



‘Trains not tollroads’ campaign revs up

In November 2010 Ted Baillieu said of Doncaster rail: “The easiest thing to do would be to do exactly what this [Brumby] government has done and do nothing. We are not going to do that, we are going to... find the funds and get on and build it.”

So why do we now see an assortment of arguments in the public media by the road lobby, government officials and consultants that Doncaster rail service is unviable?

The Baillieu Government now touts as its number one infrastructure priority the westward extension of the Eastern Freeway through Carlton and Fitzroy—a project never mentioned during the 2010 election campaign. In doing so it conveniently mirrors the wish-list of the RACV (of which we say more on page 4). It also inherits the road lobby’s political interest in sidelining Doncaster and other promised rail extensions, in order to assemble a fiscal ‘war chest’ for this very costly road.

Against this, the community groups and local councils campaigning for the Doncaster line with the PTUA have been redoubling their efforts to counter the threat. Transport experts have now weighed in, with a report by RMIT and Curtin University researchers garnering recent media headlines (“Doncaster railway line could be built for \$840m”, *The Age*, 24 July 2012). Commissioned by a group of six north-east suburban councils, the report concluded the line could be built at modest cost and would attract significant patronage. The expert’s cost estimates, encouragingly, are not far off the PTUA’s own figures based on actual costs for Perth’s rail lines and Melbourne’s EastLink tunnels.

Yet the report prompted immediate public criticism from the leader of the Doncaster Rail Study team. The response is curious, as it is not usual for the leaders of ‘independent’ studies for government, that have not yet publicly reported their own findings, to publicly preempt their inquiries in this way—after giving themselves barely a day to consider outside views.

But it has become common to assert, in particular, that there is insufficient capacity on the rail tracks from Clifton Hill to the city to accommodate trains from

Doncaster, South Morang and Hurstbridge all together. Informed analysis shows otherwise: the system now in place should suffice to handle six trains per hour on the Doncaster line in addition to the forecast peak services on the South Morang and Hurstbridge lines through to 2020. The ‘capacity’ argument has become a self-perpetuating put-down that, through sheer repetition, aims to dampen the community’s expectations of its public transport system.

The steady critique against Doncaster rail appears designed to provide cover for the Baillieu Government having dug itself into a hole on the issue. The government has seemingly been corralled behind closed doors into placing all its transport infrastructure eggs in one rotten basket—the east-west motorway—despite coming to power riding a wave of community frustration over the failings of the public transport system, and promising a new deal for public transport.

The government’s current rhetoric and actions smack of weakness and dishonesty. Together with local councils and community groups, we will keep working to hold the government to its promises.

Rail is the solution ⇒ Page 4

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Keeping in touch:

PTUA Office

Ross House
247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne
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
Tony Morton—Secretary
Malcolm Simister—Treasurer
Matthew Ferrantino
Michael Galea
Tim Hoffmann
Ian Hundley
Terry Konstandelis
Tim Long
Tim Petersen
David Robertson

Branch convenors

Paul Westcott—Geelong
Jeremy Lunn—Eastern Suburbs

Contact

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

Member Meetings

Melbourne

AGM: 11 October at 6:30pm
Level 4, Ross House
247 Flinders Lane, City
More details: see below

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

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the PTUA will be held on **Thursday 11 October at 6:30pm**, in the Hayden Ray-smith Room, 4th floor, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane Melbourne.

Finger food and light refreshments will be provided for members.

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 below (a photo-

copy is acceptable) and signed by the nominator and the candidate, both of whom must be current financial members of the PTUA.

In accordance with the PTUA's rules, to be eligible for election a candidate:

- must not be a sitting MP;
- must be a member of at least 12 months' standing, and must not be a local councillor (unless the Committee waives this requirement); and

- must disclose to the Secretary if they are a member of an MP's or councillor's electoral staff, or a candidate for election to political office.

Nominations must reach the PTUA Secretary by hand or by mail (Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000) by 4:00pm on Friday 5 October. Nominations will not be called for at the AGM unless nominations are insufficient to fill all positions. There is no proxy voting in the event of an election.

PTUA Committee Nomination Form

I, _____ of _____ (nominator)

nominate _____ of _____ (candidate)

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

I declare that the candidate is not a current Member of Parliament; is / is not a Mayor, Councillor or equivalent office holder of a municipality; is / is not employed by a sitting MP or Local Councillor; and is / is not currently a candidate for a political office. (delete as appropriate)

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

PTUA activities, winter 2012

Over recent months we have focussed on countering the government's new-found obsession with road-building, instead keeping in the public eye its commitment to rebuild public transport.

This has included participating in the steering committee for the City of Yarra's 'Trains not Tollroads' campaign. This will be formally launched later this year, after Council formally endorsed most elements of the campaign plan at a recent meeting.

We have also helped provide advice to the Victorian Auditor-General toward future planned work on evaluation of major infrastructure projects, including through participation in a stakeholder workshop with Professor Bill Russell.

Myki continues to raise ructions with the travelling public, and we have fielded numerous complaints and referred users to PTV and the Ombudsman for further action.

The PTUA continues to feature prominently in the news media, as the need for transport planning reform reverberates in the wider community.



A message from PTUA President Daniel Bowen

After nine years as President, I have decided not to stand for re-election at the Annual General Meeting in October.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to lead the campaign for better public transport during this time, but I've decided to take a break.

We have had significant wins: all-night services on New Year's Eve, more services moving Melbourne towards our

'every 10 minutes to everywhere' vision, and recognition from the public and from politicians of both sides of the importance of public transport, and of the issues of overcrowded and infrequent services and the lack of timetable co-ordination between modes.

It's also an opportunity for the organisation to get some new blood, and new ideas.

I would urge all members to seriously

consider nomination for the Committee (you'll find the form on page 2 of this newsletter) or if not up to nominating, to get in touch and get active with campaigning.

There's enormous potential to push the debate forward as we move towards the 2014 state election. Please get involved—your PTUA needs you!

Government backs away from Southland station

The government has backed away from its election promise to build Southland station in its first term.

It now claims the \$13 million in the budget was merely to start the works, with no firm timeline or budget for completion (*The Age*, 28/7/2012).

This is at odds with the Coalition's pledge which was explicit that the money would fully fund the station:

The \$13 million Southland Railway Station on the Frankston line between

Highbury and Cheltenham will feature two platforms and ramps and lifts for full-time access by commuters with a disability, senior citizens, mothers with prams and children with bicycles. (Coalition statement, 14/11/2010)

This Coalition promise was well below the Labor election pledge of \$45 million, but we understand that Labor's costing included moving the current bus interchange closer to the railway line—arguably an unnecessary extravagance

given almost all bus services into Southland intersect the Frankston line at other stations already. (The Coalition pledge stated their less grandiose station would have just two bus bays.)

The bottom line is that with traffic chaos in the area and packed car parks—particularly on weekends when most buses are hourly and the ten-minute trains whiz by the centre—the Coalition must fulfil their promise. The station at Southland must be built.

Myki marches on despite more cost blowouts, planning failures

Staffed railway stations around Melbourne are now having their booking office Metcard equipment removed. The result is that shortly, it will be impossible to buy any suburban ticket at a railway station other than a Myki.

This is already an issue at unstaffed stations, where Metcard sales were removed several months ago. We have received repeated complaints about the lack of a single-use or short-term ticket option at unstaffed stations, and this problem is only going to get worse with the removal of Metcard sales in coming months from all other points of sale.

Meanwhile, installation of Myki-only gates has commenced, with Parliament station's southern entrance being converted to all Myki gates apart from a small number for Metcard holders. This has improved the situation in peak hour, as the new gates are more responsive—but they are still not perfect. Some Myki-only gates at Melbourne Central

continue to be troubleprone, suffering breakdowns.

We already know that in coming months, bus drivers will stop selling Metcards and will commence selling (and topping-up) Mykis. Trams will also have their Metcard machines deactivated and removed, resulting in no tickets at all being available for sale; you will have to pay elsewhere.

This is all expected by the end of the year, though TTA boss Bernie Carolan's evidence at a Parliamentary Inquiry last month hinted that the Metcard contract had been extended into 2013, raising the prospect of a further delay in the final transition off the old system. As has also been reported, the total project budget has now increased from \$1.35 to \$1.5 billion over ten years: *three times* the initial budget announced in 2004.

Mr Carolan also admitted what most people knew: that serious mistakes

were made over the course of the project, and there was a failure to learn from others' experience. This resulted in cost blowouts, delays and flaws in the business case.

Additionally, an Auditor-General report into fare evasion released in August estimates that the rollout of Myki has resulted in some \$350 million of additional costs to the taxpayer, via the 'revenue guarantee' to private operators during the Metcard–Myki transition.

Contrary to news reports, this sum is *not* all due to increased fare evasion, though that has certainly played a large part. Much of this cost was simply due to over-optimistic and self-serving forecasts of future patronage from the private operators amid the rail passenger boom in 2007–08, which were evidently not subjected to sufficient scrutiny or risk management by the bureaucracy.

Dear RACV: the north east needs rail, not roads

Like the Baillieu Government, the RACV regards an east-west road as its number one priority. A two page spread in its latest *RoyalAuto* magazine entitled "Think Link" claims the road is "the best solution to traffic gridlock" on the Eastern Freeway. As with most road lobby literature, actual evidence presented is superficial.

In the 1970s when construction of the Eastern Freeway began, geographer John Michael Thomson wrote *Great Cities and Their Traffic*. He observed the way cities that embarked on road-building suffered chronic congestion, that seemed to get worse the more roads were built. Those that avoided building big roads also suffered congestion, but dealt with it by expanding public transport and by encouraging an urban form better suited to walking and cycling. With a readily accessible alternative to driving, congestion in the latter cities never reached debilitating levels.

This interaction between transport supply and demand had been noted earlier by the economist Anthony Downs, and from the 1970s became known as the Downs–Thomson Paradox.

But to the road lobby, the interaction simply does not exist. Road-building, instead of feeding latent demand for car travel and undermining public transport, simply allows motorists to reach their destination faster. And if their destination is the CBD—as we know is the case for the majority of Eastern Freeway traffic—they will magically traverse the last 3km to and from North Carlton without bottlenecking every north-south arterial road on the way.

As Downs and Thomson explained, the vast increases in car and truck traffic forecast by the RACV are consequences of policy choice, not inevitabilities. By diverting car journeys to public transport, new train lines liberate road space for freight; new roads encourage new

car trips that get in its way.

Melbourne needs more trains. The road 'solution' hasn't worked.

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/myths



Mernda rail campaign

The 5185-signature petition for the Mernda rail extension (reported in our last issue) gained good publicity in local media outlets when presented to Parliament, and was the subject of an

article in *The Age* on 1 August.

The article drew attention to the rapid growth of car traffic on the only road in and out of Mernda: from 10,000 vehicles per day on Plenty Road to over 17,000 in three years. It can now take over half an hour just to cross a single suburb!

The Facebook campaign continues to grow, with 1275 'likes' as of the end of August. Clearly there is a solid view in the community that further rail extension is needed to avoid future gridlock and maintain the viability and liveability of Melbourne's outer north.

⇒ www.facebook.com/merndarail



Chadstone: repeating 1960s errors again and again

As we go to press the Stonnington City Council has endorsed the planning amendment (C154) permitting a \$500 million expansion and redevelopment of Chadstone Shopping Centre. The amendment is now expected to be approved by the minister for planning, Matthew Guy, for final adoption.

Meanwhile, Planning Panels Victoria has concluded in a report to the Minister that Chadstone has become *even more car-dependent* than it was in the early 2000s when the last major expansion commenced.

The permitted development includes additional car parking (from 9,500 to 11,000 spaces) and consolidation of bus stops into a single interchange. This interchange is the only significant element relating to public transport. In the hearing it was suggested this would assist mode shift to public transport, but neither we nor the Panel were convinced.

Also permitted are big retail expansions and refurbishments, a new cinema complex, new food and entertainment areas, and a new office tower and residential hotel on the Dandenong Road frontage. The latter—being entirely new uses for the site—are likely to attract huge volumes of car traffic in the absence of decent public transport. It has been found where office-based employment is moved from areas with high qual-

ity public transport to places like Chadstone that car trips skyrocket: we saw this with the early-1990s relocation of the Myer head office from the City to Tooronga, when public transport mode share went from 90% to 20%.

In our submission to the Planning Panel, PTUA insisted that expansion of Chadstone be conditional on substantial improvements to public transport. Our recommendations included extension of the Alamein rail line to Oakleigh via East Malvern station and Chadstone, improved bus services and priority, and the extension of the number 3 tram (which has terminated at Darling Road, Malvern East, since November 1913).

The Panel agreed that Chadstone had been designed with free parking to attract car-based customers, and that car dependence had increased in the eight year period since the last major expansion of the centre. Evidence was presented that between 2002 and 2011 the mode share for customers and visitors had fallen by 5% for buses (from 17% to 12%), and by 2% for walking and cycling (from 5% to 3%).

Despite all this the Panel agreed with PTV that buses are “the appropriate base for future planning at this time.” The Panel said the question of light or heavy rail access could be pursued through the Victorian government’s current Metropolitan Strategy process. The

Panel said it may also be a matter for consideration in structure planning and has been canvassed in another possible planning amendment (C161).

It is unlikely the planning minister would now block this project—even as it threatens to further jam up the road network in south-east Melbourne for cars, trucks and buses alike. The Baillieu government has an evident infatuation with new bulky-goods stores, which are now permitted to trade in many products other than bulky goods, and are typically located in areas remote from good quality public transport.

Of course, Chadstone should never have been built where it is in the first place, remote from the heavy rail network. It is just one of many gross postwar-era planning errors that set an unhealthy pattern: opened in 1960, it was followed in short order by Doncaster Shoppingtown, Northland, Highpoint and Southland. Even Eastland, despite being close to Ringwood station, is designed as a car-centred operation with its back turned from the station precinct. Like Chadstone, many of these shopping centres will have ambitions to further expand existing free or cheap car parking options, and can overlook as ‘too hard’ opportunities for improved public transport access such as Southland station and the Doncaster rail extension.

Geelong Branch report

RRL bypasses the public

It is too late now to change the foolish decision not to provide Regional Rail Link platforms at North Melbourne station, but we were concerned that very few passengers even knew about it.

A flyer was written—and nine hundred printed—briefly setting out the situation and listing the contact details of relevant state politicians. In early July some very hardy volunteers handed the leaflet out to morning peak passengers going to Melbourne. Despite minor interference from a couple of officious V/Line staff, we handed out at Marshall, South Geelong, Geelong, North Geelong and Lara stations.

Passenger reaction confirmed that many commuters were unaware of the decision to bypass North Melbourne. Unsurprisingly, the opinion of the proposal from those who currently use North Melbourne was entirely negative. One passenger who said he wasn't af-

fectured because he only travelled to and from Werribee was disconcerted to be informed that Werribee would be bypassed too!

Corio's rail orphan

The Branch has also been active in campaigning to improve access to Corio station. We were already discussing what might be done when V/Line banned buses from using the station access road because of damage being caused.

Two bus routes run along and terminate in School Road and there are bus stops at the start of the station access road, which is almost half a kilometre long. A number of bus drivers were acceding to passenger requests to take them up to the station itself, and some drivers were also laying over in the little-used station car park before undertaking their return runs.

The simplest way to improve access to the fairly remote station is to reconstruct the access road to cater for bus

access and to make the station the termination point of the two routes. Drivers could even be provided with keys to the currently locked toilets at the station.

A made footpath to Corio should also be provided from the Princes Highway, via School Road and the station access road. There is currently no footpath at all, even though a gated pedestrian level crossing has been provided at School Road.

The issue has gained quite a bit of traction, even to the extent of Corio MHR Richard Marles speaking in Federal Parliament about it. We have been in contact with V/Line Stakeholder Relations, and V/Line CEO Rob Barnett has now written to Public Transport Victoria requesting funding of \$30,000 to scope the works.

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

Committee for Ballarat jumps on board PT campaign

The *FastTrack Ballarat Project* is a Committee for Ballarat campaign to improve the rail service between Ballarat and Melbourne. Committee for Ballarat members John Kilgour and Noel Coxall recently contacted the PTUA's Regional Spokesperson, Paul Westcott, to ask our support for the campaign.

The Committee for Ballarat brings together local business organisations to promote programs which they feel will enhance their region. The *FastTrack Ballarat* team has formulated a relatively modest set of proposals to improve the frequency and reliability of rail services on the Ballarat line, which can be built in stages if necessary.

They are:

- Duplicating and electrifying the line from Sunshine to Melton;

- Providing a second platform at Bacchus Marsh to allow trains to pass there;
- Providing a passing loop near Ballan;
- Restoring the duplication of the line from Ballarat to Warrenheip; and
- Ensuring reliable mobile phone reception along the entire route.

These ideas are broadly similar to the PTUA's policies for the Ballarat line. While that initially seemed surprising, we realised it was because the proposals are more or less common-sense ones.

The *FastTrack* team's idea is that the government will be attracted by the fact that the measures proposed can be

built in stages and are relatively inexpensive. Indeed, they pointed out that the \$5 billion Regional Rail Link will do less to improve the Ballarat rail service than their relatively modest set of proposals.

The team has done a good deal of research to ensure their plans are feasible, and seem to have spoken to most of the right people in formulating their proposals, gaining the backing of most of the movers and shakers of Ballarat.

The PTUA has happily agreed to add its name to those of the various other organisations supporting the initiative. It will be formally launched in Ballarat on Friday 14 September and the Minister for Public Transport has been invited to receive the Committee's brief.

www.committeeforballarat.com/news/launch_-_fasttrack

Swanston Street: new tram stops open, but flaws remain

After months of construction work, new tram platform stops have finally opened along Swanston Street at Bourke Street and Collins Street.

While better access for wheelchair and pram users is undoubtedly welcome, the completion of the stops has once again highlighted the flaws in the design adopted for Swanston Street.

The main part of the platform is a bike lane, but one where cyclists must give way to passengers boarding or alighting trams. At La Trobe Street in particu-

lar, the lane is not marked in a way that is 'legible' by tram passengers, who remain unsure where to wait.

The location of the stops means that the connection at Swanston and Lonsdale Streets between the city's busiest tram and bus arteries has been severed. Passengers wanting to interchange must now walk at least half a block to make the connection.

Motorists are also observed ignoring or failing to notice the closure of Swanston Street to all traffic other than trams and

bicycles. In some cases cars have driven through Bourke Street Mall in order to find a way out. More signage may be required to emphasise the closure.

Lord Mayor Robert Doyle has said the City of Melbourne will make small changes, including improvements to signage. This will be welcome, provided it does not destroy the integrity of the urban design by impeding pedestrian movement (as rumoured centre-of-road fences would likely do). But it seems nothing will fix the lack of integration between trams and buses.

Haymarket junction shows how not to do a 'safety' upgrade

Reconfiguration of this major intersection north of the city has succumbed to the old road engineer's formula: that 'safety' is best served by improving access for cars at the expense of trams and pedestrians.

Haymarket Junction—the meeting point for three of the city's busiest tram routes—is just the latest of many multi-lane roundabouts to receive an 'upgrade'. The result is an intersection that is much easier to negotiate by car. But trams, already slowed to jogging pace by hostile traffic signals, are now routinely delayed both when entering and exiting the junction, compared to the previous arrangements where trams had full right of way.

The biggest problem, however, may be that the foreshadowed 'safety benefits' for pedestrians are illusory. Walkers crossing at Peel Street (including those interchanging between routes 19 and 55) are now permitted only a brief phase during a marathon 2 minute clockwork signal sequence. At the same time there are long 'dead' periods when this part of the intersection is empty. Just as at Melbourne University terminus, this encourages nearly everyone to cross against the red light. Unlike at the university, however, there are no road treatments aimed at 'calming' the car traffic. Near-misses between cars and pedestrians are therefore common.

Even worse, the proliferation of traf-

fic lights appears to confuse the few motorists who make a hard left turn from Elizabeth into Peel Street—the only ones likely ever to have to stop at the pedestrian crossing. Anecdotally, motorists in this situation seem as likely to fail to notice the red light as they are to stop. If pedestrians are safer crossing with the green man, it is only because the engineers have ensured the only cars normally crossing at that time are the rare ones making the hard left turn.

It seems clear the new design is flawed, and will need revisiting. With the volume of both pedestrians and tram users increasing at this location, we can only hope they will receive better consideration in the future.

In brief. . .

PT and cyclists in the city

PTUA Secretary Tony Morton recently met the Melbourne Bicycle Users Group (BUG). We are hopeful of developing an ongoing relationship where city cyclists and public transport users can better understand and cam-

paign on each other's issues.

Will staff cuts affect our planning capability?

The Baillieu Government is reducing staff numbers right across the Victorian Public Service, and public transport staff are not immune. Word is currently that both PTV and the Department of Transport will shrink in num-

bers by some 20 per cent.

While we have regularly criticised the transport bureaucracy as 'middle management heavy', there is an obvious concern that staff cuts will be poorly targeted. It would be a shame if the 'new blood' we need to help build a service-oriented culture in PTV were in fact the first people to face the axe.

Copy deadline for the next PTUA News is 19 October 2012.

Newsletter contributors: Tony Morton, Daniel Bowen, Ian Hundley, David Robertson and Paul Westcott.
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Responsibility for electoral comment in PTUA News is taken by Tony Morton, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.