



Transport Authority still a waiting game

As the month of July passes, Transport Minister Terry Mulder faces increasing community anxiety over the government’s progress on keeping its promises in transport. Most important is the promise to introduce an independent Public Transport Development Authority (PTDA) to coordinate the planning and operation of Victoria’s public transport system.

The State Budget in May this year gave the second quarter of 2011–12 as the target date for establishment of the PTDA. This would have the Authority in place by December at the latest, with enabling legislation passed by Parliament well in advance. There can be little doubt that legislation is being drafted behind the scenes, and will probably be announced in time to be reported in the next *PTUA News*.

It is of concern at this stage of the process, however, that action on the PTDA should still be taking place behind closed doors. Successful transport authorities in cities like Vancouver, Zurich and London operate in a climate of openness: meetings are held in public, public submissions are welcomed, and information to support decisions is published. According to planners like Vukan Vuchic of the University of Pennsylvania, this openness is part of the very reason these authorities are successful, because it reduces the tendency to institutional ‘groupthink’ and increases accountability for decisions.

Those decisions which have come amid the ongoing hiatus prior to the establishment of the PTDA suggest the same old bureaucracy is at work. The promised review of the Regional Rail Link project concluded that nothing should change and the RRL should proceed as planned, only with a higher price tag. The introduction of the new Metro timetable provided no opportunity for prior public review, to establish whether its more negative aspects really were necessary. And most recently, the decision to keep Myki but reduce its functionality contrasts strangely with the then Opposition’s view before the election that Myki was a millstone around Victoria’s neck.

If a PTDA with the relevant expertise had already existed when these decisions needed to be taken, we suspect there is a good chance they would have played out differently. But of course the PTDA does not yet exist, nor would it have been possible to establish it in time to have a meaningful role in these decisions. That is not to say that a suitable interim arrangement could not have been found, such as selecting some of the key personnel and appointing them to an interim committee.

The good news is that by the time another decision as weighty as those over the RRL and Myki is required, there will be a PTDA in place to carry it out. But it behoves the Minister to involve the community more deeply in the process to establish the PTDA, to ensure it is constituted in a way that fulfils the community’s expectations of it, as expressed in people’s votes at the last election.

Myki reduced in scope ⇒ Page 3

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Keeping in touch:

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Ross House
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Telephone (03) 9650 7898
Email: office@ptua.org.au

Membership Enquiries

Call or email the office (see above).

Commuter Club

PTUA members can obtain cheap yearly Myki Passes. See www.ptua.org.au/members/offers.

Internet

Our website is at www.ptua.org.au. The PTUA runs email lists for member discussions, and to stay up to date with PTUA events. Members can also view archived newsletters online. See: www.ptua.org.au/members/resources.

Committee

Daniel Bowen—President
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Contact

All committee members can be emailed using the format `firstname.lastname@ptua.org.au`.

Member Meetings

Melbourne

Dates / times as advised
Ross House
247 Flinders Lane, City
More details: see below and opposite

Eastern Suburbs

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

Station User Panel news

The PTUA is represented on a panel of community interests to agree design guidelines and community consultation processes for new railway stations, with a particular focus on accessibility.

The Panel was formed at the request of the Minister for Transport after he identified problems with recent station 'upgrades'. He mentioned the Panel in Parliament in June when responding to criticism of Laverton Station (which was rebuilt without access other than by lift or stairs, with the lift being frequently vandalised).

The Panel meets monthly and has visited North Melbourne, Laverton and Yarraville as examples of recent work. (At Yarraville the council created a pedestrian friendly bus interchange at the station entrance.) The Regional Rail Link team presented early concept designs for the new RRL station works and the panel will be commenting on their ideas. Southland and Grovedale are two new stations on which the panel is expected to make recommendations.

The panel is forming the design guidelines in a framework under the broad headings of

- Safety;
- Navigation / Wayfinding;
- Comfort / Amenity;
- Accessibility;
- Information;
- Precinct Integration; and
- Community Ownership.

It is expecting to have a draft completed by Christmas.

Contributions from PTUA members are welcome. Discussions are held on the membership discussion list; see above for details on how to join. Alternatively, write to us at the office.

Allies call for Federal public transport funding

A coalition of health, transport, environment and Local Government groups has thrown its weight behind greater Federal funding of public transport, walking and cycling.

The coalition includes the Heart Foundation, whose press release points to the importance of physical inactivity

as a public health problem and a major factor in chronic disease. Foundation CEO Lyn Roberts estimates that inactivity kills 16,000 Australians and costs the health budget \$1.5 billion each year.

On the other hand, a person's risk of heart disease or stroke can be halved

with 30 minutes of daily exercise. Travel surveys indicate that people who travel by public transport average about 40 minutes of walking or cycling daily, compared to less than 10 minutes for those who mainly travel by car. The groups' call is a welcome addition to the PTUA's own efforts here.

For members only: Meet the Minister on 25 August

The Minister for Transport, the Hon Terry Mulder, will be our guest at the next members' meeting.

Minister Mulder will make a short presentation, and then be available for questions. This is your opportunity to speak directly with the man himself.

When: Thursday 25th August at 6:30pm

Where: Hayden Raysmith meeting room, 4th floor, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne. (Please use the 'upper floors' entrance.)

Please note that as this is a special privilege being extended to PTUA members, only current financial members will be admitted.



Is 2013 the end of turn-up-and-go travel?

It's been confirmed: Myki is to be kept, but in modified form. In fact, the government intends to make Myki cards compulsory for travel on Melbourne's public transport once Metcard is phased-out.

The original plan had been for 'Short Term Tickets'—single use cardboard tickets with chips in them—to be used by passengers who didn't have a Myki card, with 2-hour or daily fares available. These tickets are already in use in regional cities that use Myki, offering a way for occasional users (including tourists) to buy a ticket when they travel.

But with each Short Term Ticket costing around 35 cents to produce, the government appears to have decided—with some justification—that they are too expensive. The problem is they have not proposed any alternative. This will leave *all* passengers requiring a Myki card, at an upfront cost of \$10 per adult or \$7 per concession passenger, before a cent in actual fares is paid. What's more, topping up existing Myki cards will not be possible on trams, and may not be possible on buses either.

This is a severely retrograde step. For public transport to win more 'market share', particularly for off-peak and suburban trips, all possible hurdles to occasional use must be avoided. To make a prospective customer buy a \$10 card before they can use the service is akin to refusing to sell someone a newspaper unless they become a subscriber.

To illustrate the practical problems with this decision: a typical tourist family of two adults and two children visiting Melbourne for a few days would have to pay \$34 for Myki cards plus the cost of their travel. (It does at least appear the government is planning to offer a return and refund system similar to that in other cities with smartcards.)

This is one more egregious addition to the list of ways in which Myki has broken its promise to Victorians—that passengers would not lose any benefits they had under Metcard. (Other such withdrawn benefits include free all-zone travel on weekends with periodical tickets, and the ability to extend the ticket validity period when a service is delayed or cancelled.) It also represents a reduction in the Myki contract

scope, for which the government ought to have negotiated a reduction in payments, saving taxpayers' money.

There are other alternatives to the costly Short Term Tickets. One option that should be considered is to issue paper tickets, using the equipment already fitted to Myki machines that produces paper receipts for topups. Another is to adjust pricing, so that while an individual 2-hour or daily ticket remains available, the incentive to switch to Myki (and particularly to periodical fares—see *PTUA News* February 2011) is greater than at present.

But the plan as it stands will greatly inconvenience occasional public transport users and visitors (from overseas, interstate and regional Victoria). It is therefore likely to either discourage patronage growth, or result in widespread unintentional fare evasion, or both.



Metro timetables: punctuality improving, but problems remain

In June the suburban train network achieved its punctuality target for only the fourth time since Metro took over from Connex in late 2009—and for the first time this year.

Metro are attributing this to two factors: the new May timetable, which made a number of significant changes to services from Frankston, Ringwood and Newport (see *PTUA News*, May 2011); and the lifting of speed restrictions now that Siemens trains have been fitted with sanders to assist with braking.

In May 82.2% of trains ran ‘on time’ (less than five minutes late). For June the figure had climbed to 88.2%, and as-of mid-July the 28-day average had risen further to 90.6%.

But the improvement has come at a cost. Altona residents continue to be frustrated by the new operating pattern which sees them have to catch up to three separate trains to reach some CBD stations outside peak hour. Dur-

ing peak hour there have been numerous reports of delays and cancellations to their now incomprehensible 22-minute timetable, and on-the-ground information has been inadequate.

On the Frankston line, padding was added to the timetable in May which has resulted in many trains either departing early or spending excessive time waiting at platforms for their scheduled departure time. One driver was heard to apologise to his passengers via the PA for the delay, telling them it was “the slackest timetable” he had ever seen.

Frankston passengers leaving the city between 6pm and 7pm on weekdays have to contend with a confusing timetable which sees direct and Loop trains leaving within a minute of each other from Flinders Street, and three different operating patterns.

Laburnum passengers continue their protest against the reduction in morning express trains, resulting in longer trips.

(Oddly, the evening express pattern is unchanged.)

There are some good points, of course. Apart from the punctuality improvement, there has been a noticeable reduction in overcrowding on lines which got extra services. According to leaked reports the worst line for overcrowding is now the Hurstbridge line, which still runs fewer trains in peak hour than it did in the 1960s, but is expected to be targeted next for additional peak services.

We have provided member feedback to Metro on the May changes, and they have assured us this will be taken into account in planning for the next timetable change. Further modifications are expected late this year, as more of the new trains arrive, and infrastructure improvements on the Clifton Hill lines (including the South Morang extension) come online. If you have feedback, contact the office.

⇒ office@ptua.org.au

Government pushes armed guards on stations, but regional pledge watered down

Despite logistical and other concerns, the government is pushing ahead with its election pledge to put armed Protective Service Officers on all metropolitan and some regional railway stations after 6pm each night.

However it appears one aspect of the plan has been watered down: before the election, the Coalition’s crime policy media release stated: “Melbourne’s metropolitan train stations and all stations in Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Traralgon will be protected by uniformed officers.” This implied all stations within those cities would be included, and indeed our Geelong Branch was specifically told that Lara would have officers after 6pm.

But recent statements from the government have referred only to the four main stations in those cities, meaning other stations such as Lara, South Geelong, Marshall, Eaglehawk, Warragul and Wendouree will not benefit from the security presence. In addition, a number of deployment issues are still unclear, including whether officers will have access to toilets, how and where firearms are to be stored, and whether officers’ powers will allow them to intervene if trouble occurs on-board a train, or in an area adjacent to a station such as a street or carpark.

A PTUA study last year of 2009 crime figures showed that about 45% of reported assaults occur at just ten stations, and about half occur before 6pm. A

more recent *Herald Sun* study of 2010 figures showed a similar pattern. This led to the view that this kind of ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to station safety is not the optimum use of taxpayer funds.

Passengers would be better served by regular fulltime staff at all stations (thus providing better access to customer information including during disruptions, assistance with ticket machines, and toilet facilities) and a dedicated fulltime police presence at hotspot locations. No doubt the Coalition will push ahead regardless, and while it comes at a high cost, ultimately it is expected that passengers will see increased safety on the train system at night.

PTUA website highlights transport problems

In April the PTUA web site started a new feature: **Public Transport Problem Of The Day**.

Aimed at highlighting some of the issues around the network which affect passengers adversely but sometimes fly under the radar, this series of photos ran every day for ten weeks, before reverting to a weekly series. A number of issues raised were given coverage in the free *MX* commuter newspaper, including one photo which showed half-a-dozen inaccuracies on a single departure board at Southern Cross Station.

The series will continue every Monday. ⇒ www.ptua.org.au

If you have snapped a photo clearly showing a problem on public transport, please email it to problems@ptua.org.au



What's wrong with this picture? Hint: where are the next trains to Altona or Werribee—and why are passengers at 1:32pm being told about trains to Flinders Street leaving at 5pm? (Even the indicated 1:42 'Flinders Street' service is actually a suggestion to catch the Epping train and change at Clifton Hill!)

Carbon tax's imperfect implications for transport

Our carbon price gets it wrong on transport, but there are ways this could be remedied.

Despite the shrill, well-funded campaigns questioning climate science and the urgency of reducing emissions, scientists are now virtually unanimous that human activities are increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and that global temperatures are rising as a result. This is being witnessed in the form of rising sea levels, retreating glaciers, melting ice sheets and more frequent extreme weather.

Worryingly, recent measurements are tracking close to, or even worse than, the worst-case predictions of scientists only a few years ago.

With this in mind, it is encouraging that the Federal Government has reached an agreement with the Greens and independents to introduce a carbon pricing scheme, backed-up with complementary measures to reduce emissions. A broad-based carbon price is considered by economists to be the least costly and

most efficient way to ensure all sectors contribute a fair share of reductions.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the agreement exempts private motorists from the carbon price while including electricity and diesel used by public transport. This will make public transport slightly more expensive relative to private car use, and potentially lead to *higher* emissions from transport rather than lower. Heavy road vehicles will be included in the scheme from 2014, but rail transport is being made to pay the price from day one.

While this cost penalty on public transport is perverse, and the opposite of what is intended, it remains true that poor service quality is the main barrier to getting people out of cars and onto public transport. A small increase in fuel costs due to carbon pricing (likely less than the weekly fluctuations already faced by motorists) is unlikely to reduce transport emissions unless motorists have the option of switching to fast, frequent and reliable public trans-

port. This is where the government can help reduce emissions well beyond the effect of pricing the carbon in petrol.

To offset the unfair advantage granted to private cars by exempting their fuel from carbon pricing, the government should reallocate funding from roads to improve public transport so that service quality, rather than pricing, is able to turn motorists into public transport passengers and reduce transport emissions. The equivalent of the cost of carbon pricing on public transport energy—up to around \$200 million per year—would be a good start towards meeting the transport needs of more people with public transport.

A recent survey by Auspoll showed that about three quarters of Australians want revenue from carbon pricing used to improve public transport, walking and cycling. With the government struggling to sell its carbon tax message in the face of strident campaigning against it, this is one opinion poll the government would do well to heed.

Geelong Branch report

Armstrong Creek planning

To highlight the lack of a public transport plan for the new Armstrong Creek suburban development, the Branch made a submission and presentation to the Planning Advisory Committee set up by the new State Government to review the already-established route of 'Section 4C' of the Geelong Bypass.

Section 4C is planned be a six-lane divided road running immediately south of the railway line between Anglesea Road and the Surf Coast Highway. Our submission can be read at http://www.ptua.org.au/files/2008/section_4c_committee.pdf.

We were successful in getting the public transport issue aired. We elicited from the City of Greater Geelong planners that there was, sadly but predictably, no overall plan for public transport in Armstrong Creek, but that \$600,000 has been spent on some public transport planning. In trying to find out exactly what has been done, the CoGG referred us to the Geelong section of Department of Planning and Community Development, but the relevant officer is proving extremely hard to pin down.

However the money appears to have been spent on planning the Armstrong Creek railway station on the Warrnambool line (to be surrounded by a 2,500-space car park!) and investigating a route for the proposed public transport corridor to Torquay.

North Shore community hub

The Geelong Branch is assisting the North Shore Station Task Force, and North Shore and Norlane residents, campaigning about the withdrawal, or non-availability, of \$1.5 million, supposedly made available under the previous state government's 2008 'Train Stations as Community Hubs' program, to provide a community building and other facilities at North Shore station. Laverton and Mooroolbark stations were also part of the program.

The bureaucracy revealed the termination of support for the program at the end of last year, saying that it was only a three year pilot. The DoT is now saying the \$1.5 million had never been promised, and that only \$160,000 for "landscaping" is actually available. Politicians have been lobbied and a very successful media campaign has been

waged, coordinated by PTUA member and North Shore resident Coralie Jenkin.

Central bus interchange

The public hearing conducted as part of the CoGG's review of the recently-opened Moorabool Street bus interchange was held in late June. The Branch and a number of individual PTUA members made verbal submissions in support of their written ones.

At the hearing, the only strong objection to retaining the interchange came from the owner of an employment service adjacent to the west side stop. However only about a quarter of all submitters addressed the panel.

Almost everyone who did speak was in favour of keeping the interchange in its current location, and most agreed with the Branch that the area should be expanded to improve the operation of the facility. There was also a good deal of support for making that section of Moorabool Street car-free.

The PTUA Geelong Branch meets monthly in Geelong city; see Page 2 for details. Paul Westcott is the branch convenor.

Rowville update

The wheels are turning on the government's Rowville rail feasibility study, with the appointment of a consultant to lead the study team.

The leader of the study is William McDougall from consultants SKM. In Melbourne, he is perhaps best known for publicly disputing the inclusion of a \$10 billion east-west road tunnel—the predecessor of Rod Eddington's own tunnel proposal—in a report to Melbourne City Council that he was commissioned to produce in 2005. In a remarkable statement to the media, Mr McDougall explained the road had been included at the request of council bureaucrats, and said "my personal

view is that we'd probably be better off not building a tunnel: I think the real key to solving congestion is to shift people from car to public transport." Mr McDougall has also worked in the UK, where he authored a report recommending the extension of the London Underground's Northern Line to Battersea. While in the past he has also recommended against rail lines (including an early version of the Northern Suburbs line in Perth), Mr McDougall's record suggests he will be scrupulously fair and will base conclusions on evidence, rather than on prior convictions.

The PTUA will be engaging closely with the study process. A meeting

with the study team has been arranged, and we will also be providing submissions to ensure all the relevant evidence is correctly weighed. Our Outer East branch is active in the region, of course, and has regular contact with the Cities of Knox and Monash, whose support for the project will be vital. Knox in particular has long advocated the Rowville extension, and has commissioned its own complementary study—something councils have been happy to do in the past to boost the case for major road projects.

If you are interested in the campaign for the Rowville line, please contact the PTUA office.

⇒ office@ptua.org.au

RRL disrupts Sydenham, country travellers: how it turned out

The complete closure of the rail line between Sunshine and Footscray for the two weeks of the July school holidays led to a possibly unprecedented level of disruption for regional passengers on the Ballarat and Bendigo lines, and suburban passengers on the Sydenham line.

Not only were large numbers of passengers affected, but most journeys took significantly longer. For example, the earliest service from Bendigo, a stopping-all-stations bus, left Bendigo at 3:25am, arriving in Melbourne at 7:12! Fortunately there was a later express bus that 'only' took two hours 22 minutes.

The line closure was to allow for the construction of two extra tracks between Sunshine and Footscray as part of the Regional Rail Link project. The closure also provided an opportunity for other work to be done elsewhere on the vacated tracks. The Sunbury electrification project was given two weeks with full occupation of the line and V/Line was able to rectify some track problems, particularly a number arising from the wetter weather in recent months.

The RRL Authority decided a short but total shutdown was preferable to a longer period of partial closures. School holiday time was chosen because buses normally used on school runs were available to provide the alternative bus services, and passenger numbers are slightly reduced.

In fact, there is a lot of anecdotal evidence that passenger numbers were lower than usual during the shutdown. It seems that many commuters took various forms of leave to avoid the disruptions, and some took to cars.

There were obvious fears that the huge logistical exercise involved in providing the alternative bus services would lead to chaos and confusion, but fortunately these proved groundless. The obvious effort involved in organising the alternative arrangements generally bore fruit. The publicity about the changes was extensive, though some Metro publicity confused passengers with incorrect dates. Journey times were certainly lengthened considerably, but by and large only to the extent predicted.

The idea of providing bus shuttles for suburban passengers from either Albion

or Sunshine stations to the Flemington Racecourse branch, from where train shuttles ran to the city, proved to be a sound one. The plethora of regional coaches arriving more or less simultaneously at the Southern Cross bus terminal was generally well handled. At all crucial points in the journeys there were plenty of staff on hand to guide passengers.

The major problem seemed to arise from congestion on roads approaching the city. Bus-only lanes were provided, but hold-ups often occurred where bus lanes were discontinuous.

Unfortunately there are more disruptions to come as construction of the RRL project continues. The major reconstruction required around Footscray station will affect the heavily-patronised Geelong and Werribee services as well as those involved this time.

As yet we have no idea how that will be handled, but the earlier the notification to those affected the better. And we hope that passengers lost to the railway during this and later shutdowns will promptly return.

Haymarket Junction rebuild: more tram stops lost

A 'safety' upgrade to a major inner Melbourne intersection is being used as a pretext to delete tram stops, including one located nowhere near the intersection.

The Haymarket roundabout has long been a hazard for pedestrians. Motorists often fail to notice pedestrians on crossings here, and even fail to notice the traffic lights that were installed several years ago in an attempt to make the crossings safer. Reconfiguration of this large, confusing intersection to provide a safer and more at-

tractive pedestrian environment is long overdue.

However, the roundabout is also the intersection point of three of Melbourne's busiest tram routes, and important as an interchange between tram route 19 to Sydney Road, and route 55 to the western CBD. Previous safety upgrades to roundabouts, such as St Georges Road in Northcote, have introduced further delays to trams due to installation of traffic signals that provide no tram priority. A similar situation at Haymarket would be a major

regressive step affecting a significant part of the public transport system.

The rebuild is also being used as an excuse to delete some tram stops. One of these is located a short distance from a retained stop, and its loss might be acceptable if pedestrian access between the two points is improved. The other, however, is at the intersection of Elizabeth and Queensberry Streets, and is not even at the intersection in question. The rationale for this deletion is not at all clear, and it poses a major inconvenience for local workers and residents.

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Newsletter contributors: Tony Morton, Daniel Bowen, Paul Westcott and Kerryn Wilmot.

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If you are reading a friend's newsletter and would like to join and help the fight for better public transport, it's \$30 per year (\$15 concession). Call the office or see www.ptua.org.au/join.

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