



PTV and the Budget: Lack of money no excuse for inaction

The ‘retail politics’ of Victorian transport policy have focussed almost exclusively on two hugely expensive projects: the East West motorway (costed at up to \$15 billion) and the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel (costed at \$9 billion). This in a political environment where governments are increasingly starved of revenue and privately-funded tollways are dropping like dominoes. There are much more cost-effective ways to give Melbourne a first-rate transport system.

The Napthine Government’s single-minded focus on the East West road should disabuse anyone of the notion that transport improvements are funded on merit, or indeed on any semblance of rational consideration. The project has been evaluated by Sir Rod Eddington—whose role as a spruiker for big infrastructure projects continues via his chairmanship of Infrastructure Australia—and given a benefit-cost ratio of just 45 cents in the dollar, or 73 cents including “wider economic benefits”.

The government has confirmed the public will not be allowed to scrutinise the ‘business case’ purported to justify committing scarce public money to such a huge loss-making road project. It is claimed this is to avoid giving an advantage to commercial tenderers, yet this has not prevented high level business cases being published for competing public transport initiatives.

For the same reason it is unclear what favourable terms will be offered to potential private-sector ‘partners’ to build a toll road. Given car use per capita has been trending downward since 2005, it is unlikely any private builder would be prepared to assume any commercial risk—leaving this with ourselves, the people of Victoria.

What is certain is that a commitment to build this road will starve the government of funds for other major transport projects. This means not just the \$9 billion Metro tunnel (given just \$10 million in the budget on the pretext it is ‘not ready’) but also the suburban rail extensions that—unlike the East West road—were actually in play at the last election. The Doncaster and Rowville extensions were the subject of specific promises; a line to Melbourne Airport is now considered overdue by nearly everyone; and 5km extensions from South Morang to Mernda and from Cranbourne to Clyde are increasingly urgent to serve newly car-dependent local communities with intractably congested roads.

Spending on the East West road will also restrict the funds available for other important government priorities, such as schools and hospitals. Ultimately, to avoid being a drain on the health and development of our communities, investment in transport has to make a real difference in outcomes, and be cost-effective given the tight budget constraints in which governments now operate. As Rita Mae Brown might have said, doing the same thing over and over, expecting different outcomes, is an insane way to plan transport.

The PTUA has for years demanded progress on suburban rail extensions to support a multimodal public transport network. At first, this was resisted because of low patronage on public transport. Now, it’s resisted by claiming there’s no room for more trains into the city in peak hour. The government’s feasibility studies and PTV’s development plan try to make the Rowville, Doncaster, Mernda and airport extensions, and other major improvements, conditional on a Metro tunnel that does not actually add capacity on most of Melbourne’s train lines. **(Continued on Page 7)**



Keeping in touch...

PTUA office

Ross House,
247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne
Telephone (03) 9650 7898
e-mail: office@ptua.org.au

Membership Enquiries

Call or e-mail the office (see above)

PTUA members can obtain cheap yearly Myki passes – 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. Members can also view archived newsletters online:

www.ptua.org.au/members/resources

Committee

- Anthony Morton – President
Tim Long – Secretary
Phil Bourke – Treasurer

Daniel Bowen

Matthew Ferrantino

Ian Hundley

Terry Konstandelis

Paul Prentice

Nalla Sivarasa

David Robertson

Alison Clarke

Branch convenors:

Paul Westcott – Geelong

Terry Konstandelis – Eastern Suburbs

Committee members can be emailed using the format:

firstname.lastname@ptua.org.au

Member meetings

Melbourne:

Every couple of months, 6pm
Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane (see below for details)

Eastern Suburbs:

Fourth 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

Next Member Meeting: Thursday 27 June, 6:30pm at Ross House

Join the PTUA's campaign team to learn more about our Community Campaign leading up to the 2014 State election, and how you can participate yourself or assist in other important ways.

The PTUA is gearing up to fight the East West link and campaign for a serious public transport alternative. This will work in solidarity with similar campaigns by the City of Yarra, the Metropolitan Transport Forum and local community leaders.

Trains not Tollroads Campaign Launch: Thursday 13 June, 6:30pm at Fitzroy Town Hall

With this PTUA News you will find a flyer for this key public event, hosted jointly by PTUA and the City of Yarra.

Our featured speaker at this 'town hall meeting' is Alannah McTiernan, former Minister for Planning and Infrastructure in Western Australia. Alannah is credited by Professor Peter Newman and others with providing the key political support for Perth's 'second wave' of public transport expansion, including the 70km Mandurah railway.

Learn about how politicians together with community leaders were able to drive change in Perth, and help build a similar movement in Melbourne!

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Newsletter contributors Daniel Bowen, Anthony Morton, Ian Hundley, Paul Westcott.

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“What planning?” Academic asks.

At the PTUA’s member meeting on 26 March, Professor Michael Buxton of RMIT painted a grim picture of likely consequences of the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Strategy now being developed by planning minister, Matthew Guy.

He said that fundamentally the Victorian government does not believe in planning and, in practical terms, is divesting the task to the private sector.

Prof Buxton said that unlike some strategic planning in Melbourne in the past, which was evidence-based and undertaken with proper thought and consultation, this hasty strategy relies on a grab-bag of poorly digested ideas.

He was especially critical of the “20 minute city” concept proposed by Minister Guy. Prof Buxton said that mixed-use activity centres (comprising commercial, retail and

residential functions) can reduce car-based travel. This principle was included in the previous state government's *Melbourne 2030* planning blueprint, but it was not realised because (amongst other things) public transport deficient suburban malls such as Chadstone were designated as major activity centres for development focus.

Prof Buxton said a spate of high-rise developments in and around the CBD is being approved by the planning minister in the name of a purported land shortage. This is detrimental to aspects of the city which have made it an attractive place to live and work. The State Government fails to understand that our urban heritage provides a huge competitive advantage to Melbourne.

Research demonstrates there is no shortage of land to cater for increased population and economic activity. However, available land

is poorly utilised. One example is the Aurora development in Epping North, designed for rail access that was never provided and now utterly car dependent.

The government's determination to break down the planning system is also reflected in its revision of planning zones, permitting major “out of centre” developments, which will have an adverse effect on the amenity of the Melbourne metropolitan area.

Melbourne planning is in crisis, Prof Buxton concluded. It is hard to know whether this is reversible. There are signs however that the Victorian government has overreached in its erosion of the Melbourne planning framework. Community organisations are now in the position where they can take advantage of this and push back to campaign publicly for a planning regime for a liveable city.

Victorian Budget 2013 at a glance

The Good....

- \$4.5 million to commence a trial of high-capacity signalling—a potential ‘game changer’.
- \$100 million for improvements on the Frankston line (and through to Newport). Much is to allow the line to accommodate heavier trains, but includes improvements to station facilities and reliability.
- \$179 million for 8 new trains.
- Upgrades to Frankston and Ringwood stations, and new stations at Epsom (Bendigo) and Grovedale (Geelong).
- Reopen the Echuca to Toolamba freight line.

- Feasibility study into rail services from Geelong to Drysdale and Torquay on restored track.

The Bad....

- \$520 million in spending on new public transport initiatives still falls behind \$630 million for new road initiatives. This ignores both the relative health of the road and public transport networks and the preferences of most Victorians.
- Nearly \$70 million on facilities such as toilets for use by PSOs, not available to the public.
- ‘Central Activity District’ station upgrades such as Broadmeadows have seen their funds vanish.

- Level crossings get another \$50 million for planning, but actual construction funds ‘unallocated’.

- While Southland station is said to be progressing, the budget for it is “tbc” (to be confirmed).

- \$10 million for one multilevel car park at Syndal is equal to all the funding provided for new bus services in the five year outlook. This sum represents \$40,000 per additional car space provided.

....And The Ugly

- East West link: a \$6–\$8 billion road that will shift bottlenecks, fail to solve congestion, and soak up funds to fix public transport.

Integrated planning and land use? No, says government.

When the Victorian government was elected in October 2010 it promised an integrated approach to planning and transport policy in Victoria. However, at the broader strategy and policy level we have since witnessed actions that will accelerate the drift to car dependency and the sidelining of public transport.

The incoming government shelved the previous Labor government's goal of a 20% mode share for public transport by 2020. The urban growth boundary has been expanded yet again, and the types of development permitted in Melbourne's green wedges have been extended. These are pre-conditions for even more chaotic and expensive urban sprawl.

Projects have been signed off by the government, and locations earmarked for development, which promise further transport and planning difficulties, including the rubber-stamping by planning minister Matthew Guy of a massive expansion of Chadstone Shopping Centre. This is based on the outmoded 1960's suburban shopping centre model with inadequate public transport and thousands of free car parking spaces. Fishermans Bend was designated for urban consolidation without any consideration of transport requirements. One-off endorsements of ever larger residential projects in the City of Melbourne are increasing in the absence of strategic thought or

justification. In outer suburbs developers are calling the shots with projects that proceed without regard for the location and capacity of public transport services for new residents and businesses.

After years of criticism of the previous government's "Melbourne 2030" planning strategy it took Minister Guy two years to release a discussion paper on a proposed new metropolitan planning strategy for Melbourne - *Melbourne, let's talk about the future*. It was claimed this document is intended to lead to a new Melbourne metropolitan planning strategy to "help guide Melbourne's growth and change over the next 30-40 years.' There has been little open discussion of the document, either with ministerial participation, or more broadly in the community, and there has been next to no public debate involving planning and transport policy practitioners and academics. This leaves the very strong impression that after the late start the Victorian government wishes the process to be disposed of before the October 2014 Victorian state election.

Informed opinion suggests that there is a parallel process going on behind closed government doors involving major industry players. Property development industry players and associates would be a good place to start in identifying who has the inside running on this.

In concurrent campaigning, these groups and roads-based lobbyists like the RACV are now energetically pitching their ambitions for a car dependent outer Melbourne.

The RACV's most recent campaign document, *Growing Pains*, released late in 2012, purportedly to address all transport infrastructure needs in outer Melbourne and Geelong, promotes an elaborate list of road expansion projects. The RACV has now hooked up with other members of the Australian Automobile Association in the lead-up to the federal election in a *Demand Better Roads* campaign. Their wish list is highly compatible with the roads based future reflected in the Victorian government's deregulation of the planning system.

The contrived process for the review of Victoria's planning zones has been a reliable predictor of the government's approach to the planning strategy. It is reflective of a government that stumbled into office armed with a few clichés but with no properly resolved and researched policy on transport or planning and is now comfortable in its role as a jelly-back captive of the property development industry and roads lobbyists.

The rest of us will pay the price if they get away with it.

**"A developed country is not a place where the poor have cars. It's where the rich use public transportation."
Petro Gustavo, Mayor of Bogota**

New Myki glitch: Your next Yearly Pass may start too early

A new issue has emerged with the \$1.5 billion Myki ticketing system with Myki Passes (periodicals, such as Yearlies).

The problem appears to be related to the ability of Myki cards to have two Passes loaded: the active Pass in use, and the next Pass which should only start on the first day of travel after the current one is finished.

This allows people, including those using PTUA Commuter Club Yearlies, to beat price rises by buying their next Pass ahead of the January price rise. It also allows you to plan ahead and be ready to continue travelling as soon as your Pass expires, without being caught out and having to queue to buy another when you next travel.

Former PTUA President Daniel Bowen noticed the problem in March. He had a Yearly which

should have expired on 27th of March, and a second Yearly on the same card which should have then activated the next day.

Instead the second Yearly activated itself on 15th of March, meaning that 13 days from the first Yearly were lost.

PTV claimed to the Herald Sun ("Myki found to be double dipping in latest glitch", 1/4/2013) that only three people had contacted them about the issue. We've since heard of a number of other Myki Pass users having this problem, which would appear to indicate that it is more widespread.

Affected users who put in a complaint are being reimbursed, but it is unclear if they are being proactively detected and contacted.

We would urge those using Myki with a Pass and load a second Pass

in preparation for the first expiring, to check to ensure that the second Pass is activating correctly.

It is easily visible using the Myki web site, which will show that there are two Passes active on the card at the same time.

If the problem does affect you and you seek reimbursement from PTV, watch that too – Daniel was told that he would be receiving reimbursement of \$70, but a cheque arrived for only \$35!

Myki might be close to fully running in Melbourne, but along with increasing sightings of unresponsive or out of service readers during April and May, this latest problem makes it clear that even four years after it first started running, the system is far from perfect.

PSOs – effective value for money?

The initial round of PSO deployments has been largely welcomed by passengers - this is hardly a surprise, with most officers going to stations with higher incidences of crime, such as Frankston, Footscray and Dandenong, as well as busy CBD locations.

Many of those travelling at night have appreciated their presence, and figures obtained by the *Herald Sun* in April (21/4/2013) show that at those stations, they appear to be having a big effect on crime and undesirable behaviour.

What's less clear is the impact at quieter stations such as Yarraville and Ormond, and the scores of

suburban stations where officers are yet to be deployed.

Analysis of the figures shows that in the period from the PSOs' first deployment date to the end of 2012, at Dandenong and Flinders Street about 5 infringement notices were issued per night. The figure for Footscray was 2.4. But at Yarraville the figure was only 0.35, or about one infringement notice every three days. And Yarraville's night time patronage benefits from nearby bars, restaurants and a cinema.

The PTUA is still of the view that a security presence such as PSOs is a real benefit to the public at busy stations where crime is a problem,

but that it should be all day, not just after 6pm.

And we continue to take the view that at remaining stations, full time rail (customer service) staff are of more use to passengers than PSOs, who could more effectively provide a security response when and as required, via patrols and rapid response to incidents as they occur.

With construction of completely new buildings underway at a number of locations to provide facilities for PSOs, the rollout of two officers at every single suburban station is not a cheap one - it remains to be seen whether it is good value for taxpayers' money.

Whither Doncaster Hill?

When the Minister for Public Transport, Terry Mulder, released the Doncaster Rail Study's Phase One draft report on 14 March, he revealed that the preferred route for a rail line to Doncaster would terminate in a car park, the Doncaster Park-and-Ride, rather than at Doncaster Hill, the major commercial centre and passenger destination in the City of Manningham and a key interchange for connecting bus services.

How will this provide for the development of the City of Manningham and Doncaster Hill?

Not at all, is the short answer. As the only municipality in the greater Melbourne metropolitan area without train or tram services, Manningham is highly car dependent. According to the 2011 Census over 80% of Manningham residents drive to work. Less than 8% catch a bus. Doncaster Hill is the only Principal Activity Centre in Manningham. The City of

Manningham's vision for the 58 hectare Doncaster Hill is a sustainable mixed-use high density urban village with 8,000 additional residents in 4,080 new apartments and 10,000 new jobs in 20 years. The adjacent 47 hectare Eastern Golf Course site may also see significant residential development, including higher density residential development.

This vision will not be realised without the provision of a train service to Doncaster Hill. The major road intersection at Doncaster Road and Williamsons Road/Tram Road already caters for substantial volumes of traffic, perhaps in the order of 70,000 vehicles per day. There is a shortage of road space, including for dedicated bus lanes at Doncaster Hill, which is already causing planning authorities to cavil at the practicality of road-based transport to cater for the types of residential and commercial development that would permit the activity centre to realise its potential.

Doncaster Hill was effectively launched as a major commercial destination

in late 1969 with the opening of Doncaster Shoppingtown, now Westfield Doncaster. The centre has since undergone three expansions and the current Shoppingtown has assumed a scale, - 120,000 square metres of retail space and 5,000 car parking spaces, that would have been unimaginable 44 years ago. However, like other businesses in Doncaster, Westfield Doncaster has one major thing in common with the original - it remains car dependent with more parking spaces mooted to come. For practical purposes the parking is free, with charges only being applied after the first three hours to attract retail customers.

If a train service is not provided at Doncaster Hill the ability of the centre to attract additional commercial activity and residential capacity will be capped significantly below its potential. More and more available space will be devoted to the movement of cars, and the ability of people to walk around the precinct will be out of the question. Doncaster Hill will turn into an ugly place in which to be.



Yet another broken Myki reader, snapped and sent in by one of our members.

Geelong Branch Report

With the introduction of night football to Kardinia Park on 1st June, Geelong faces the situation that no local public transport will be available to spectators after matches finish. The Branch has been highlighting the problem, which was obviously unknown to the football club and the city council until we notified them.

Bus services in Geelong stop running well before 10 p.m. (much earlier on Sundays), but night football matches finish after 10.30 p.m. There will still be special football trains to and from Melbourne, but they cater for end-to-end passengers and don't stop at local stations.

It has been difficult to argue for any provision of post-match bus services for night games. PTV policy requires the organisers of an event to pay for extra services, but the number of football fans using local buses to get to and from daytime football matches has always been very small.

No special bus services are ever scheduled, and normal infrequent

Saturday or Sunday timetables are maintained. Those hourly services aren't used by people who have another option. PTV has agreed to look at what might be done.

Consulting firm AECOM has been appointed by the G21 alliance of local councils to undertake its second local public transport study. One of the two leaders of AECOM's study team is Robin Miles - until mid last year the local regional manager of VicRoads.

Briefing to the G21 Transport Pillar, the study team noted the basic problem of trying to balance bringing services as close to users as possible with the need for frequency and directness.

Amusingly, they said they hoped to get some useful passenger data from Myki. It was pointed out that wasn't likely, because sixty percent of Geelong bus passengers were using short-term tickets and often didn't touch off because there was no incentive for them to do so.

On the subject of short-term tickets, we hoped that the apparent

delay in abolishing them on local buses meant that the government might be changing its mind, but they were done away with on 19 April. Needless to say, this stupid decision caused a lot of annoyance and confusion, and is likely to be a disincentive to PT use, as well as a catalyst for fare evasion.

The state government's announcement of funding for a railway station Armstrong Creek/Waurn Ponds/Grovedale (take your pick) has not clarified how usable the services provided to the station will be. The single track south of Geelong means that a number of peak trains can't go beyond Geelong or South Geelong as it is, yet the new station is another six kilometres further along the line from the current terminus at Marshall.

Congratulations to our founding convenor, Tim Petersen, on achieving his PhD. in public transport planning, and on his new job with the WA Department of Transport.

(continued from Page 1) Meanwhile, included almost as a footnote in the PTV plan and the Budget is one cost-effective rail (capacity measure with the ability to transform the entire network and remove virtually all capacity-related objections to new rail extensions. Described as "high-capacity signalling" in PTV's documents (and known technically as moving block in-cab signalling), it is the preferred system for boosting capacity on heavy rail lines in London, Paris and numerous other cities worldwide. In Melbourne, it has the potential

to increase the number of trains per hour on every line by around 50 per cent—greater than the potential of the Metro tunnel and more than enough to fit in more trains from new lines in the suburbs.

Transport for London is currently upgrading 310km of track and nearly 200 trains to use this type of system at a total cost of £354 million. Translating this to Melbourne's suburban network gives a total cost well under \$1 billion—a fraction of the cost of either the Metro tunnel or the East West road.

The just-released State budget appears to provide the funding necessary to try out this system on one suburban train line as a pilot project. Rather than commit billions of dollars to megaprojects of limited benefit, the resources and funding should be put in place to roll out high-capacity signalling on all suburban lines, and (with no further excuses) to commence construction on the promised extensions within five years—not 15 to 20 as our never-never planners would have it.

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PTUA Office, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000



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PTUA office

247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne
Telephone (03) 9650 7898
e-mail: office@ptua.org.au

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