



## Eddington: Tunnel vision

Sir Rod Eddington’s East West Needs Assessment report was finally released at the beginning of April. The assessment was a key part of the government’s Meeting Our Transport Challenges strategy, and like MOTC itself the Eddington report deserves a hearty one-hand clap.

Melbourne’s traffic problem actually has a fairly simple diagnosis. A failure to adequately plan and coordinate public transport services means that the bulk of Melburnians are conscripted into mandatory car use.

If you live within walking distance of a railway station or tram and only ever travel along that route, you might find public transport fairly competitive with car travel. Otherwise, you have no choice: if you want a life, you drive a car. This situation has persisted for so long in Melbourne that we assume it’s the natural state of affairs.

And so for the last half century we have followed the road lobby’s standard prescription of building more roads to solve traffic congestion. Politicians love it, because the idea has such a seductive appeal when compulsory car use lands so many of us in traffic jams.

And yet, congestion has just grown and grown with the number of new roads. There’s no ‘natural’ reason why use of cars should grow twice as fast as population, but unchecked freeway-building makes it so. Citylink, for example, has been so good at ‘solving’ congestion that we’re now building extra lanes on the Monash to deal with the extra congestion Citylink has brought us.



Setting aside all the road lobby propaganda, it should now be clear to anyone that the 1950s remedy for congestion has failed. We’d all like to travel on uncongested roads, but the strategy of building more roads hasn’t actually delivered that outcome – it’s done the opposite. It’s time for a new prescription.

Which is what the Eddington report fails to deliver with its recommendation for a \$9 billion version of Sydney’s

Cross City Tunnel. This, of course, is the same road that was studied four years ago and dismissed, mainly because east-west travel accounts for only 15% of Eastern Freeway traffic, including the trucks. So we already know the road tunnel would have a negligible effect on the traffic jam at the end of the Eastern Freeway, since that’s made up mainly of cars bound for the city and surrounding area.

Sir Rod Eddington is no fool, but his background is demonstrably not in urban planning. It’s funny that when WA planning expert Peter Newman delivered a report on Melbourne’s transport in 2005 the government dismissed him as an ‘outsider’, yet the same criticism does not apply to Eddington, who as a non-planner has tended to rely on vested interests for advice.

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Tunnel picture: [www.flickr.com/photos/view/208175657/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/view/208175657/)

## Keeping in touch...

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Call or e-mail the office (see above)

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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](http://www.ptua.org.au/members/resources)

## Committee

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

## Committee Meetings

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

### Branch meetings

#### Outer East:

Third Tuesday of every month, 7pm  
“The Barn” (behind Box Hill Baptist Church)  
3 Ellingworth Parade (off Station St)  
Box Hill

#### 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 news

With the release of Sir Rod Eddington’s report, the branch is working to highlight the lack of solutions in the outer east. Most notable is the lack of Doncaster rail, which will instead see upgraded freeway buses. While this may be cheaper than building a railway line, clearly the capacity will be severely limited. Other opportunities missed by Eddington include Rowville rail and much needed bus upgrades.

The branch has also been busy campaigning ahead of the bus reviews in Manningham, Whitehorse and Monash. We have been successful in highlighting the deficiencies in Sunday bus services. There is still much to be done before submissions close on May 2. We will certainly be keeping up the call for more frequent buses on quicker more direct routes. We also

encourage members to have your say, if you haven’t already done so.

We are continuing our efforts to get off-peak train frequencies upgraded, along with a range of other issues. And with over 350 signatures, we will be arranging for the Canterbury Road SmartBus petition to be tabled in Parliament.

### Yarra Valley forum

The Outer East Branch also had a presence at a Yarra Valley transport forum, held by Leader newspaper (7th April). Like much of Victoria, residents in the Yarra Valley and the surrounding hills have been plagued by grossly inadequate public transport services. For example, the lack of north-south (cross-valley) connections is a cause for complete car dependence for many people.

The community (backed by the Shire of Yarra Ranges and local politicians) has been longing for improvement, with little action from the State Government. However, where upgrades have been made, they have successfully been met with significant patronage increases. Despite this, some trials, such as extending the 683 bus to East Warburton were rolled back for no apparent reason.

The PTUA would like to see the ‘Pulse Network’ model applied to the region, as used successfully in Switzerland, Austria and Sweden. Under this model, buses would be timed to connect with trains and other routes, while frequencies and operating hours would be vastly improved to meet community expectations.

⇒ [www.ptua.org.au/outereast](http://www.ptua.org.au/outereast)

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

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## Metro train timetables revamped

The government has outlined the coming timetable changes for metropolitan trains. A major revamp for some lines from November will result in better use of rail infrastructure, allowing more trains to run immediately, and as the fleet expands.

As has been expected for some time, Epping and Hurstbridge line trains will run clockwise all day through the city loop, avoiding conflicts near Jolimont which cause delays during the morning peak. While some passengers heading for Parliament will face longer trips, others such as those going to Flinders Street for the southern half of the CBD, Southbank and St Kilda Road, will save time. An extra train will run on each line in the morning peak, which will relieve overcrowding.

The Werribee line will run direct to Southern Cross and Flinders Street during peak hours. Passengers for those stations will save time off their trip, while those going to underground stations will need to

change at North Melbourne, or Southern Cross (where they can catch Clifton Hill trains to their destination). Or if going to the Hospital/University precincts they can use the express 401 bus from North Melbourne. This change will allow more trains from both Sydenham and Werribee in the peak, helping with rampant overcrowding on those lines.

The PTUA were consulted about these changes before they were announced. We believe that while some passengers will have slightly longer journey times, others will save time, and the overall effect of more train services will help everyone on those lines. We have long said that more trains could be run using the current rail infrastructure – in line with what was intended when the City Loop was designed – and these changes demonstrate that.

Other changes being introduced include running 6-car trains on most lines all day, relieving off-peak



overcrowding currently seen on the Northern and Clifton Hill groups.

And Sprinters will be used on the Stony Point line, providing more and faster services. Curiously, unlike the older diesel-hauled passenger trains, these won't be fitted with ticket machines, so passengers will have to buy their tickets at Frankston, meaning passengers on the line who aren't using Frankston will get a free ride.

A number of these changes were recommended in our paper 'Getting the Rail System Back on Track', published last year, and while the changes won't suit everybody, they are important to allow more train services to run in the future.

⇒ [www.ptua.org.au/2008/04/11/](http://www.ptua.org.au/2008/04/11/)

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## What would YOU like to see in the new contracts?

The Public Transport Division has asked the PTUA to provide input into the new operating contracts and trains and trams. While obviously we would like more frequent services and network extensions, the emphasis for this particular input is on customer service issues, such as information, cleanliness, amenity, that kind of thing.

This provides a good opportunity for PTUA members to offer their suggestions. Do the inaccurate automated announcements on trains irritate you? Is there a lack of system maps? Are there particular times when the trains are in dire need of litter collection? Should we have more seats at stops and stations? More staff? And how

would such requirements be audited and measured to ensure they were up to scratch?

Email your suggestions to [contracts@ptua.org.au](mailto:contracts@ptua.org.au)

The PTUA committee will be looking at all ideas before we submit our response to PTD.

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## Write a letter, win car share for a year

Sometimes public transport just doesn't quite cut it. And for those who only occasionally need a car, car sharing could be the answer.

Go Get car share have given us, unsolicited, a gift certificate of a double-membership to their car share scheme for a year – worth \$410. We'll give it to the member

who writes the best transport-related letter published in a daily newspaper between now and the end of June.

To enter, email [competitions@ptua.org.au](mailto:competitions@ptua.org.au) with a copy of the letter, and the publication details (newspaper, date). The winner will be at the discretion of the PTUA

committee, and no correspondence will be entered into. All current PTUA members except those on the committee and their families are eligible to enter. The winner will be announced in a future newsletter and published on our web site.

⇒ [www.ptua.org.au/members/competitions](http://www.ptua.org.au/members/competitions)

## Eddington's tunnel vision (cont'd from page 1)

Indeed, the east-west road is just the next link in the freeway grid the road lobby says we have to have, ever since an earlier transport plan in 1969 presented a vision for Melbourne as an antipodean Los Angeles with 500km of interconnecting motorways. The Eddington report, with its outdated predict-and-provide approach lifted from the earlier 1969 plan, is just the means to that end.

The 1969 planners themselves were also very worried about CBD rail capacity. In 1964, 92 suburban trains arrived in the city in the busiest hour of the peak (leaving out the now-defunct St Kilda and Port Melbourne lines). The planners thought this would have to nearly double by 1985, and so the city loop was born. With the loop in place, they proudly stated, the number of peak hour trains could increase from 92 to at least 160, not counting country services. The city loop would be the biggest increase in CBD rail capacity in a century.

Step forward to 2008. Thanks to a new timetable, we are now running 95 suburban trains into the city in peak hour - about the same as in 1964. And once again, planners tell us this is straining the capacity of the central-city network. Yet the city loop has been built! So where are the other 65-odd trains that the loop was built to handle?

It's certainly not clear from the Eddington report, which proposes spending another \$8 billion to duplicate the city loop with a rail tunnel from Footscray to Caulfield. There are literally hundreds of pages seeking to justify this, which nicely serves the purpose of confusing critics. But what is clear is it's an awful lot of money to solve a problem we were supposed to have solved 30 years ago.

Many of the smaller recommendations of the report are positive. Electrification to Sunbury is long overdue; tram priority needs a whole of government focus (though we doubt that clearways are the best solution); and Yarraville residents are pleased at proposals to move trucks out of Francis Street.

More dubious is the proposal for a new train line through the middle of a green wedge connecting Werribee with Deer Park. This would make some sense if the government were so determined to build the next group of Melbourne suburbs here, rather than (say) in the Rockbank-Melton corridor where there is a train line ready and waiting. Once again, there is no capacity problem to be solved by this project, only the prospect of a lengthy detour for Geelong travellers.

Meanwhile, there's no shortage of important and overdue, but ignored, public transport projects crying out for funding. The report delivers precisely nothing for all those already built-up areas of Melbourne that have gone without train lines for decades. Doncaster and Rowville, for example, were promised train lines in that same 1969 transport plan; they're still waiting (and no, you can't make buses do everything a train line does, even with a cute acronym like DART). South Morang was promised theirs in 1999, but the government is using the phony 'capacity crisis' to delay it until at least 2015. Meanwhile, it only takes 4 years to build an Eastlink motorway.

The more one reads the 'Needs Assessment', the clearer it becomes that it's recycling old-school thinking and getting its priorities upside down. It recites all the old urban myths from the road lobby, foists a 'let them eat bitumen' solution on the suburbs, and

subverts all efforts to manage greenhouse emissions and save suburban families from high petrol prices. Roads and public transport do not complement one another: new roads urge us to respond to our transport needs in unsustainable ways, and non-road alternatives cannot succeed while they are undermined by road expansion.

The great irony of the report is that its big-ticket rail project is doomed to become a stranded asset, due to the impact of its big-ticket road project. Not that the private sector will want to fund either. The cross-city tunnel will only attract private investment if it can act as a radial freeway funnelling cars into the CBD, because that's the only way it could make money. But we're assured there will be no off-ramps into the city centre. This means the road will be paid for with \$9 billion of public money, which is money we need to fix our schools and hospitals, let alone our public transport.

The proposed spending on both cross-city tunnels would be better used on rail extensions to Doncaster, Rowville and Mernda; electrification to Melton; and a radical boost to bus services, as part of a building a proper multimodal public transport network for the western and eastern suburbs. These are all projects that the PTUA and the Melbourne community has backed for decades.

Even this would only use some \$2-3 billion of the \$17-odd billion price tag: Perth recently put in a brand new 70km train line with feeder buses for around \$1 billion. With the money left over, we could then think about what new inner-city infrastructure is appropriate: but driven by evidence, not by the mystical force of its price tag.

⇒ [www.doi.vic.gov.au/eastwest](http://www.doi.vic.gov.au/eastwest)

## How many trains?

Just how many more trains can our rail system handle? Well, the City Loop project, which also included two extra tracks between Flinders Street and what is now Southern Cross, was supposed to double train capacity in the city area.

City Loop literature from during its construction proudly proclaims that the project would double CBD train capacity.

And the Metropolitan Transport Plan of 1969 reveals that planners

anticipated up to 52 trains per hour coming into the city from Caulfield (currently there are 22 between 8am and 9am), and 25 trains per hour in from Footscray (currently 14).\*

There can be little doubt that more trains can be run on our current (not insubstantial) rail infrastructure.

The changes announced for November (see page 3) are a good start, but a lot more can be done to get more trains running, before we

resort to spending billions on new tunnels.

### Necessary

By reducing time between trains and improving the distribution of City stations the Loop will provide for the doubling of the capacity of the whole suburban railway system. It will overcome pedestrian congestion in and around City stations by distributing passengers in a more convenient and comfortable manner. It will eliminate peak-

Melbourne Underground Rail Loop Authority brochure

\*These figures do not include V/Line trains

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## Urban growth: is PT keeping up?

On 4 March, Premier John Brumby announced plans to fast-track the development of over 90,000 new homes on farmland around Melbourne. Meanwhile, demographers have suggested Melbourne may overtake Sydney as Australia's largest city within two decades.

The Brumby land release is an attempt to make housing more affordable by increasing the supply of land, a dubious strategy in itself. Similar land releases by the Kennett Government in the late 1990s failed to prevent record increases in house prices.

Nonetheless, urban growth isn't objectionable in itself as long as it is contiguous with existing urban areas and occurs in established rail

corridors. Along our existing rail lines to Sunbury, Melton, Werribee, Pakenham and Cranbourne there is ample scope to develop new urban land with superior public transport access - as long as the train services, new stations, and feeder buses are developed along with the subdivisions, as happens for example in Perth.

This strategy is much more far-sighted and 'future proof' than developing land within green wedges remote from existing suburbs, as was the pattern with many American cities and which the Kennett Government tried to replicate in Melbourne. Nor is it particularly efficient to develop green wedge land and try to graft expensive new public transport services onto these developments,

as with the strange 'Tarnait link' proposal that sprang fully-fledged from the Eddington Review without any prior discussion.

The PTUA has renewed calls to extend services into new urban growth areas following the Brumby announcement. This includes electrification and new stations on the Melton line, extending the Epping line to South Morang and Mernda, and establishing new stations on the Pakenham and Cranbourne lines. Also required is a long-overdue expansion of bus services to feed into rail stations, to relieve pressure on outer suburban roads and station car parks.

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## New ombudsman appointed

In March, the PTUA met the new Public Transport Ombudsman, Simon Cohen. Mr Cohen's background is in the State Ombudsman's office in New South Wales.

Members may be aware that although the PTUA was one of the principal lobbyists behind the establishment of the Ombudsman scheme, we have not had a great

deal of confidence in its effectiveness over the last few years. One reason for this was that the conduct of ticket inspectors - which has been the biggest single source of complaint to the PTUA - was taken outside the PTO's jurisdiction when it was set up.

Fortunately, this anomaly has now been rectified, and the PTO can accept and investigate complaints

about ticket inspectors. Mr Cohen's previous role included responsibility for complaints about police, which should equip him well for this new responsibility.

The PTUA looks forward to working with the scheme and the new Ombudsman.

⇒ [www.ptovic.com.au](http://www.ptovic.com.au)

## Earlybird rolls out

The Earlybird scheme has now rolled-out across all train lines, despite the fact that the trial on the Frankston and Sydenham lines appeared not to fulfil the original goals.

When the trial started, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Transport Rob Hudson was quoted in the Caulfield Glen Eira Leader (25/9/2007) as saying that 600 of the 12,000 peak hour commuters on the Frankston line would need to move their trips for it to be deemed a success.

Detailed results of the trial haven't been released, but we understand that of the 1600 people per day who used the free tickets, only 400 had moved their trips. Of those, around 170 were on the Sydenham line, and 230 on the Frankston line.

So while the government has claimed the trial was a success, in fact less than half the target number moved their trips. It's also not clear how many moved to before 7am from the busiest time in peak hour, between 8am and 9am – we suspect that many of those moving their trips did so by less than half-an-hour.

In any case, to put the numbers into perspective: 230 people on the Frankston line is less than a third of a moderately full train load. Putting on a single additional peak hour train makes at least three times the difference to overcrowding, without the consequent loss of fare revenue.

### Tram and bus miss out

Last year, in a victory for simplicity in the fare system, the last purely

single mode tickets, the National Bus section fares, were withdrawn. But with the Earlybird tickets, we've stepped backwards. They are the only tickets which are only available for use on trains.

Early risers who are trying to avoid crowding on trams, or busy bus routes (such as those from Doncaster) can't take advantage of the deal. Nor can those train travellers who start or complete their trip by tram or bus, such as people heading to St Kilda Road by tram. And those using V/Line, even from suburban V/Line stations like Sunbury, are also out of luck.

While the Early Bird ticket may not make much sense for relieving overcrowding (see above), if the ticket is going to be offered, it should be offered on all modes.

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## 401 shuttle success

The North Melbourne to university/hospital precinct shuttle bus 401 has met with early success, with up to 1800 trips recorded per day in the first few weeks of operation. Thanks to frequent services (every 3 minutes in peak) and good promotion, passengers have quickly learnt that the buses can save them time on their commutes.

While it could be further improved, the service represents a breath of fresh air in public transport: a positive step in attempting to relieve

Northern Loop train overcrowding by giving people a genuine alternative which actually saves them time, and resourcing it properly so that those taking advantage of it face minimal waiting times.

It's a stark contrast from the Earlybird scheme, which has tried largely unsuccessfully to change passenger behaviour.



Passengers from the Northern group train lines heading towards the university/hospital precinct are encouraged to try the service, which runs on weekdays from 7am to 7pm.

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## Musical chairs on the trains

Connex have flagged that they are reviewing internal train layouts, to see if more efficient use can be made of the space.

The last thing we'd want to see is the wholesale removal of seats. But the current layouts could be made more efficient. Siemens trains and some Comeng layouts encourage people to stand blocking the

doorways, and Connex is looking at modifying these to encourage people to move further inside the carriage.

Most models of train lack many hand straps. Connex have been reluctant to add more straps due to their use by vandals to kick out windows. We have discussed the possibility of placing them at angles

(as seen in some areas of the Siemens trains) to provide more places to stand.

Nobody wants to see so few seats on trains that even long distance passengers end up standing for all of their trip, but we'd cautiously welcome tweaking with layouts to improve dwell times and help fit a few more people on board.

## Geelong branch news

The main activity recently has been a round of meetings with local councillors to try to get some action on the continuing failure to return a proper bus interchange to central Geelong.

It has been an interesting exercise. One councillor declined to meet us, claiming not to know anything about public transport and therefore "having nothing to bring to the

table"! Another claimed not to know that central bus stops had been scattered around the outskirts of the CBD since 2005. One started aggressively ("I suppose you people opposed the ban on bikes on trains") but we feel that we eventually won him around, to some extent at least.

The fundamental message is that buses need to be run like trams. This seems to have been appreciated by most councillors. We are grateful to Councillors Mc Mullin and Kontelj, who have set the wheels in motion for us to formally brief Council about our ideas in the near future.

⇒ [www.ptua.org.au/geelong](http://www.ptua.org.au/geelong)

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## Wang woes

V/Line announced in February the most trains between Wangaratta and Albury would be permanently replaced by buses, increasing the length of the journey by half an hour.

The decision reflects decades of neglect of Victoria's country rail network by various state governments. The Regional Fast Rail project led to much-needed upgrades of some sections of track, but the Melbourne - Albury line was a notable exclusion from that scheme.

Not only was the broad gauge line to Albury not reconstructed, its infrastructure has actually been reduced in recent years. There is now only one crossing loop in the

whole 210 kilometres of single track between Seymour and Albury. As well as limiting the number of trains that can be run, this also means that any disruptions to the schedule will delay other trains running on that line, as well as any trains formed by carriage sets coming off Albury services.

Disruptions are inevitable, particularly in summer. The poor quality track, coupled with the consistently high temperatures in that part of Victoria, means that trains are often run more slowly because tracks are likely to buckle. Not surprisingly, the Albury line usually has V/Line's worst timekeeping record.

After V/Line's decision was announced, the PTUA issued a media release noting that the state government had recently bought back control of the Victorian country rail network and called on it to carry out the longstanding plan, recommended Tim Fischer's Victorian Rail Freight Network Review, for the broad gauge track from Seymour to Albury to be leased to the federal Australian Rail Track Corporation, upgraded, and converted to standard gauge.

Along with the existing ARTC-controlled interstate standard gauge line, this would create a high quality double track standard gauge line to Albury.

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## Trams get even greener

Five years ago critics of trams thought they'd got a new weapon when a non-refereed conference paper suggested that because trams use brown coal-fired electricity, their CO2 emissions per passenger were higher than for cars.

The claim was nonsense, of course. Nonetheless, we all know that of all ways to generate electricity, burning brown coal is by far dirtiest. The emissions from tram use may be only a fraction of those from car use, but it's still true that trams (and trains) are emitting much more

greenhouse gas than if we had a less polluting source of electricity.

The PTUA accordingly supports moves to run Melbourne's trains and trams on 'green power', from sustainable sources such as wind farms. The first step in this direction occurred in March, when Yarra Trams launched its first 'wind powered tram'.

The tram is no different to any other (besides its facade promoting renewable energy); what is different is that Yarra Trams has agreed to purchase renewable electricity from

Pacific Hydro's Yambuk wind farm equivalent to this tram's power consumption.

With only a single tram running on renewable electricity, at this stage it's still more of a PR exercise than a meaningful shift in energy consumption. Ultimately, moving away from the use of coal-fired electricity for public transport and other public services needs to become part of the government's sustainable energy policy; it is not really the job of private operators to accomplish this.

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## Inside:

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