political purposes; and
- 2) Directs the committee to investigate appropriate amendments to the PTUA’s Constitution and by-laws to prevent such attempts from taking place in the future, and to protect and strengthen the PTUA’s political independence.”

Resolution No. 3

Member Elaine Hopper moved a vote of thanks to the Committee for its work over the year on behalf of the Association. The motion was seconded by Chris Hooper and carried unanimously.

Planning the future of Melbourne's rail network

The PTUA has long sought 'evidence-based' transport planning, where communities and experts collaborate on the design of public transport based on an assessment of all available evidence. It contrasts with the 'conviction-based' planning we have long had in Melbourne (for both public transport and roads), where planners simply assert without evidence that doing X will solve the problem of the day: where X may be building another freeway, or building a third track to Dandenong, or introducing smartcard ticketing.

In October the PTUA took part in a roundtable forum on rail capacity organised by the Metropolitan Transport Forum. It was attended by some two dozen people, including senior planning staff from the Department of Infrastructure and Connex, plus a number of consultants and academics, all armed with charts and figures on Melbourne's rail system. The purpose was to investigate the claims of 'capacity constraints' on the train network and develop options for boosting train services.

What we witnessed at this forum was a small but significant step in the direction of evidence-based planning. Evidence presented by community advocates was considered, and many of the bureaucrats present conceded that critiques of rail operations by the PTUA and others were largely correct. Over the years, planners faced with stagnant patronage levels have created barriers to the scheduling of more services, through a confusing array of stopping patterns, inappropriate scheduling of express and stopping services, and a failure to manage factors such as on-time running and dwell times at stations. A more thorough review of train timetables is underway which all believe will significantly boost the number of trains that can run in peak hour.

That said, there is still a push for the third track on the Dandenong line. And there is still an overriding focus on peak-hour central-city commuters, as though trains are only of use in taking people to work and then only if it's in the city centre.

So, while everyone in the room could agree with the goal of doubling or tripling train patronage, the view persists that this somehow means doubling peak hour CBD trips from the outer suburbs. This flies in the face of Census evidence that while the population in the outer suburbs is growing, the proportion of CBD workers in these suburbs is low and in decline. CBD workers and students largely come from the inner and middle suburbs, and are better served by interleaving short-haul stopping trains with suburban expresses.

We nonetheless gained a very positive impression from the forum in comparison with earlier attitudes. It is hoped that this might signal the start of a broader process that involves community advocates more formally in policy and planning and shows a willingness to consider evidence and not foreclose debate with bald assertions.

As the forum was in the nature of a general discussion there were no concrete policy or planning proposals agreed there. However, we in the PTUA continue to pursue our existing policies for boosting the number of trips able to be made by train, which include:

- A simplification of Loop services, with consistent running directions adhered to all day, seven days a week, and a mix of direct and Loop services, with through-routing to maximise the number of trains able to run through the city in peak hour.
- An ongoing programme to boost rolling stock numbers

back toward 1980s levels and to extend the service life of existing rolling stock.

- Short-haul stopping trains alternating with express services, both within and outside peak hour, to boost service levels in inner and middle suburbs while reducing travel times for long-haul travellers. Integration of shorter lines such as Alamein and Williamstown into this pattern to act as 'sweeper services' for inner-suburban travellers.
- Minor capital works to remove bottlenecks in the network, chiefly due to single-track sections.
- Reconfiguration of bus services to act as feeders to railway stations, with proper coordination of timetables, to remove the artificial limit placed on rail patronage by car parking availability.

And not least:

- Extension of the network to serve outlying suburbs

It should always be remembered that Melbourne already has one of the largest train networks for a city of its size anywhere in the world, even when compared with other cities that have much greater numbers of people travelling by train. Perhaps we are beginning to see a realisation that the infrastructure is capable of a good deal more than it manages at present.

There is still no doubt, however, that for real changes to occur our planners will need strong leadership backed by political will. The process that we hope might grow out of current developments will be best steered and assisted by the kind of independent public authority we see in Vancouver, London, Perth, and now Brisbane.

At last: Good news on the trains

No summer train reduction

Connex has announced that this summer, they will not run reduced services, finally giving train passengers what the PTUA has been asking for for some years. This is good news, with the somewhat random removal of services from the schedule in previous years leaving some stations with long gaps between trains, and overcrowding in January when most people are back from holidays.

It's also a reflection of the recent surge in patronage, and the fact that peak hour services are normally overcrowded. And it means those who normally catch peak hour trains and are working over the Christmas break will have some respite, with more pleasant travelling conditions.

Yarra Trams will go ahead with service reductions between Christmas and January 11th, with mostly Saturday frequencies in effect (meaning a drop in services

of 20% in off-peak hours on some routes).

At the time of writing we are waiting what bus operators will do. In some cases last year, off-peak outer-eastern bus services were cut from every 30 to every 60 minutes.

Weekend crowding relief

It's now just over a year since the PTUA highlighted the issue of crowded short weekend trains. Some passengers have been forced to stand for long periods of time, and others have even been left behind at stations to face a 20 minute wait for the next service.

We have continued to lobby on this behind the scenes, and finally there has been action, with the introduction of regular 6-car weekend running on all daytime weekend services except the Upfield line and the Alamein and Williamstown shuttles. This means relief from weekend overcrowding experienced on some lines.

This boost is very welcome. We'll be watching closely to see if it completely fixes the problem. Also of concern are evening services, which have become overcrowded at times, particularly in summer.

It should be noted that Connex was not behind the change. PTUA has been told this was, like most upgrades under privatisation, initiated and paid for by the government. This makes something of a mockery of the "innovation" that successive transport ministers have claimed is the advantage of having private operators, if they can't be trusted to run trains with enough capacity, even when hundreds of spare carriages are available.

The next step is to increase frequencies to every 15 minutes or better, seven days-a-week including evenings, on every line where it is possible, to help encourage further growth at non-peak times.

Weekend train overcrowding
⇒ www.ptua.org.au/2006/11/03/

Craigieburn line a hit

Despite poor performance due to a plague of signalling and other faults, patronage in the newly opened Craigieburn line is growing fast, showing that the investment in outer suburban train services is fully warranted.

Local newspapers reported that the expanded carparks in the two new stations were already full just two weeks after the extension opened, prompting the PTUA to call for upgrades to feeder bus services.

The popularity of the extended service shows that while outer-suburban V/Line passengers may value their express trains and roomy seats, "proper" suburban services with relatively frequent trains throughout the day and evening services until midnight are what leads to greater patronage growth.

While the PTUA remains concerned at the way the project was managed, running late and suffering cost overruns, the success of the service

should convince the government to look at other electrification and extension projects in outer-suburban growth corridors, such as to Sydenham to Sunbury, Sunshine to Caroline Springs and Melton, Frankston to Baxter, and of course the long-awaited Epping to South Morang extension, which – given the urban growth boundary – should also serve Mernda.

Fares up in January

The government has announced a fare rise effective January 1st. Weekly and longer tickets will go up by just under CPI. Daily and

shorter-term tickets will go up by 20 cents each, meaning a Zone 1 two hour ticket has gone up by 30% in the past five years.

The silver lining is the introduction from April of a Weekend Saver ticket, offering five days travel on Saturdays or Sundays for \$14.50.

Federal election result a decisive call for change

The coalition's loss in the recent federal election has demonstrated an overwhelming mood for change in the Australian electorate. With outgoing Prime Minister John Howard's persistent refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol contrasting starkly with the ALP's prominent commitment to ratification, and the decisive role of Greens' preferences in many electorates such as Deakin in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, the new government has a clear mandate to actively pursue greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

What is less clear is how the federal government will translate this mood into support for more climate-friendly forms of transport. On one hand, the ALP National Platform strongly endorsed by its membership earlier this year calls for federal support for public transport including:

- a role for Commonwealth involvement in delivering urban public transport infrastructure; and

- financial assistance to State governments to improve and extend public transport systems in urban and regional Australia.

However, the ALP was effectively silent on this issue during what many have dubbed the "me too" election campaign. A year ago this month, Kevin Rudd alluded to federal funds for urban rail expansion under a Major Cities Program, but most transport announcements during the campaign allocated funds from AusLink to large road projects that will encourage higher levels of traffic and greater car dependence. In the face of this, all levels of government will have to work harder to improve the attractiveness of public transport if the rapid growth in road transport emissions is to be reversed.

One bright spot is that the "TrackDown" campaign - involving groups such as the PTUA, the Eastern Coalition on Transport and the Environment and the Greens - has borne fruit with both major

parties committing to grade separation of the Springvale Road level crossing in Nunawading. We hope this is a sign that the federal and state governments will now be able to work cooperatively to improve public transport infrastructure, including expanding the rail network and eliminating bottlenecks such as single track sections of railway. Similarly, both major parties made some commitments to improving rail freight infrastructure, such as improving rail access to the Port of Geelong, which are a welcome start to renovating Australia's neglected rail network.

One other thing does appear to be clear - growing recognition of the urgency to reduce greenhouse emissions and the possibility that conventional oil production has peaked are likely to increase the importance of transport policy between now and the next federal election. The parties that respond proactively to these challenges should be well placed when Australians next cast their votes.

On the trams

Another tram stop goes

Yarra Trams' removal of tram stops is proceeding apace: the latest victim is the stop at the corner of Bourke and Exhibition Streets.

Funnily enough, this coincides with the relocation of most of the public transport bureaucracy from Nauru House to the new Southern Cross 2

building, right next to the axed tram stop.

Been short-shunted recently?

The short-shunting of Swanston St trams in evening peak hour appears to have returned with a vengeance. Those who've been around for a while will remember the PTUA raised this issue way back in 1997.

But didn't Yarra Trams get several million dollars of Think Tram funding to solve this problem for good with that urban design catastrophe, the new Melbourne Uni terminus? It's hardly good thinking to cut off one side of Swanston St from the other in a high activity zone, only to suffer a recurrence of 10-year-old operational problems.

Call for Canterbury Road Smartbus

For some time now, a gaping hole has existed in the public transport network between Burwood Highway and the Belgrave/Lilydale line. Seeking to fill this gap, the

Outer East Branch has launched a petition calling for the Canterbury Road SmartBus. We encourage all our members who live or travel in the eastern suburbs to sign this

petition, which is available from our web site or by phoning the office.

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/outereast