

## 100 Days of Andrews: Change in the Air, Quick Wins Needed

Victoria's second 'public transport election' last November was even more dramatic than the first in 2010. In both cases an incumbent government was punished for prioritising big urban roads of dubious merit, while deferring to a subsequent term of government any major initiatives to improve public transport for long-suffering communities.

While transport was not the only decisive issue in 2014, its importance contrasts with earlier times when it was seen as a 'business as usual' matter, largely occupied with building roads. In any event, for a Victorian government to be defeated after just one term is remarkable, and would likely not have happened had transport not been a decisive issue.

In the immediate aftermath of the election, the focus was on the Andrews Government's promise to cancel the East West Link and unwind the construction contracts signed by the Napthine Government two months earlier. This is by all accounts happening, though far less quickly and openly than the community would like. This remains the most important of the government's election promises, since only by freeing the state of this multi-billion dollar, decades-long liability will Victoria retain the fiscal capacity to renovate and extend its wider transport system to thrive in the 21st century.

At the same time it is vital that the new Andrews Government keeps its positive promises on transport, given what has turned out to be a multi-year hiatus on new public transport investment. To her credit, new Transport Minister Jacinta Allan has lost no time in commencing planning work for the

government's level-crossing elimination project, placing an interim order for five additional trains to be assembled in Ballarat, and launching a new statutory authority to develop the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel.

We will certainly expect to see real money start flowing in the May budget, including the funds to complete a substantial number of grade separations in this term of government, to build the promised Mernda rail extension and to expand the order for train and tram rolling stock.

A particularly welcome aspect of the Andrews Government's declared agenda on transport is a decisive move away from the megaproject 'solutionism' that has hijacked Victoria's transport conversation since the Eddington report in 2008. It is notable that many of the projects now advanced have likely benefit-cost ratios far in excess of that promised by

Eddington's 'integrated' package (which just barely broke even, and then only after considering 'wider economic benefits').

But the required transformation of Victoria's public transport system will not come about through grade separations and new rolling stock alone. The government will need to make substantial upgrades to the public transport network, starting with the now-stalled Dandenong Corridor project. The PTUA supported this project when announced by the Napthine Government, despite having serious concerns about its scoping and management being led by a private consortium rather than the PTV agency created for this very purpose.

*Continued on p4*



## Keeping in touch...

### PTUA office

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

### Internet

Our web site is at [www.ptua.org.au](http://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](http://www.ptua.org.au/members/resources)

## Convenor Committee Member meetings

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

Daniel Bowen  
Alison Clarke  
Matthew Ferrantino

Ian Hundley  
Tony Mohr  
David Robertson

Petra Stock  
Bruce Sutherland  
Jennifer Williams

Geelong Branch:  
Paul Westcott – Convenor

### Melbourne:

Meetings will be advertised in PTUA News and on our website  
[www.ptua.org.au](http://www.ptua.org.au)

### Geelong:

First Saturday of every month (except Jan), 10:30am  
Multimedia Room, Courthouse Youth Arts Centre  
Corner Gheringhap and Little Malop Streets, Geelong

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

## Members' Meeting

The next PTUA members' meeting will be held on Thursday 30th April at 6pm in the Ground Floor Meeting Room at Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

Professor Ian Woodcock from the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at The University of Melbourne will be speaking about cost efficient level crossing grade separation.

With the Andrews Government aiming to remove fifty level crossings over eight years, it's critical that cost-effective designs and methods are found which also result in improved amenity to local communities.

**Please note this Members' Meeting will also include a special presentation to long-standing PTUA volunteer Peter Waters. Peter has tended our office and financial systems on a regular basis for many years, and now enters a well deserved retirement from PTUA duties.**

**All members welcome, and you can join or renew on the night.**

## Goodbye to Eastern Suburbs Branch

After eleven years of campaigning, the Outer East branch of the PTUA has now formally been disbanded.

Over the years the branch has highlighted a number of issues in Melbourne's outer eastern suburbs, particularly the scarcity of fast frequent public transport services. Now however, the good work being done throughout Melbourne's suburbs and elsewhere by our Public Transport Not Traffic campaign makes it less important to have a branch carrying out similar activities.

The PTUA wishes to thank the convenor of this branch, Terry Konstandelis for his work running this branch, as well as past convenors Jeremy Lunn and Alex Makin, and other members who have contributed over the years.

## In this issue

- **100 days of Andrews - p1,4**
- **Trains, Level crossings - p3**
- **RRL delays - p5**
- **Free trams, and fare anomalies - p7**

Newsletter contributors - Daniel Bowen, Tony Morton, Cait Jones, Paul Westcott.

Edited by Anna Morton.

Printed by Kosdown, Port Melbourne.

Our thanks to Margaret Pullar and the dedicated mailout team.

## Metro rail / Level crossings

**February saw a raft of government announcements, with the Andrews government obviously keen to shake off the shackles of the East West Link and to show its public transport credentials.**

Authorities to manage the Metro rail tunnel and the removal of fifty level crossings will be created to manage those projects.

**The rail tunnel** is back to the pre-2014 route, connecting the Sunbury line with the Dandenong line via Arden, Parkville, two stations along Swanston Street and Domain.

While the overall capacity boost is similar, this tunnel plan for a cross-city connection makes more sense than the Coalition's plan last year to connect a line from the south with a line from the east, with a loop around the city in the middle. However the current plan excludes interchange platforms at South Yarra. We understand the project team are considering implementing cross-platform interchange at Caulfield instead, which would at least allow those passengers using the Dandenong line to easily change trains to reach South Yarra or Richmond.

The question of interchange at Flinders Street ("CBD South") and Melbourne Central ("CBD North") also needs to be resolved to ensure passengers from other lines can easily access the new stations at Domain, Arden and, most importantly, Parkville.

We understand the state government will aim to fully fund the tunnel for construction starting in 2018, but that unsurprisingly they would prefer a contribution by the Federal government. This of

course is unlikely to happen while Tony Abbott is Prime Minister, given his ridiculous belief that the Commonwealth should never fund urban public transport.

Do we need the rail tunnel? PTUA members would know this has been the subject of much debate over the years. Given measures afoot to increase the size of the train fleet, remove level crossings, implement high capacity signalling and start implementing higher capacity trains, one would hope the rail network can cope with growth for the next few years without it.

But time is passing, and longer-term, once other measures are exhausted, track capacity does need to be boosted. Given a ten-plus year construction period is not unlikely, it is time to start work on extra CBD capacity to ensure the rail system continues to be able to grow and support Melbourne's economy into the future. We may not need the tunnel right now, but we will by the time it's built.

### Level crossings

Having made a key promise to remove fifty level crossings in two terms (eight years), Labor now has a challenge ahead of them to make it happen.

Removal of level crossings obviously benefits road users, but that includes bus and tram users as well as cyclists and pedestrians, many of whom see regular delays trying to cross the rail line to catch their train.

Level crossings also represent a barrier to providing more frequent train services. At some locations in peak hour, crossing gates are unpredictably closed for long periods of time, particularly when delays occur.

A small number were already fully funded by the Coalition, and some others are subject to early planning, but this still leaves scores with little planning and no funding beyond the initial money now provided by Labor to get them underway.

While Labor has sensibly mostly picked crossings from near the top of the ALCAM (Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model) list, one left us baffled - Werribee Street, Werribee is on the list, despite that it will see little rail traffic once Regional Rail Link opens. Nearby Old Geelong Road in Hoppers Crossing, a much busier location close to a hospital, would make more sense.

The question of design needs to be considered. Conventional wisdom is that lowering the rail line is the best solution, but this can also be extremely expensive - the St Albans project currently underway is set to cost a whopping \$200 million.

It may be that elevating the railway line - which can result in good outcomes if carefully planned - is a more viable solution in some locations. In a small number of cases, closing access across the line, in favour of traffic using another nearby route, may also be possible.

In any case, economies will need to be found to make the delivery of so many grade separations affordable as well as the least disruptive possible. On some lines, there are several crossings in a row to be removed, and a smart government would find a way to do these all at once rather than subject rail users to years and years of disruptions.

## Where to now for PTNT?

**The Public Transport Users Association is hoping that 2015 can see effort pushed behind a campaign to improve public transport across Victoria. While we have had specific pushes in the past we are hoping to frame our message in a way that builds alliances across communities, government, bureaucracy and industry.**

For the campaign to work we need to put forward a specific ask as well as establish beyond doubt that without improved mass transit Victoria faces a crisis.

We will be in contact with

members and supporters soon via social media and other forums, to publicise a new target we are urging for public transport in Victoria—considering both the capacity of the system to carry

passengers and the actual effort that needs to be made to compete with car travel.

With numerous ways for this target to be delivered, we will be joining with communities across the state

to hold events that highlight the public transport crises in their towns and suburbs as well as discussing the different initiatives that are required to see public transport use increased.

If you are interested in finding out more details or joining the campaign please visit [www.ptnt.org](http://www.ptnt.org) and sign up for an event.



Bentleigh residents with local MPs at the PT To Parliament event, 12th February.

Alternatively call Cait Jones on 0412 549 589.

---

### *Continued from p1*

We continue to see the Dandenong Corridor project as a vital 'pilot' for the high-capacity signalling system that will enable long-overdue extensions of the rail network throughout Melbourne. We are however conscious of the need to give attention to technology selection and work scope to avoid a repeat of the Regional Fast Rail and Myki experiences, where outcomes fell short of expectations and costly remedial work was required. To do this requires substantial 'front end' planning and scoping.

It is unfortunate that the previous government's obsession with the East West Link resulted in a lack of strategic focus on this and other projects; nonetheless we would expect to see work commence on a Dandenong Corridor signalling

trial within this term of government.

The Melbourne Metro tunnel will be a further challenge for this government - see our detailed article on page 3 of this newsletter for more about this very substantial project.

There are many other important initiatives that will need to form part of a new long term plan for public transport development.

Suburban bus services require significant improvement to be useful - and not in the zero-sum manner currently being proposed, which robs large areas of Melbourne of frequent 'Smartbus' service in order to boost frequency elsewhere.

Train and tram extensions in the suburbs, too, should demonstrate substantial benefits once the technical barriers in the form of

outdated signalling and poor traffic priority are addressed.

In the meantime, while all the necessary planning takes place, the Andrews Government will need some 'quick wins' to demonstrate its commitment to real transport improvements and maintain the momentum for positive change. One

opportunity is presented by off-peak train services. Already, there have been successful demonstrations of running trains every 10 minutes through the day on the Frankston and Dandenong lines. On all but a handful of lines, there are no technical barriers to 10 minute off-peak service (rather than 15 to 20 at present); just the opportunity to attract more passengers and revenue with a more attractive service, that caters to more than just peak-hour city commuting.



## Regional Rail Link delayed, opening June

**The opening of the multi-billion dollar Regional Rail Link project has been delayed by two months, with the Labor government blaming the Coalition for dragging its heels on ordering V/Line carriages to cater for the new services that will run.**

We've watched this project with much interest - from its illogical beginnings as a line on a map through through desolate land outside the Urban Growth Boundary, to a fully-fledged rail line adding much-needed capacity to the western side of the rail network and serving new (and now booming) suburbs.

Our web article in August 2014 looked at the infrastructure, but what are the actual operational benefits?

New stations - the growing suburbs of Wyndham Vale and Tarneit will have their own stations, supported by a feeder bus network, though at the time of writing it's unclear how frequent train and bus services will run.

**Geelong line** - a detour through the new suburbs, but the higher speed of the line and the lack of Metro getting in the way may mean the overall travel time isn't greatly affected, at least for expresses. Stopping trains may be more problematic. We'll hopefully know more soon when

the timetables are publicised. The off-peak 20 minute service to Geelong will start when RRL opens.

Passengers between Geelong and Werribee are in for a tough time, however. Their direct services are likely to be removed, with a bus connection between Wyndham Vale and Werribee instead. It remains to be seen how effective this will be, as connections and travel time are likely to be problematic.

**Ballarat and Bendigo lines** - trains on these lines are already using the new tracks, so (apart

Southern Cross (with no stops), which is longer than peak hour suburban trains, allowed 9 minutes with two intermediate stops!

**Sunbury line** - the removal of V/Line trains onto their own tracks has freed up most of the Sunbury line for more suburban services. We hope to see increased frequencies (both at peak and non-peak times) soon to help with overcrowding and long waiting times.

**Werribee line** - likewise, once Geelong trains move onto their own tracks, it should be possible to run more trains on the line to

relieve overcrowding, and also to run Altona Loop trains all the way into the City all day, fixing the much-hated off-peak change at Newport, which sees some passengers needing to catch three trains to get to City Loop underground stations.

Overall it looks like RRL will bring benefits to Melbourne's west

and to many (but not all) regional travellers once it opens in June. We are hopeful the government will take full advantage of the increased rail capacity to introduce more services to help cope with the train overcrowding on the busiest lines.



The new RRL station at Wyndham Vale

from a section of the Bendigo line) now run independently of metropolitan services. However V/Line still need to reduce delays in and out of Southern Cross to take full advantage of this. Currently trains are timetabled to take up to 15 minutes between Footscray and

## Geelong branch report

Towards the end of January, Branch Convenor Paul Westcott was suddenly inundated with calls from people complaining about aspects of the proposed new Geelong bus routes, particularly changes to the current Routes 50 & 51 in Hamlyn Heights, Herne Hill and Geelong West.

Without asking, someone had put notices at bus stops in Hamlyn Heights & Herne Hill with Paul's name and number, telling people to ring and register any complaints. Although he was happy to help people, and most callers have been very reasonable, he didn't appreciate a few rants from those who thought he was responsible for the changes!

Those complaints, and others, mainly came from passengers without access to the web, who had been unaware of the planned

changes to the bus system, and/or of the specific proposals, until they heard about them "on the grapevine", well after the pre-Christmas closure of the comments period. That inevitably led to misinformation and rumour, causing often-unnecessary upset.

Those people were not catered for in PTV's information process, either in its format or in its duration. Given our current "social service" bus system, those without internet access make up a not-inconsiderable proportion of passengers. It's almost impossible for them to give useful feedback on proposals that they know little or nothing about.

PTV set up an information "Hub" at Westfield Shopping Centre about four months ago. That is an excellent initiative, and it's obviously the best port

of call for the people referred to. However the Hub's existence was not mentioned in what publicity there was.

When informed about those shortcomings by us, PTV said it would try to ensure a better performance in future from its "Comms" team, which recently had a new director appointed.

The rushed process was largely driven by PTV trying to introduce the new system in tandem with the scheduled April opening of the Regional Rail Link "Tarneit diversion" for Geelong trains.

Fortunately, the recently-announced two month delay of that has allowed for an extended consultation process, at the request of the Minister. We hope it will be more comprehensive and effective.

## Now available - PTUA T shirts!

Wear your PTUA love with pride in our limited edition 'I heart the PTUA' t-shirts!

Available in sizes M, L, XL (they are large to size) for only \$40.00 including postage.

Orders can be made sending your details to [office@ptua.org.au](mailto:office@ptua.org.au) including:

Name:

T-Shirt size:

Address:

Direct bank transfer reference:

Direct bank transfer date:



Please transfer \$40 by direct transfer to:

Account Name – Public Transport Users Association

BSB: 633-000

Account number: 111410973

Reference: Your Last name plus TS (ie – JONES TS)

## Free Trams lead to more overcrowding - and little benefit to passengers

**January saw a number of changes to the fare system, pledged initially last year by the Coalition but matched by Labor going into the state election.**

The Free Tram Zone means trams are now free in the CBD (within the Hoddle Grid) and Docklands.

No Myki is required, meaning a benefit to tourists who may not have one. Those who live and work in the CBD also benefit.

But the main beneficiaries of this are those commuters who *drive* into the CBD. They can now park their car knowing they can catch free trams around the city.

It is hard to imagine a lesser priority for increased taxpayer subsidies than CBD motorists.

Most of those who use public transport to get to the CBD do not benefit from the free trams, as they already pay a daily fare (unless using Earlybird).



Already it appears this largesse has started to lead to more overcrowding on trams. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Bourke Street services in particular (which lost the short route 95 in a network revamp) are suffering from long delays and many passengers regularly left behind at stops, unable to board.

If the Free Tram Zone is to stay, the government will need to keep working to increase services - which of course will have little in the way of farebox return, while farepaying outer-suburban passengers continue to be neglected, with low quality infrequent bus services.

## Zone 2 changes lead to anomalies.

**The other major change to fares in January - apart from general fare rise - was the capping of metropolitan fares at zone 1 prices. (Local trips entirely in zone 2 are still at the cheaper zone 2-only rate.)**

The two-zone system has long been problematic thanks to the huge jump in prices for going across the zone boundary, and many passengers would welcome the removal of the disincentive to cross the boundary.

Already we are seeing passengers who formerly avoided two zone trips by driving to zone 1 stations instead boarding at stations closer to home. This may lead to a reduction in peak hour local traffic,

though it has also added to car park pressure at some zone 2 stations.

The flat fare has led to some anomalies. Some keen Myki users have discovered that existing Zone 1 passes used in Zone 2 on weekends can earn a \$1.52 credit under certain circumstances, thus paying you money to travel further.

And the Ballarat Courier has reported that regional passengers have found that when travelling to Melbourne, if they break their trip in zone 2, they pay less than half the price. We wouldn't advise trying it, as it obviously risks missing the train, but for instance Ballarat to Melbourne in peak hour costs \$19.20, whereas breaking the

trip in Bacchus Marsh means a cost of only \$9.56.

It's these types of quirks that come from transposing an ageing fare system onto a clumsy new ticket system, followed by politically-motivated changes to the zones which benefit some at the expense of others.

The changes in January are expected to cost taxpayers around \$100 million every year which could have gone into improved services.

And of course the general fare rise that also came into effect in January was CPI plus 5%, meaning many are paying for the huge fare cuts and free rides despite not benefitting themselves.

## PTUA News

Newsletter of the Public Transport Users Association, Org. No.

A-6256L

Print Post: Publication No. PP 100002658

If undeliverable, return to:

PTUA Office, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000

**SURFACE  
MAIL**

**POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTRALIA**

### Inside:

**100 days of Andrews - p1,4**  
**Trains, Level crossings**  
**RRL delays**  
**Free trams, and fare anomalies**

#### Changed your address?

Make sure your PTUA News follows you when you move!

Cut out or photocopy this form, fill in and return to us at:

PTUA, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000.

Or e-mail us at [office@ptua.org.au](mailto:office@ptua.org.au)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

New address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/Suburb \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (M) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

#### PTUA office

247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

Telephone (03) 9650 7898

e-mail: [office@ptua.org.au](mailto:office@ptua.org.au)

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

#### Join us

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](http://www.ptua.org.au/join)

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