

Big splurge on roads, public transport planned on the run.

As expected, the State Budget released on 6 May was a splurge on new roads, dominated by the East West Link. Budget figures show that the government plans to spend \$7 billion on new roads in the next term of government alone, but only one third of this amount on new public transport developments in that time, including the newly announced Melbourne Airport train line, Melbourne Rail Link (the new 'Metro') and multiple grade separations - even though the latter are primarily road projects.

In addition, projects such as the Airport line are at least a decade away, showing that the priorities of this government continue to be dominated by the road lobby. The Doncaster and Rowville rail extensions that were promised in 2010 seem to have disappeared off the radar, and of the Mernda and Clyde extensions to serve our outer suburbs, there's nothing to be seen.

By contrast, the government has committed to start construction on both the eastern and western sections of the East West Link in its next term. For all the talk about public transport, this hugely expensive road leaves everything else in the shade.

The Melbourne Rail Link is billed as this government's version of the Melbourne Metro project, but it actually looks nothing like the Metro tunnel from the Eddington report. Whilst the new Melbourne Rail does increase capacity to the west it fails to provide the preferred improved connectivity that the Melbourne Metro was intended to provide.

For years now, the government and PTV have insisted the Metro tunnel was needed to provide extra track capacity from the west, and to develop rail capacity north of the CBD in the Parkville and Arden precincts. Yet they have suddenly decided, without explanation, that Parkville can be adequately serviced by upgraded trams and buses after all!

Instead, the government proposes rerouting the Frankston line toward Fishermans Bend (actually Montague Street), then to Southern Cross, before running through the City Loop and out to Lilydale and Belgrave. Two existing Loop tracks will be disconnected from Flinders Street to become a dedicated route to Fishermans Bend. Frankston line

travellers wishing to access Flinders Street will need to change at Caulfield or South Yarra.

Quite simply, this is policy on the run all over again.

The government has effectively taken the PTV Rail Network Development Plan - less than two years old - thrown it in the bin and told PTV to start again from scratch. This is despite the PTV plan actually being mostly sound, with its biggest problem being the timelines and the single-mode focus.

Whatever the merits of the new rail plan, it is such a radical departure from the practice of the past century that there should have been a public debate before announcing it as a *fait accompli*. We believe the Victorian public is running out of patience with governments that come up with plan after plan, seemingly out of thin air, defend them for a couple of years then throw them away for something different. A large reason for creating PTV in the first place was so that an appropriate plan could be developed that could win bipartisan support. For all its shortcomings, the PTV rail plan was a big step in this direction.

The budget also includes provision for bus services to new suburbs in Wyndham, including those to be served by the Regional Rail Link. Otherwise, there are no new initiatives to improve suburban bus services. Indeed, for most people living in the suburbs, the government is only offering one thing for public transport, and that's a reduced fare for travelling into Zone 1. There is nothing for people who live and work in Zone 2, unless you drive a car, and ultimately that seems to be what Premier Napthine wants us to do given how eager he is to fund and build the East West Link before doing anything for public transport.

If the government were to reverse its priorities, spending \$7 billion on public transport and \$2.5 billion on roads, it would be more in keeping with the community's preference for public transport investment, and fit us better for 21st century growth and productivity. Yet we can't help but think that if the government gets its way with the East West Link, it'll turn around again in five years' time and declare that there's nothing left in the till after all.

Keeping in touch...

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Member meetings

Melbourne:

See below for details of upcoming meetings

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

Where: Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne
(If you have trouble finding the way in on the night, please ring 03 9650 7898.)

When: Wednesday 28th May 2014, 6.30pm

Topic: Vancouver’s public transport successes

There will be a presentation by Gordon Price. **Gordon Price** is the director of The City Program at Simon Fraser University. In 2002, he finished his sixth term as a city councillor in Vancouver, B.C. He also served on the Board of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (Metro Vancouver) and was appointed to the first board of the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (TransLink) in 1999. Vancouver has the distinction of being the only city where the average travel time to work *decreased* between 1990 and 2010.

Note: You must be a current PTUA member to attend these meetings. You can join now or at the meeting. (Please bring correct change if paying by cash.)

Gordon is also appearing at a PTUA/MTF forum on Tuesday 27th May.

Melbourne Town Hall, 6pm. RSVP at www.transportforum.org.au

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State budget delivers little for regional public transport.

There was very little in the State Budget for regional and rural public transport. Nothing at all was allocated to improve bus services, which therefore remain very much the Cinderella service.

The headline item was the mooted standardisation of the Geelong - Mildura line. However the government's media release only says that up to \$220m *may* be spent on standardising the Mildura

line. The only actual work to be funded is \$40m worth of maintenance on the Maryborough to Mildura (broad gauge) and Murtoa to Hopetoun (standard gauge) lines to allow for goods wagons with 21 tonne axle loads, as was recently done for the dual-gauge Geelong grain unloading loop.

Any actual gauge conversion will rely on a business case to be developed by the end of this year

to see if the project is justified, and which route might be followed, either via Maryborough, which is the current route, or via Hopetoun with a new link across to the existing Mildura line. The latter route would bypass a very maintenance-heavy section of the present line. So there's no guarantee that anything at all will happen.



As is regrettably the case with budgets these days, two items are for projects already under way or completed. There's \$22 million to build and operate the new railway station at Grovedale, a facility which is already being constructed. The \$10 million for the "improvement of the Warrnambool to Geelong rail link" is actually for the passing loop at Warncoort which was opened last month!

There's also at least one re-announcement. The investigation of the viability of rail services between South Geelong and Drysdale, and Grovedale and Torquay, was first announced in the middle of last year. Nothing has been heard of it since.

A new crossing loop at Ballan on the single-track Ballarat line was promised by the Coalition in 2010. Nothing has been done, but now the government says it will provide a crossing loop at Rowsley instead.

We'll see. In fact, what the Ballarat line needs is not piecemeal minor projects prompted by approaching elections, but a structured program to progressively duplicate the route.

In the meantime, the government is removing the tracks of the Castlemaine - Maryborough line at every level crossing - for the benefit of motorists.

Does the Rail Link really provide more capacity than the Metro tunnel?

The greatest disappointment in the budget is the failure to start any rail extensions in the next term of government. Instead we have the Melbourne Rail Link (MRL), to be planned over the next term but not commence in earnest until at least 2018, with completion over a decade away.

MRL departs from previous plans that envisaged a 'Metro tunnel' from Footscray with new stations at Arden, Parkville and beneath Swanston St. The new proposal includes no new tracks from Footscray, yet it's claimed it provides more additional capacity than the Metro tunnel. Can this be right?

We took a first look at the detail of the alternatives: see the diagrams opposite. The focus is on capacity from the north and west, where the most serious constraints exist and forecast population growth is high.

Figure 1 shows (somewhat simplified) the current layout between Footscray and the city, as of completion of the Regional Rail Link (RRL) in 2015. The important thing to notice is that in the city itself there are basically three pairs of tracks. Each has an independent 'path' in and out: one around the City Loop, one 'over the viaduct' toward Frankston (for the time being), and the RRL terminating at the Southern Cross regional platforms (which provide room to turn around multiple trains without hurting capacity).

The complicated array of cross-overs near North Melbourne means the incoming suburban lines have the ability to use either the Loop or the 'viaduct' route. This in theory allows trains to be 'pathed' to maximise available capacity. But this strategy is limited, because path switching can itself reduce capacity if overdone.

The practical capacity of one independent track pair is held to be 24 trains per hour. So the layout (as of next year) caters for at most 48 suburban trains and 24 regional trains in the busiest hour. But at

most 24 can come from Sunbury, Craigieburn and Upfield without path-switching.

Figure 2 shows the layout with the Metro tunnel as proposed in PTV's Rail Network Development Plan from 18 months ago. It provides a fourth independent path through the city. PTV proposed all Sunbury trains would use the tunnel, and run through to Dandenong. Future services that could use this path include Melbourne Airport (via Albion) and an electrified Melton line. So in practice it does not constrain the system in future if Newport trains are unable to access the tunnel.

PTV also proposed that Newport trains would be through-routed to Sandringham, and all Frankston trains would operate via the loop. Yet this is not an absolute requirement, because re-routing Dandenong trains via the tunnel means Frankston trains have access to both a direct and a Loop path. This means some Newport trains can be routed to Frankston to balance capacity on the east and west side of the city, as already happens now.

The bottom line is, under the prior plan there are four independent paths from the west, which could all be used to capacity as follows:

- Sunbury, Airport and Melton via the Metro tunnel to Dandenong;
- Craigieburn/Upfield via Loop;
- Newport over the viaduct to Sandringham or Frankston; and
- V/Line trains via the RRL tracks to Southern Cross.

All these can be routed though the PTV layout without crossing. No path-switching is required (except possibly Sandringham/Frankston). Capacity thus exists for up to 72 suburban and 24 regional trains from the west in the busiest hour.

Figure 3 shows the MRL project. Sunbury trains go not through a new tunnel, but through Southern Cross using the former Caulfield and Burnley loop tracks. These run

through to Dandenong as before. Newport trains would run over the existing viaduct to Sandringham.

One crucial difference is that whereas the PTV plan allows trains on the viaduct to go either to Sandringham or Frankston, MRL removes Frankston trains entirely from the Caulfield loop and associated tracks through Richmond. Frankston trains connect to Camberwell, which already runs close to capacity, ensuring that all Frankston paths are taken up without further large changes. This obliges all suburban trains via Newport to run to the Sandringham line, or terminate.

The Sandringham line is not a growth corridor, unlike the Dandenong or western lines. It is therefore unlikely that the 24 trains per hour on the Newport to Sandringham route will all represent usable capacity on the east side of the city—it is not easily possible to switch surplus Sandringham paths to Frankston or Dandenong.

Nonetheless, the MRL does in theory provide the same capacity boost from the west as before: four independent paths without crossings, for 72 suburban and 24 regional trains in the busiest hour.

So what to make of the claim that the MRL provides more capacity? We suspect the capacity figure under the prior PTV plan has been 'sandbagged' by assuming lower maximum use of some paths. For example, if the Melton and Airport lines don't proceed, the tunnel is constrained to the suburban capacity on the Sunbury line, which is shared with regional trains.

Our conclusion is that the Metro tunnel and MRL are similar capacity-wise. The former is however preferable as regards serving existing demand, spreading the passenger load from the west with new stations, and maintaining the centrality of both Flinders Street and Southern Cross stations.

Figure 1: Existing layout between Footscray and city

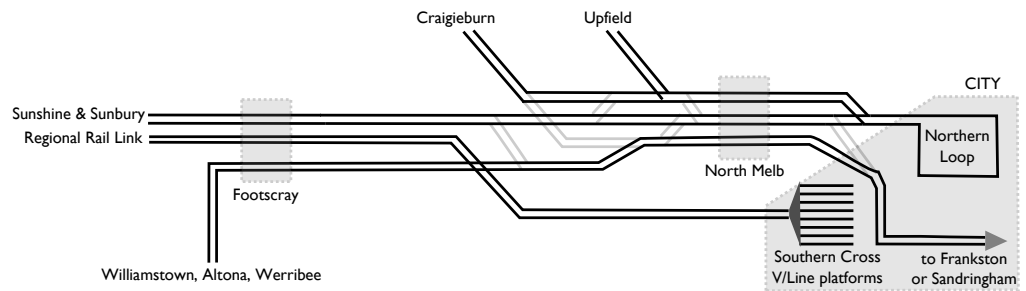


Figure 2: Layout under original PTV Metro tunnel plan

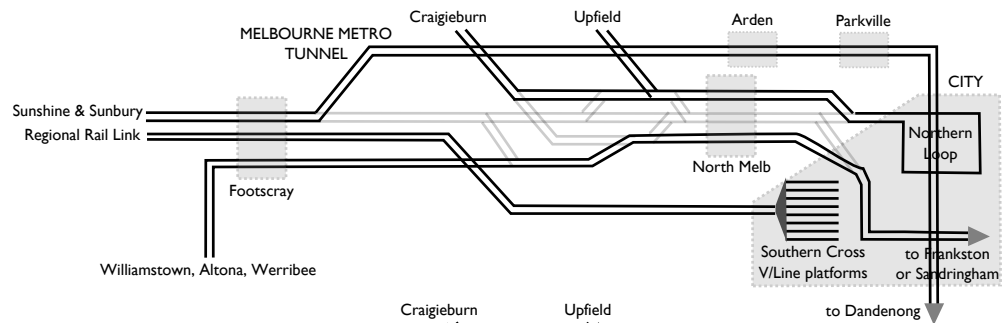
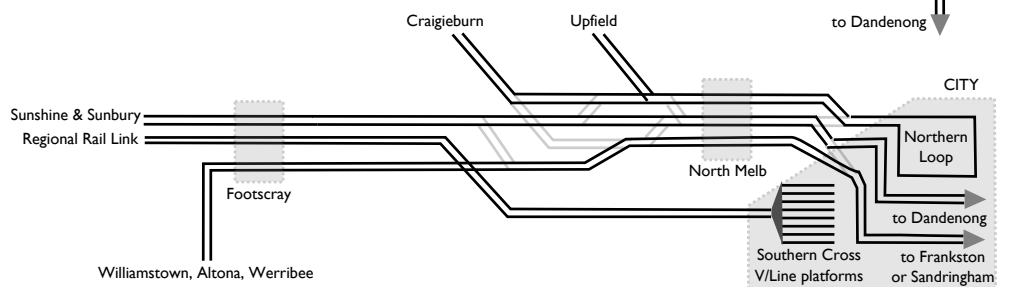


Figure 3: Layout under new Melbourne Rail Link plan



Metropolitan zone shakeup

Along with other sudden announcements, out of nowhere in March came the news that two-zone trips in Melbourne will be abolished from January 2015.

Zone 2 won't be removed, but effectively the Zone 1/2 overlap will expand to include all of zone 2. This means Zone 2-only trips will remain at the cheaper fare (currently \$2.48), but all other trips will be charged at the Zone 1-only rate (currently \$3.58).

The biggest benefit will be for passengers travelling across zones, who will see a big reduction in fares. But there are issues, of course. What additional pressure will be placed on services, particularly trains? Will people from outside Melbourne clog the freeways and car parks to get to a zone 2 station for a \$3.58 trip into the City? What will it mean for V/Line zone 2 stations such as Lara and Bacchus Marsh?

The government also announced that in Melbourne's CBD, tram trips will be free. The biggest beneficiaries of this change will be CBD residents, and those who drive into the CBD each day, who will no longer have to pay to use the trams. Curiously, the free area appears to exclude the Arts Centre and the Melbourne Museum, so tourists may not benefit fully from this change.

The fare reforms are from January 2015, and Labor has said they will also implement them. With the changes expected to cost around \$100 million per year (about 15% of total fare revenue), in the longer term, can we expect big fare hikes to cover the cost?

The fare hike for crossing a zone boundary has long been a problem, but the removal of two-zone fares is likely to see upward pressure on fare levels, which will particularly be a problem for shorter trips.

This danger is clear from Adelaide with its single zone, and also from the removal of Melbourne zone 3. Today, a two-zone trip in Melbourne costs almost as much in real terms as a three-zone trip did in 2006, before zone 3 was removed.

Meanwhile, the biggest barrier to greater public transport use isn't the fares at all, but the poor levels of service in most of Melbourne, where buses only every 30-60 minutes are the norm. While it is true that fares need reform, services are more important. Unfortunately this move will starve the system of funding, when many areas still need upgrades. Current passengers might welcome price cuts, but potential passengers continue to be put off by overcrowding and infrequent services, particularly in the middle and outer suburbs.

New metro rail map in development.

PTV is working on a new rail map, to cover not only Melbourne but also the whole of Victoria. The map will, with slight modifications, be launched next year when Regional Rail Link opens.

As you can see, it's a big change from the existing map, and will use colours to distinguish between lines, rather than zones. It better shows where the various lines connect, and fixes problems with the current long-standing map which implies, for

instance, that Upfield line trains bypass the city and run to Sunbury.

We've printed some of the draft map below, but have published the entire map on our web site. PTV are seeking comments.



Geelong Branch Report

We submitted a detailed response to the Draft G21 Public Transport Strategy which was finally released for comment in February. Generally speaking, the document is a useful one. A number of specific actions are listed for each of the five participating municipalities, but the Strategy is largely a set of quite sensible principles to guide improvements to the system.

After the Strategy has been finalised the hard work really starts. That involves trying to get the state government to commit the necessary funding to implement the recommended changes to the system, not just a watered-down version of them, as happened last time. Unfortunately, advocacy for sensible public transport improvements by local councils in the Geelong region has rarely been

strong, unlike road expansion proposals which seem to find plenty of enthusiastic supporters.

PTV will need to develop a route structure and timetables in accordance with the principles in the Strategy. We hope these will then be subject to the sort of consultation that occurred during the development of the Strategy. Pleasing everyone is almost impossible, but giving people the chance to analyse what is proposed will help lessen adverse reactions.

Coincidentally, the City of Greater Geelong's Draft Integrated Comprehensive Transport Plan was released in March. The grand title did not disguise the fact that it is neither comprehensive nor a real strategy, especially in regard to local public transport. In fact, consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff

seem to think that Geelong's public transport is basically the rail line to Melbourne. Our response to the document, with expert input from Tim Petersen (former PTUA Geelong convener, now in Perth), was suitably critical.

One of our members, whose employment at Kardinia Park is adversely affected by the lack of public transport for night games, has been actively campaigning about the problem. Infuriatingly, he received a response from the Mayor which praised him for trying to enhance sustainable transport options, yet merely quoted the excuses given by PTV as to why buses can't be provided. What is the Mayor himself going to do to improve the situation?

Letter to the editor...

Peter Ryan the Minister for Regional Development, lacks any credibility with his response to Jacinta Allan's criticism of the Napthine Government's changes to zone 1 and 2 in Melbourne.

The free tram travel must be seen for what it is, a total capitulation on the part of the Napthine Government to effectively collect fares on the trams in the CBD. The changes to the zoning of fares for trains and trams will rip out \$100 million of the transport budget to pay for the pork barrelling. The \$100 million could have easily been used to open the Castlemaine to Maryborough rail line creating the Bendigo to Geelong Regional Rail Link.

Mr Ryan's word doesn't hold any credibility in the regions that include Geelong, Ballarat, Maryborough, Castlemaine and

Bendigo after his dismal performance and lack of follow through with his pronouncement in the 2012 election, to establish the Geelong to Bendigo Rail Link. Mr Ryan also attempts to lay claim to the successes and achievements of the Regional Rail link in Melbourne, the opening of the Robinvale line and the Velocity trains. We all know which party has brought these beneficial developments into fruition and Mr Ryan's self aggrandisement can be summed up in the words 'It is an impoverished man who lays claim to other people's achievements and successes'.

Mr Ryan even had the rail line in his own electorate pulled up to be converted into a very productive rail trail, consequently the people in his own electorate are denied access to effective and reliable public transport that connects them

to the rest of Victoria and Melbourne.

Mr Mulder, the Minister for Transport, in a recent conversation stated that the Geelong to Bendigo Rail Link will never be built and is a pipe dream. So here we have two Napthine Government Ministers totally ignoring the ambitions and desires of the country electorate.

It certainly appears that the Premier, Dr Napthine, Minister for Regional Development Peter Ryan and Transport Minister Terry Mulder who all have country electorates work against the interests of country people.

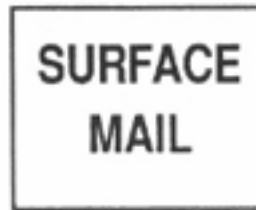
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Rail Revival Alliance

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